

Pesticides, biotech crops on wildlife refuges trigger lawsuit

by [Britt E. Erickson](#)

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Credit: Brett Hart/Center for Biological Diversity

Allowing the use of neonicotinoid pesticides on US national wildlife refuges will put many birds, such as the red knot, at risk, environmental groups say.

The Center for Food Safety and Center for Biological Diversity [are suing](#) the Trump administration for reversing a [2014 decision](#) that would have phased out the use of neonicotinoid pesticides and genetically engineered crops on US national wildlife refuges.

The advocacy groups claim that allowing such uses will cause harm to many endangered species, including pollinators and birds. "It's frankly astounding that anyone would promote spraying dangerous pesticides on wildlife refuges," Hannah Connor, senior attorney with the Center for Biological Diversity, says in a statement.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service announced in [August 2018](#) that it would allow neonicotinoid pesticides like thiamethoxam and crops that are genetically modified to tolerate herbicides such as glyphosate and dicamba on national wildlife refuges on a case-by-case basis. The agency claims that such practices are sometimes necessary to grow crops that provide forage for waterfowl and migratory birds. The two advocacy groups point out that the neonicotinoid pesticides imidacloprid and thiamethoxam are toxic to aquatic invertebrates and say that their use could put birds that feed on aquatic invertebrates at risk of indirect effects.