

March 31, 2020

The Honorable Nita Lowey  
Chairman  
House Appropriations Committee  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Committee  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear House and Senate Appropriations Committee leaders:

The undersigned sportsmen's conservation organizations write to you on behalf of millions of American hunters in support of increased funding to state wildlife agencies for the purposes of containing the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in free-ranging deer.

Of course, like the rest of the United States our organizations are concerned by, and continue to take precautions to limit, the spread of the COVID-19 virus. We greatly appreciate the steps Congress has taken thus far to ensure that our nation and economy continue to move forward, and wish you, your families and colleagues good health as communities seek a return to normalcy in coming months. With that in mind, we submit this letter to you in an effort to maintain business schedules and outline a top-level ask of the conservation community in Fiscal Year (FY) 2021.

During consideration of Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 appropriations, the House of Representatives voted in favor of providing \$15 million to the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Equine, Cervid and Small Ruminant Health Program to facilitate cooperative agreements with state wildlife agencies for the monitoring, testing, research and surveillance of CWD in free-ranging deer populations. However, during Senate consideration that figure was reduced to \$5 million, to be split between state wildlife and agriculture agencies. *As your committees considers funding levels for FY21, we encourage you provide \$15 million for cooperative agreements with state wildlife agencies within the Equine Cervid and Small Ruminant Health line-item.*

Our community is increasingly concerned about the effects that the rapid spread of CWD, a contagious, 100% fatal prion disease that causes emaciation, abnormal behavior, and other neurological symptoms in cervids and big game, will have on the future of free-ranging deer populations. According to the Centers for Disease Control, as of January 2020 CWD is detected in 299 counties in 26 states. As the disease spreads, state wildlife agencies are being forced to divert resources from other, ongoing programs in order to identify and contain CWD-infected herds. Pressures on state agency resources are compounded by the fact that deer hunters comprise a significant portion of state wildlife agency funding streams via the Pittman-Robertson Act. A decline in big game hunting threatens the security of these funding streams in the years to come.

Increased investment in state wildlife agency response to CWD is not only vital to ensuring healthy populations of cervids, but also the security of conservation funding streams and the North American model of conservation well into the future.

Sincerely,

Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies

Archery Trade Association

Mule Deer Foundation

National Deer Alliance

National Shooting Sports Foundation

National Wildlife Federation

Quality Deer Management Association

Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Wildlife Management Institute

Wildlife Mississippi