

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