



United States
Department of
Agriculture

February 6th, 2008

(b)(6)

Animal and
Plant Health
Inspection
Service

Mustang Airport
10565 Arno Road
Galt, CA 95632

Wildlife
Services

Dear Mr. (b)(6)

California State
Office

3419A Arden Way
Sacramento, CA
95825
(916) 979-2675

Thank you for providing Wildlife Services (WS) with the opportunity to conduct a site visit of Mustang Airport on November 19th, 2007 regarding identification and management of wildlife hazards. WS is a division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, whose mission is to resolve conflicts between wildlife and people. One of the roles of WS is to assess wildlife conflicts on and around airfields and improve safety by reducing hazards associated with wildlife. To accomplish this goal, WS has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) which recognizes WS as having the expertise to manage wildlife hazards at airports. WS provides a variety of services to airports nationwide, which includes conducting site visits, assisting cooperators in obtaining permits (i.e., Migratory Bird Depredation permits), developing wildlife hazard assessments and wildlife hazard management plans, and conducting wildlife hazard management programs.

The meeting and site visit which occurred on November 19th, 2007, and the recommendations and information contained in this letter, together constitute the Initial Consultation provided to Mustang Airport by WS. Wildlife hazard management recommendations in this letter are based on observations made on a single visit, and are limited in scope.

Mustang Airport is a small, privately owned airport in Sacramento County approximately 6 miles north of Galt California. The Airport is located on 160 acres of private land in the central valley. There is a house, an approximately 1.5 acre lawn and an aircraft hanger at the south west end of the runway. The asphalt runway is 4000 ft by 40 ft. The property is bordered by undeveloped fields to the south and west. The north boundary consists of grass and marsh habitat. Arno Road borders the Airport immediately to the east with a residence and vineyard beyond the road. The majority of land bordering the runway was disced when I visited. There has never been a known wildlife strike at Mustang Airport.

WS conducted wildlife surveys during the morning (7:00-10:30 AM) of November 19th, 2007. Based on information obtained during the November 19th site visit, WS believes moderate wildlife hazards are present at Mustang Airport, with significant wildlife hazards during the early morning hours. WS observed the following wildlife species on November 19th, 2007 (Table 1). No Federal or State threatened or endangered wildlife species were observed.



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Table 1. Species and number of wildlife observed by USDA APHIS Wildlife Services during surveys conducted at Mustang Airport on November 19th, 2007.

Number of individuals	Species
2	Coyote (<i>Canis latrans</i>)
1	Red-tailed Hawk (<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>)
3	Mourning Dove (<i>Zenaida macroura</i>)
300	Sandhill Crane (<i>Grus canadensis</i>)
20	Canada Geese (<i>Branta canadensis</i>)
6	Yellow-billed Magpie (<i>Pica nuttalli</i>)
1	Killdeer (<i>Charadrius vociferous</i>)
50	Red-winged Blackbird (<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>)
3	Black-tailed Jackrabbit (<i>Lepus californicus</i>)
1	Northern Flicker (<i>Colaptes auratus</i>)
1	White-tailed Kite (<i>Elanus leucurus</i>)
30	Western Meadowlark (<i>Sturnella neglecta</i>)
3	American Crow (<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>)
1	Turkey Vulture (<i>Cathartes aura</i>)
1	American Coot (<i>Fulica Americana</i>)

Habitat features that may attract and support wildlife at Mustang Airport were: 1) fresh water in temporary ponds, and ditches, and 2) foraging areas adjacent to the runway. Although there are attractants on the property, the majority of wildlife seen were transient. The Cosumnes River Preserve is adjacent to the airport. This preserve provides habitat for a variety of wildlife, especially birds. In addition to the preserve, neighboring agriculture lands provide significant wildlife habitat. Most wildlife observed were passing through or directly over the airport property. Based on these observations the following general recommendations are provided:

1. Operating Hours.

With transient wildlife crossing an airfield, as is the case at Mustang Airport, it is difficult to deter wildlife by habitat management at the airfield. The wildlife is attracted to surrounding property and their travel takes them over the airport. Limit operating hours in the early mornings and evenings when wildlife are most active to reduce wildlife/aircraft strikes. Wildlife activity decreased significantly one hour past sunrise on the day of the site visit.

2. Review all New Landscaping/Development Plans for Wildlife Hazards.

All landscaping and airport development plans should be reviewed by a wildlife damage biologist to identify potential wildlife attractants and hazard potential. Vegetation that provides fruits, nuts, and nesting/roosting sites should be avoided.

3. Vegetation Management.

The FAA recommends maintaining a thick uniform stand of vegetation at a height of 6 to 12 inches without openings or weedy vegetation. Mowing the vegetation shorter, or allowing it to reach heights where it becomes uneven encourages the growth of broad-leaved weedy vegetation. Such vegetation provides feeding and cover resources that increase bird hazards at the airfield. The ideal grasses will grow in a dense, sod-forming manner that will fill in bare spots and out-compete weeds. It would also have to grow to the recommended height of 6-12 inches before going to seed, which could attract a variety of wildlife. A series of mowing, disking and herbicide application may be necessary to achieve the desired vegetation cover. Tall grass can exclude many birds due to limited visibility for flocking species, difficulty for birds to locate invertebrate food sources, difficulty in predator detection and physical obstruction of movements. Vegetation height is ultimately a control technique that has to be tailored for each individual airport and their problem species.

4. Wildlife Harassment

Implement a wildlife harassment program, incorporating various hazing devices (i.e., propane cannons, pyrotechnics, and bioacoustics), repellents, exclusionary devices, etc.

5. Lethal Control

Combine harassment techniques with a lethal shooting program. The lethal shooting reinforces the negative aspects associated with the harassment devices making them more effective at displacing birds. US Fish and Wildlife Service Migratory Bird Depredation permits and state issued permits must be obtained before any lethal management may take place. Wildlife removal, pursuant to Federal/State permits includes proper species identification, safe and effective shooting of animals, and appropriate reporting of take to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and/or the California Department of Fish and Game.

This letter report concludes the Initial Consultation phase of our involvement. If the occurrence of strikes increases or wildlife becomes a greater threat we recommend contacting WS again to discuss additional options and a Wildlife Hazard Assessment.

Sincerely,

Jeff Amaral, Wildlife Biologist

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