

June 13, 2011

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
2406 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-6016

The Honorable Norm Dicks
Ranking, Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
2467 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-6016

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Dicks:

The one hundred and twenty-eight undersigned organizations represent a broad range of food producers, wildlife, sportsmen, local governments and resource interests that benefit from the cooperative efforts of the USDA-APHIS/Wildlife Services (WS) program. We write in strong support of this critical program and in opposition of any effort to restrict or eliminate WS funding.

Wildlife causes over \$12.8 billion in damage a year to natural resources, public infrastructures, private property and agriculture. WS works to prevent, minimize or manage this damage, and to protect human health and safety from conflicts with wildlife. Wildlife damage to U.S. livestock, aquaculture, small grains, fruits, vegetables and other agricultural products has been estimated at almost a billion dollars annually. Wildlife predators cause over \$126 million in death loss to livestock; field crop losses due to wildlife total \$619 million annually; losses to vegetables, fruits and nuts totaled \$146 million annually; and 70 percent of catfish farmers incur wildlife-related damage resulting in losses of \$10 million to \$13 million annually from double-crested cormorants in Mississippi alone. Consequently, WS is an essential program in agriculture production in the United States.

The spread of wildlife-borne diseases to humans, livestock and other wildlife is a growing concern. WS works to prevent the entry of pests and diseases in the United States, and monitors and manages pests and diseases already found in this country. WS is often the first line of defense in reducing and eliminating diseases such as the West Nile virus, avian influenza, chronic wasting disease, pseudorabies, bubonic plague, hantavirus, lyme disease, bovine tuberculosis and rabies. In fact, rabies-associated costs range from \$300 million to \$450 million annually in the United States primarily for pet vaccinations, education, diagnostics, post-exposure treatment and case investigations. WS also prevents entry or controls invasive species such as nutria, the brown tree snake, European starlings and the beaver. Feral swine are a subject of increasing concern as potential carriers of or catalysts for a variety of diseases. Feral swine estimates are at 4 million plus animals in 35 states with \$3.7 million spent in lethal control by WS and cooperators last fiscal year.

In FY2008 alone, WS conducted more than 67,580 technical assistance projects to reduce wildlife damage to property in urban, suburban and rural locations as well as airports across the country, which includes homes, schools, industrial facilities, roads, bridges, airport runways, dams and electrical and water systems. One example of this work is WS efforts in reducing deer collisions with automobiles which injure an average of 29,000 people annually and cause more than \$1 billion in damage. In addition, WS works to protect wetlands habitat, riparian habitat, tidal marsh and timber from a variety of pest species including feral hogs, nutria and beavers which alone cause millions of dollars of damage each year – more than any other U.S. wildlife species. WS expended more than \$16.1 million to protect property from wildlife damage in FY2008 and \$14.1 million in FY2007.

Protection of natural resources is a growing area of need for WS. Last year, WS protected game species including mule deer, bighorn sheep, antelope and waterfowl in eight states. In FY2008, WS spent \$7 million to protect and assist 131 threatened or endangered species in 36 states, Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Cuba. In more than 95 percent of the projects, local threatened and endangered species either increased or remained stable.

More than 85,000 wildlife strikes with civil aviation have been reported since WS began keeping records in 1990. In FY2008, nearly 7,700 wildlife collisions with civil aircraft were reported, with an additional 4,900 strikes reported by military aviation costing the total aviation industry more than \$725 million annually and more than 94,000 hours in down time. WS provided direct services at 336 airports in FY2008 including population management through harassment, habitat modification or removal. Technical assistance, such as initial consultations and wildlife hazard assessments, was provided at 738 airports across the country.

It has been WS's cooperative nature that has allowed it to accomplish all of the above listed programs and has made it the most cost effective and efficient program in federal government in the areas of wildlife damage management and public health and safety. WS has over 2,000 cooperative agreements, up 20 percent from FY2000, and has 82,644 access agreements to professionally monitor and manage wildlife on private, state and federal lands.

WS cooperators include agriculture, forestry, private industry, state wildlife agencies, state departments of health, state departments of agriculture, schools, universities, counties, local government, Indian nations, homeowner associations, conservation groups and others that together with WS mitigate the damage and dangers that public wildlife can inflict.

Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Dicks, we appreciate your leadership and strong support of this essential program. Our organizations are committed to working with you to strengthen WS' resources and to ensure a continued federal partnership in the responsible management of our nation's wildlife.

WS is one of the few federal programs that have been consistently funded by 50 percent federal money and 50 percent cooperative money. In FY2007, \$56 million in cooperator dollars went to Wildlife Services while the remaining of the \$117 million budget was funded through federal appropriations. The majority of WS' budget – 43 percent – is spent on protecting human health and safety.

American Beekeeping Federation
 American Feed Industry Association
 American Horse Council
 American Sheep Industry Association
 American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers
 American Veterinary Medical Association
 Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
 Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
 Association of National Grasslands
 Catfish Farmers of America
 Catfish Institute
 Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
 Livestock Marketing Association
 National Aquaculture Association
 National Association of Counties
 National Association of State Departments of Agriculture

National Cattlemen's Beef Association
 National Farmers Union
 National Meat Association
 National Pork Producers Association
 National Renderers Association
 National Rifle Association
 National Shooting Sports Foundation
 National Sorghum Producers
 Public Lands Council
 Safari Club International
 Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife
 State Agriculture and Rural Leaders
 United States Animal Health Association
 U.S. Cattlemen's Association
 USA Rice Federation
 Wildlife Management Institute

Alabama Farmers Federation
 Alabama Meat Goat and Sheep Producers
 Arizona Cattle Grower's Association
 Arizona Cattlemen's Association
 Arizona Wool Producers Association
 Arkansas Farm Bureau
 Arkansas State Sheep Council
 California Agricultural Commissioners and Sealers
 California Farm Bureau Federation
 California Wool Growers Association
 Colorado Cattlemen's Association
 Colorado Wool Growers Association
 Connecticut Sheep Breeders Association, Inc
 Delaware Sheep and Wool Producers Association, Inc
 Delta Council
 Eastern Regional Conference of the Council of State Governments
 Empire Sheep Producers
 Garden State Sheep Breeders Inc
 Georgia Cattlemen's Association
 Georgia Sheep and Wool Growers Association
 Gila County Cattlemen's Association
 Hawaii Sheep and Goat Association
 Idaho Cattle Association
 Idaho Farm Bureau
 Idaho Wool Growers Association
 Illinois Lamb and Wool Producers Inc
 Independent Cattlemen's Association of Texas
 Indiana Sheep Association
 Iowa Cattlemen's Association
 Iowa Sheep Industry Association
 Kansas Livestock Association
 Kansas Sheep Association
 Kentucky Sheep and Wool Producers Association
 Maine Sheep Breeders Association
 Maryland Sheep Breeders Association
 Massachusetts Federation of Sheep Associations
 Meat Sheep Alliance of Florida, Inc
 Michigan Sheep Breeders Association
 Midwestern Legislative Conference of the Council of State Governments
 Minnesota Lamb and Wool Producers Association
 Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association
 Missouri Cattlemen's Association
 Missouri Sheep Producers
 Montana Farm Bureau
 Montana Public Lands Council
 Montana Stockgrowers Association
 Montana Wool Growers Association
 Nebraska Sheep and Goat Producers
 Nevada Cattlemen's Association
 Nevada Wool Growers Association
 New Hampshire Sheep and Wool Growers Association
 New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association
 New Mexico Federal Lands Council
 New Mexico Trappers Association
 New Mexico Wool Growers, Inc
 North Carolina Sheep Producers Association
 North Dakota Lamb and Wool Producers Association
 North Dakota Stockmen's Association
 North Dakota Department of Agriculture
 North Dakota Game and Fish Department
 Northeast States Association for Agricultural Stewardship
 Ohio Cattlemen's Association
 Ohio Sheep Improvement Association
 Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association
 Oregon Cattlemen's Association
 Oregon Farm Bureau Federation
 Oregon Forest Industries Council
 Oregon Sheep Producers Association
 Pennsylvania Farm Bureau
 Pennsylvania Sheep and Wool Growers Association
 South Carolina Sheep Industries Association
 South Dakota Cattlemen's Association
 South Dakota Sheep Growers Association
 Tennessee Sheep Producers Association
 Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association
 Texas Pork Producers
 Texas Cattle Feeders Association
 Texas Sheep and Goat Predator Management Board
 Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers' Association
 Utah Department of Agriculture and Food
 Utah Cattlemen's Association
 Utah Farm Bureau
 Utah Wool Growers Association
 Vermont Sheep and Goat Association
 Virginia Sheep Producers Association
 Wasco County Livestock Association
 Washington Cattlemen's Association
 Washington State Sheep Producers
 West Virginia Cattlemen's Association
 West Virginia Farm Bureau
 West Virginia Shepherds Federation
 Western Nebraska Sheep and Goat Association

Wisconsin Sheep Breeders Cooperative
Wyoming Wool Growers Association
Wyoming Animal Damage Management Board

Wyoming Stock Growers Association