Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

November 4, 2019

Ms. Margaret Everson
Principal Deputy Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Department of the Interior
1849 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Deputy Director Everson:

We are writing to make you aware of the negative effects of avian predators on animal agriculture and aquaculture producers. Specifically, we direct your attention to predators protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). While the specific species of offending birds may vary by region, the primary offenders are black vultures (*Coragyps atratus*), double-crested cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auratus*), and ravens (*Corvus corax*).

We recognize there are federal processes in place for affected producers to manage protected avian predators. However, these processes are often insufficient to adequately address the problem. In order to comply with the MBTA and its implementing regulations, those affected must annually apply for a depredation permit from the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), which producers must pay a fee to receive. These permits cap an applicant's legal take, often at levels inadequate to prevent loss or deter further predation. While federal livestock indemnity programs do exist, it is far more cost-effective to the producer and the taxpayer to allow greater management flexibility to prevent avian depredation.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species, often considered the world's leading authority on the global conservation status of species, all of the aforementioned avian species are considered to be of "Least Concern," the lowest of the IUCN's threat assessments. Additionally, the IUCN lists each of these species as increasing in population. With populations of each species numbering well in the millions, they are thriving and face no immediate or foreseeable threat of extinction. It is incumbent upon the FWS to consider the growing economic losses inflicted upon livestock and aquaculture producers by these birds.

We urge the FWS to promulgate new rules that simplify and streamline the permitting process, as well as allow greater flexibility for livestock and aquaculture producers to protect their livelihoods from these avian predators.

Sincerely,

John Boozman
U.S. Senator

Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress

James E. Risch
U.S. Senator

Trent Kelly
Member of Congress

David Perdue
U.S. Senator

Kevin Hern
Member of Congress

Tim Scott
U.S. Senator

Liz Cheney
Member of Congress

Cindy Hyde-Smith
U.S. Senator

Rick Crawford
Member of Congress

Mike Crapo
U.S. Senator

Tom Cole
Member of Congress

Lamar Alexander
U.S. Senator

Bob Gibbs
Member of Congress

Marsha Blackburn
U.S. Senator

James Comer
Member of Congress

Tom Cotton
U.S. Senator

Michael R. Turner
Member of Congress

Roy Blunt
U.S. Senator

Jason Smith
Member of Congress

Roger F. Wicker
U.S. Senator

Robert Aderholt
Member of Congress

James M. Inhofe
U.S. Senator

Austin Scott
Member of Congress

Johnny Isakson
U.S. Senator

Bruce Westerman
Member of Congress

Josh Hawley
U.S. Senator

Anthony Gonzalez
Member of Congress

Rob Portman
U.S. Senator

Vicky Hartzler
Member of Congress

Frank D. Lucas
Member of Congress

Mike D. Rogers
Member of Congress

Markwayne Mullin
Member of Congress

Brad Wenstrup
Member of Congress

Steve Chabot
Member of Congress

Rick W. Allen
Member of Congress

Michael Guest
Member of Congress

Billy Long
Member of Congress