



# THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

Leaders in Wildlife Science, Management and Conservation

6 April 2020

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

Submitted by: Gary White, PhD, CWB®  
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**Re: FY 2021 Appropriations for APHIS, NIFA, and NRCS**

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The Wildlife Society appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony concerning the FY 2021 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 2021. Thank you in advance for considering the views of The Wildlife Society.

<b>FY 2021 Appropriations Recommendations - The Wildlife Society</b>			
<b>USDA Agency/Unit</b>	<b>Program</b>	<b>FY 2020 Enacted</b>	<b>FY 2021 The Wildlife Society</b>
<b>APHIS/Wildlife Services</b>	Wildlife Damage Management	109.8 M	<b>112 M</b>
	Methods Development	18.9 M	<b>20 M</b>
<b>NIFA/Formula Grants</b>	RREA	4.1 M	<b>10M</b>
	McIntire-Stennis Coop. Forestry	36.0 M	<b>41M</b>
<b>NRCS/PLCO</b>	PLCO-Discretionary	829.6 M	<b>890M</b>

<b>Farm Bill Mandatory Funding</b>	<b>The Wildlife Society encourages full mandatory funding to Farm Bill Conservation (Title II) Programs, including the Conservation Reserve Program, the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program, and the Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot Program.</b>
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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 Senate Agriculture Appropriations subcommittee 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 wildlife, agriculture, and human health and safety 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 \$112 million in FY 2021**, commensurate with the rate of inflation. Maintaining inflation-adjusted funding levels will allow Wildlife Services to carry out programs 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. This includes novel deterrents to prevent predator conflict with livestock, as well as the development of new and humane toxicants against pervasive populations of feral swine. **TWS requests a modest increase in Methods Development program funding to \$20 million in FY 2021.**

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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. 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 extension programs continually work to improve management practices on over 43 million acres annually with the limited funds provided. **Authorized at \$30 million, RREA has seen flat funding at only \$4 million annually for over a decade. To meet the growing need for sustainable outreach, The Wildlife Society requests Congress increase RREA funding to at least \$10 million in FY 2021.**

**The McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry Program** also has a long history of effectively leveraging outside dollars that benefit private land management practices. This program requires a 1:1 non-federal match for research projects related to producing, using, and protecting natural resources based on identified private landowner needs. These funds are targeted at public and land grant university research, which in turn fosters the next generation of natural resources professionals. In the US today, private landowners own approximately 300 million acres (over 35%) of the nation's forests and woodlands. In the absence of long-term private lands research such as that provided through McIntire-Stennis, the nation may have difficulty meeting future natural resource challenges. A funding level of **\$41 million in FY 2021** will allow the agency to make continued investments in relevant conservation and management techniques on our nation's private lands.

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## Natural Resources Conservation Service

The **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** is the primary federal agency that works with private land and farm owners 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 authorized funding for several conservation programs, such as the Conservation Reserve Program, the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, and the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program, which work effectively with landowners to provide measurable benefits for fish and wildlife. The legislation also created novel programs to deal with some of our nation's greatest natural resource challenges, including a pilot program to provide grants for feral swine eradication and control projects. **For FY 2021, TWS requests Congress**

**reject Administration requests to reduce mandatory Farm Bill funding and instead supply full funding to all 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 new and reworked 2018 Farm Bill programs continue to be finalized, 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.

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Thank you for considering the views of wildlife professionals. Please reach out to Caroline Murphy, AWB®, government relations manager at The Wildlife Society, if you have any questions regarding these recommendations. We look forward to working with you.