

Testimony of
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, I thank you for this opportunity to testify on behalf of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) on the history of the activities that USDA has conducted for Mormon crickets and other grasshoppers in the Great Basin, and our efforts to combat current and future grasshopper and Mormon cricket outbreaks in this area. Accompanying me today is Christopher Pyron, Deputy Regional Forester for the Intermountain Region of the Forest Service.

Grasshoppers and Mormon crickets have caused widespread devastation throughout the Great Basin. In Utah alone, Mormon crickets and grasshoppers have infested more than 1.5 million acres and an estimated \$25 million in crop damage may occur. In fact, Mormon crickets can feed on more than 400 species of plants, and a single Mormon cricket can consume an amount of rangeland forage equal to 38 pounds dry weight per acre.

Throughout the western United States, there is excellent cooperation between USDA, other Federal agencies, State agencies, local governments, and private landowners in combating Mormon cricket and grasshopper outbreaks. This year, stressed financial resources have been used to their fullest extent. The ominous fact is that each female Mormon cricket can lay about 86 eggs in the ground, and, if natural

conditions favor hatching next spring when treatment would be most effective, the Mormon cricket outbreaks in 2002 could be even more widespread, severe, and destructive.

During the mid-1980's, USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) took a lead role in monitoring and suppressing grasshoppers and Mormon crickets. In 1986, Congress, in response to destructive grasshopper outbreaks, appropriated \$18 million to APHIS for a grasshopper suppression program. In addition, Congress created no-year funding for continued grasshopper suppression programs by stipulating that \$16 million remain available until expended. This funding mechanism provided APHIS with immediate access to resources for suppressing economically significant grasshopper populations. From 1987-1992, Congress appropriated \$5 million annually for the no-year grasshopper reserve fund.

As the lead Federal agency, APHIS conducted population surveys, implemented cooperative programs with States and other cooperating organizations, prepared cost-share agreements and escrow accounts, recruited and trained seasonal staff, and obtained sufficient equipment and materials, such as vehicles, pesticides, and pesticide storage facilities. In addition, APHIS provided the essential environmental assessment documentation for the suppression program.

In 1990, APHIS received an emergency supplemental appropriation of \$6.8 million to cooperate with States and individuals to suppress grasshoppers on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and other lands. The grasshopper populations during this time were kept under control, so the no-year grasshopper reserve exceeded \$16.5 million in 1993.

Since 1994, no new appropriations have been provided for the grasshopper and Mormon cricket program. Since then, all grasshopper related activities, including survey and suppression, have been funded from the accumulated no-year reserve, which was exhausted in fiscal year 1999, and additional funds from the appropriated reserve for contingencies.

In an attempt to conserve the use of funds, APHIS has conducted only crop protection activities since 1995. The goal of crop protection programs is to protect high-value crops by treating strips of Federal range lands where these lands border the crop. Such programs provide short-term, immediate suppression of grasshopper populations migrating from Federal lands onto cropland. Crop protection programs do not include any long-term rangeland management. However, since 1999, only the APHIS contingency fund, which must also cover other emergencies in APHIS, has been available to cover grasshopper and Mormon cricket suppression.

For example, in FY 2000, the Agency, using APHIS' contingency funds, prepared to conduct traditional surveys and earmarked funds for grasshopper and Mormon cricket suppression programs. However, the populations were not as high as projected and most of the suppression dollars were returned to APHIS' contingency fund at the end of the fiscal year.

In FY 2001, APHIS has taken \$300,000 from the contingency fund to carry out grasshopper and Mormon cricket surveys and other program planning activities. However, due to other high priority needs, no additional APHIS money will be available for grasshopper and Mormon cricket suppression. Accordingly, funding for suppression on public lands to protect rangeland will require resources from the responsible Federal land management agencies, such as the Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The Plant Protection Act requires the Secretary of Agriculture to pay 100 percent of the cost of grasshopper or Mormon cricket control on Federal lands to protect rangeland out of funds specifically appropriated for grasshopper control or transferred from the Department of the Interior under section 417 of the Act. Current

APHIS policy is that all program costs, including surveys, site specific environmental assessments, and treatments, will be paid by the Federal land management agency. As a result, Federal land management agencies, such as the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management and USDA's Forest Service, would be required to do site specific project level work, including environmental assessments that would tier to the programmatic EIS currently being prepared by APHIS. I should note that current Forest Service policy requires that Forest Service personnel participate in the development of all pesticide-use plans and direct those activities on National Forest System lands.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify. I would be happy to take any questions that you may have.