



State Invasive Species Fund

Issue

In the 2017 legislative session, there was an effort by some legislators to prevent any of Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency's (TWRA) revenue from hunting and fishing licenses to go to the wild hog eradication program the agency performs. Farm Bureau opposed this effort, however the legislation remains and can be brought again next session. The legislative process started a larger discussion about how state government should pay for programs for different types of invasive species such as wild hogs and Asian carpe.

Background

Legislation prohibited TWRA funding generated by license sales from being used for wildlife and species eradication and control, specifically the wild hog program. The bill passed the Senate Energy, Agriculture, and Natural Resources Committee but was pulled off the Senate Calendar by the sponsor after the bill was taken off notice in House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee. The argument of the sponsor was that wild hogs, along with other invasive species, were a problem of all Tennesseans and not just that of hunters and fishermen. Farm Bureau opposed the legislation because the bill gave no funding source to wild hog eradication efforts after the next fiscal year.

Wild hogs can cost thousands of dollars to individual farmers in damage to crops. A 2015 survey showed that landowners in Tennessee incurred \$28.31 million in value of damage and control costs. Wild hogs also cause extensive damage to wildlife habitat, contribute to erosion and water pollution, and carry diseases harmful to livestock and other animals as well as humans. Farm Bureau believes there should be a steady funding source for wild hog eradication efforts in Tennessee.

There are numerous other types of invasive species in Tennessee including Asian carpe, coyotes, insects and plants. Though there are varying levels of dollars available at the state and federal level, the state of Tennessee does not have specific, earmarked dollars to fight invasive species. For example, Michigan has the Invasive Species Grant Program which is a joint effort of the Michigan departments of Natural Resources, Environmental Quality, and Agriculture and Rural Development and is funded at \$3.6 million.

Questions

- 1) Do you believe invasive species populations in Tennessee are currently being managed well?
- 2) Are there enough resources in Tennessee to fight invasive species?
- 3) Should there be legislation to enact a Tennessee Invasive Species Fund?

Farm Bureau Policy

WILDLIFE PESTS AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS (partial)

Wildlife population controls

Farm Bureau supports good wildlife management programs. In some areas of the state, however, managed species have become serious agricultural problems.

Increasing deer, coyote, wild dog, turkey, beaver, geese, raccoons, wild hogs, sandhill cranes, and river otter populations are resulting in damages and are a costly problem for Tennessee farmers and need to be addressed.

Wild hogs are not a native wildlife species to be protected and managed. Wild hogs are a nuisance species rapidly spreading across the state. Property damage, disease, and lost income from wild hogs are an imminent threat to Tennessee's production agriculture. We support TWRA's and the Wild Hog Eradication Team's (WHEAT) efforts toward controlling the spread of wild hogs. We believe this can best be accomplished by:

1. Stopping the spread of wild hogs and establishment of populations,
2. Eradicating small populations, and
3. The contraction and reductions of core populations.

NURSERY CROPS (partial)

Some plant material can be invasive and detrimental to the plant industry. We urge the Tennessee Department of Agriculture to maintain such plants listed on the federal list of invasive species, as pest plants in Tennessee.