



THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

Leaders in Wildlife Science, Management and Conservation

4 April 2019

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

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Re: FY 2020 Appropriations for APHIS, NIFA, and NRCS

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The Wildlife Society appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony concerning the FY 2020 budgets for the **Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)**, **National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)**, and the **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)**. We respectfully request the following programmatic funding in FY 2020. Thank you in advance for considering the views of The Wildlife Society.

FY 2020 Appropriations Recommendations - The Wildlife Society			
USDA Agency/Unit	Program	FY 2019 Enacted	FY 2020 The Wildlife Society
APHIS/Wildlife Services	Wildlife Damage Management	108M	110M
	Methods Development	19M	20M
NIFA/Formula Grants	RREA	4M	10M
	McIntire-Stennis Coop. Forestry	36M	41M
NRCS/PLCO	PLCO-Discretionary	819M	890M

NRCS Farm Bill Programs	The Wildlife Society encourages full mandatory funding to Farm Bill Conservation (Title II) Programs, including the Environmental Quality Incentive Program, the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, and the Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot Project.
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The Wildlife Society (TWS; wildlife.org) inspires, empowers, and enables wildlife professionals to sustain wildlife populations and their habitat through science-based management and conservation. Founded in 1937, TWS and our network of affiliated chapters and sections represents more than 15,000 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 jurisdiction of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture have significant effects on the incorporation of science into wildlife management and policy. To enhance the 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 and wildlife health and safety, personal property, endangered species, and other natural resources from wildlife damage and wildlife-borne diseases in the United States.

Wildlife Services’ **Wildlife Damage Management** program provides frontline assistance to cooperators to protect these natural and manmade resources. **TWS requests a \$2 million increase in Wildlife Damage Management funding to \$110 million in FY 2020**, commensurate with the rate of inflation. Maintaining inflation-adjusted funding levels will allow Wildlife Services to carry out programs previously identified by Congress as key focus areas, including the National Rabies Management Program, which distributes oral rabies vaccines to wildlife within targeted areas with the goal of disease eradication, and the feral swine management program, which works with cooperators to protect natural and manmade resources against this highly destructive non-native species.

Methods Development, also within Wildlife Services, funds the vitally important National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC), which provides tools that Damage Management and federal, state, and local partners need to deter human-wildlife conflict in the field setting. Methods Development helps deliver successful Damage Management projects by first undertaking a careful assessment of the problem, including effects on people, the community, and other wildlife species. Though this program has had flat funding in the past several fiscal years, much of the new research critical to state wildlife agencies and municipalities continues to be delivered by NWRC. **TWS requests a modest increase in Methods Development program funding to \$20 million in FY 2020.**

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National Institute of Food and Agriculture

The Renewable Resources Extension Act (RREA) provides resources to state extension programs that share with landowners and land managers the latest management tools applicable to forest and rangeland resources, including wildlife, soil, and recreation. The RREA funds, which are apportioned to services focused on private landowner outreach, effectively leverage cooperative partnerships at an average ratio of four to one. These private landowners continually work to improve management practices on over 43 million acres annually with the limited funds provided. 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, The Wildlife Society recommends Congress increase RREA funding to at least \$10 million in FY 2020.**

The McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry Program also has a long history of effectively leveraging outside dollars that benefits private land management practices. This program requires a 1:1 non-federal match for funding projects related to producing, using, and protecting forest resources—including fish and wildlife. These funds are targeted, largely at public and land grant university research, which in turn foster the next generation of natural resources professionals.

A 2003 U.S. Forest Service report estimated that U.S. timber harvest will increase 24% by 2050; most of this increase is expected to come from private timberlands. As the demand for forest products grows, the nation will increasingly rely on private forestlands to provide wood fiber needed by society. Already today, small, private landowners own approximately 300 million acres (over 35%) of the nation’s forests and woodlands. 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. TWS appreciates the \$2 million increase for this program in FY 2019 and urges Congress to continue to increase funding again this year. A funding level of **\$41 million in FY 2020** would allow the agency to address future opportunities and challenges relative to private forest landowners.

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Natural Resources Conservation Service

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, and wildlife. Similar to TWS, NRCS emphasizes science-based conservation, and offers cooperative problem solving at the local level through a variety of voluntary incentive programs. With increased pressure on farmlands from urban sprawl—along with concurrent declines in some wildlife habitat and water quality on agricultural landscapes—the need for NRCS conservation programs continues to grow. The 2018

Farm Bill authorizes several conservation programs, such as the Environmental Quality Incentive Program, the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, which work effectively with landowners to provide measurable benefits for fish and wildlife. **For FY 2020, TWS requests that Congress reject Administration requests to reduce funding and instead supply full funding to all mandatory Farm Bill Conservation (Title II) programs as authorized.**

Furthermore, TWS urges Congress to provide at least \$890 million in critical discretionary funding for Private Lands Conservation Operations as administered by NRCS, including Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA). The CTA program provides landowners with site-specific solutions needed to implement conservation programs, while also providing for public accountability to ensure funds are spent as intended. As new requirements for these programs take shape in regulations resulting from the 2018 Farm Bill, demand for technical assistance will continue to grow. Yet, during a time when greater assistance is needed to address emerging natural resources challenges, NRCS can only fund a small portion of the overall demand. Funding for this important function decreased \$55 million from FY 2018 to FY 2019; we urge Congress to reverse this trend in FY 2020.

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