

March 13th, 2023

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

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair, 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, Vice Chair 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 9.5 million head of cattle, 5.1 million head of sheep, and 55 million head of other livestock in 340,000 direct control actions. In FY22, WS provided more than 20,800 technical assistance activities that enabled 6,180 livestock producers to implement improved husbandry and methods such as use of guard animals, exclusion, fencing, and predator dispersal. These activities included 19 predator management workshops attended by more than 3,000 individuals from 14 states, dispersal of 121,310 double-crested cormorants, removal of 1,195 cormorants at aquaculture facilities in 22 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 FY22, WS deployed 123 personnel on 267 deployments for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) and African Swine Fever (ASF). WS personnel have physically deployed to assist 18 states in response to HPAI. WS responded to the ASF detection on the island of Hispaniola and have removed 3,754 feral swine and have sampled 2,431 for ASF on Puerto Rico and US Virgin Islands. The National Wildlife Disease Program (NWDP) 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 27, capturing-relocating 18, and lethally removing 7 in FY22. Congressional funding of \$2.5 million in FY22 supported protecting livestock from large carnivore predation in 13 states using nonlethal strategies such as range riding, fladry installation, and electric fence construction. WS filled 31 full-time positions and supported 6 part-time positions in 12 states to implement these strategies. WS' National Wildlife Research Center evaluated the effectiveness of activities to reduce depredation.

In FY22 alone, WS conducted more than 70,000 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.

In FY22, WS' National Feral Swine Damage Management Program supported 34 projects in 12 states - in cooperation with the Natural Resources Conservation Service under the latest Farm Bill - focusing on specific problem populations, while continuing work to reduce feral swine damage on approximately 188 million acres in 37 states and 3 territories.

WS had 3,477 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 FY22, WS donated more than 279,000 pounds of meat to food banks and other organizations providing for people in need. WS donated an additional 35,000 pounds of meat for non-human consumption.

WS flew 78 aircraft for 16,291 flight hours over a total of 1.13 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 17,000 strikes with civil aircraft with more than 10,000 strikes with military aircraft also reported. More than 275,000 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 343 staff years of direct support to assist a total of 813 civil, military, and joint-use airports including about 75% of all U.S. commercial passenger airports. WS trained 6,098 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 111 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
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
Arkansas Farm Bureau
Arkansas State Sheep Council
Association of Texas Soil and Water
Conservation Districts
California Agricultural Commissioners and
Sealers 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

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	New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association
Idaho Cattle Association	New Mexico Department of Agriculture
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation	New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau
Idaho Outfitters & Guides Association	New Mexico Federal Lands Council
Idaho Wool Growers Association	New Mexico Trappers Association
Illinois Beef Association	New Mexico Wool Growers, Inc
Illinois Lamb and Wool Producers Inc	North Carolina Cattlemen's Association
Independent Beef Association of North Dakota	North Carolina Sheep Producers Association
Independent Cattlemen's Association of Texas	North Dakota Lamb and Wool Producers Association
Indiana Sheep Association	North Dakota Stockmen's Association
Iowa Cattlemen's Association	North Dakota Department of Agriculture
Iowa Sheep Industry Association	North Dakota Game and Fish Department
Kansas Livestock Association	Ohio Aquaculture Association
Kansas Sheep Association	Ohio Cattlemen's Association
Kentucky Aquaculture Association	Ohio Dairy Producers Association
Kentucky Cattlemen's Association	Ohio Farm Bureau Federation
Kentucky Sheep and Wool Producers Association	Ohio Pork Council
Louisiana Cattlemen's Association	Ohio Poultry Association
Louisiana Farm Bureau	Ohio Sheep Improvement Association
Maine Aquaculture Association	White Tail Deer Farmers of Ohio
Maine Sheep Breeders Association	Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association
Maryland Sheep Breeders Association	Oregon Cattlemen's Association
Massachusetts Federation of Sheep Associations	Oregon Dairy Farmers Association
Meat Sheep Alliance of Florida, Inc	Oregon Farm Bureau Federation
Michigan Aquaculture Association	Oregon Forest Industries Council
Michigan Sheep Producers Association	Oregon Outdoor Council
Minnesota Lamb and Wool Producer Association	Oregon Seed Council
Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association	Oregon Sheep Growers Association
Missouri Cattlemen's Association	Oregon Small Woodlands Association
Missouri Sheep Producers, Inc	Oregonians for Food & Shelter
Montana Association of State Grazing Districts	North Central Oregon Livestock Association
Montana Farm Bureau Federation	Pennsylvania Cattlemen's Association
Montana Public Lands Council	Pennsylvania Farm Bureau
Montana Stockgrowers Association	Pennsylvania Sheep and Wool Growers Association
Montana Wool Growers Association	Rhode Island Sheep Cooperative
Nebraska Cattlemen, Inc.	South Carolina Sheep Industries Association
Nebraska Farmers Union	South Dakota Cattlemen's Association
Nebraska Sheep and Goat Producers	South Dakota Sheep Growers Association
Nebraska State Grange	South East Dairy Farmers Association
Nebraska Women Involved in Farm Economics	Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife Idaho
Nevada Cattlemen's Association	Tennessee Cattlemen's Association
Nevada Department of Agriculture	Tennessee Sheep Producers Association
Nevada Farm Bureau Federation	Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association
Nevada Rangeland Resources Commission	Texas Cattle Feeders Association
Nevada Central Committee for State Grazing Boards	Texas Farm Bureau
Nevada Wool Growers Association	Texas Pork Producers Association
New Hampshire Sheep and Wool Growers 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 Farm Bureau
Federation Utah Wild
Sheep Foundation Utah
Wildlife Board
Utah Wool Growers Association
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