

# National Environmental Coalition on Invasive Species

Center for Invasive Species Prevention ♦ Entomological Society of America  
The Wildlife Society ♦ National Association of Invasive Plant Councils  
National Wildlife Federation ♦ Ecological Society of America

Date: 6 April 2020

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

Submitted by: The National Environmental Coalition on Invasive Species

**Re: FY 2021 Appropriations for APHIS, NIFA, ARS**

POC: Caroline Murphy, AWB®, cmurphy@wildlife.org

The National Environmental Coalition on Invasive Species (NECIS) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony concerning the FY 2021 budgets for the U.S. Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). Our coalition is made up of conservation organizations and professional societies whose mission is to promote sound policies for preventing the introduction and spread of harmful invasive species in the United States. The priority programs outlined below have a direct impact on the nation's ability to combat the introduction and spread of invasive species. To tackle an issue that has an impact on many different facets of American life, we respectfully request the following programmatic funding in FY 2021.

## **USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS)**

### **Tree and Wood Pests**

This program supports eradication and control efforts targeting three insects: Asian longhorned beetle (ALB), emerald ash borer (EAB), and gypsy moth. Each is responsible for billions of dollars in damage each year.

The majority of the program's funding – about \$40 million of the \$60 million – is allocated to efforts to eradicate ALB. This portion of the program has seen encouraging progress: APHIS reports ALB has been eradicated from Illinois, New Jersey, portions of New York, portions of Ohio, and Boston, Massachusetts. **The Coalition supports continuing this program at level funding.**

Efforts to combat EAB have been funded at \$7 million in recent years. Though stakeholders have urged APHIS to continue its engagement on options to curtail movement of firewood and other materials that facilitate EAB's spread, the Administration has proposed to terminate the EAB regulatory program. **The Coalition requests the continuation of \$7 million for EAB programming in FY 2021. The Coalition also requests the entire Tree and Wood Pests program be maintained and funded at robust levels until each of these three pests has been eradicated in every state.**

## **Specialty Crops**

Through the Specialty Crops program, APHIS regulates nursery operations to prevent the spread of the sudden oak death (SOD) pathogen. This pathogen has been devastating to forests in California and Oregon. If it were to spread to the eastern US, it would threaten important eastern forest tree species like northern red oak, chestnut, white, and pin oaks; sugar maple; and black walnut. In 2019, plants infected by the SOD pathogen were found to have been shipped to 18 states. **The Coalition requests robust funding for the Specialty Crops program in FY 2021 so APHIS can prevent establishment of SOD in the eastern US.**

## **Wildlife Services – Methods Development**

Methods Development funds the National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC), which provides tools for federal, state, and local partners to mitigate human-wildlife conflict in the field. Methods Development delivers successful Damage Management projects by undertaking a careful assessment of the problem, including the effects on people, the community, and native wildlife species. While this program has received flat funding in the past several fiscal years, much of the new research that is critical to state wildlife agencies and municipalities continues to be delivered by NWRC. This includes research to improve deployment of the national rabies management program and implement the pilot feral swine management program. **Given the increased demands for Wildlife Services research, the Coalition requests a modest increase in Methods Development program funding to \$20 million in FY 2021.**

## **Pest Detection**

Successful pest eradication and containment programs depend on early detection before the pest has established and begun inflicting damage. The Pest Detection program supports critically important state and federal collaboration on nationwide surveys to detect newly introduced pest species. The data from these surveys are crucial for federal, state, and partner plans that address invasive pest species. Early detection programs deliver wide benefits by preventing more widespread pest damage, loss of forestland, and associated costs and job losses. **The Coalition requests continued funding of the Pest Detection program at \$28 million.**

## **Agriculture Research Service (ARS)**

As USDA's intramural research agency, the Agricultural Research Service funds research projects that have a direct impact on our nation's agricultural enterprises. This includes important research on ways to defend against invasive species. Invasive pests pose a threat to domestic agriculture, horticulture, and forests as well as cities, waterways and lakes, parks, and private residences.

The Agriculture Research Service supports key research on projects related to the detection, identification, collection, and analysis of invasive pests. These pests include terrestrial and aquatic animals, plants, and pathogens. ARS also supports research on biological controls or "biocontrols." In a biocontrol strategy, an invasive pest's natural predators or other threats are identified and deployed against the pest. These agents can

include bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites, as well as predatory organisms like insects. However, substantial research is always needed before releasing an agent to assure that the introduction will not lead to unanticipated consequences. **The Coalition requests at least \$1.789 billion for the Agricultural Research Service in FY 2021.**

### **National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)**

Domestic forests, crops, homes, and livelihood are all threatened by pests that enter our nation on cargo from other nations. The programs funded through NIFA play a critical role in helping respond to the invasive species that constantly threaten to establish to the US.

The response programs within NIFA include the National Invasive Species Management Plan. This Plan and other programs - like the National Animal and Plant Diagnostic Laboratory Networks and the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Pest Information System for Extension and Education - help support early detection and rapid response against invasive species that pose a high agricultural or biosecurity risk. Meanwhile, NIFA's extramural research branch, the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative, awards competitive grants to academic institutions for research that will help support efforts to detect and respond to invasive species threats. NIFA also supports research and extension activities through the Hatch Act and Smith-Lever programs. These programs provide capacity funding to support state agricultural experiment stations' research. This enables states to help their local farmers and ranchers make pest management decisions that are environmentally sound. They also encourage adoption and implementation of IPM techniques to help respond more rapidly to new pest threats. **The Coalition requests no less than the FY 2020 level of \$1.6 billion for NIFA programming in FY 2021.**

Thank you for your consideration of the coalition's priorities and for your action in this Fiscal Year on combating and preventing invasive species. Please reach out to Caroline Murphy, Government Relations Manager at The Wildlife Society (301-897-9770 x 308; cmurphy@wildlife.org) or any of the organizations listed below with questions regarding these funding priorities.

Sincerely,

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