

**DECISION
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

**SUPPLEMENT TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT: STATEWIDE BIRD DAMAGE
MANAGEMENT IN MISSOURI**

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wildlife Services (WS) program completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) on alternatives for the protection of agricultural, natural resources, property, and human health and safety from damage and risks associated with birds in Missouri in 2002 (USDA 2002). The program completed a Supplement and additional FONSI in 2008 (USDA 2008). The management alternative selected was, “*Alternative 1 – Continue the Current Federal BDM (bird damage management) Program/Integrated Wildlife Damage Management (Proposed Action/No Action)*” in which WS uses and recommends practical and effective nonlethal and lethal methods to alleviate bird damage to agricultural and natural resources, property, and human health and safety. The program prepared an additional Supplement in 2013 to analyze additional methods and changing wildlife demographics that may have potential environmental and social impacts to the quality of the human environment from resolving damage, including conflicts and threats, associated with birds. The EA and supplement document the need for bird damage management and assess potential impacts on the human environment of four alternatives to address that need. The proposed action alternative in the EA would continue an integrated damage management program to address the need to manage damage and threats associated with birds (USDA 2013).

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The Supplement was made available for review and comment from June 28 to August 1, 2013. The document was made available through a Notice of Availability (NOA) published in the *The Jefferson City News Tribune* and mailings sent to 25 interested parties. WS also published these documents on the program website. No comments were received. All correspondence on the EA and Supplement is maintained at the WS office, 1714 Commerce Court, Suite C, Columbia, Missouri 65202-1594.

ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH BIRD DAMAGE MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The EA analyzed a range of management alternatives in context of issues relevant to the scope of the analysis including:

- Issue 1 - Effects on target bird populations
- Issue 2 - Effects on non-target wildlife species, including threatened and endangered (T&E) species
- Issue 3 - Economic losses to property as a result of bird damage
- Issue 4 - Effects on human health and safety
- Issue 5 - Effects on the aesthetics
- Issue 6 - Humaneness and animal welfare concerns of methods

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Bird damage or threats of damage can occur statewide in Missouri wherever those bird species occur. However, bird damage management would only be conducted by WS when requested by a landowner or manager and only on properties where a cooperative service agreement or other comparable document

was signed between WS and a cooperating entity. Upon receiving a request for assistance, activities could be conducted on federal, State, tribal, municipal, and private properties. Areas where damage or threats of damage could occur include, but would not be limited to agricultural fields, vineyards, orchards, farms, aquaculture facilities, grain mills, grain handling areas, railroad yards, waste handling facilities, industrial sites, natural resource areas, park lands, and historic sites, state and interstate highways and roads, property in or adjacent to subdivisions, businesses, industrial parks, timberlands, croplands, and pastures, private and public property, and locations where birds are a threat to human safety through the spread of disease. The areas could also include airports and military airbases where birds are a threat to human safety and to property.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ALTERNATIVES

The following four alternatives were developed to respond to the issues identified in Chapter 2 of the EA. A detailed discussion of the effects of the alternatives on the issues is described in the EA under Chapter 4 (USDA 2002); below is a summary of the alternatives.

Alternative 1 - Continuing the Current Integrated Approach to Managing Bird Damage (Proposed Action/No Action)

The proposed action is to continue an integrated bird management program that responds to requests for BDM to protect property, agriculture crops, livestock, turf, livestock feed, livestock health, aquaculture, other natural resources, and human health and safety. An IWDM approach would continue which would allow use of any legal lethal and non-lethal technique or method, used singularly or in combination, to meet requests or needs for resolving conflicts with birds on public and private property. Individuals requesting assistance would be provided with information regarding the use of effective non-lethal and lethal techniques. Lethal methods used and/or recommended by WS may include shooting, trapping, toxicants, DRC-1339, Starlicide, Avitrol, nest and/or egg destruction or euthanasia following live capture and/or use of Alpha-Chloralose (oral hypnotic). Non-lethal methods used and recommended by WS may include habitat alteration, chemical repellents (e.g., methyl anthranilate), wire barriers and deterrents, netting, capture and relocation, harassment and scaring devices. The implementation of non-lethal methods such as habitat alteration and exclusion-type barriers would primarily be the responsibility of the landowner to implement. BDM by WS would be allowed in Missouri, when requested, where a need has been documented and only upon completion of an Agreement for Control with the landowner/manager. All management actions would comply with appropriate federal, state, and local laws.

Alternative 2 - Non-lethal BDM Only By WS

This alternative would require WS to use and recommend non-lethal methods only to resolve wildlife damage problems. Requests for information regarding lethal management approaches would be referred to MDC, FWS, local animal control agencies, or private businesses or organizations. Individuals might choose to implement WS non-lethal recommendations, implement lethal methods or other methods not recommended by WS, contract for WS direct control services, use contractual services of private businesses, or take no action. Persons receiving technical assistance could still resort to lethal methods that were available to them. WS would not make recommendations to the FWS and MDC regarding the issuance of permits to resource owners to allow them to take wildlife by lethal methods. Currently, DRC-1339 and Alpha-Chloralose are only available for use by WS employees. Therefore, use of these chemicals by private individuals would be illegal. Under this alternative, Alpha-Chloralose would be used by WS personnel to capture and relocate wildlife.

Alternative 3 – Lethal BDM Only By WS

Under this alternative, WS would provide only lethal direct control services and technical assistance. Technical assistance would include making recommendations to the FWS and MDC regarding the issuance of permits to resource owners to allow them to take wildlife by lethal methods. Requests for information regarding non-lethal management approaches would be referred to MDC, FWS, local animal control agencies, or private businesses or organizations. Individuals might choose to implement WS lethal recommendations, implement non-lethal methods or other methods not recommended by WS, contract for WS direct control services, use contractual services of private businesses, or take no action. In some cases, control methods employed by others could be contrary to the intended use or in excess of what is necessary.

Alternative 4 - No Federal WS BDM

This alternative would eliminate Federal involvement in BDM within Missouri. WS would not provide direct operational or technical assistance and requesters of WS services would have to conduct their own BDM without WS input. DRC-1339 and Alpha-Chloralose are only available for use by WS employees. Therefore, use of these chemicals by private individuals would be illegal. Avitrol could be used by State certified restricted-use pesticide applicators.

CONSISTENCY

Wildlife damage management activities conducted in Missouri are consistent with work plans, MOU's, and policies of WS, the MDC, and the USFWS. WS reviewed the list of T&E species in Missouri as determined by the USFWS and the National Marine Fisheries Services. Based on that review during the development of the EA and Supplements, WS has determined that activities conducted pursuant to the proposed action would have no effect on federally listed T&E species. In addition, WS has made a no effect determination for all T&E species listed by the MDC.

MONITORING

The Missouri WS program will annually review its effects on target bird species and other species addressed in the EA and Supplement to ensure those activities do not impact the viability of wildlife species. In addition, the Supplement will be reviewed each year to ensure that the analyses are sufficient.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

Since the Supplement was made available for public comment, additional information was obtained on target species population estimates. The Partners in Flight Landbird Population Estimate database was recently updated to reflect current population estimates (PFSC 2013). The previous best available data was obtained from the model established by Rich et al. (2004). WS has reviewed the updated database to ensure the accuracy of the target bird population impact analyses as described under the proposed action. The following summarizes the relevant changes.

Many of the target bird populations in Missouri increased since 2004 which actually decreases the percentage of cumulative take for those species. There were eight species that exhibited lower population estimates than in 2004 (Table 1). The resultant increase in percentages of cumulative take is still considered to be of low magnitude and not expected to result in any cumulative negative impacts to the viability of these species.

Table 1. Comparison of species population estimates and percentage of cumulative take (2004 vs. 2013) in Missouri based on the Partners in Flight Landbird database.

Species	2004 Estimate	2013 Estimate	2004 % Take	2013 % Take
American crow	837,500	740,000	0.02	0.02
Mourning dove	2,745,300	2,200,000	0.04	0.05
Red-tailed hawk	44,300	38,000	0.65	0.76
Barn swallow	1,630,100	1,300,000	0.03	0.04
Bank swallow	99,300	40,000	0.53	1.31
Cliff swallow	3,779,300	200,000	0.01	0.26
Tree swallow	89,500	30,000	0.59	1.75
American kestrel	56,300	30,000	0.32	0.6

No significant cumulative environmental impacts were identified from any of the four alternatives, including the proposed action. Under the proposed action, the lethal removal of birds by WS would not have significant impacts on statewide bird populations when known sources of mortality were considered. No risk to public safety were identified when activities were provided and expected by requesting individuals under Alternative 1 since only trained and experienced personnel would conduct and/or recommend damage management activities. There would be a slight increased risk to public safety when persons who reject assistance and recommendations conduct their own activities when no assistance is provided under Alternative 4. However, under all of the alternatives, those risks would not be to the point that the effects would be significant. The analysis in the EA indicates that an integrated approach to managing damage and threats caused by birds would not result in significant cumulative effects on the quality of the human environment.

DECISION AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

I have carefully reviewed the Supplement prepared for this proposal and the input from the public involvement process. I find the proposed action alternative (Alternative 1) to be environmentally acceptable, addressing the issues and needs while balancing the environmental concerns of management agencies, landowners, advocacy groups, and the public. The analyses in the EA and Supplement adequately address the identified issues, which reasonably confirm that no significant impact, individually or cumulatively, to the quality of the human environment are likely to occur from the proposed action, nor does the proposed action constitute a major federal action. Therefore, the analysis in the EA and Supplement does not warrant the completion of an EIS.

Based on the analyses in the EA, the need for action and the issues identified are best addressed by selecting Alternative 1 and applying the associated standard operating procedures. Alternative 1 successfully addresses (1) bird damage management using a combination of the most effective methods and does not adversely impact the environment, property, human health and safety, target species, and/or non-target species, including T&E species; (2) it offers the greatest chance of maximizing effectiveness and benefits to resource owners and managers; (3) it presents the greatest chance of maximizing net benefits while minimizing adverse effects to public health and safety; and (4) it offers a balanced approach to the issues of humaneness and aesthetics when all facets of those issues are considered. Further analysis would be triggered if changes occur that broaden the scope of damage management activities that affect the natural or human environment or from the issuance of new environmental regulations. Therefore, it is my decision to implement the proposed action/no action alternative (Alternative 1) as described in the EA.

Based on the analyse provided in the EA and Supplement, there are no indications that the proposed action (Alternative 1) would have a significant impact, individually or cumulatively, on the quality of the human environment. I agree with this conclusion and therefore, find that an EIS should not be prepared. This determination is based on the following factors:

1. Bird damage management, as conducted by WS in the State, is not regional or national in scope.
2. The proposed action would pose minimal risk to public health and safety. Based on the analyses in the EA, the methods available would not adversely affect human safety based on their use patterns and standard operating procedures.
3. There are no unique characteristics such as park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wild and scenic areas, or ecologically critical areas that would be significantly affected. WS' standard operating procedures and adherence to applicable laws and regulations would further ensure that WS' activities do not harm the environment.
4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not highly controversial. Although there is some opposition to bird damage management, this action is not highly controversial in terms of size, nature, or effect.
5. Based on the analysis documented in the EA and the accompanying administrative file, the effects of the proposed damage management program on the human environment would not be significant. The effects of the proposed activities are not highly uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks.
6. The proposed action would not establish a precedent for any future action with significant effects.
7. No significant cumulative effects were identified through the assessment. The EA analyzed cumulative effects on target and non-target species populations and concluded that such impacts were not significant for this or other anticipated actions to be implemented or planned within the State of Missouri.
8. The proposed activities would not affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor would they likely cause any loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.
9. WS has determined that the proposed program would not adversely affect any federally listed T&E species currently listed in the State and the USFWS has concurred with WS' determination. In addition, WS has determined that the proposed activities would not adversely affect State-listed species.
10. The proposed action would comply with all applicable federal, State, and local laws.
11. No significant cumulative effects were identified by this assessment or other actions implemented or planned within the area.

The rationale for this decision is based on several considerations. This decision takes into account public comments, social/political and economic concerns, public health and safety, and the best available science. The foremost considerations are that: 1) bird damage management would only be conducted by WS at the request of landowners/managers, 2) management actions would be consistent with applicable laws, regulations, policies and orders, and 3) no significant effects to the environment were identified in

the analysis. As a part of this Decision, the WS program in Missouri would continue to provide effective and practical technical assistance and direct management techniques that reduce damage and threats of damage.



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8/16/13

Date

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