



## THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

5410 Grosvenor Lane • Bethesda, MD 20814-2197

Tel: (301) 897-9770 • Fax: (301) 530-2471

E-mail: [twswildlife.org](mailto:twswildlife.org)

Submitted by:

Bruce Leopold, President

The Wildlife Society

5410 Grosvenor Lane, Bethesda, MD 20814-2144

19 March 2010

Submitted to: House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies

2362-A Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515-6016

**The Wildlife Society appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony concerning the FY 2011 budgets for the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).** The Wildlife Society represents over 9,000 professional wildlife biologists and managers dedicated to sound wildlife stewardship through science and education. The Wildlife Society is committed to strengthening all federal programs that benefit wildlife and their habitats on agricultural and other private land.

This is a difficult financial year, with many programs across the board being asked to take significant cuts in appropriations. While budget cuts may be unavoidable, we urge Congress to remember that many of the programs funded by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) play a key role in protecting our natural resources, safeguarding wildlife and human health, and securing our economy in the face of a changing climate. And, with the President's focus on addressing climate change, as well as the potential for climate change and energy legislation to emerge from Congress, funding for the programs within USDA that support environmental science, develop mitigation strategies, and implement conservation measures are more important now than ever before.

### **Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service**

**Wildlife Services**, a unit of APHIS, is responsible for controlling wildlife damage to agriculture, aquaculture, forest, range, and other natural resources, monitoring wildlife-borne diseases, and protecting wildlife at airports. Its activities are based on the principles of wildlife management and integrated damage management, and are carried out cooperatively with state fish and wildlife agencies. The administration's request this year is a \$7.69 million decrease from FY 2010. Such a significant decrease would substantially reduce funding for state and federal cooperative wildlife damage programs across the country; just a few of the programs affected would be Hawaii Wildlife Operations, Louisiana Rice Damage, and Pennsylvania Cooperative Livestock Protection. Funding cuts for these programs not only result in significant ecological damage, but they threaten local economies as well. **TWS recommends that Congress increase the**

**appropriation for Wildlife Services Operations to \$79.9 million;** this amount would continue to provide support for the ongoing programs funded through the direct appropriations process, and it would as well as fund necessary safety improvements and cover the programmed pay costs for operations.

Another key budget line in Wildlife Services is **Methods Development**, which funds the National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC). Much of the newest and most cross-cutting research that is critical to state wildlife agencies is being performed at the NWRC, and in order for State wildlife management programs to be the most up-to-date, the mission of the NWRC must continue. The President's request is currently a \$2.84 million decrease from FY 2010 enacted levels. The result of this decrease is that programs conducting research into human-wildlife conflict (Jack Berryman Institute), invasive species and seed crops (Hilo Hawaii Field Station), and wildlife disease (Kingsville Texas Field Station) would all be eliminated or severely reduced. Such a loss could be devastating in this era as human and wildlife issues are becoming increasingly intertwined. **TWS requests that Congress restore \$3.7 million to the Methods Development line to ensure adequate funding for the National Wildlife Research Center.**

**Finally, TWS is recommending providing \$20.6 million to Veterinary Services for addressing the import and export of invasive species.** The potential import of exotic diseases, parasites, and vectors into the US is a grave threat to human, wildlife, and habitat health and has the potential to cause incalculable economic damage. To mitigate this, it is important that APHIS -Veterinary Services is able to conduct inspections at all US ports. The historic method of relying on import or user fees is inadequate and varies greatly from year to year. Also, as wildlife disease continues to spread worldwide, more exotic species are continually imported, and the number of ports of entry increase, the resources for inspections are stretched even further. Therefore, TWS recommends funding \$7 million beyond the Administration's request of \$13.6 million, \$3 million to support inspections, and an additional \$4 million for surveillance of exotic parasites, and staffing and operations of offshore disease monitoring and evaluation.

### **National Institute of Food and Agriculture**

**The Renewable Resources Extension Act (RREA)** provides an expanded, comprehensive extension program for forest and rangeland renewable resources. The RREA funds, which are apportioned to State Extension Services, effectively leverage cooperative partnerships at an average of four to one, with a focus on private landowners. The need for RREA educational programs is greater than ever today because of continuing fragmentation of ownership, urbanization, the diversity of landowners needing assistance, and increasing societal concerns about land use and the impact on natural resources including soil, water, air, wildlife and other environmental factors. **The Wildlife Society recommends that the Renewable Resources Extension Act be funded at \$30 million,** as authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill.

The **McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry Program** is essential to the future of resource management on non-industrial private forestlands, as forest products are produced while conserving natural resources, including fish and wildlife. As demand for forest products grow, privately held forests will increasingly be needed to supplement supplies, but trees suitable for

harvest take decades to produce. In the absence of long-term and on-going research, such as provided through McIntire-Stennis, the nation could be unable to meet future forest-product needs. **We appreciate the over \$29 million in funding allocated in the FY10 appropriations and urge that amount to be increased to \$31 million in FY2011.**

### **Natural Resources Conservation Service**

The Farm Bill conservation programs are more important than ever, given huge backlogs of qualified applicants for these programs, increased pressure on farmland from the biofuels boom, sprawling development, and the ongoing declines in wildlife habitat and water quality. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), which administers many of the Farm Bill conservation programs, is one of the primary contributors to ensuring that our public and private lands are made resilient to climate change. NRCS does this through a variety of programs that are aimed to preserve land, protect water resources, and mitigate effects of climate change.

**The Wildlife Society recommends that the Farm Bill conservation programs be funded at the levels mandated in the 2008 Farm Bill.** Currently, the Administration's request results in collective program reductions of about \$705 million less than authorized levels. TWS encourages Congress to restore funding for all conservation programs at authorized levels. Demand for these programs continues to grow during this difficult economic climate when more assistance than ever is needed to address natural resource challenges and conservation goals, such as climate change, soil quality deficiencies, declining pollinator health, disease and invasive species, water quality and quantity issues, as well as degraded, fragmented and lost habitat for fish and wildlife. We would also like to particularly highlight the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP), a voluntary program for landowners who want to improve wildlife habitat on agricultural, nonindustrial, and Indian land. WHIP plays an important role in protecting and restoring America's environment, and is doubly important because it actively engages public participation in conservation. **We urge Congress to fully fund WHIP at \$85 million.**

### **Farm Services Administration**

We also note that 4 million acres of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts have expired, and **we recommend that a general sign up of these 4 million + acres be added in order to more fully realize the conservation needs of the nation.** Additionally, the Administration's budget request, \$15 million less than FY2010, in part reflects a CRP enrollment projection of 30.2 million acres by the end of FY2011, which is 1.8 million acres below the enrollment authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill. Farmers need CRP to provide supplemental income, and enrolled lands provide an important source of fish and wildlife habitat as well as help achieve soil and water conservation needs. **We also recommend that CRP should be funded at a level that allows for full enrollment of authorized CRP acres.**

Thank you for considering the views of wildlife professionals. We look forward to working with you and your staff to ensure adequate funding for wildlife conservation. Please feel free to contact Laura Bies, Director of Government Affairs, at (301) 897-9770 x308 if you need further information or have any questions.