



THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

Leaders in Wildlife Science, Management and Conservation

13 April 2018

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

Submitted by: Dr. John E. McDonald, Jr, President
The Wildlife Society
425 Barlow Place, Suite 200
Bethesda, MD 20814

Re: FY 2019 Appropriations for APHIS, NIFA, and NRCS

POC: Caroline Murphy, Government Relations Program Coordinator
The Wildlife Society
cmurphy@wildlife.org

The Wildlife Society appreciates the opportunity to submit comment concerning the FY 2019 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 2019. Thank you in advance for considering the views of The Wildlife Society.

FY 2019 Appropriations Recommendations - The Wildlife Society				
USDA Agency/Unit	Program	FY 2017 Enacted	FY 2018 Enacted	FY 2019 The Wildlife Society
APHIS/Wildlife Services	Wildlife Damage Management	103M	108M	110M
	Methods Development	19M	19M	20M
NIFA/Formula Grants	RREA	4M	4M	10M
	McIntire-Stennis Coop. Forestry	34M	34M	40M
NRCS/PLCO	PLCO-Discretionary	846M	874M	891M

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, and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program.
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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 represents more than 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 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. The Wildlife Society is pleased to see Congressional acknowledgement of the importance of this program in the FY 2018 omnibus for the continued maintenance of wildlife, human, and agricultural health. **TWS requests a \$2 million increase in Wildlife Damage Management funding to \$110 million in FY 2019** commensurate with the rate of inflation. Maintaining inflation-adjusted funding levels will allow Wildlife Services to carry out programs identified by Congress as in need of additional targeting within the FY 2018 omnibus spending package. This includes 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 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, many of the newest research critical to state wildlife agencies continues to be delivered by NWRC. **TWS requests a modest increase in Methods Development program funding to \$20 million in FY 2019.**

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The Wildlife Society is also pleased to see increased attention being paid to **cervid health** by Congress in the FY 2018 omnibus bill with \$3,500,000 directed toward APHIS programs to implement cervid health activities. We encourage a continued spotlight on the causes and management strategies available to combat the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease in FY 2019.

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 2019.**

The McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry Program also has a long history of effectively leveraging outside dollars to the benefit of 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. Of particular note is how these funds are targeted, largely at public and land grant university research, which in turn fosters the next generation of natural resources professionals.

A 2003 USFS 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 supplement resources obtained from national forest lands. Already today, small, private landowners own 290 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. Funding has remained flat on this vital program since FY 2014. Therefore, **TWS requests an increase in funding to \$40 million in FY 2019**, 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. NRCS, like The Wildlife Society, 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 biofuels development and urban sprawl—along with concurrent declines in some wildlife habitats and water quality—the need for NRCS conservation programs continues to grow.

For FY 2019, TWS requests that Congress supply full funding to all mandatory Farm Bill Conservation (Title II) programs as authorized, including EQIP, ACEP, and RCPP. The House and Senate Agriculture Committees are working to determine mandatory funding levels for conservation programs in the 2018 Farm Bill, and we urge the Appropriations Committees to defer to their authorities in setting long-term, mandatory spending levels.

Furthermore, TWS urges Congress to provide at least \$891 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. Demand for these programs continues 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.

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