

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 20, 2013

Ms. Phyllis Fong
Inspector General
Office of the Inspector General
United States Department of Agriculture
Jamie Whitten Building
1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 117-W
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Inspector General Fong,

We are writing to request a thorough audit of Wildlife Services (WS), especially its lethal predator control program, by the USDA Office of Inspector General (OIG). We understand that OIG announced the intention of auditing WS but that, due to budgetary constraints, USDA may be faced with difficult choices regarding planned activities. We ask that the WS program be a top priority for an audit and that the OIG should undertake an audit of WS as soon as practically possible.

Representatives DeFazio and Campbell expressed concern about the WS lethal predator control program in November of last year, when they requested an investigation. That request was triggered by news reports indicating a WS employee may have committed acts of animal cruelty in violation of WS Directives and Wyoming state law. We are still awaiting the outcome of the investigation into that employee's action. Since that time, an employee was arrested on animal cruelty charges in Arizona and another employee shot and killed an endangered Mexican wolf in New Mexico. These incidents raise serious concerns the practices of the WS program.

However, our concerns about this program are broader than the action of one or even a few employees. The WS program is inefficient, inhumane, and in need of review by the IG. These concerns should be addressed by the prompt initiation of an audit by your office.

Wildlife Services' lethal predator control activities, including its use of poisons and aerial gunning, are primary concerns. Wildlife Services' predator control program primarily benefits a small proportion of the nation's private agriculture and big-game management interests while depending on costly and indiscriminate lethal control activities. We question the benefit of these activities to U.S. taxpayers. Our concerns are not limited to predator control issues. Wildlife Services is not adequately accountable and transparent, failing to provide complete information to the public about their activities and use of taxpayer dollars.

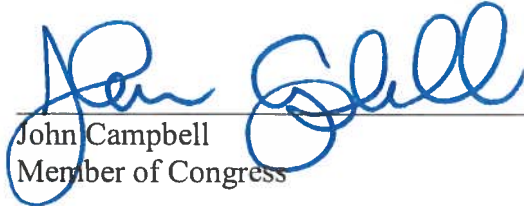
Information recently brought to light in the *Sacramento Bee* by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Tom Knudson's year-long investigation document many serious problems that reinforce our existing concerns about the WS program's operations and especially about its lethal predator

control activities. The problems documented include employees hiding non-target animals killed, unintended negative environmental consequences, and indiscriminant use of lethal control. We look forward to the results of your audit and thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Gary C. Peters
Member of Congress



John Campbell
Member of Congress



Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress

Cc: Mr. Thomas Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture