



# THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

Leaders in Wildlife Science, Management and Conservation

5 April 2017

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

Submitted by: Ken Williams, Executive Director  
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**Re: FY 2018 Appropriations for APHIS, NIFA, NRCS, and FSA**

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The Wildlife Society appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony concerning the FY 2018 budgets for the **Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Farm Service Agency (FSA)**. We would like to respectfully request the following programmatic funding in FY 2018. Thank you in advance for considering the views of wildlife professionals.

<b>FY 2018 Appropriations Recommendations - The Wildlife Society</b>					
<b>USDA Agency/Unit</b>	<b>Program</b>	<b>FY 2015 Actual</b>	<b>FY 2016 Enacted</b>	<b>FY 2017 CR</b>	<b>FY 2018 The Wildlife Society</b>
<b>APHIS/Wildlife Services</b>	Wildlife Damage Management	90M	101M	...	<b>90M</b>
	Methods Development	19M	19M	...	<b>19M</b>
<b>NIFA/Formula Grants</b>	RREA	4M	4M	...	<b>10M</b>
	McIntire-Stennis Coop. Forestry	34M	34M	...	<b>34M</b>
<b>NRCS/PLCO</b>	PLCO-Discretionary	846M	851M	...	<b>865M</b>

<b>NRCS/FSA Farm Bill Programs</b>	<b>The Wildlife Society strongly encourages full funding for Farm Bill Conservation (Title II) Programs, including CSP, EQIP, ACEP, CRP, and RCPP, as authorized in the Agricultural Act of 2014.</b>
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The Wildlife Society (TWS; wildlife.org) inspires, empowers, and enables wildlife professionals to sustain wildlife populations and habitats through science-based management and conservation. Founded in 1937, TWS represents nearly 10,000 professional wildlife biologists, managers, and educators dedicated to excellence in wildlife stewardship. As leaders in wildlife science, management, and conservation, TWS actively promotes the use of science in all aspects of policy and decision making. Appropriations for the following programs within the jurisdiction of the Subcommittee on Agriculture could potentially have a significant effect on the current and future status of wildlife in North America. To empower and enable the appropriate use of science within these programs and beyond, TWS respectfully offers our funding recommendations.

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

**Wildlife Services**, a unit of APHIS, resolves human/wildlife conflicts and protects agriculture, human health and safety, personal property, and natural resources from wildlife damage and wildlife-borne diseases in the United States. TWS recognizes wildlife damage management as an important part of modern wildlife management.

**We encourage Congress to fund Wildlife Damage Management at or beyond the FY 2015 funding levels of \$90 million for FY 2018.** In FY 2016, the Wildlife Damage Management program received \$101 million. This increase in FY 2016 partially reflects a one-time capital investment of \$5.8 million in aircraft equipment. As a result, we expect to see a slight decrease in FY 2018 funding levels. However, TWS encourages Congress to keep FY 2018 appropriations for Wildlife Damage Management at or above \$90 million to ensure the continued success of this important Wildlife Services program.

Before Wildlife Damage Management projects are undertaken, Wildlife Services must make a careful assessment of the problem, including its effects on individuals, the community, and other wildlife species. A key budget line in Wildlife Service’s operations is **Methods Development**, which funds the National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC). Much of the newest research critical to state wildlife agencies is being performed at NWRC. In order for state wildlife management programs to be the most up-to-date, the work of the NWRC must continue. **TWS recommends funding of Methods Development at a minimum of \$19 million in FY 2018.**

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**National Institute of Food and Agriculture**

**The Renewable Resources Extension Act (RREA)** provides an expanded, comprehensive extension program for forest and rangeland renewable resources. 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 because of the increasing impacts of humans on natural resources and the growing number of landowners in need of assistance. Authorized at \$30 million, RREA has been appropriated at roughly \$4 million per year since FY 2008. **To meet the growing need for sustainable outreach initiatives, TWS recommends that Congress increase the funding for RREA to at least \$10 million for FY 2018.**

**The McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry Program** is essential to the production, utilization, and protection of forestry resources—including fish and wildlife—on non-industrial,

private forestlands. As the demand for forest products grows, the nation will increasingly rely on privately held forests to supplement resources obtained from national forest lands. However, commercial trees take many decades to produce. In the absence of long-term research, such as that provided through McIntire-Stennis, the nation may have difficulty meeting future forest-product needs in a sustainable manner. **We appreciate the \$34 million provided for McIntire-Stennis in FY 2016 and urge Congress to continue—and consider expanding—this funding in FY 2018.**

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**Natural Resources Conservation Service**

TWS regularly expresses the importance of wildlife habitat on a mosaic of public and private lands. The **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** is the primary federal agency that works with private landowners to help them conserve, maintain, and improve their natural resources, including soil, water, air, plants, fish, wildlife, and ecosystems. NRCS, like TWS, emphasizes science-based conservation, and through a variety of voluntary, incentive-based programs, offers technical assistance and cooperative problem solving at the community level. Demand for NRCS programs has far outnumbered the agency’s present capacity under current funding, leading to a backlog of qualified applicants. With increased pressure on farmlands from biofuels development and urban sprawl—along with the concurrent declines in wildlife habitat and water quality—the need for NRCS conservation programs continues to grow.

**For FY 2018, TWS requests that Congress reject any cuts to conservation programs and supply full funding to all mandatory Farm Bill Conservation (Title II) Programs as authorized in the Agricultural Act of 2014, including CSP, EQIP, ACEP, and RCPP. Furthermore, TWS urges Congress to provide at least \$865 million in critical discretionary funding for Private Lands Conservation Operations as administered by NRCS, including Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA).** Demand for these programs continues to grow, yet during a time when greater assistance is needed to address emerging natural resource challenges, NRCS can only fund a small portion of the overall demand for these popular programs.

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**Farm Service Agency**

Like NRCS, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) oversees, a number of voluntary conservation related programs, including the **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)**. Private land owners enrolled in CRP are provided with a yearly rental payment in exchange for removing environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and planting species that will improve environmental quality. Lands enrolled in CRP are important for the conservation of soil on some of the nation’s most erodible cropland. These lands also contribute to water quantity and quality; provide habitats for wildlife that reside on agricultural landscapes; sequester carbon; and provide a strategic forage reserve for periodic compatible use in times when other livestock forage is limited due to drought or other natural disasters. **We strongly encourage Congress to fund CRP at a level that fully utilizes program enrollment authority through CRP general sign-up, as authorized in the Agricultural Act of 2014.**