DECISION

SUPPLEMENT TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT: REDUCING AQUATIC RODENT DAMAGE THROUGH AN INTEGRATED WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM IN THE STATE OF LOUISIANA

I. INTRODUCTION

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wildlife Services (WS) program has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to analyze the potential environmental and social impacts to the quality of the human environment from resolving damage and threats associated with beaver (*Castor canadensis*), nutria (*Myocastor coypus*), and muskrats (*Ondatra zibethicus*) to agricultural resources, property, natural resources, and human safety when requested in Louisiana (USDA 2005). The EA documents the need for aquatic rodent damage management in the State and assesses potential impacts on the human environment of five alternatives to address that need. After consideration of the analysis contained in the EA and review of public comments, a Decision and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the EA was issued on May 6, 2005. The Decision and FONSI selected the proposed action alternative, which implemented an integrated damage management program using multiple methods to address the need to manage damage caused by aquatic rodents.

II. HISTORICAL AQUATIC RODENT DAMAGE MANAGEMENT

The EA provides a historical perspective of aquatic rodent damage management in Louisiana and some of the damage management programs that have been attempted in other States to alleviate damage. WS continued to assist those cooperators requesting assistance with damage caused by beaver, nutria, and muskrats in Louisiana from federal fiscal year (FY)[1] 2005 through FY 2010. Those persons requesting assistance reported damages to timber, roads, crops, pasture, and drainage control devices, primarily from beaver burrowing into embankments, beaver gnawing on and felling trees, and from flooding caused by beaver impounding water through dam building.

III. BEAVER, NUTRIA, AND MUSKRAT ACTIVITY IMPACTS TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The information provided in Section 1.2 of the EA describes the many beneficial aspects of aquatic rodents as well as damage associated with aquatic rodents. The information provided in the EA is still appropriate and reflective of the damages caused by aquatic rodents as well as the many beneficial aspects that aquatic rodents provide.

IV. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

The supplement to the EA was prepared to examine potential environmental impacts of the proposed action alternative based on new information that has become available from research findings and data gathering since the issuance of the Decision and FONSI in 2005. In addition, the supplement communicates to the public the analysis of individual and cumulative impacts of the proposed action alternative since 2005. The supplement also documents the analyses of WS' aquatic rodent damage management activities in Louisiana since the Decision/FONSI was issued in 2005 to ensure program activities remain within the impact parameters analyzed in the EA.

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[1]The federal fiscal year begins on October 1 and ends on September 30 the following year.

V. NEED FOR AQUATIC RODENT DAMAGE MANAGEMENT IN LOUISIANA

The need for action is based on a need to manage aquatic rodent damage to agricultural resources, natural resources, and property, including threats to human safety. WS has received reports of or verified nearly $6.9 million in damages associated with aquatic rodents in the State between FY 2005 and FY 2010. In addition, nearly $52.9 million in resources have been protected from further damage by WS' aquatic rodent damage management activities between FY 2005 and FY 2010. WS continues to receive requests for both operational assistance and technical assistance from people experiencing damage or threats of damage caused by aquatic rodents in Louisiana. The need for action to manage aquatic rodent damage remains as addressed in the EA. The need for action addressed in the EA remains applicable to the supplement to the EA.

VI. PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action alternative was briefly described in Section 1.5 of the EA and further described in Chapter 3 of the EA. The Decision and FONSI for the EA issued in 2005 selected the proposed action alternative, which implemented an adaptive integrated approach to managing damage associated with aquatic rodents in the State. The proposed action alternative continued the implementation of an adaptive integrated approach utilizing non-lethal and lethal techniques, as deemed appropriate using the WS Decision Model, to reduce damage and threats caused by aquatic rodents in Louisiana. Under the proposed action alternative, WS could respond to requests for assistance by: 1) taking no action, if warranted, 2) providing only technical assistance to property owners or managers on actions they could take to reduce damages caused by aquatic rodents, or 3) provide technical assistance and direct operational assistance to a property owner or manager experiencing damage.

VII. OBJECTIVES FOR THE LOUISIANA WS BEAVER, NUTRIA, AND MUSKRAT DAMAGE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

In Section 1.6 of the EA, three objectives for aquatic rodent damage management conducted by WS in the State were identified. Those objectives were to (1) resolve as many beaver, nutria, and muskrat damage problems that time, funding, and labor would allow, (2) respond to individual damage complaints within a two week time period, and (3) maintain the take of non-target otters (*Lutra canadensis*) during beaver, nutria, and muskrat damage management operations below 5% of the total otter harvest.

VIII. RELATIONSHIP OF THE DOCUMENTS TO OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS

The relationship of the EA and the supplement to other documents that address aquatic rodent management were also discussed in the EA and the supplement, including WS' programmatic Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS; USDA 1997).

IX. DECISIONS TO BE MADE

Based on the scope of the EA, the decisions to be made would be: 1) should WS continue to implement an integrated wildlife damage management strategy, including non-lethal and lethal damage management methods, to meet the objectives for beaver, nutria, and muskrat damage management in Louisiana, 2) if not, should WS attempt to implement one of the alternatives to an integrated wildlife damage management strategy as described in the EA, and 3) would the proposed action or the other alternatives have significant impacts on the quality of the human environment requiring preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

X. SCOPE OF ANALYSIS

The EA evaluated aquatic rodent damage management under five alternatives to reduce threats to human safety and to resolve damage to property, natural resources, and agricultural resources wherever such management could be requested by a cooperator. The analyses in the EA would be intended to apply to any action taken by WS to alleviate damage or threats of damage associated with aquatic rodents that may occur in any locale and at any time within the State. The EA emphasizes major issues as they relate to specific areas; however, the issues addressed apply wherever aquatic rodent damage and the resulting damage management activities would occur. The standard WS Decision Model (Slate et al. 1992, USDA 1997, USDA 2005) would be the site-specific procedure for individual actions conducted by WS. The supplement adds to the analysis in the EA and the 2005 Decision/FONSI. The information and analyses in the EA remain valid unless otherwise noted.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) has jurisdiction over the management of aquatic rodents and has specialized expertise in identifying and quantifying potential adverse effects to the human environment from aquatic rodent damage management activities. The LDWF is responsible for the establishment and enforcement of regulated hunting and trapping seasons in the State. WS' activities to reduce and/or prevent aquatic rodent damage in the State have been and would continue to be coordinated with the LDWF, which ensures WS' actions would be incorporated into population objectives established for wildlife populations in the State.

The supplement to the EA along with the EA and the 2005 Decision/FONSI were made available for public review and comment through the publication of a legal notice announcing a minimum of a 30-day comment period. The legal notice was published in *The Advocate* and posted on the APHIS website located at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/nepa.shtml according to WS' public notification requirements (72 FR 13237-13238). A letter of availability was directly mailed to agencies, organizations, and individuals with probable interest in aquatic rodent damage management in the State. No comments were received during the public comment period for the supplement to the EA.

XI. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Aquatic rodents can be found throughout the year across the State where suitable habitat exists. Aquatic rodents are capable of utilizing a variety of aquatic habitats. Damage or threats of damage associated with aquatic rodents can occur statewide wherever those species occur. However, damage management activities 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 has been signed between WS and a cooperating entity.

WS has reviewed the affected environment during evaluation of program activities under the proposed action through monitoring reports and the supplement. The affected environment continues to be as addressed in the EA and has not changed since the implementation of the proposed action alternative (USDA 2005).

XII. ISSUES ANALYZED IN DETAIL

Issues related to wildlife damage management were initially identified and defined during the development of WS' programmatic FEIS (USDA 1997). Issues related to aquatic rodent damage management in Louisiana were defined and preliminary alternatives were identified through consultation with the LDWF. The EA was also made available to the public for review and comment through notices published in local media and through direct notification of interested parties.

Chapter 2 of the EA describes in detail the issues considered and evaluated in the EA (USDA 2005). The following issues were identified as important to the scope of the analysis (40 CFR 1508.25) with each alternative evaluated in the EA relative to the impacts on the major issues:

- Issue 1 - Effects on beaver, nutria, and muskrat populations
- Issue 2 - Effects on plants and other wildlife species, including T&E species
- Issue 3 - Effects on public and pet health and safety
- Issue 4 - Humaneness of methods to be used
- Issue 5 - Effects on wetlands
- Issue 6 - Economic losses to property
- Issue 7 - Impacts to stakeholders, including aesthetics

Those issues identified during the development of the EA were evaluated in the supplement by each issue as those issues related to WS' activities conducted since the original Decision was signed in 2005. Each of those issues was also evaluated as those issues relate to conducting the proposed action alternative as described in the supplement to the EA.

XIII. ADDITIONAL ISSUES USED TO DEVELOP MITIGATION

Several additional issues were identified and were discussed in Section 2.3 of the EA (USDA 2005). Those issues were related to compliance with relevant federal, state, and local laws and regulations, including relevant Executive Orders. Those issues were used to develop standard operating procedures, which were identified and addressed in Chapter 3 of the EA (USDA 2005). Those issues and measures are still appropriate to the need for action.

XIV. ISSUES CONSIDERED BUT NOT IN DETAIL WITH RATIONALE

In addition to those issues analyzed in detail, several additional issues were identified during the development of the EA but were not considered in detail. The rationale for the decision not to analyze those issues in detail has been discussed in the EA. WS has reviewed the issues not considered in detail as described in the EA and has determined that the analysis provided in the EA has not changed and is still appropriate.

XV. ALTERNATIVES ANALYZED IN DETAIL

Five alternatives were developed to respond to the issues identified in Chapter 2 of the EA and to address the need for action discussed in Chapter 1 (USDA 2005). Chapter 4 in the EA analyzes the environmental consequences of each alternative in comparison to determine the extent of actual or potential impacts on the issues. The alternatives analyzed in detail were:

- Alternative 1: No WS Beaver, Nutria, or Muskrat Damage Management in Louisiana
- Alternative 2: Only Lethal Beaver, Nutria, and Muskrat Damage Management
- Alternative 3: Fully Integrated Beaver, Nutria, and Muskrat Damage Management for all Public and Private Land (No Action/Proposed Action)
- Alternative 4: Technical Assistance Only
- Alternative 5: Non-lethal Beaver, Nutria, and Muskrat Damage Management

The EA contains a detailed description and discussion of the alternatives and the effects of the alternatives on the issues identified. Appendix D of the EA provides a description of the methods that could be used

or recommended by WS under each of the alternatives. The supplement to the EA provides additional discussion of methods available for use since the completion of the EA.

XVI. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT ANALYZED IN DETAIL

Additional alternatives were also considered to address the issues but were not analyzed in detail with the rationale discussed in the EA (USDA 2005). WS has reviewed the alternatives analyzed but not in detail and determined the analyses in the EA are still appropriate for those alternatives considered.

XVII. STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

The WS program in Louisiana uses many standard operating procedures and conducts work pursuant to WS' Directives. Standard operating procedures are discussed in detail in Chapter 5 of WS' programmatic FEIS (USDA 1997) and in Chapter 3 of the EA (USDA 2005). Those standard operating procedures would continue to be incorporated into activities conducted by WS when addressing aquatic rodent damage and threats.

XVIII. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES FOR ISSUES ANALYZED IN DETAIL

Chapter 4 of the EA analyzes the environmental consequences of each alternative in comparison to determine the extent of actual or potential impacts on those major issues identified in the EA. The proposed action/no action alternative serves as the baseline for the analysis and the comparison of expected impacts among the alternatives. The analysis also takes into consideration mandates, directives, and the procedures of WS and the LDWF. The analyses in Chapter 4 of the EA indicate the potential impacts to the quality of the human environment would be similar across the alternatives.

Based on the analyses in the EA, the 2005 Decision determined the need for action along with the issues identified in the EA were best addressed by selecting Alternative 3. Based on the analyses, the Decision determined the implementation of the selected alternative would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment (USDA 2005). Between FY 2005 and FY 2010, WS has implemented an aquatic rodent damage management program, which responds to requests for assistance using an adaptive integrated methods approach as described under Alternative 3 in the EA. The supplement to the EA evaluates the implementation of Alternative 3 from FY 2005 through FY 2010 to ensure individual and cumulative activities conducted pursuant to the alternative continue to be within the impact parameters evaluated in the EA based on current information and methods. Potential impacts of Alternatives 1, 2, 4, and 5 on the human environment related to the major issues have not changed from those described in the EA.

The following resource values in Louisiana would be not expected to be significantly impacted by any of the alternatives based on the analyses in the EA and in the supplement to the EA: soils, geology, minerals, water quality/quantity, flood plains, wetlands, critical habitats (areas listed in threatened and endangered (T&E) species recovery plans), visual resources, air quality, prime and unique farmlands, aquatic resources, timber, and range. The activities proposed in the alternatives would have a negligible effect on atmospheric conditions including the global climate. Meaningful direct or indirect emissions of greenhouse gases would not occur because of any of the alternatives. Those alternatives would meet the requirements of applicable laws, regulations, and Executive Orders, including the Clean Air Act and Executive Order 13514.

The following issues were analyzed in detail in the supplement as they relate to those activities conducted by WS under the selected alternative from FY 2005 through FY 2010:

Issue 1 - Effects on beaver, nutria, and muskrat populations

A common issue when addressing damage caused by wildlife are the potential impacts of management actions on the population of target species. Under the proposed action, WS provides technical and direct damage assistance using methods described in Appendix D of the EA in an integrated approach in which all or a combination of methods may be employed to resolve a request for assistance. Methods available for use under the proposed action alternative are categorized into lethal and non-lethal methods. Non-lethal methods would generally be regarded as having minimal impacts on overall populations of wildlife since those species would be unharmed.

Of primary concern would be the magnitude of take on a species' population from the use of lethal methods. Lethal methods would be employed to remove an individual or those individuals responsible for causing damage or the threat of damage but only after requests for such assistance have been received by WS. The use of lethal methods would therefore result in local population reductions in the area where damage or threats were occurring. The EA evaluated a lethal take of up to 5,000 beaver, up to 1,500 muskrats, and up to 1,500 nutria annually by WS to alleviate damage. The take of aquatic rodents by WS from FY 2005 through FY 2010 occurred within the impact parameters analyzed in the EA (USDA 2005).

WS' annual take of aquatic rodents in Louisiana has been within annual take levels analyzed in the EA. When compared to the estimated populations of beaver, muskrat, and nutria in the State based on a stable population and when compared to the overall harvest of beaver taken in the State, the magnitude of WS' annual take has been low. WS' activities did not adversely affect aquatic rodent populations in Louisiana based on the limited number of those species taken by WS, the unlimited take allowed by the LDWF, and the concurrence of the LDWF that WS' activities would not adversely affect aquatic rodent populations in the State.

Issue 2 - Effects on plants and other wildlife species, including T&E species

While every precaution would be taken to safeguard against taking non-targets during operational use of methods and techniques for resolving damage and reducing threats caused by aquatic rodents, the use of such methods can result in the incidental take of unintended species. Those occurrences would be minimal and should not affect the overall populations of any species. No T&E species were taken or adversely affected by WS' actions. No adverse effects to non-targets were observed or reported to WS during aquatic rodent damage management activities conducted from FY 2005 through FY 2010. WS would continue to monitor the take of non-target species to ensure program activities or methodologies used in aquatic rodent damage management do not adversely affect non-targets.

A review of T&E species listed by the LDWF, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Marine Fisheries Service showed that additional listings have occurred since the completion of the EA. Those species include the gray wolf (*Canis lupis*), jaguar (*Panthera onca*), Mississippi gopher frog (*Rana capito sevosa*), smalltooth sawfish (*Pristis pectinata*), and pondberry (*Lindera melissifolia*). None of the species added to the list are found in the State of Louisiana, except for the smalltooth sawfish. WS determined that program activities, based on those methods described in the EA and the supplement, would have no effect on those species listed as threatened and endangered in Louisiana that do not occur in the State, including any designated critical habitat. The no effect determination is based on those species being absence from the State based on the current known distributions of those species. Based on the current known range of the smalltooth sawfish being restricted to peninsular Florida, WS' aquatic rodent damage management activities conducted pursuant to the EA would have no effect on the smalltooth sawfish.

Issue 3 - Effects on public and pet health and safety

WS' implementation of the proposed action from FY 2005 through FY 2010 did not result in any adverse effects to human or pet safety. The potential impacts of program activities on human health and safety have not changed from those analyzed in the EA.

Issue 4 - Humaneness of methods to be used

The issue of humaneness was also analyzed in the EA. Since many methods addressed in Appendix D of the EA would be available under all the alternatives, the issue of method humaneness would be similar for those methods across all the alternatives. WS' personnel would be experienced and professional in their use of management methods. When employing methods to resolve damage to resources or threats to human safety, methods would be applied as humanely as possible. Methods used in aquatic rodent damage management activities since the completion of the EA and their potential impacts on humaneness and animal welfare have not changed from those analyzed in the EA.

Issue 5 - Effects on wetlands

Beaver dams that are breeched by WS' are created because of recent beaver activity; therefore, those areas have not developed into wetlands subject to regulations under the Clean Water Act. No new methods, circumstances, or regulations have been implemented since the implementation of the proposed action addressed in the EA and the Decision. The EA concluded that WS' beaver dam removal/breaching activities should have minimal impact on wetlands. The impacts of WS' aquatic rodent damage management activities on wetlands are expected to remain insignificant.

Issue 6 - Economic losses to property

During the reporting period, WS reduced or alleviated aquatic rodent damage to property including timber, crops, landscaping, levee damage to private and public ponds and lakes, roads, bridges, culverts, and ditches. From FY 2005 to FY 2010, cooperators reported and WS verified resource losses totaling $6,680,589. During the same period, direct control activities provided by WS resulted in a documented savings (losses prevented) to the same resources of $52,846,488. The effects of WS' activities on this issue are expected to remain insignificant.

Issue 7 - Impacts to stakeholders, including aesthetics

The EA concluded the effects on aesthetics would be variable depending on the damage situation, stakeholders' values towards aquatic rodents, and their compassion for those persons who are experiencing damage. Program activities and their potential impacts on aesthetics have not changed from those analyzed in the EA. When compared to the estimated populations of those species in Louisiana and when compared to the total known harvest levels, WS' take of aquatic rodents has been minimal with the magnitude of take being low. Aquatic rodent populations remain high and those species would be readily available for viewing if a reasonable effort has been made to locate those species. WS' take of aquatic rodent has not adversely affected the aesthetic value of aquatic rodents.

XIX. CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

No cumulative adverse effects have been identified because of program activities implemented over time based on analyses contained in the EA, from monitoring reports, or from analyses contained in the supplement. WS continues to implement an integrated damage management program that adapts to the

damage situation and the species involved with causing the damage. WS only targets aquatic rodents causing damage when a request for assistance has been received.

WS' take has been and would continue to be a small component of the overall harvest of those target aquatic rodent species, which is monitored and adjusted by the LDWF to meet management objectives for those populations in the State. Target species' populations in the State continue to remain relatively stable, which provides an indication that the cumulative take of those species has not reached a level where an undesirable decline in those species' populations has occurred.

The methods described in Appendix D of the EA all have a high level of selectivity and can be employed using standard operating procedures to ensure minimal impacts to non-targets species. Based on the methods available to resolve aquatic rodent damage and/or threats, WS does not anticipate the number of non-targets taken to reach a magnitude where declines in those species' populations would occur. Therefore, take of non-targets would not cumulatively affect the populations of non-target species.

WS has received no reports or documented any adverse effects to human safety from WS' aquatic rodent damage management activities conducted from FY 2005 through FY 2010. Personnel employing methods would continue to be trained to be proficient in the use of those methods to ensure the safety of the applicator and to the public. Based on the use patterns of methods, those methods would not cumulatively affect human safety. WS employs methods as humanely as possible by applying measures to minimize pain and that allow wildlife captured to be addressed in a timely manner to minimize distress. Through the establishment of WS' Directives and standard operating procedures that guide WS in the use of methods to address damage and threats associated with aquatic rodents in the State, the cumulative impacts on the issue of method humaneness would be minimal.

Population objectives would be established and enforced by the LDWF through the regulating of harvest during the statewide trapping season after consideration of other known mortality factors. Therefore, WS has no direct impact on the status of aquatic rodent populations. Since those persons seeking assistance could remove aquatic rodents from areas where damage has been occurring, WS' involvement would have no effect on the aesthetic value of those species in the area where damage was occurring. Since a property owner and/or manager experiencing damage caused by aquatic rodents could conduct damage management activities at any time, the removal of those individuals would likely occur whether WS was involved with taking those species or not.

XX. DECISION AND RATIONALE

Based on the analyses of the alternatives developed to address those issues in the EA, including individual and cumulative impacts of those alternatives, the following decision has been reached:

Decision

The information and analyses in the supplement to the EA have been carefully reviewed, including the analyses in the EA, the comments received during the public involvement processes, and the 2005 Decision/FONSI. After review and consideration, the proposed action, based on the analyses in the supplement to the EA, has been determined to be environmentally acceptable by 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 the supplement to the EA adequately address the identified issues, which reasonably confirm that no significant impact, individually or cumulatively, to wildlife populations or to the quality of the human environment would likely occur from the proposed activities addressed in the EA or the supplement to the EA. Therefore, the analysis in the EA, as supplemented, remains valid and does not warrant the completion of an EIS.

Based on analyses in the EA and the supplement to the EA, the issues identified would be best addressed by continuing the proposed action, as supplemented, and applying the associated standard operating procedures discussed in Chapter 3 of the EA. The proposed action, as addressed in the supplement, successfully addresses (1) aquatic rodent damage management using a combination of the most effective methods and does not adversely impact the environment, property, human safety, 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 while minimizing cumulative impacts on the quality of the human environment that might result from the program's effect on target and non-target species populations; (3) it presents the greatest chance of maximizing net benefits while minimizing adverse impacts 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 have been considered. Further analysis would be triggered if changes occur that broaden the scope of aquatic rodent damage management activities, that affect the natural or human environment, or from the issuance of new environmental regulations.

Finding Of No Significant Impact

Based on the analyses provided in the EA, the 2005 Decision/FONSI, the monitoring reports, and the supplement, there continues to be no indications that WS' activities have had or 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 has been based on the following factors:

1. Aquatic rodent damage management as conducted by WS in the State would not be regional or national in scope.

2. Based on the analyses in the EA and in the supplement, the proposed action would pose minimal risk to public health and safety. Risks to the public were determined to be low in a formal risk assessment that evaluated many of the methods available to manage aquatic rodent damage (USDA 1997).

3. The proposed action, as supplemented, would continue to have no significant impact on unique characteristics such as park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wild and scenic areas, or ecologically critical areas. WS' standard operating procedures and adherence to laws and regulations that govern impacts on elements of the human environment would assure that significant adverse impacts would be avoided.

4. The effects on the quality of the human environment would not be highly controversial. Although there may be opposition to killing wildlife, this action would not be controversial in relation to size, nature, or effects. Based on consultations with the LDWF, the proposed action would not cause a controversial disagreement among the appropriate resource professionals.

5. Based on the analysis documented in the EA, the supplement to 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 would not be highly uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks.

6. The proposed action would not establish a precedent for future actions. This action would not set a precedent for future actions that may be implemented or planned within the State.

7. No significant cumulative effects were identified through the EA and the supplement.

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 determined that the proposed action would not result in any adverse effects on state- or federally-listed T&E species for those species addressed in the EA. The supplement to the EA determined that activities conducted pursuant to the EA would have no effect on those species listed in the State since the completion of the EA.

10. WS would continue to comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws.

Rationale

The rationale for this decision was 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 would be that: 1) aquatic rodent 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 adverse impacts to the environment were identified in the analysis. As a part of this Decision, the WS program in Louisiana would continue to provide effective and practical technical assistance and direct management techniques that reduce damage.

6/1/12

Charles S. Brown, Director-Eastern Region
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Date

XXI. LITERATURE CITED

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