

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 22, 2011

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

We write to urge you to maintain funding for the Brown Tree Snake control program within the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Wildlife Services. The Brown Tree Snake (BTS) is an invasive species that is a threat to agriculture, endangered species, and the economy. The BTS control program is critical to restoring endangered species habitats and preventing the spread of the BTS to other islands throughout the Pacific region.

As you are aware, the BTS continues to pose a significant threat to the environment, wildlife, and economy of several Pacific Islands including Guam, Hawaii, and the Northern Marianas Islands. In Guam, for example, the BTS is responsible for the extirpation of 10 of 13 native birds, and continues to have an adverse impact on agriculture and tourism. Further, the snakes have caused more than 1600 power outages on Guam, including 200 outages in 2002 alone. Each outage results in lost productivity on island and poses a threat to public safety.

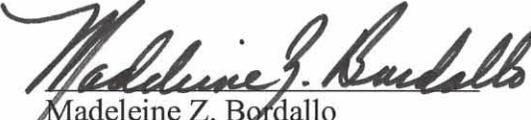
The APHIS BTS control program is the first line of defense in preventing the spread of this invasive species to other areas, specifically, Hawaii and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands. Without adequate funding, the program could no longer control the spread of BTS and the impacts associated with the snakes would increase dramatically. According to APHIS, if the BTS were to establish a "home" on Hawaii, it would cost the state an estimated \$593 million to \$2.14 billion annually in medical incidents, power outages, and lost tourism. The snake would also pose a significant threat to endangered bird species found only in Hawaii.

While the moratorium on earmarks in the 112th Congress has restricted Congress's ability to provide direct funding for the APHIS BTS program, it remains a critical program and we request its continued funding through the APHIS Wildlife Services account. It is important to note that the Brown Tree Snake control program is an authorized program under several federal departments. Case in point, the U.S. Department of Defense, under Sikes Act authorization, has a pilot program for BTS control and eradication at military installations on Guam and Hawaii. This program is a part of each base's Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan (INRMP). APHIS Wildlife Services has led the effort to coordinate these operations between the agencies.

Without supporting personnel from APHIS, the Department of Defense and other federal, state or territorial entities would be unable to prevent and control the spread of the BTS.

In making decisions on the expenditure for the FY 2011 appropriations, we strongly urge you to include adequate funding for the Brown Tree Snake Control Program. The program is critical to the environment and the economies of islands throughout the Pacific region. Accordingly, we also seek your support for the Program with funds ultimately appropriated for FY 2012. Without adequate control measures, the BTS could have permanent repercussions on our island's native wildlife. We appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,


Madeleine Z. Bordallo
Member of Congress


Daniel K. Inouye
U.S. Senator


Daniel K. Akaka
U.S. Senator


Mazie K. Hirono
Member of Congress


Colleen Hanabusa
Member of Congress


Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan
Member of Congress