March 21, 2025

The Honorable Susan Collins Chair, Committee on Appropriations United States Senate Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Hoeven Chair, Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food & Drug Administration & Related Agencies Committee on Appropriations United States Senate Washington, D.C. 20510 The Honorable Patty Murray Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations United States Senate Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Agriculture,
Rural Development, Food & Drug Administration,
& Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Cole, Ranking Member DeLauro, Chair Harris, & Ranking Member Bishop:

Wildlife causes more than \$12.8 billion in damage each year to natural resources, public infrastructures, private property, and agriculture. USDA Wildlife Services (WS) works to prevent, minimize, or manage this damage and to protect human health & safety from conflicts with wildlife. Wildlife damage to U.S. livestock, aquaculture, small grains, fruits, vegetables, and other agricultural products has been estimated to reach nearly \$1 billion annually. Wildlife predators cause more than \$232 million in death loss to livestock; field crop losses due to wildlife total \$619 million annually; losses to vegetables, fruits, and nuts total \$146 million annually; and 70% of catfish farmers incur wildlife-related damage. The annual industry-wide value of lost catfish sales revenue to cormorants averages \$47.2 million, ranging from \$25.8 million to \$65.4 million, depending upon predation levels in any given year. As a result, WS is an essential program to U.S. agriculture.

WS assists farmers and ranchers in 50 states and 3 territories to reduce the impact of predators on their animals, protecting 8.9 million head of cattle, 5.1 million head of sheep, and 56 million head of other livestock in 334,000 direct control actions. In FY23, WS provided more than 20,800 technical assistance activities that enabled 6,061 livestock producers to implement improved husbandry and methods such as use of guard animals, exclusion, fencing, and predator dispersal. These activities included 53 predator management workshops attended by more than 2,700 individuals from 14 states, dispersal of 277,335 double-crested cormorants, and removal of 2,521 cormorants at aquaculture facilities in 15 states to protect farmed fish from avian depredation. The industry is worth \$1.5 billion nationally (per National Marine Fisheries Service).

WS supported USDA's Animal Plant Health Inspection Services' emergency response efforts to animal diseases, natural disasters, and hazardous spills. In FY23, WS deployed 102 personnel on 172 deployments for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) and African Swine Fever (ASF). WS personnel have physically deployed to assist 12 states in response to HPAI. WS responded to the ASF detection on the island of Hispaniola and since detection in July 2021, have removed a total of 4,921 feral swine and have sampled 3,042 for ASF on Puerto Rico and US Virgin Islands through FY23. The National Wildlife Disease Program (NWDP) also coordinated sample collection and evaluation or assisted state agencies with many other diseases in wildlife to include SARS-CoV-2, plague, tularemia, leptospirosis, rabies, chronic wasting disease, and rabbit hemorrhagic disease virus.

In collaboration with state wildlife agencies, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and Tribes, WS addresses livestock depredation and protects human health and safety related to wolves and grizzly bears. WS manages conflicts with gray wolves or Mexican gray wolves in 11 states. WS conducted operations with grizzly bears in 3 states, dispersing 22, capturing-relocating 7, and lethally removing 6 in FY23. Congressional funding of \$4.5 million in FY23 supported protecting livestock from large carnivore predation in 12 states using nonlethal strategies such as range riding, fladry installation, and electric fence construction. WS filled 30 full-time positions and 1 part-time position to implement these strategies. WS' National Wildlife Research Center evaluated the effectiveness of activities to reduce depredation.

In FY23 alone, WS conducted more than 72,950 technical assistance projects to reduce wildlife damage to property in urban, suburban, and rural locations across the country which include: homes, schools, industrial facilities, roads, bridges, airports and airport runways, dams, and electrical and water systems. In addition, WS works to protect wetland habitat, riparian habitat, tidal marsh, and timber from a variety of pest species including feral hogs and nutria, as well as the destruction that beaver can cause. Through cooperator-funded beaver damage management on more than 45,000 sites in 49 states, WS worked to protect roads, bridges, timber, agriculture, property, native habitat, and other natural resources from flooding damage.

WS' National Feral Swine Damage Management Program continued to reduce the impacts of invasive feral swine to American agriculture, natural resources, and property, and to reduce threats to human health and safety, declaring a 12th state (Indiana) free of feral swine since the program's inception in 2014. Work to reduce feral swine damage on approximately 187 million acres continued across 34 states and 3 territories. Funding for the Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot Program (FSCP) within the 2018 Farm Bill was set to expire at the end of FY23, however, Continuing Resolution (H.R. 6363) provided extensions, adding an additional \$15 million, split between APHIS and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to continue the FSCP.

WS had 3,809 cooperative service and interagency agreements including agriculture, forestry, private industry, state wildlife agencies, state departments of health, state departments of agriculture, schools, universities, counties, local governments, Tribal governments, homeowner associations, conservation groups and others that together with WS, mitigate the damage and dangers that wildlife can inflict. As a biproduct of operational activities in FY23, WS donated more than 651,500 pounds of meat to food banks and other organizations providing for people in need. WS donated an additional 35,800 pounds of meat for non-human consumption.

WS flew 80 aircraft for 16,400 flight hours over a total of 1.1 million miles of flight operations to conduct livestock protection via predator removal, removal of invasive feral swine and brown tree snakes, aerial delivery of vaccine baits (rabies), emergency response, and other missions.

WS processed more than 18,200 strikes with civil aircraft with more than 11,000 strikes with military aircraft also reported. More than 290,000 wildlife strikes with civil aviation have been reported to the National Wildlife Strike Database for civil aviation since WS began keeping records in 1990. Reported wildlife-aircraft strikes continue to increase as airport managers and biologists prioritize reporting all wildlife strikes to the FAA database. Damaging strikes have decreased because of wildlife mitigation and awareness efforts at airfields. WS provided 333 staff years of direct support to assist a total of 782 civil, military, and joint-use airports including about 76% of all U.S. commercial passenger airports. WS trained 7,871 airport and military personnel to prevent wildlife from colliding with aircraft, improving travel safety. WS also provided direct staff support to reduce aviation hazards at 151 U.S. or coalition military airbases stateside and in southwest Asia, the Pacific Rim, Africa, Europe, and in the British Indian Ocean Territory, and an additional 110 civil-military airports protecting American military aviation assets and personnel.

It has been WS's cooperative nature that has allowed it to accomplish all of the above listed programs and has made it the most cost effective and efficient program in the federal government in the areas of wildlife damage management and public health and safety.

Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l

Airlines for America

American Association of Airport Executives American Association of Veterinary Medical

Colleges

American Beekeeping Federation American Dairy Goat Association American Dairy Sheep Association American Farm Bureau Federation American Feed Industry Association

American Goat Federation American Horse Council

American Sheep Industry Association American Veterinary Medical Association

America's Fur Resource Council

Animal Health Institute

Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies Association of National Grasslands

Big Game Forever

Blackfeet Nation Agriculture Development

Foundation

Blackfeet Nation Stock Growers Association

Boone & Crockett Club Catfish Farmers of America

Catfish Institute

Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation East Coast Shellfish Growers Association

Exotic Wildlife Association Fur Commission USA

Livestock Marketing Association Mohair Council of America Mule Deer Foundation National Aquaculture Association National Association of Counties

National Association of Federal Veterinarians National Association of State Departments of

Agriculture

National Farmers Union

National Grange

National Lamb Feeders Association National Milk Producers Federation National Pork Producers Council National Shooting Sports Foundation

National Sorghum Producers National Sunflower Association

National Women Involved in Farm Economics

Natural Fiber Alliance

North American Meat Institute

North American Renderers Association

Northwest Aquaculture Alliance

Public Lands Council

R-CALF USA

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Rural & Agriculture Council of America

Safari Club International

Society for Range Management Sportsmen for Fish & Wildlife

State Agriculture & Rural Leaders Association United States Animal Health Association United States Trout Farmers Association US Aquaculture Suppliers Association

USA Rice

Wild Sheep Foundation Wildlife Management Institute

Alabama Catfish Producers Alabama Cattlemen's Association Alabama Farmers Federation

Alabama Meat Goat & Sheep Producers

Arizona Cattle Feeders Association Arizona Cattle Growers' Association Arizona Cattlemen's Association Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society

Arizona Wool Producers Association Arkansas Cattlemen's Association

Arkansas Farm Bureau

Arkansas State Sheep Council Association of Oregon Counties Association of Texas Soil & Water

Conservation Districts

California Agricultural Commissioners &

Sealers Association

California Cattlemen's Association

California Farm Bureau

California Pork Producers Association California Wool Growers Association

Catfish Farmers of Arkansas
Colorado Cattlemen's Association
Colorado Wool Growers Association
Connecticut Sheep Breeders Association,
Inc.

Delta Council

Empire Sheep Producers

Florida Aquaculture Association Florida Cattlemen's Association

Florida Tropical Fish Farms Association

Garden State Sheep Breeders, Inc. Georgia Agribusiness Council, Inc. Georgia Cattlemen's Association

Georgia Sheep & Wool Growers Association Hawaii Aquaculture & Aquaponics Association

Hawaii Farm Bureau

Hawaii Sheep & Goat Association

Idaho Cattle Association Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

Idaho Outfitters & Guides Association Idaho Wool Growers Association

Illinois Beef Association

Illinois Lamb & Wool Producers, Inc.

Independent Beef Association of North Dakota Independent Cattlemen's Association of Texas

Indiana Sheep Association Iowa Cattlemen's Association Iowa Sheep Industry Association Jack H. Berryman Institute, Utah State

University

Kansas Livestock Association Kansas Sheep Association

Kentucky Aquaculture Association Kentucky Cattlemen's Association Kentucky Sheep & Wool Producers Louisiana Cattlemen's Association

Louisiana Farm Bureau

Maine Aquaculture Association Maine Sheep Breeders Association Maryland Sheep Breeders Association

Massachusetts Federation of Sheep Associations

Meat Sheep Alliance of Florida, Inc. Michigan Aquaculture Association Michigan Sheep Producers Association Minnesota Lamb & Wool Producers Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association

Missouri Cattlemen's Association Missouri Sheep Producers, Inc.

Montana Association of State Grazing Districts

Montana Farm Bureau Federation Montana Public Lands Council Montana Stockgrowers Association Montana Wool Growers Association

Nebraska Cattlemen, Inc. Nebraska Farmers Union

Nebraska Sheep & Goat Producers

Nebraska State Grange

Nebraska Women Involved in Farm Economics

Nevada Cattlemen's Association Nevada Central Committee for State

Grazing Boards

Nevada Department of Agriculture Nevada Farm Bureau Federation

Nevada Rangeland Resources Commission

Nevada Wool Growers Association New Hampshire Sheep & Wool Growers

Association

New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association New Mexico Department of Agriculture New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau New Mexico Federal Lands Council New Mexico Trappers Association New Mexico Wool Growers, Inc.

North Carolina Cattlemen's Association North Carolina Sheep Producers Association North Central Oregon Livestock Association North Dakota Department of Agriculture North Dakota Game & Fish Department North Dakota Lamb & Wool Producers

Association

North Dakota Stockmen's Association

Ohio Aquaculture Association Ohio Cattlemen's Association Ohio Dairy Producers Association Ohio Farm Bureau Federation

Ohio Pork Council
Ohio Poultry Association

Ohio Sheep Improvement Association Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association

Oklahoma Farm Bureau

Oregon Aquaculture Association
Oregon Cattlemen's Association
Oregon Dairy Farmers Association
Oregon Farm Bureau Federation
Oregon Forest Industries Council

Oregon Outdoor Council Oregon Seed Council

Oregon Sheep Growers Association Oregon Small Woodlands Association

Oregon Trappers Association

Oregon United Sporting Dogs Association

Oregonians for Food & Shelter

Pennsylvania Cattlemen's Association

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau

Pennsylvania Sheep & Wool Growers

Association

Rhode Island Sheep Cooperative Shellfish Growers of Virginia

South Carolina Sheep Industries Association South Dakota Cattlemen's Association South Dakota Sheep Growers Association South East Dairy Farmers Association

Sportsmen for Fish & Wildlife Idaho

Tennessee Cattlemen's Association

Tennessee Farm Bureau

Tennessee Sheep Producers Association

Texas & Southwestern Cattle Raisers

Association

Texas Cattle Feeders Association

Texas Farm Bureau

Texas Pork Producers Association

Texas Sheep & Goat Predator Management

Board

Texas Sheep & Goat Raisers' Association Texas

Wildlife Damage Management Association

The Port Authority of New York & New

Jersey

United Dairymen of Arizona

Utah Cattlemen's Association

Utah Department of Agriculture & Food Utah

Division of Wildlife Resources

Utah Farm Bureau Federation

Utah Wild Sheep Foundation

Vermont Sheep & Goat Association

Virginia Cattlemen's Association

Virginia Farm Bureau Federation

Virginia Sheep Producers Association

Washington Cattlemen's Association

Washington Cattle Feeders Association

Washington State Animal Damage Control

Program

Washington State Sheep Producers

West Virginia Cattlemen's Association

West Virginia Farm Bureau

West Virginia Shepherds Federation

Western Forestry & Conservation Association

Western United Dairymen

White Tail Deer Farmers of Ohio

Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association

Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association

Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation

Wisconsin Firearms Owners, Ranges, Club &

Educators

Wisconsin Sheep Breeders Cooperative

Wyoming Animal Damage Management Board

Wyoming Association of County Predatory Animal Boards Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation Wyoming Game & Fish Department Wyoming Sportsmen for Fish & Wildlife Wyoming Stock Growers Association Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation Wyoming Wool Growers Association