

February 26, 2024

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair, Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Ranking Member, Committee on
Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
Chair, Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug Administration,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Hoeven
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Agriculture,
Rural Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray, Ranking Member Collins, Chair Heinrich, and Ranking Member Hoeven:

Wildlife causes more than \$12.8 billion in damage each year to natural resources, public infrastructures, private property, and agriculture. USDA Wildlife Services (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 to reach nearly \$1 billion annually. Wildlife predators cause more than \$232 million in death loss to livestock; field crop losses due to wildlife total \$619 million annually; losses to vegetables, fruits, and nuts total \$146 million annually; and 70% of catfish farmers incur wildlife-related damage. The annual industry-wide value of lost catfish sales revenue to cormorants averages \$47.2 million, ranging from \$25.8 million to \$65.4 million, depending upon predation levels in any given year. As a result, WS is an essential program to U.S. agriculture.

WS assists farmers and ranchers in 50 states and 3 territories to reduce the impact of predators on their animals, protecting 8.9 million head of cattle, 5.1 million head of sheep, and 56 million head of other livestock in 334,000 direct control actions. In FY23, WS provided more than 20,800 technical assistance activities that enabled 6,061 livestock producers to implement improved husbandry and methods such as use of guard animals, exclusion, fencing, and predator dispersal. These activities included 53 predator management workshops attended by more than 2,700 individuals from 14 states, dispersal of 277,335 double-crested cormorants, and removal of 2,521 cormorants at aquaculture facilities in 15 states to protect farmed fish from avian depredation. The industry is worth \$1.5 billion nationally (per National Marine Fisheries Service).

WS supported USDA's Animal Plant Health Inspection Services' emergency response efforts to animal diseases, natural disasters, and hazardous spills. In FY23, WS deployed 102 personnel on 172 deployments for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) and African Swine Fever (ASF). WS personnel have physically deployed to assist 12 states in response to HPAI. WS responded to the ASF detection on the island of Hispaniola and since detection in July 2021, have removed a total of 4,921 feral swine and have sampled 3,042 for ASF on Puerto Rico and US Virgin Islands through FY23. The National Wildlife Disease Program (NWDPP) also coordinated sample collection and evaluation or assisted state agencies with many other diseases in wildlife to include SARS-CoV-2, plague, tularemia, leptospirosis, rabies, chronic wasting disease, and rabbit hemorrhagic disease virus.

In collaboration with state wildlife agencies, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and Tribes, WS addresses livestock depredation and protects human health and safety related to wolves and grizzly bears. WS manages conflicts with gray wolves or Mexican gray wolves in 11 states. WS conducted operations with grizzly bears in 3 states, dispersing 22, capturing-relocating 7, and lethally removing 6 in FY23. Congressional funding of \$4.5 million in FY23 supported protecting livestock from large carnivore predation in 12 states using nonlethal strategies such as range riding, fladry installation, and electric fence construction. WS filled 30 full-time positions and 1 part-time position to implement these strategies. WS' National Wildlife Research Center evaluated the effectiveness of activities to reduce depredation.

In FY23 alone, WS conducted more than 72,950 technical assistance projects to reduce wildlife damage to property in urban, suburban, and rural locations across the country which include: homes, schools, industrial facilities, roads, bridges, airports and airport runways, dams, and electrical and water systems. In addition, WS works to protect wetland habitat, riparian habitat, tidal marsh, and timber from a variety of pest species including feral hogs and nutria, as well as the destruction that beaver can cause. Through cooperator-funded beaver damage management on more than 45,000 sites in 49 states, WS worked to protect roads, bridges, timber, agriculture, property, native habitat, and other natural resources from flooding damage.

WS' National Feral Swine Damage Management Program continued to reduce the impacts of invasive feral swine to American agriculture, natural resources, and property, and to reduce threats to human health and safety, declaring a 12th state (Indiana) free of feral swine since the program's inception in 2014. Work to reduce feral swine damage on approximately 187 million acres continued across 34 states and 3 territories. Funding for the Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot Program (FSCP) within the 2018 Farm Bill was set to expire at the end of FY23, however, Continuing Resolution (H.R. 6363) provided extensions, adding an additional \$15 million, split between APHIS and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to continue the FSCP.

WS had 3,809 cooperative service and interagency agreements including agriculture, forestry, private industry, state wildlife agencies, state departments of health, state departments of agriculture, schools, universities, counties, local governments, Tribal governments, homeowner associations, conservation groups and others that together with WS, mitigate the damage and dangers that wildlife can inflict. As a byproduct of operational activities in FY23, WS donated more than 651,500 pounds of meat to food banks and other organizations providing for people in need. WS donated an additional 35,800 pounds of meat for non-human consumption.

WS flew 80 aircraft for 16,400 flight hours over a total of 1.1 million miles of flight operations to conduct livestock protection via predator removal, removal of invasive feral swine and brown tree snakes, aerial delivery of vaccine baits (rabies), emergency response, and other missions.

WS processed more than 18,200 strikes with civil aircraft with more than 11,000 strikes with military aircraft also reported. More than 290,000 wildlife strikes with civil aviation have been reported to the National Wildlife Strike Database for civil aviation since WS began keeping records in 1990. Reported wildlife-aircraft strikes continue to increase as airport managers and biologists prioritize reporting all wildlife strikes to the FAA database. Damaging strikes have decreased because of wildlife mitigation and awareness efforts at airfields. WS provided 333 staff years of direct support to assist a total of 782 civil, military, and joint-use airports including about 76% of all U.S. commercial passenger airports. WS trained 7,871 airport and military personnel to prevent wildlife from colliding with aircraft, improving travel safety. WS also provided direct staff support to reduce aviation hazards at 151 U.S. or coalition military airbases stateside and in southwest Asia, the Pacific Rim, Africa, Europe, and in the British Indian Ocean Territory, and an additional 110 civil-military airports protecting American military aviation assets and personnel.

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 the federal government in the areas of wildlife damage management and public health and safety.

Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l
Airlines for America
American Association of Airport Executives
American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges
American Beekeeping Federation
American Dairy Goat Association
American Dairy Sheep Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Feed Industry Association
American Goat Federation
American Horse Council
American Sheep Industry Association
American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers
American Veterinary Medical Association
Animal Health Institute
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Association of National Grasslands
Big Game Forever
Blackfeet Nation Agriculture Development Foundation
Blackfeet Nation Stock Growers Association
Boone & Crockett Club
Catfish Farmers of America
Catfish Institute
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Exotic Wildlife Association
East Coast Shellfish Growers Association
Fur Commission USA
Livestock Marketing Association
Mohair Council of America
Mule Deer Foundation
National Aquaculture Association

Alabama Catfish Producers
Alabama Cattlemen's Association
Alabama Farmers Federation
Alabama Meat Goat and Sheep Producers
Arizona Cattle Feeders Association
Arizona Cattle Growers' Association
Arizona Cattlemen's Association
Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society
Arizona Wool Producers Association
Catfish Farmers of Arkansas
Arkansas Cattlemen's Association

National Association of Counties
National Association of Federal Veterinarians
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Farmers Union
National Grange
National Lamb Feeders Association
National Milk Producers Federation
National Pork Producers Council
National Rifle Association
National Sorghum Producers
National Shooting Sports Foundation
National Sunflower Association
National Women Involved in Farm Economics
Natural Fiber Alliance
North American Meat Institute
North American Renderers Association
Northwest Aquaculture Alliance
Public Lands Council
R-CALF USA
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Rural and Agriculture Council of America
Safari Club International
Society for Range Management
Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife
State Agriculture and Rural Leaders Association
United States Animal Health Association
U.S. Cattlemen's Association
United States Trout Farmers Association
USA Rice
Wild Sheep Foundation
Wildlife Management Institute

Arkansas Farm Bureau
Arkansas State Sheep Council
Association of Texas Soil and Water Conservation Districts
California Agricultural Commissioners and Sealers Association
California Cattlemen's Association
California Farm Bureau
California Pork Producers Association
California Wool Growers Association
Colorado Cattlemen's Association
Colorado Wool Growers Association

Connecticut Sheep Breeders Association, Inc
Delta Council
Empire Sheep Producers
Florida Aquaculture Association
Florida Cattlemen's Association
Florida Tropical Fish Farms Association
Garden State Sheep Breeders Inc
Georgia Agribusiness Council Inc
Georgia Cattlemen's Association
Georgia Sheep and Wool Growers Association
Hawaii Aquaculture and Aquaponics
Association
Hawaii Sheep and Goat Association
Idaho Cattle Association
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation
Idaho Outfitters & Guides Association
Idaho Wool Growers Association
Illinois Beef Association
Illinois Lamb and Wool Producers Inc
Independent Beef Association of North Dakota
Independent Cattlemen's Association of Texas
Indiana Sheep Association
Iowa Cattlemen's Association
Iowa Sheep Industry Association
Kansas Livestock Association
Kansas Sheep Association
Kentucky Aquaculture Association
Kentucky Cattlemen's Association
Kentucky Sheep and Wool Producers
Association
Louisiana Cattlemen's Association
Louisiana Farm Bureau
Maine Aquaculture Association
Maine Sheep Breeders Association
Maryland Sheep Breeders Association
Massachusetts Federation of Sheep Associations
Meat Sheep Alliance of Florida, Inc
Michigan Aquaculture Association
Michigan Sheep Producers Association
Minnesota Lamb and Wool Producer
Association
Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association
Missouri Cattlemen's Association
Missouri Sheep Producers, Inc
Montana Association of State Grazing Districts
Montana Farm Bureau Federation
Montana Public Lands Council
Montana Stockgrowers Association
Montana Wool Growers Association
Nebraska Cattlemen, Inc.
Nebraska Farmers Union

Nebraska Sheep and Goat Producers
Nebraska State Grange
Nebraska Women Involved in Farm Economics
Nevada Cattlemen's Association
Nevada Department of Agriculture
Nevada Farm Bureau Federation
Nevada Rangeland Resources Commission
Nevada Central Committee for State Grazing
Boards
Nevada Wool Growers Association
New Hampshire Sheep and Wool Growers
Association
New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association
New Mexico Department of Agriculture
New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau
New Mexico Federal Lands Council
New Mexico Trappers Association
New Mexico Wool Growers, Inc
North Carolina Cattlemen's Association
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
Ohio Aquaculture Association
Ohio Cattlemen's Association
Ohio Dairy Producers Association
Ohio Farm Bureau Federation
Ohio Pork Council
Ohio Poultry Association
Ohio Sheep Improvement Association
White Tail Deer Farmers of Ohio
Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association
Oklahoma Farm Bureau
Oregon Cattlemen's Association
Oregon Dairy Farmers Association
Oregon Farm Bureau Federation
Oregon Forest Industries Council
Oregon Outdoor Council
Oregon Seed Council
Oregon Sheep Growers Association
Oregon Small Woodlands Association
Oregon Trappers Association
Oregon United Sporting Dogs Association
Oregonians for Food & Shelter
North Central Oregon Livestock Association
Pennsylvania Cattlemen's Association
Pennsylvania Farm Bureau
Pennsylvania Sheep and Wool Growers
Association

Rhode Island Sheep Cooperative
South Carolina Sheep Industries Association
South Dakota Cattlemen's Association
South Dakota Sheep Growers Association
South East Dairy Farmers Association
Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife Idaho
Tennessee Cattlemen's Association
Tennessee Farm Bureau
Tennessee Sheep Producers Association
Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers
Association
Texas Cattle Feeders Association
Texas Farm Bureau
Texas Pork Producers Association
Texas Sheep and Goat Predator Management
Board
Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers' Association
Texas Wildlife Damage Management
Association
The Port Authority of New York and New
Jersey
United Dairymen of Arizona
Utah Cattlemen's Association
Utah Department of Agriculture and Food
Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
Utah Farm Bureau Federation
Utah Wild Sheep Foundation
Jack H. Berryman Institute, Utah State
University
Vermont Sheep and Goat Association
Virginia Farm Bureau Federation
Virginia Cattlemen's Association
Virginia Sheep Producers Association
Shellfish Growers of Virginia
Washington Cattlemen's Association
Washington Cattle Feeders Association
Washington State Animal Damage Control
Program
Washington State Sheep Producers
West Virginia Cattlemen's Association
West Virginia Farm Bureau
West Virginia Shepherds Federation
Western Forestry and Conservation Association
Western United Dairymen
Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association
Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association
Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation
Wisconsin Firearms Owners, Ranges, Club and
Educators
Wisconsin Sheep Breeders Cooperative
Wyoming Animal Damage Management Board

Wyoming Association of County Predatory
Animal Boards
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation
Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Wyoming Sportsmen for Fish & Wildlife
Wyoming Stock Growers Association
Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation
Wyoming Wool Growers Association