ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

REDUCING CANADA GOOSE DAMAGE THROUGHOUT THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

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In cooperation with:

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR
UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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ACRONYMS

AP	Atlantic Population
APHIS	Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
AVMA	American Veterinary Medical Association
BO	Biological Opinion
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CDFG	California Department of Fish and Game
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DNC	4,4'-dinitrocarbanilide
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EPP	Eastern Prairie Population
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
FEIS	Final Environmental Impact Statement
FIFRA	Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act
FR	Federal Register
HDP	4,6-dimethyl-2-pyrimidinol
INAD	Investigational New Animal Drug
LC	Lethal Concentration
LD	Lethal Dose
MBTA	Migratory Bird Treaty Act
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAP	North Atlantic Population
NCZ	Nicarbazin
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NWRC	National Wildlife Research Center
ROD	Record of Decision
RIDEM	Rhode Island Division of Environmental Management
SJBP	Southern James Bay Population
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
T&E	Threatened and Endangered
USAF	United States Air Force
USC	United States Code
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USGS	United States Geological Survey
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
WS	Wildlife Services

CHAPTER 1: PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

1.1 PURPOSE

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wildlife Services (WS)[1] program in the State of Rhode Island continues to receive requests for assistance to resolve or prevent damage occurring to agricultural resources, natural resources, property, and threats to human safety associated with Canada geese (*Branta canadensis*). Normally, individual wildlife damage management actions conducted by the WS program could be categorically excluded from further analysis pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), in accordance with APHIS implementing regulations for the NEPA (7 CFR 372.5(c), 60 FR 6000-6003).

The purpose of this Environmental Assessment (EA) is to evaluate activities conducted by WS to manage damage and threats to agricultural resources, property, natural resources, and threats to humans caused by Canada geese in the State of Rhode Island where a request for assistance is received and when a depredation permit has been issued by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). This EA will assist in determining if the proposed management of goose damage could have a significant impact on the human environment for both humans and other organisms. The EA will also assist with identifying and addressing issues associated with goose damage management and will analyze alternative approaches to address those issues. In addition, this EA will be a planning document to coordinate efforts with other federal, State, and local agencies. The public involvement process associated with the development of the EA will inform the public of the proposed activities and will allow for public input into the process. This EA analyzes the potential effects of goose damage management when requested, as coordinated between WS, the USFWS, and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM).

More specifically, WS is preparing this EA to: 1) facilitate planning, 2) promote interagency coordination, 3) streamline program management, 4) clearly communicate to the public the analysis of individual and cumulative impacts of activities, and 5) evaluate and determine if there are any potentially significant or cumulative adverse affects from the proposed program. The analyses contained in the EA are based on information derived from WS' Management Information System, published documents (Appendix A), interagency consultations, public involvement, information in WS' programmatic Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) (USDA 1997)[2], and the FEIS completed by the USFWS for the management of resident Canada geese (USFWS 2005).

The EA evaluates the need for action to manage damage associated with Canada geese in the State, the potential issues associated with goose damage management, and the environmental consequences of conducting different alternatives to address the need for action and the identified issues. The issues and alternatives were initially developed by WS, the USFWS, and the RIDEM. To assist with the identification of additional issues and alternatives to managing damage associated with geese in Rhode Island, the pre-decisional EA will be made available to the public for review and comment prior to a Decision[3]. Under the proposed action, WS would respond to requests for assistance to resolve and prevent goose damage and threats on federal, State, municipal, and private lands in Rhode Island.

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[1] The USDA-APHIS-WS program is authorized to protect agriculture and other resources from damage caused by wildlife through the Act of March 2, 1931 (46 Stat. 1468; 7 U.S.C. 426-426b) as amended, and the Act of December 22, 1987 (101 Stat. 1329-331, 7 U.S.C. 426c).

[2] WS has prepared a programmatic FEIS that further addresses WS' activities to manage damage associated with wildlife, including detailed discussion of program activities, a risk assessment of methods, and discussion of issues (USDA 1997). Information from WS' programmatic FEIS has been incorporated by reference into this EA.

[3] After the development of the EA by WS and after public involvement in identifying new issues and alternatives, WS will issue a Decision. Based on the analyses in the EA after public involvement, a decision will be made to either publish a Notice of Intent to prepare an environmental Impact Statement or a Finding of No Significant Impact will be noticed to the public in accordance to the NEPA and the Council of Environmental Quality regulations.

The EA also addresses the potential effects of managing goose damage on areas where additional agreements may be signed in the future. Because the proposed action is to conduct a coordinated damage management program in accordance with plans, goals, and objectives developed to reduce damage, and because the program's goals and directives are to provide services when requested, within the constraints of available funding and workforce, it is conceivable that additional damage management efforts could occur. Thus, this EA anticipates those additional efforts and the analyses are intended to apply to actions that may occur in any locale and at any time within Rhode Island as part of a coordinated program.

1.2 NEED FOR ACTION

Some species of wildlife, including Canada geese, have adapted to and thrive in human altered habitats. Those species, in particular, are often responsible for the majority of conflicts between humans and wildlife that lead to requests for assistance to reduce damage to resources and to lessen the threat to human safety. WS' programmatic FEIS summarizes the relationship of wildlife values and wildlife damage in this way (USDA 1997):

> "*Wildlife has either positive or negative values, depending on varying human perspectives and circumstances...Wildlife is generally regarded as providing economic, recreational and aesthetic benefits...and the mere knowledge that wildlife exists is a positive benefit to many people. However... the activities of some wildlife may result in economic losses to agriculture and damage to property...Sensitivity to varying perspectives and values are required to manage the balance between human and wildlife needs. In addressing conflicts, wildlife managers must consider not only the needs of those directly affected by wildlife damage but a range of environmental, sociocultural and economic considerations as well*".

Both sociological and biological carrying capacities must be applied to resolve wildlife damage problems. The wildlife acceptance capacity, or cultural carrying capacity, is the limit of human tolerance for wildlife or the maximum number of a given species that can coexist compatibly with local human populations. Biological carrying capacity is the land or habitat's ability to support healthy populations of wildlife without degradation to the species' health or their environment during an extended period of time (Decker and Purdy 1988). Those phenomena are especially important because they define the sensitivity of a community to a wildlife species. For any given damage situation, there are varying thresholds of tolerance exhibited by those directly and indirectly affected by the species and any associated damage. This damage threshold determines the wildlife acceptance capacity. While the habitat may have a biological carrying capacity to support higher populations of wildlife, in many cases the wildlife acceptance capacity is lower or has been met. Once the wildlife acceptance capacity is met or exceeded, people begin to implement population or damage management, including lethal methods, to alleviate damage or address threats to human health and safety.

The alleviation of damage or other problems caused by or related to the behavior of wildlife is termed wildlife damage management and is recognized as an integral component of wildlife management (The Wildlife Society 1992). The imminent threat of damage or loss of resources is often sufficient for individual actions to be initiated and the need for damage management is derived from the specific threats to resources. Those species have no *intent* to do harm. They utilize habitats (*e.g.*, reproduce, walk, forage, deposit feces) where they can find a *niche*. If their activities result in lost economic value of resources or threaten human safety, people characterize this as damage. When damage exceeds or threatens to exceed an economic threshold and/or poses a threat to human safety, people seek assistance with resolving damage or reducing threats to human safety. The threshold triggering a request for assistance is often unique to the individual person requesting assistance and can be based on many factors (*e.g.*, economic, social, aesthetics).

Wildlife management is often based on balancing wildlife populations and human perceptions, in a struggle to preserve rare species, regulate species' populations, oversee consumptive uses of wildlife, and conserve the environment that provides habitat for wildlife resources. Increasingly, cities, towns, parks, airports, and private properties have become sites of some of the greatest challenges for wildlife management (Adams et al. 2006). When the presence of a prolific, adaptable species such as the Canada goose is combined with human expansion, land management conflicts often develop. Long thought of as a spectacular sight during the spring and fall migration, Canada geese are now frequently and abundantly present in cities and towns throughout Rhode Island and across the United States. Wildlife, including Canada geese, are generally regarded as providing ecological, educational, economic, recreational, and aesthetic benefits (Decker and Goff 1987), and there is enjoyment in knowing wildlife exists and contributes to natural ecosystems (Decker et al. 2001).

Native waterfowl add an aesthetic component to wetlands, sometimes provide opportunities for recreational hunting, and like all wildlife, provide people with valued close contact with nature. Many people, even those experiencing damage, consider geese to be a charismatic and valuable component of their environment; however, tolerance differs among individuals (Smith et al. 1999). Because of their prolific nature, site tenacity, longevity, size, and tolerance of human activity, Canada geese are often associated with situations where damage or threats can occur. Geese are extremely adaptable and may use the resources provided by humans in urban landscapes for nesting, raising young, molting, feeding, and loafing. Increasing populations of resident geese are resulting in increasing numbers of conflicts with human activities (Conover and Chasko 1985, USFWS 2005, Dolbeer and Seubert 2006), and increasing concerns related to human health and safety (Ankney 1996, Seubert and Dolbeer 2004, USFWS 2005, Dolbeer and Seubert 2006).

Geese are a difficult species to manage because they are highly mobile, able to exploit a variety of habitat types within a given area, and cannot be permanently excluded from large areas. It is rarely desirable or possible to remove or disperses all problem geese from an area, but with a proper management scheme, numbers of geese and associated problems may be reduced to a level that can be tolerated. Additionally, management of goose-related problems often exceeds the capabilities of single landowners to reduce damage to tolerable levels. In Rhode Island, problem situations associated with geese typically involve, but are not limited to, unacceptable accumulations of feces, aggression during the nesting season, grazing of landscaped vegetation, damage to agricultural and natural resources, and unacceptable safety hazards for vehicles (*e.g.*, automobiles, boats, airplanes). Those problems frequently occur on private properties, residential communities, apartment/condominium complexes, municipal parks, schools, hospitals, natural/habitat restoration sites, corporate and industrial sites, office complexes, roadways, airports, and other areas (USFWS 2005).

The need for action to manage damage associated with Canada geese in Rhode Island arises from requests for assistance received to reduce and prevent damage from occurring to four major categories. Those four major categories include agricultural resources, natural resources, property, and threats to human safety. Most requests for WS' assistance are associated with suburban areas where geese congregate on public or private ponds and forage on lawns and mowed areas associated with parks, beaches, golf courses, schools, business campuses, and residences. The major problems are associated with the impacts of feces and grazing damage to lawns and other areas (including sidewalks, driveways, and swimming pools). Table 1.1 lists WS' technical assistance projects involving goose damage or threats of goose damage to those four major resource types in Rhode Island from the federal fiscal year[4] (FY) 2006 through FY 2009. Technical assistance is provided by WS to those persons requesting assistance with resolving damage or the threat of damage by providing information and recommendations on goose damage management activities that can be conducted by the requestor without WS' direct involvement in managing or

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

preventing the damage. WS' technical assistance activities will be discussed further in Chapter 3 of this EA.

Table 1.1 - Technical assistance requests for goose damage received by WS, FY 2006 - FY 2009

Fiscal Year	Resource Category				TOTAL
	Agriculture	Natural Resources	Property	Human Safety	
2006	1	0	3	2	**6**
2007	4	0	4	2	**10**
2008	3	0	3	2	**8**
2009	3	0	6	1	**10**
TOTAL	**11**	**0**	**16**	**7**	**34**

The technical assistance projects conducted by WS are representative of the damage and threats that are caused by Canada geese in Rhode Island. As shown in Table 1.1, WS has conducted 34 technical assistance projects in Rhode Island that addressed damage and threats associated with geese. Most requests for assistance were associated with goose damage to property. Overall, nearly 47% of the requests received by WS for technical assistance involved goose damage to property. Information regarding goose damage to those main categories is discussed in the following subsections of the EA:

Need to Resolve Damage to Agricultural Resources

The most common waterfowl damage to agricultural resources is crop consumption (loss of the crop and revenue), but also consists of unacceptable accumulations of feces on pastures, trampling of emerging crops, and increased erosion and runoff from fields where the cover crop has been grazed (USFWS 2005). Soil compaction resulting in reduced production and quality of potato crops and damage to commercial sod grass from grazing and droppings has also been reported in Rhode Island. Canada geese graze a variety of crops, including alfalfa, barley, beans, corn, soybeans, wheat, rye, oats, spinach, and peanuts (Atlantic Flyway Council 1999). A single intense grazing event by Canada geese in fall, winter, or spring can reduce the yield of winter wheat by 16-30% (Fledger et al. 1987), and reduce growth of rye plants by more than 40% (Conover 1988). However, some studies have shown that grazing by geese during the winter may increase rye or wheat seed yields (Clark and Jarvis 1978, Allen et al. 1985). Canada geese were found to significantly impact wild rice (*Zizania aquatica*) by grazing, and considerable reduction in the local goose population allowed recovery of rice and other vegetation (Haramis and Kearns 2006). The principal agricultural crops grown in Rhode Island are hay, sod, vegetables, silage corn, and nursery stock (USDA 2010).

Resident Canada geese are also a concern to livestock producers. Waterfowl droppings in and around livestock ponds, hayfields, and pasture can affect water quality, contaminate feed, and could be a source of a number of different types of bacteria, creating concerns about potential disease interactions between Canada geese and livestock. The transmission of diseases through drinking water is one of the primary concerns for a safe water supply for livestock.

Need to Reduce Threats to Human Safety

Birds can play an important role in the transmission of zoonotic diseases where humans may come into contact with fecal droppings of those birds. Few studies are available on the occurrence and transmission of zoonotic diseases in wild birds. Study of this issue is complicated by the fact that some disease-causing agents associated with birds may also be contracted from other sources. The risk of disease transmission from birds to humans is likely very low. However, human exposure to fecal droppings through direct contact or through the disturbance of accumulations of fecal droppings where disease

organisms are known to occur increases the likelihood of disease transmission. Canada geese can be closely associated with human habitation where interaction with geese or fecal droppings if geese can occur. Geese often exhibit gregarious behavior which can lead to accumulations of fecal droppings in areas where birds forage or loaf. Accumulations of feces can be considered a threat to human health and safety due to the close association of those species of birds with human activity. Accumulations of bird droppings in public areas are aesthetically displeasing and are often in areas where humans may come in direct contact with fecal droppings.

Geese may impact human health through the distribution and incubation of various pathogens and through nutrient loading. For instance, a foraging Canada goose defecates between 5.2 and 8.8 times per hour (Bedard and Gauthier 1986). Kear (1963) recorded a maximum fecal deposition rate for Canada geese of 0.39 pounds per day (dry weight). Public swimming beaches, private ponds, and lakes can be affected by goose droppings. There are several pathogens involving waterfowl which may be contracted by humans; however, the risk of infection is believed to be low (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) 1998). The primary route of infection is through incidental contact with contaminated material. Direct contact with fecal matter is not a likely route of transmission of waterfowl zoonoses unless ingested directly. Although intentional contact with feces is not likely, transmission can occur when people unknowingly contact and ingest contaminated material. Therefore, the risk to human health from zoonoses is low and a direct link of transmission from geese to humans is difficult to determine, especially given that many pathogens occur naturally in the environment or can be attributed to contamination from other sources. However, the presence of disease causing organisms in goose feces increases the risks of exposure and transmission of zoonoses wherever people may encounter large accumulations of feces from geese. Flemming et al. (2001) reviewed the impacts of Canada geese on water quality by addressing pathogens and nutrient loading and identified a number of hazards that geese are associated with. The USFWS has documented threats to public health from geese and has authorized the take of geese to reduce this threat in the resident Canada goose FEIS (USFWS 2005).

Cryptosporidiosis is a disease caused by the parasite *Cryptosporidium parvum* and was not known to cause disease in humans until as late as 1976 (CDC 1998). A person can be infected by drinking contaminated water or from contact with the fecal material of infected animals (CDC 1998). Exposure can occur from swimming in lakes, ponds, streams, and pools, and from swallowing water while swimming (Colley 1996). *Cryptosporidium* can cause gastrointestinal disorders (Virginia Department of Health 1995) and produce life threatening infections, especially in people with compromised or suppressed immune systems (Roffe 1987, Graczyk et al. 1998). Cryptosporidiosis is recognized as a disease with implications for human health (Smith et al. 1997). Canada geese in Maryland were shown with molecular techniques to disseminate infectious *Cryptosporidium parvum* oocysts in the environment (Graczyk et al. 1998). Kassa et al. (2001) found that *Cryptosporidium* was the most common infectious organism found in 77.8% of goose fecal samples from sites comprised primarily of parks and golf courses, indicating that occupational exposure to this pathogen is very plausible although the risk to humans is relatively low.

Giardiasis (*Giardia lambia*) is an illness caused by a microscopic parasite that has become recognized as one of the most common causes of waterborne disease in humans in the United States during the last 15 years (CDC 1999). Giardiasis is contracted by swallowing contaminated water or from placing contaminated surfaces into the mouth. Symptoms of giardiasis include diarrhea, cramps, and nausea (CDC 1999). Canada geese in Maryland were shown with molecular techniques to disseminate infectious *Giardia* spp. cysts in the environment (Graczyk et al. 1998). Kassa et al. (2001) also found *Giardia* spp. in goose feces at numerous urban sites.

Salmonella (*Salmonella* spp.) may be contracted by humans by handling materials soiled with bird feces (Stroud and Friend 1987). Salmonella causes gastrointestinal illness, including diarrhea.

Chlamydia psittaci, which can be present in diarrhetic feces of infected waterfowl, can be transmitted if it becomes airborne (Locke 1987). Severe cases of Chlamydiosis have occurred among wildlife biologists and others handling snow geese, ducks, and other birds (Wobeser and Brand 1982). Chlamydiosis can be fatal to humans if not treated with antibiotics. Waterfowl, herons, and rock pigeons are the most commonly infected wild birds in North America (Locke 1987).

Campylobacteriosis is an infectious disease caused by bacteria of the genus *Campylobacter*. In persons with compromised immune systems, *Campylobacter* occasionally spreads to the bloodstream and causes a serious life-threatening infection, but normally causes diarrhea and is one of the most common diarrhea illnesses in the United States (CDC 2007). Canada geese have been found to be a carrier of *Campylobacter* and can spread the bacteria in their feces (Kassa et al. 2001).

Escherichia coli (*E. coli*) are fecal coliform bacteria associated with fecal material of warm blooded animals. There are over 200 specific serological types of *E. coli* with the majority of serological types being harmless (Sterritt and Lester 1988). Probably the best known serological type of *E. coli* is *E. coli* O157:H7, which is usually associated with cattle (Gallien and Hartung 1994). Recent research has demonstrated that Canada geese can disseminate *E. coli* into the environment which can elevate fecal coliform densities in the water column (Hussong et al. 1979, Alderisio and DeLuca 1999, Cole et al. 2005). Many communities monitor water quality at swimming beaches and lakes, but lack the financial resources to pinpoint the source of elevated fecal coliform counts. When fecal coliform counts at swimming beaches exceed established standards, the beaches are temporarily closed which can adversely affect the enjoyment of those areas by the public, even though they may not have been able to determine the serological type of the *E. coli*. Unfortunately, linking the elevated bacterial counts to the frequency of waterfowl use and attributing the elevated levels to human health threats has been problematic until recently. Advances in genetic engineering have allowed microbiologists to match genetic code of coliform bacteria to specific animal species and link those animal sources of coliform bacteria to fecal contamination (Simmons et al. 1995, Jamieson 1998). Simmons et al. (1995) used genetic fingerprinting to link fecal contamination of small ponds on Fisherman Island, Virginia to waterfowl. Microbiologists were able to implicate waterfowl and gulls as the source of fecal coliform bacteria at the Kensico Watershed, a water supply for New York City (Klett et al. 1998, Alderisio and DeLuca 1999). Also, fecal coliform bacteria counts coincided with the number of Canada geese and gulls roosting at the reservoir. Cole et al. (2005) found that geese may serve as a vector of antimicrobial resistance genes, indicating that they not only harbor and spread zoonotic diseases like *E. coli* but may spread strains that are resistant to current control measures.

Roscoe (1999) conducted a survey to estimate the prevalence of pathogenic bacteria and protozoa in resident Canada geese in New Jersey and found no *Salmonella* spp., *Shigella* spp., or *Yersinia* spp. isolated from any of the 500 Canada goose samples. However, Roscoe (1999) did report finding *Cryptosporidium* spp. in 49 (10%) of the 500 geese, and *Giardia* sp. in 75 (15%) of the geese. Additionally, the United States Geological Survey (USGS) conducted field studies in New Jersey, Virginia, and Massachusetts to determine the presence of organisms that could cause disease in humans exposed to feces of Canada geese at sites with a history of high public use and daily use by geese (USGS 2000). *Salmonella* spp., *Listeria* spp., *Chlamydia* spp., and *Giardia* spp. were isolated from goose feces in New Jersey (USGS 2000).

While transmission of diseases or parasites from geese to humans has not been well documented, the potential exists (Luechtefeld et al. 1980, Wobeser and Brand 1982, Hill and Grimes 1984, Pacha et al. 1988, Blandespoor and Reimink 1991, Graczyk et al. 1997, Saltoun et al. 2000). In worse case scenarios, infections may even be life threatening for people with compromised or suppressed immune systems (Roffe 1987, Graczyk et al. 1998). Even though many people are concerned about disease transmission

from feces, the probability of contracting a disease from feces is believed to be small. However, human exposure to fecal droppings through direct contact or through the disturbance of accumulations of fecal droppings where disease organisms are known to occur increases the likelihood of disease transmission. Canada geese are closely associated with human habitation and they often exhibit gregarious roosting and nesting behavior. This gregarious behavior leads to accumulations of fecal droppings that can be considered a threat to human health and safety due to the close association of those species of birds with human activity. Accumulations of bird droppings in public areas are aesthetically displeasing and are often in areas where humans may come in direct contact with fecal droppings.

As stated previously, a common concern among those requesting assistance is the threat to human health and safety from disease transmission which has only been heightened from recent, widely publicized zoonoses events like the spread of West Nile Virus and Avian Influenza. However, requests are also received for assistance from a perception of a threat of physical harm from aggressive waterfowl. Canada geese thrive in urban habitat created by humans from a constant supply of food, water, and shelter. Many people enjoy wildlife to the point of purchasing food specifically for feeding wildlife despite laws prohibiting the act in many areas. The constant presence of human created food sources, readily available water supplies, and the few predators found in urban areas often increase the survival rates and carrying capacity of wildlife species that are adaptable to those habitats. Often the only limiting factor to wildlife species in and around urban areas is the prevalence of diseases, which can be confounded by the overabundance of wildlife congregated into a small area that can be created by the unlimited amount of food, water, and shelter found within urban habitats.

Financial costs related to human health threats involving geese may include testing of water for *coliform* bacteria, cleaning and sanitizing beaches regularly of feces, contacting and obtaining assistance from public health officials, and implementing non-lethal and lethal methods of wildlife damage management. WS recognizes and defers to the authority and expertise of local and state health officials in determining what does or does not constitute a threat to public health.

As people are increasingly living with wildlife, the lack of harassing and threatening behavior by humans toward many species of wildlife, especially around urban areas, has led to a decline in the fear wildlife have toward humans. When wildlife species begin to habituate to the presence of humans and human activity, a loss of apprehension occurs that can lead those species to exhibit threatening behavior toward humans. This threatening behavior continues to increase as human populations expand and the populations of those species that adapt to human activity increase. Threatening behavior can be in the form of aggressive posturing, a general lack of apprehension toward humans, or abnormal behavior. Though geese attacking humans occurs rarely, aggressive behavior by geese does occur, especially during nest building and the rearing of eggs and chicks. Canada geese aggressively defend their nests, nesting areas, and young, and may attack or threaten pets, children, and adults (Smith et al. 1999). This is a significant threat because resident Canada geese often nest in high densities in areas used by humans for recreational purposes such as parks, beaches, and sports fields (VerCauteren and Marks 2004). Additionally, slipping hazards can be created by the buildup of feces from geese on docks, walkways, and other areas of foot traffic.

Need to Reduce Threats to Aviation Safety

In addition to threats of zoonotic diseases, birds also pose a threat to human safety from being struck by aircraft. Birds struck by aircraft, especially when ingested into engines, can lead to structural damage to the aircraft leading to catastrophic engine failure. The civil and military aviation communities have acknowledged that the threat to human health and safety from aircraft collisions with wildlife is increasing (Dolbeer 2000). Collisions between aircraft and wildlife are a concern throughout the world because strikes threaten passenger safety (Thorpe 1996), result in lost revenue, and repairs to aircraft can

be costly (Linnell et al. 1996, Robinson 1996). Aircraft collisions with wildlife can also erode public confidence in the air transport industry as a whole (Conover et al. 1995).

Generally, bird collisions occur when aircraft are near the ground. From 1990-2007, approximately 60% of reported bird strikes to United States civil aviation occurred when the aircraft was at an altitude of 100 feet above ground level or less (Dolbeer and Wright 2008). Additionally, 73% occurred less than 500 feet above ground level and about 92% occurred under 3,000 feet above ground level (Dolbeer and Wright 2008). From 1990-2007, birds were involved in more than 97% of the reported wildlife strikes to civil aircraft in the United States (Dolbeer and Wright 2008).

From 1990-2009, 457 wildlife strikes were reported to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in Rhode Island, with four strikes involving Canada geese (FAA 2009). The number of bird strikes actually occurring is likely to be much greater, since it is estimated that only 20-25% of all bird strikes are reported (Conover et al. 1995, Dolbeer et al. 1995, Linnell et al. 1996, Linnell et al. 1999, Cleary et al. 2000). Waterfowl were involved in the greatest number of damaging strikes (31%) in which the bird species was identified when compared to all other bird groups (Dolbeer and Wright 2008). Nationally, the resident Canada goose population probably represents the single most serious bird threat to aircraft safety (Alge 1999, Seubert and Dolbeer 2004, Dolbeer and Seubert 2006). Resident Canada geese are of particular concern to aviation because of their large size (typically 8-15 lbs which exceeds the 4-lb bird certification standard for engines and airframes); flocking behavior (which increases the likelihood of multiple bird strikes); attraction to airports for grazing; and year-around presence in urban environments near airports (Seubert and Dolbeer 2004).

From 1990-2007 there were 1,109 reported strikes involving Canada geese in the United States, resulting in over $47 million in damage and associated costs to civil aircraft (Dolbeer and Wright 2008). The United States Air Force (USAF) reports that Canada geese have caused over $92 million in damage and have been involved in 130 strikes since the beginning of their recording period through 2007, averaging over $710,000 in damages per strike (USAF 2007). In 1995, a Boeing 707 E38 AWACS jet taking off from Elmendorf Air Force Base in Alaska ingested at least 13 geese into the number 1 and 2 engines and crashed, killing all 24 crew members.

Bird strikes cause an estimated seven fatalities involving civilian and military aircraft each year (Linnell et al. 1996). For the period 1990-2000, waterfowl (geese and ducks) comprise 11% of all bird-aircraft strikes to civil aviation reported to the FAA for which the bird species or group was reported (Cleary et al. 2002). For the period 1990-2000, more than 50% of Canada Goose-aircraft strikes resulted in damage to the aircraft, and 28.5% resulted in a negative effect on the flight (Cleary et al. 2002). WS receives requests for assistance regarding bird damage management at airports and military airbases in Rhode Island.

Need to Reduce Damage to Property

Geese may cause damage to aircraft, landscaping, piers, yards, boats, beaches, shorelines, parks, golf courses, driveways, athletic fields, ponds, lakes, rafts, porches, patios, gardens, foot paths, swimming pools, play grounds, school grounds, and cemeteries (USFWS 2005). Property damage most often involves goose fecal matter that contaminates landscaping and walkways, often at golf courses and water front property. Fecal droppings and the overgrazing of vegetation can be aesthetically displeasing. Businesses may be concerned about the negative aesthetic appearance of their property caused by excessive droppings and excessive grazing, and are sensitive to comments by clients and guests. Costs associated with property damage include labor and disinfectants to clean and sanitize fecal droppings, implementation of wildlife management methods, loss of property use, loss of aesthetic value of flowers, gardens, and lawns consumed by geese, loss of customers or visitors irritated by walking in fecal

droppings, repair of golf greens, and replacing grazed turf. The costs of reestablishing overgrazed lawns and cleaning waterfowl feces from sidewalks have been estimated at more than $60 per bird (Allan et at. 1995).

Need to Protect Natural Resources

Geese can also negatively impact natural resources. Large concentrations of geese have affected water quality around beaches and in wetlands by acting as nonpoint source pollution. There are four forms of nonpoint source pollution: sedimentation, nutrients, toxic substances, and pathogens. Large concentrations of waterfowl can remove shoreline vegetation resulting in erosion of the shoreline and soil sediments being carried by rainwater into lakes, ponds, and reservoirs (USFWS 2005). WS has assisted cooperators in Rhode Island with managing goose damage to wetland mitigation sites where excessive grazing on emergent vegetation necessitated re-planting of the site at significant costs. Overabundant resident Canada geese can negatively impact crops and habitats that are maintained as food and cover for migrant waterfowl and other wildlife.

The severe grazing of vegetation along levees results in the loss of turf which holds soil on manmade levees. Heavy rains on bare soil levees results in erosion which would not have occurred if the levee had been vegetated. Excessive numbers of Canada geese have been reported to be sources of nutrients and pathogens in water. Canada geese are attracted to waste water treatment plants because of the water and available grasses. Sewage treatment plants in Rhode Island are required to test water quality of effluents before release from finishing ponds into the environment. Coliform bacteria causes acidic pH levels in the water and lowers dissolved oxygen which kills aquatic organisms (Cagle 1998). Also, fecal contamination increases nitrogen levels in the pond resulting in algae blooms. Oxygen levels are depleted when the algae dies resulting in the death of aquatic invertebrates and vertebrates.

Nutrient loading has been found to increase in wetlands in proportion to increases in the numbers of roosting geese (Manny et al. 1994, Kitchell et al. 1999). In studying the relationship between bird density and phosphorus (P) and nitrogen (N) levels in Bosque Del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico, Kitchell et al. (1999) found an increase in the concentration of both P and N correlated with an increase in bird density. Scherer et al. (1995) stated that waterfowl metabolize food very rapidly and most of the phosphorus contributed by bird feces probably originates from sources within a lake being studied. In addition, assimilation and defecation converted the phosphorus into a more soluble form and, therefore was considered a form of internal loading. Waterfowl have contributed substantial amounts of P and N into lakes through feces creating excessive aquatic macrophyte growth and algae blooms (Scherer et al. 1995) and accelerated eutrophication through nutrient loading (Harris et al. 1981).

1.3 SCOPE OF ANALYSES IN THE EA

Actions Analyzed

This EA evaluates the need for goose damage management to reduce threats to human safety and to resolve damage to property, natural resources, and agricultural resources on federal, State, tribal, municipal, and private land within the State of Rhode Island wherever such management is requested by a cooperator. This EA discusses the issues associated with conducting goose damage management in the State to meet the need for action and evaluates different alternatives to meet that need while addressing those issues. In addition, this EA evaluates the permitting of goose take through the issuance of depredation permits by the USFWS to WS and to other entities within the State.

The methods available for use under the alternatives evaluated are provided in Appendix B. The alternatives and Appendix B also discuss how methods would be employed to manage damage and threats

associated with geese in the State. Therefore, the actions evaluated in this EA are the use of those methods available under the alternatives and the employment of those methods by WS to manage or prevent damage and threats associated with geese from occurring when permitted by the USFWS. In addition, this EA evaluates the permitting of take by the USFWS to other entities to address goose damage in the State.

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) makes it unlawful to pursue, hunt, take, capture, kill, possess, import, export, transport, sell, purchase, barter, or offer for sale, purchase, or barter, any migratory bird, or their parts, nests, or eggs (16 U.S.C 703-711). A list of bird species protected under the MBTA can be found in 50 CFR 10.13.

The MBTA does allow for the lethal take of those bird species listed in 50 CFR 10.13 when depredation occurs through the issuance of depredation permits or the establishment of depredation orders. Under authorities in the MBTA, the USFWS is the federal agency responsible for the issuance of depredation permits or the establishment of depredation orders for the take of those protected bird species when damage or threats of damage are occurring. Information regarding migratory bird permits can be found in 50 CFR 13 and 50 CFR 21.

The USFWS is a cooperating agency on this EA to analyze cumulative take of geese from the issuance of depredation permits to entities within the State and to ensure compliance with the NEPA. The USFWS has jurisdiction over the management of migratory birds and has specialized expertise in identifying and quantifying potential adverse affects to the human environment from bird damage management activities. The analyses in this EA will ensure the USFWS compliance with the NEPA for the issuance of depredation permits for the take of Canada geese in the State to WS and to other entities.

Native American Lands and Tribes

Currently, WS does not have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or signed cooperative service agreement with any Native American tribe in Rhode Island. If WS is requested by a tribe to conduct goose damage management activities, this EA would be reviewed and supplemented, if appropriate, to insure compliance with the NEPA.

Federal, State, County, City, and Private Lands

Under two of the alternatives, WS could continue to provide goose damage management activities on federal, State, county, municipal, and private land in Rhode Island when a request is received for such services by the appropriate property owner or manager. In those cases where a federal agency requests WS' assistance with managing damage caused by geese, the requesting agency would be responsible for analyzing those activities in accordance with the NEPA. However, this EA would cover such actions if the requesting federal agency determined the analyses and scope of this EA were appropriate for those actions and the requesting federal agency adopted this EA through their own Decision based on the analyses in this EA. Therefore, actions taken on federal lands have been analyzed in the scope of this EA.

Period for which this EA is Valid

If the analyses in this EA indicates an EIS is not required, this EA will remain valid until WS determines that new needs for action, changed conditions, new issues, or new alternatives having different environmental impacts must be analyzed. At that time, this analysis and document will be reviewed and, if appropriate, supplemented pursuant to the NEPA. Review of the EA will be conducted each year to ensure that activities conducted under the selected alternative occur within the parameters evaluated in the EA. If the alternative analyzing no involvement in goose damage activities by WS is selected, no annual

analyses would occur based on the lack of involvement by WS. Annual monitoring of activities ensures the EA remains appropriate to the scope of goose damage management activities conducted by WS in Rhode Island.

Site Specificity

This EA analyzes the potential impacts of goose damage management and addresses activities on all private and public lands in Rhode Island where activities occurred previously under a MOU, cooperative service agreement, and in cooperation with the appropriate public land management agencies. The EA also addresses the potential impacts of goose damage management on areas where additional MOUs, cooperative service agreements, or other comparable documents may be signed in the future. Because the goals and directives of WS are to provide services when requested, within the constraints of available funding and workforce, it is conceivable that additional goose damage management efforts could occur. Thus, this EA anticipates that potential expansion and analyzes the impacts of such efforts as part of the alternatives.

Planning for the management of goose damage must be viewed as being conceptually similar to federal or other agency actions whose missions are to stop or prevent adverse consequences from anticipated future events for which the actual sites and locations where they will occur are unknown but could be anywhere in a defined geographic area. Examples of such agencies and programs include fire and police departments, emergency clean-up organizations, and insurance companies. Although some of the sites where goose damage could occur can be predicted, all specific locations or times where such damage will occur in any given year cannot be predicted. This EA emphasizes major issues as they relate to specific areas whenever possible; however, many issues apply wherever goose damage and the resulting damage management activities occur, and are treated as such. Chapter 2 of this EA identifies and discusses issues relating to goose damage management in Rhode Island. The standard WS Decision Model (Slate et al. 1992, USDA 1997) would be the site-specific procedure for individual actions conducted by WS in Rhode Island (see Chapter 3 for a description of the Decision Model and its application). Decisions made using the model would be in accordance with WS' directives and SOPs described in this EA and adopted as part of any decision associated with this EA.

The analyses in this EA are intended to apply to any action that may occur *in any locale* and at *any time* to reduce goose damage or threats within the State. In this way, the EA meets the intent of the NEPA with regard to site-specific analysis and that this approach is the only practical way for WS to comply with the NEPA and still be able to address damage and threats associated with geese in the State.

Summary of Public Involvement

Issues related to goose damage management as conducted by WS in Rhode Island were initially developed by WS in consultation with the USFWS and the RIDEM. Issues were defined and preliminary alternatives were identified through the scoping process. As part of this process, and as required by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) and APHIS' NEPA implementing regulations, this document will be noticed to the public through legal notices published in local print media, through direct mailings to parties that have requested to be notified or have been identified to have an interest in the reduction of threats and damage associated with Canada geese in Rhode Island, and by posting the pre-decisional EA on the APHIS website at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/nepa.shtml.

WS will provide for a minimum of a 30-day comment period for the public and interested parties to provide new issues, concerns, and/or alternatives. Through the public involvement process, WS will clearly communicate to the public and interested parties the analyses of potential environmental impacts on the quality of the human environment. New issues or alternatives raised after publication of public

notices will be fully considered to determine whether the EA should be revisited and, if appropriate, revised prior to issuance of a final Decision or publication of a notice of intent to prepare an EIS. New issues or alternatives identified from the public involvement process will be fully considered.

1.4 DECISIONS TO BE MADE

Based on agency relationships, MOUs, and legislative authorities, WS is the lead agency for this EA, and therefore, responsible for the scope, content, and decisions made. The management of migratory birds is the responsibility of the USFWS. As the authority for the management of bird populations, the USFWS was involved in the development of the EA and provided input throughout the EA preparation process to ensure an interdisciplinary approach according to the NEPA and agency mandates, policies, and regulations. The RIDEM is responsible for managing wildlife in the State, including geese. Any activities to reduce and/or prevent Canada goose damage in Rhode Island will be coordinated with the USFWS and the RIDEM which ensure WS' actions are incorporated into population objectives established by those agencies for goose populations in the State. The USFWS and the RIDEM reviewed the pre-decisional EA to identify issues, alternatives, and to ensure compliance with State laws and regulations.

Based on the scope of this EA, the decisions to be made are: 1) should WS continue to conduct Canada goose damage management to alleviate damage to agriculture, property, natural resources, and threats to human safety, 2) should WS conduct disease surveillance and monitoring in the goose population when requested by the RIDEM and the USFWS, 3) should WS implement an integrated wildlife damage management strategy, including technical assistance and direct operational assistance, to meet the need for goose damage management in Rhode Island, 4) if not, should WS attempt to implement one of the alternatives to an integrated damage management strategy as described in the EA, 5) should the Migratory Bird Program in USFWS Region 5 issue a depredation permit to WS and other entities to conduct Canada goose damage management activities, and 6) would the proposed action result in adverse impacts to the environment requiring the preparation of an EIS.

1.5 RELATIONSHIP OF THIS EA TO OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS

WS' Programmatic Final Environmental Impact Statement: WS has developed a programmatic FEIS that addresses the need for wildlife damage management in the United States (USDA 1997). The FEIS contains detailed discussions of potential impacts to the human environment from wildlife damage management methods used by WS. Information from WS' programmatic FEIS has been incorporated by reference into this EA.

Resident Canada Goose Management Final Environmental Impact Statement: The USFWS has issued a FEIS addressing the need for and potential environmental impacts associated with resident goose damage management activities titled "*Resident Canada Goose Management*" (USFWS 2005)[5]. The FEIS also contains detailed analyses of the issues and methods used to manage Canada goose damage. A Record of Decision (ROD) and Final Rule were published by the USFWS on August 10, 2006 (Federal Register Vol. 71, No. 154: 45964- 45993). On June 27, 2007, WS, as a cooperating agency, issued a ROD and adopted the USFWS FEIS (Federal Register Vol. 72, No. 123: 35217).

[5]The FEIS may be obtained by contacting the Division of Migratory Bird Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 North Fairfax Drive, MBSP-4107, Arlington, Virginia 22203 or by downloading it from the USFWS website at http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/issues/cangeese/finaleis.htm.

1.6 AUTHORITY OF FEDERAL AND STATE AGENCIES

WS' Legislative Authority

The primary statutory authority for the WS program is the Act of March 2, 1931 (46 Stat. 1468; 7 U.S.C. 426-426b) as amended, and the Act of December 22, 1987 (101 Stat. 1329-331, 7 U.S.C. 426c). The WS program is the lead federal authority in managing damage to agricultural resources, natural resources, property, and threats to human safety associated with wildlife. WS' directives define program objectives and guide WS' activities to manage wildlife damage.

United States Fish and Wildlife Service Authority

The USFWS mission is to conserve, protect, and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. Responsibilities are shared with other federal, state, tribal, and local entities; however, the USFWS has specific responsibilities for the protection of threatened and endangered (T&E) species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), migratory birds, inter-jurisdictional fish, and certain marine mammals, as well as for lands and waters that the USFWS administers for the management and protection of those resources. The USFWS also manages lands under the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The USFWS is responsible for managing and regulating take of bird species that are listed as migratory under the MBTA and those that are listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA. The take of migratory birds is prohibited by the Act. However, the USFWS can issue depredation permits for the take of migratory birds when certain criteria are met pursuant to the MBTA. Depredation permits are issued to take migratory birds to alleviate damage and threats of damage. Under the permitting application process, the USFWS requires applicants to describe, prior non-lethal damage management, techniques that have been used. In addition, the USFWS can establish depredation orders that allow for the take of those migratory birds addressed in the orders when those bird species are causing or about to cause damage without the need for a depredation permit.

The USFWS authority for migratory bird management is based on the MBTA of 1918 (as amended), which implements treaties with the United States, Great Britain (for Canada), the United Mexican States, Japan, and the Soviet Union. Section 3 of this Act authorized the Secretary of Agriculture:

> *"From time to time, having due regard to the zones of temperature and distribution, abundance, economic value, breeding habits, and times and lines of migratory flight of such birds, to determine when, to what extent, if at all, and by what means, it is compatible with the terms of the convention to allow hunting, taking, capture, killing, possession, sale, purchase, shipment, transportation, carriage, or export of any such bird, or any part, nest, or egg thereof, and to adopt suitable regulations permitting and governing the same, in accordance with such determinations, which regulations shall become effective when approved by the President."*

The authority of the Secretary of Agriculture, with respect to the MBTA, was transferred to the Secretary of the Interior in 1939 pursuant to Reorganization Plan No. II. Section 4(f), 4 FR 2731, 53 Stat. 1433.

United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Authority

The EPA is responsible for implementing and enforcing the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) which regulates the registration and use of pesticides, including repellents and reproductive inhibitors available for Canada goose.

Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management Authority

The RIDEM authority in wildlife management is given within the Rhode Island Code Annotated Section 49-1-1 et seq., the official regulations of the Commission of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks and applicable federal laws.

Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management/Division of Agriculture (RIDEM/DA)

The Pesticide Program of the RIDEM/DA enforces state laws pertaining to the use and application of pesticides. Under the Rhode Island General Law (Chapters 23-25, Pesticide Control) this division monitors the use of pesticides in a variety of pest management situations. It also licenses private and commercial pesticide applicators and pesticide contractors.

1.7 COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS AND REGULATIONS

Several laws or statutes authorize, regulate, or otherwise affect WS' and USFWS' activities. WS and the USFWS comply with those laws and statutes and consults with other agencies as appropriate. WS will comply with all applicable federal, State, and local laws and regulations in accordance with WS Directive 2.210.

National Environmental Policy Act

All federal actions are subject to the NEPA (Public Law 9-190, 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.). WS follows CEQ regulations implementing the NEPA (40 CFR 1500 et seq.) along with the USDA (7 CFR 1b) and APHIS Implementing Guidelines (7 CFR 372) as part of the decision-making process. Those laws, regulations, and guidelines generally outline five broad types of activities to be accomplished as part of any project: public involvement, analysis, documentation, implementation, and monitoring. The NEPA also sets forth the requirement that all major federal actions be evaluated in terms of their potential to significantly affect the quality of the human environment for the purpose of avoiding or, where possible, mitigating and minimizing adverse impacts. Federal activities affecting the physical and biological environment are regulated in part by the CEQ through regulations in 40 CFR 1500-1508. In accordance with the CEQ and USDA regulations, APHIS guidelines concerning Implementation of the NEPA Procedures, as published in the Federal Register (44 CFR 50381-50384) provide guidance to APHIS regarding the NEPA process.

Pursuant to the NEPA and the CEQ regulations, this EA documents the analyses resulting from federal actions, informs decision-makers and the public of reasonable alternatives capable of avoiding or minimizing adverse impacts, and serves as a decision-aiding mechanism to ensure that the policies and goals of the NEPA are infused into federal agency actions. This EA was prepared by integrating as many of the natural and social sciences as warranted, based on the potential effects of the proposed actions. The direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the proposed action are analyzed.

The NEPA requires federal agencies to incorporate environmental planning into federal agency actions and decision-making processes. The two primary objectives of the NEPA are: 1) agencies must have available and fully consider detailed information regarding environmental effects of federal actions and 2) agencies must make information regarding environmental effects available to interested persons and agencies before decisions are made and before actions are taken.

This EA will assist WS and consulting agencies in determining whether potential environmental impacts caused by the alternatives might be significant, requiring the preparation of an EIS. The development of

this EA documents the incorporation of environmental planning into the actions and decision-making process to ensure compliance with the NEPA requirement for the activities proposed in the State. When WS' direct management assistance is requested by another federal agency, compliance with the NEPA is the responsibility of the other federal agency.

Endangered Species Act

Under the ESA, all federal agencies will seek to conserve T&E species and will utilize their authorities in furtherance of the purposes of the Act (Sec.2(c)). WS conducts Section 7 consultations with the USFWS to use the expertise of the USFWS to ensure that "*any action authorized, funded or carried out by such an agency . . . is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered or threatened species . . . Each agency will use the best scientific and commercial data available*" (Sec.7 (a) (2)).

WS has conducted a formal consultation with the USFWS on programmatic activities and received a Biological Opinion (BO) describing potential effects on T&E species which prescribes reasonable and prudent measures for avoiding jeopardy (USDA 1997). As part of the development of this EA, WS has also consulted with the USFWS regarding T&E species in Rhode Island in regards to goose damage management activities proposed which will be discussed in Chapter 4 of this EA.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (U.S.C. 703711: 40 Stat. 755), as amended

The MBTA provides the USFWS regulatory authority to protect families of migratory birds. The law prohibits any "*take*" of migratory bird species by any entity, except as permitted by the USFWS. Under permitting guidelines in the Act, the USFWS may issue depredation permits to requesters experiencing damage caused by bird species protected under the Act. All actions conducted in this EA will be in compliance with the regulations of the MBTA, as amended.

Due to an increasing resident Canada goose population and an increase in damage complaints received, the USFWS developed an EIS that analyzed issues and alternatives associated with managing resident goose populations (USFWS 2005). Based on the analyses in the FEIS, several depredation orders were established to address goose damage which allow for the take of geese without the need for a depredation permit (see 50 CFR 21.49, 50 CFR 21.50, 50 CFR 21.51, 50 CFR 21.52, and 50 CFR 21.61).

Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act

The FIFRA requires the registration, classification, and regulation of all pesticides used in the United States. The EPA is responsible for implementing and enforcing the FIFRA. All chemical methods integrated into the WS program in Rhode Island are registered with and regulated by the EPA and the RIDEM/DA, and used by WS in compliance with labeling procedures and requirements. No toxicants are currently used or registered for use in managing geese or reducing goose damage. There are several repellents that are registered for use in reducing goose damage to vegetation in Rhode Island (see Appendix B). Methyl anthranilate and anthraquinone are the two most common active ingredients for repellents available for dispersing geese from areas where damage or threats are occurring. In addition, OvoControl G containing the active ingredient nicarbazin has been registered by the EPA as a reproductive inhibitor for geese. However, OvoControl G was not registered in the State at the time this EA was developed.

Investigational New Animal Drug (INAD)

The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) can grant permission to use investigational new animal drugs commonly known as INAD (see 21 CFR 511). The sedative drug alpha-chloralose is

registered with the FDA to capture waterfowl, coots, and pigeons. The use of alpha-chloralose by WS was authorized by the FDA which allows use of the drug as a non-lethal form of capture. Alpha-chloralose as a method for resolving waterfowl damage and threats to human safety are discussed in Appendix B of this EA.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended

The NHPA of 1966, and its implementing regulations (36 CFR 800), requires federal agencies to: 1) determine whether activities they propose constitute "undertakings" that have the potential to cause effects on historic properties and 2) if so, to evaluate the effects of such undertakings on historic resources and consult with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, as appropriate. Actions on tribal lands are only conducted at the tribe's request and under signed agreement; thus, the tribes have control over any potential conflict with cultural resources on tribal properties.

Each method described in this EA that might be used operationally by WS does not cause major ground disturbance, does not cause any physical destruction or damage to property, does not cause any alterations of property, wildlife habitat, or landscapes, and does not involve the sale, lease, or transfer of ownership of any property. In general, such methods also do not have the potential to introduce visual, atmospheric, or audible elements to areas in which they are used that could result in effects on the character or use of historic properties. Therefore, the methods that would be used by WS under the proposed action are not generally the types of activities that would have the potential to affect historic properties. If an individual activity with the potential to affect historic resources is planned under an alternative selected as a result of a decision on this EA, then site-specific consultation as required by Section 106 of the NHPA would be conducted as necessary.

There is potential for audible effects on the use and enjoyment of a historic property when methods such as pyrotechnics, firearms, and other noise producing methods are used at or in close proximity to such sites for purposes of resolving damage caused by waterfowl. However, such methods would only be used at a historic site at the request of the owner or manager of the site to resolve damage or the threat of damage, which means such use would be to benefit the historic property. A built-in mitigating factor for this issue is that virtually all of the methods involved would only have temporary effects on the audible nature of a site and can be ended at any time to restore the audible qualities of such sites to their original condition. Site-specific consultation as required by Section 106 of the NHPA would be conducted as necessary in those types of situations.

Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended (16 USC 1451-1464, Chapter 33; P.L. 92-583, October 27, 1972; 86 Stat. 1280).

This law established a voluntary national program within the Department of Commerce to encourage coastal states to develop and implement coastal zone management plans. Funds were authorized for cost-sharing grants to states to develop their programs. Subsequent to federal approval of their plans, grants would be awarded for implementation purposes. In order to be eligible for federal approval, each state's plan was required to define boundaries of the coastal zone, identify uses of the area to be regulated by the state, determine the mechanism (criteria, standards or regulations) for controlling such uses, and develop broad guidelines for priorities of uses within the coastal zone. In addition, this law established a system of criteria and standards for requiring that federal actions be conducted in a manner consistent with the federally approved plan. The standard for determining consistency varied depending on whether the federal action involved a permit, license, financial assistance, or a federally authorized activity. As appropriate, a consistency determination would be conducted by WS to assure management actions would be consistent with the State's Coastal Zone Management Program.

Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations (Executive Order 12898)

Executive Order 12898, promotes the fair treatment of people of all races, income levels, and cultures with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. Environmental justice is the pursuit of equal justice and protection under the law for all environmental statutes and regulations without discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. Executive Order 12898 requires federal agencies to make environmental justice part of their mission, and to identify and address disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects of federal programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income persons or populations. All activities are evaluated for their impact on the human environment and compliance with Executive Order 12898.

WS uses only legal, effective, and environmentally safe wildlife damage management methods, tools, and approaches. All chemicals used by WS are regulated by the EPA through FIFRA, the ADA, the FDA, by MOUs with land managing agencies, and by WS' Directives. Based on a thorough Risk Assessment, APHIS concluded that when WS' program chemicals are used according to label directions, they are selective to target individuals or populations, and such use has negligible impacts on the environment (USDA 1997). WS will properly disposes of any excess solid or hazardous waste. It is not anticipated that the proposed action would result in any adverse or disproportionate environmental impacts to minority and low-income persons or populations. In contrast, the proposed action may benefit minority or low-income populations by reducing threats to public health and safety and property damage.

Protection of Children from Environmental Health and Safety Risks (Executive Order 13045)

Children may suffer disproportionately for many reasons from environmental health and safety risks, including the development of their physical and mental status. WS makes it a high priority to identify and assess environmental health and safety risks that may disproportionately affect children. WS has considered the impacts that this proposal might have on children. The proposed activities would occur by using only legally available and approved methods where it is highly unlikely that children would be adversely affected. For these reasons, WS concludes that it would not create an environmental health or safety risk to children from implementing this proposed action. Additionally, since the proposed waterfowl damage management program is directed at reducing human health and safety risks at locations where children are sometimes present, it is expected that health and safety risks to children posed by waterfowl would be reduced.

Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds (Executive Order 13186)

Executive Order 13186 requires each Federal agency taking actions that have, or are likely to have, a measurable negative effect on migratory bird populations, is directed to develop and implement, a MOU with the USFWS that shall promote the conservation of migratory bird populations. WS has developed a draft MOU with the USFWS as required by this EO and is currently waiting for USFWS approval. WS will abide by the MOU once it is finalized and signed by both parties.

The Native American Graves and Repatriation Act of 1990

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act requires federal agencies to notify the Secretary of the Department that manages the federal lands upon the discovery of Native American cultural items on federal or tribal lands. Federal projects would discontinue work until a reasonable effort has been made to protect the items and the proper authority has been notified.

Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970

The Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 and its implementing regulations (29 CFR 1910) on sanitation standards states that, "*Every enclosed workplace shall be so constructed, equipped, and maintained, so far as reasonably practical, as to prevent the entrance or harborage of rodents, insects, and other vermin. A continuing and effective extermination program shall be instituted where their presence is detected*." This standard includes birds that may cause safety and health concerns at workplaces.

Depredation Orders for Canada Geese

As discussed previously, the USFWS developed an EIS to evaluate alternatives to address increasing resident goose population across the United States and to reduce associated damage (USFWS 2005). In addition, several depredation orders have been established to manage damage associated with Canada geese without a depredation permit from the USFWS when certain criteria are occurring. Under 50 CFR 21.49, resident Canada geese can be lethally taken at airports and military airfields without the need for a depredation permit by airport authorities or their agents when those geese are causing damage or posing a threat of damage to aircraft. A Canada goose nest and egg depredation order has also been established that allows the nests and eggs of those geese causing or posing a threat to people, property, agricultural crops, and other interests to be destroyed without the need for a depredation permit once the participant has registered with the USFWS (see 50 CFR 21.50). A similar depredation order was established to manage damage to agricultural resources associated with Canada geese. Under 50 CFR 21.51, Canada geese can be lethally taken without a permit from the USFWS in those states designated, including Rhode Island, when geese are causing damage to agricultural resources. Under the depredation orders for Canada geese, no individual federal depredation permit is required to take geese once the criteria of those orders have been met. However, a State permit may still be required to lethally take geese.

CHAPTER 2: AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ISSUES

Chapter 2 contains a discussion of the issues, including issues that will receive detailed environmental impact analysis in Chapter 4 (Environmental Consequences), issues that have driven the development of mitigation measures and/or standard operating procedures (SOP), and issues that will not be considered in detail, with rationale. Pertinent portions of the affected environment will be included in this chapter in the discussion of issues used to develop mitigation measures. Additional descriptions of affected environments will be incorporated into the discussion of the environmental effects in Chapter 4.

2.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The areas of the proposed action include, but are not limited to, property on or adjacent to airports, golf courses, athletic fields, recreational areas, swimming beaches, parks, corporate complexes, subdivisions, businesses, industrial parks, schools, agricultural areas, wetlands, restoration sites, and cemeteries. The proposed action may be conducted on properties held in private, local, State, or federal ownership throughout Rhode Island. Goose damage management would be conducted 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 the cooperating entity.

2.2 ISSUES ADDRESSED IN THE ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVES

Issues are concerns of the public and/or professional community raised regarding potential adverse affects that might occur from a proposed action. Such issues must be considered in the NEPA decision-making process. Issues relating to the reduction of wildlife damage were raised during the scoping process for WS' programmatic FEIS (USDA 1997) and were considered in the preparation of this EA. Issues related to managing damage associated with resident Canada geese which were addressed in the USFWS FEIS on the management of resident Canada geese (USFWS 2005) were also considered in the preparation of this EA. Issues related to managing damage associated with geese in Rhode Island were developed by WS in consultation with the USFWS and the RIDEM. The EA will also be made available to the public for review and comment to identify additional issues.

The issues as related to the possible implementation of the alternatives, including the proposed action, are discussed in detail in Chapter 4. The issues analyzed in detail in the EA are the following:

Issue 1 - Effects on Canada Goose Populations

A common issue when addressing damage caused by wildlife are the potential impacts of management actions on the population of target species. Methods used to resolve damage or threats to human safety can involve altering the behavior of target species and may require the use of lethal methods when appropriate. Under the proposed action, WS would incorporate non-lethal and lethal methods described in Appendix B in an integrated approach in which all or a combination of methods may be employed to resolve a request for assistance. WS would recommend both non-lethal and lethal methods, as governed by federal, State, and local laws and regulations.

Non-lethal methods can disperse or otherwise make an area unattractive to target species that are causing damage which reduces the presence of those species at the site and potentially the immediate area around the site. Lethal methods would be employed to remove an individual or those individuals responsible for causing damage or threats to human safety. The use of lethal methods would therefore result in local population reductions in the area where damage or threats were occurring. The number of target species removed from the population using lethal methods under this alternative would be dependent on the

number of requests for assistance received, the number of individuals involved with the associated damage or threat, and the efficacy of methods employed.

The analysis for magnitude of impact on populations from the use of lethal methods generally follows the process described in WS' programmatic FEIS (USDA 1997). Magnitude is described in WS' programmatic FEIS as "*...a measure of the number of animals killed in relation to their abundance*." Magnitude may be determined either quantitatively or qualitatively. Quantitative determinations are based on population estimates, allowable harvest levels, and actual harvest data. Qualitative determinations are based on population trends and harvest data when available. Generally, WS only conducts damage management on species whose population densities are high and usually only after they have caused damage. WS' take is monitored by comparing numbers of animals killed with overall populations or trends in populations to assure the magnitude of take is maintained below the level that would cause significant adverse impacts to the viability of native species populations (USDA 1997). All lethal take (killing) of Canada geese by WS would occur at the requests of a cooperator seeking assistance and only after the take of geese has been permitted by the USFWS pursuant to the MBTA.

Information on bird populations and trends are often derived from several sources including the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), the Christmas Bird Count (CBC), and harvest data. Further information on those sources of information is provided below.

Breeding Bird Survey

Bird populations can be monitored by using trend data derived from data collected during the BBS. Under established guidelines, observers count birds at established survey points along roadways for a set duration along a pre-determined route. The number and species of birds observed and heard within a quarter of a mile of the survey points are recorded. Surveys were started in 1966 and are conducted in June which is generally considered as the period of time when those birds present at a location are likely breeding in the immediate area. The BBS is conducted annually in the United States and Canada, across a large geographical area, under standardized survey guidelines. The BBS is a large-scale inventory of North American birds coordinated by the U.S. Geological Survey, Patuxent Wildlife Research Center (Sauer et al. 2008). The BBS is a combined set of over 3,700 roadside survey routes primarily covering the continental United States and southern Canada. The primary objective of the BBS has been to generate an estimate of population change for all breeding birds. Populations of birds tend to fluctuate, especially locally, as a result of variable local habitat and climatic conditions. Trends can be determined using different population equations and statistically tested to determine if a trend is statistically significant.

Estimates of population trends from BBS data are derived primarily from route-regression analysis (Geissler and Sauer 1990) and are dependent upon a variety of assumptions (Link and Sauer 1998). The statistical significance of a trend for a given species is reflected in the calculated P-value (*i.e.*, the probability of obtaining the observed data or more extreme data given that a hypothesis of no change is true). The level of statistical significance (*e.g.* 0.01, 0.05, 0.10) can vary and is often set by those conducting the analysis. Often BBS or other geographically large survey data is not statistically significant at the local level because of relatively smaller sample size (*i.e.*, fewer routes surveyed), more routes with zero observations of a particular bird species which results in larger statistical variance and low P-values set for statistical significance. The data reported from the BBS has a statistical level of significance set at $P<0.05$ (Sauer et al. 2008).

Christmas Bird Count

The CBC is conducted in December and early January annually by numerous volunteers under the guidance of the National Audubon Society (NAS). The CBC reflects the number of birds frequenting a location during the winter months and is based on birds observed within a 15 mile diameter circle around a central point (177 mi^2). The CBC data does not provide a population estimate, but can be used as an indicator of trends in the population. Researchers have found that population trends reflected in CBC data tend to correlate well with those from censuses taken by more stringent means (NAS 2002).

Annual Harvest Estimate

The populations of several migratory bird species are sufficient to allow for annual harvest seasons that typically occur during the fall migration periods of those species. Migratory bird hunting seasons are established under frameworks developed by the USFWS and implemented in the State by the RIDEM. For geese, take can also occur under several depredation order established by the USFWS. Therefore, the take of geese can occur during annual hunting seasons and under the depredation orders that allows geese to be taken to alleviate damage and to alleviate threats of damage. For many migratory bird species considered harvestable during a hunting season, the number of birds harvested during the season is reported by the USFWS and/or the RIDEM in published reports.

WS' proposed action incorporates an adaptive approach to resolve damage and reduce threats to human safety by targeting individual geese or groups of geese using non-lethal and lethal methods after applying the WS' Decision Model (Slate et al. 1992, USDA 1997) to identify possible techniques. Lethal methods may be used to reinforce non-lethal methods to reduce damage to a level that is more acceptable to the requester. The effects on goose populations in Rhode Island from implementation of the identified alternatives, including the proposed action, are analyzed in Chapter 4.

Canada Geese in Rhode Island

There are four primary migratory routes in North America, each of which has a Flyway Council governing migratory game bird management. Those councils are comprised of representatives from member States and Canadian Provinces which make recommendations to the USFWS on the management of waterfowl populations. The flyway system is divided into four administrative units; the Atlantic, Mississippi, Central, and Pacific Flyway Councils. The State of Rhode Island is considered part of the Atlantic Flyway Council designated for the management of migratory birds, including Canada geese.

The WS program has received requests for assistance to manage damage and threats to human safety associated with Canada geese throughout the State of Rhode Island, where there are two behaviorally distinct types of Canada goose populations: resident and migratory.

Resident Canada Geese

Canada geese are considered residents when one of the following criteria are met: 1) nests and/or resides on a year round basis within the contiguous United States; 2) nests within the lower 48 States in the months of March, April, May, or June; or 3) resides within the lower 48 States and the District of Columbia in the months of April, May, June, July, August (Rusch et al. 1995, Ankney 1996, USFWS 2005).

Resident Canada geese become sexually mature and breed at two to three years of age and have a relatively high nesting success compared to migrant Canada geese (USFWS 2005). The highest concentration of breeding Canada geese in Rhode Island occurs in urban areas, but birds can be observed

throughout the State. Resident Canada geese primarily nest from March through May each year. In Rhode Island, resident Canada geese nest in traditional sites (along shorelines, on islands and peninsulas, small ponds, lakes, and reservoirs), as well as on rooftops, adjacent to roadways, swimming pools, and in parking lots, playgrounds, planters, and abandoned property (*e.g.*, tires, automobiles). Those areas provide optimal habitat for Canada geese.

In Rhode Island, resident Canada geese molt, and are flightless, from mid-June through mid-July each year. Molting is the process whereby geese annually replace their primary and secondary flight (wing) feathers (Welty 1982). Portions of a flock of geese can be flightless from about one week before and two weeks after the primary molt period due to the asynchronous molting by individual birds. Non-breeding resident Canada geese which have failed nesting attempts sometimes move to other areas in late spring prior to molting (Nelson and Oetting 1998).

The first management plans for Canada geese in the Atlantic Flyway were developed in 1989, to help manage harvest and manage human/goose conflicts. The Atlantic Flyway Resident Canada Goose Management Plan outlines the main goals relating to Canada geese in the Atlantic Flyway. The main subject areas covered in the Plan as they relate to population management focus on population objectives, harvest management, and population control. Population objectives as outlined in the management plan were to reduce the resident Canada goose population in the Atlantic Flyway to 650,000 geese by 2005. To relieve damage and conflicts the management plan recommended allowing a wide variety of effective and efficient options for damage relief, including the adoption of a federal depredation order or conservation order to allow States to manage goose populations. In addition, the plan called for the maximum opportunities for the use and appreciation of resident Canada geese that are consistent with population goals. The plan also called for the management of resident Canada goose populations to be compatible with management criteria established for migrant geese and to annually monitor populations, harvest, and conflict levels to evaluate the effectiveness of the management plan (Atlantic Flyway Council 1999).

The USFWS and the States estimated the resident Canada goose population at 3.2 million in the United States; about 30% to 35% above the number States believe to be acceptable based on their needs to manage conflicts and problems caused by resident Canada geese (USFWS 2005). In the Atlantic Flyway, resident Canada geese consist of several subspecies that were introduced and established during the early 1900s after extirpation of native birds (Delacour 1954, Dill and Lee 1970, Pottie and Heusmann 1979, Benson et al. 1982). The spring 2009 estimate for the Atlantic Flyway resident Canada goose population was estimated over 1 million (±147,200) geese, which is 2% fewer than the 2008 estimate (USFWS 2009).

Migratory Canada Geese

Canada geese are endemic to North America, where they occur in each state of the United States (except Hawaii), each Province of Canada, and many States of Mexico. Most authorities currently recognize 11 subspecies of Canada geese, which differ primarily in body size and color (Bellrose 1980). Canada goose migrations may encompass up to 3,000 miles, like that of the Richardson's Canada goose (*B. c. hutchinsii*) which nests as far north as Baffin Island, Nunavut, Canada and winters as far south as the eastern States of Mexico. Migrant geese nest across the arctic, subarctic, and boreal regions of Canada and Alaska and range in size from the 2-4 pound cackling Canada goose (*B. c. minima*) to the 7-10 pound dusky Canada goose (*B. c. occidentalis*).

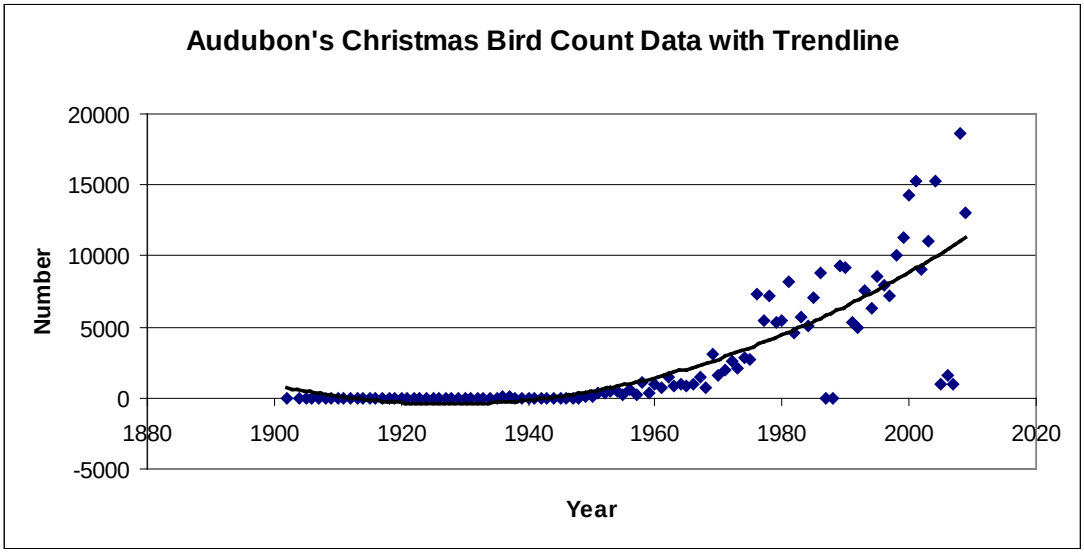
In the Atlantic Flyway, migratory Canada geese consist primarily of three distinct populations. Those populations include the North Atlantic Population (NAP), Atlantic Population (AP), and the Southern

James Bay Population (SJBP) (USFWS 2009). The wintering migratory population in Rhode Island is mostly comprised of geese from the NAP and the AP.

In 2009, the number of breeding pairs of geese for the AP was estimated to be nearly 176,100 pairs, 4% more than the 2008 estimate (USFWS 2009). The total spring population of AP geese was estimated at nearly 1.1 million geese (USFWS 2009). In 2009, there were an estimated 53,700 indicated pairs (singles plus pairs) of geese in the NAP, 28% more than the 2008 estimate. Indicated pair estimates have declined an average of 2% per year since 2000 (USFWS 2009). The total NAP goose population was estimated at 179,700 geese in 2009 which represents an increase of 66% over the 2008 estimate (USFWS 2009). The number of breeding geese in the SJBP was estimated to be 69,200 (±21,200) during the spring 2009 survey which was 25% fewer than the 2008 estimate. However, the number of geese found during surveys of the SJBP has increased an average of 1% per year since 2000 (USFWS 2009).

The number of Canada geese observed in the State during the annual CBC has shown a general increasing trend since the survey was initiated in 1902 (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1 - National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count Data for Rhode Island, 1902-2009.



As discussed previously, the NAP and the AP of Canada geese could be found in the State under those conditions where geese present could be considered migratory. Under field conditions, distinguishing geese between population segments can be difficult. Determining whether a Canada goose present in the State is migratory or a resident (present in the State year round) can also be difficult under field conditions. Therefore, for the purposes of this analyses, those Canada geese present in the State from September through March will be considered as migratory geese. The effects on the Canada goose population in Rhode Island from implementation of the identified alternatives, including the proposed action, are analyzed in Chapter 4.

Issue 2 - Effectiveness of Canada Goose Damage Management Methods

The effectiveness of any damage management program could be defined in terms of losses or risks potentially reduced or prevented, how accurately practitioner's diagnosis the problem, the species responsible for the damage, and how actions are implemented to correct or mitigate risks or damages. To determine that effectiveness, WS must be able to complete management actions expeditiously to minimize harm to non-target animals and the environment, while at the same time, using methods as

humanely as possible within the limitations of current technology, funding, and workforce. The most effective approach to resolving any damage problem is to use an adaptive integrated approach which may call for the use of several management methods simultaneously or sequentially (USDA 1997, Courchamp et al. 2003).

The purpose behind integrated management is to implement methods in the most effective manner while minimizing the potentially harmful effects on humans, target and non-target species, and the environment[6]. Efficacy is based on the types of methods employed, the application of the method, restrictions on the use of the method(s), the skill of the personnel using the method and, for WS' personnel, the guidance provided by WS Directives and policies.

The goal is to reduce damage, risks, and conflicts with wildlife as requested and not to necessarily reduce/eliminate populations. Localized population reduction could be short-term since new individuals may immigrate, be released at the site, or be born to animals remaining at the site (Courchamp et al. 2003). The ability of an animal population to sustain a certain level of removal and to eventually return to pre-management levels does not mean individual management actions are unsuccessful, but that periodic management may be necessary. The return of wildlife to pre-management levels also demonstrates that limited, localized damage management methods have minimal impacts on species' populations.

Based on the evaluation of the damage situation under the proposed action, the most effective methods will be employed individually or in combination based on the prior evaluations of methods or combinations of methods in other damage management situations. Once employed, methods will be further evaluated for effectiveness based on a continuous evaluation of activities by WS. Therefore, the effectiveness of methods is considered as part of the decision process for each damage management request based on the continual evaluation of methods and results under WS' Decision Model.

Issue 3 - Effects on Non-target Wildlife Species Populations, Including T&E Species

The issue of non-target species effects, including effects on T&E species arises from the use of non-lethal and lethal methods identified in the alternatives. The use of non-lethal and lethal methods has the potential to inadvertently capture or kill non-target wildlife. To reduce the risks of adverse affects to non-target wildlife, WS would select damage management methods that are as target-selective as possible or apply such methods in ways to reduce the likelihood of capturing non-target species. Before initiating management activities, WS would select locations which are extensively used by the target species. WS will also use minimization measures and SOPs designed to reduce the effects on non-target species' populations. Minimization measures and SOPs are further discussed in Chapter 3. Methods available for use under the alternatives are described in Appendix B.

The ESA of 1973 states that all federal agencies *"...shall seek to conserve endangered and threatened species and shall utilize their authorities in furtherance of the purposes of the Act"* [Sec. 7(a)(1)]. WS conducts Section 7 consultations with the USFWS to ensure compliance with the ESA and to ensure that *"any action authorized, funded or carried out by such an agency...is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered or threatened species…Each agency shall use the best scientific and commercial data available"* [Sec. 7(a)(2)].

Special efforts are made to avoid jeopardizing T&E species through biological evaluations of the potential effects and the establishment of special restrictions or minimization measures. WS has consulted with the USFWS on programmatic activities under Section 7 of the ESA concerning potential impacts of methods

[6]The cost of management may sometimes be secondary because of overriding environmental, legal, human health and safety, animal welfare, or other concerns.

available for use by WS on T&E species. The USFWS issued a BO on WS' programmatic activities in 1992 (USDA 1997). Further discussion of this issue will occur in Chapter 4.

Issue 4 - Humaneness and Animal Welfare Concerns of Methods

The issue of humaneness and animal welfare, as it relates to the killing or capturing of wildlife is an important but very complex concept that can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Schmidt (1989) indicated that vertebrate damage management for societal benefits could be compatible with animal welfare concerns, if *"…the reduction of pain, suffering, and unnecessary death is incorporated in the decision making process."*

According to the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) (1987), suffering is described as a *"…highly unpleasant emotional response usually associated with pain and distress."* However, suffering *"…can occur without pain…,"* and *"…pain can occur without suffering…"* Because suffering carries with it the implication of a time frame, a case could be made for *"…little or no suffering where death comes immediately…"* (California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) 1991). Pain and physical restraint can cause stress in animals and the inability of animals to effectively deal with those stressors can lead to distress. Suffering occurs when action is not taken to alleviate conditions that cause pain or distress in animals.

Defining pain as a component in humaneness appears to be a greater challenge than that of suffering. Pain obviously occurs in animals. Altered physiology and behavior can be indicators of pain and identifying the causes that elicit pain responses in humans would "*…probably be causes for pain in other animals…*" (AVMA 1987). However, pain experienced by individual animals probably ranges from little or no pain to considerable pain (CDFG 1991).

The AVMA states "*...euthanasia is the act of inducing humane death in an animal*" and "*... the technique should minimize any stress and anxiety experienced by the animal prior to unconsciousness*" (Beaver et al. 2001). Some people would prefer AVMA accepted methods of euthanasia to be used when killing all animals, including wild animals. The AVMA states that "*For wild and feral animals, many of the recommended means of euthanasia for captive animals are not feasible. In field circumstances, wildlife biologists generally do not use the term euthanasia, but terms such as killing, collecting, or harvesting, recognizing that a distress- free death may not be possible*" (Beaver et al. 2001).

Pain and suffering, as it relates to methods available for use to manage waterfowl has both a professional and lay point of arbitration. Wildlife managers and the public would be better served to recognize the complexity of defining suffering, since *"…neither medical nor veterinary curricula explicitly address suffering or its relief"* (CDFG 1991). Research suggests that some methods can cause "*stress*" (USDA 1997). However, such research has not yet progressed to the development of objective, quantitative measurements of pain or stress for use in evaluating humaneness.

The decision-making process involves trade-offs between the above aspects of pain and humaneness. Therefore, humaneness, in part, appears to be a person's perception of harm or pain inflicted on an animal, and people may perceive the humaneness of an action differently. The challenge in coping with this issue is how to achieve the least amount of animal suffering.

Additional concerns have been expressed over the potential separation of goose families through management actions. Generally, adult geese form pair bonds that are maintained until one of the pair dies. However, geese will form new pairs bonds even when their previous mate is still alive (MacInnes et al. 1974). Goose family units generally migrate together during the fall migration period and spend much of the fall and winter together (Raveling 1968, Raveling 1969). The separation of family units could

occur during waterfowl damage management activities. This could occur through relocation of nuisance/hazardous geese or through removal and euthanasia.

The issue of humanness and animal welfare concerns will be further discussed as it relates to the methods available for use under the alternatives in Chapter 4. Minimization and SOPs to alleviate pain and suffering are discussed in Chapter 3.

Issue 5 - Effects on the Aesthetic Values of Canada Geese

One issue is the concern that the proposed action or the alternatives would result in the loss of aesthetic benefits of Canada geese to the public, resource owners, or neighboring residents. Wildlife generally is regarded as providing economic, recreational, and aesthetic benefits (Decker and Goff 1987), and the mere knowledge that wildlife exists is a positive benefit to many people. Aesthetics is the philosophy dealing with the nature of beauty, or the appreciation of beauty. Therefore, aesthetics is truly subjective in nature, dependent on what an observer regards as beautiful.

The human attraction to animals has been well documented throughout history and started when humans began domesticating animals. The American public shares a similar bond with animals and/or wildlife in general and in modern societies a large percentage of households have indoor or outdoor pets. However, some people may consider individual wild animals and birds as "pets" or exhibit affection toward these animals, especially people who enjoy viewing wildlife. Therefore, the public reaction is variable and mixed to wildlife damage management because there are numerous philosophical, aesthetic, and personal attitudes, values, and opinions about the best ways to manage conflicts/problems between humans and wildlife.

Wildlife populations provide a wide range of social and economic benefits (Decker and Goff 1987). Those benefits include direct benefits related to consumptive and non-consumptive uses, indirect benefits derived from vicarious wildlife related experiences, and the personal enjoyment of knowing wildlife exists and contributes to the stability of natural ecosystems (Bishop 1987). Direct benefits are derived from a personal relationship with animals and may take the form of direct consumptive use (using parts of or the entire animal) or non-consumptive use (viewing the animal in nature or in a zoo, photographing) (Decker and Goff 1987).

Indirect benefits or indirect exercised values arise without the user being in direct contact with the animal and come from experiences such as looking at photographs and films of wildlife, reading about wildlife, or benefiting from activities or contributions of animals such as their use in research (Decker and Goff 1987). Indirect benefits come in two forms: bequest and pure existence (Decker and Goff 1987). Bequest is providing for future generations and pure existence is merely knowledge that the animals exist (Decker and Goff 1987).

Public attitudes toward wildlife vary considerably. Some people believe that all wildlife should be captured and relocated to another area to alleviate damage or threats to protected resources. Some people directly affected by the problems caused by wildlife strongly support lethal removal. Individuals not directly affected by the harm or damage may be supportive, neutral, or totally opposed to any removal of wildlife from specific locations or sites. Some people totally opposed to wildlife damage management want agencies to teach tolerance for damage and threats caused by wildlife, and that wildlife should never be killed. Some of the people who oppose removal of wildlife do so because of human-affectionate bonds with individual wildlife. These human-affectionate bonds are similar to attitudes of a pet owner and result in aesthetic enjoyment.

The effects on the aesthetic value of geese from implementation of the identified alternatives, including the proposed action, are analyzed in Chapter 4.

Issue 6 - Effects of Management Methods[7] on Human Health and Safety

An additional issue often raised is the potential risks to human safety associated with employing methods to manage damage caused by target species. Both chemical and non-chemical methods have the potential to have adverse affects on human safety. WS' employees use and recommend only those methods which are legally available, selective for target species, and effective to resolve the wildlife conflict. Still, some concerns exist regarding the safety of WS' methods despite their legality. As a result, WS will analyze the potential for proposed methods to pose a risk to members of the public or employees of WS.

In addition to the potential risks to the public associated with WS' methods, risks to employees are also an issue. WS' employees are potentially exposed to damage management methods as well as subject to workplace accidents. Selection of methods, as part of an integrated approach, includes consideration for public and employee safety.

Safety of Chemical Methods Employed

The issue of using chemicals methods as part of managing damage associated with wildlife relates to the potential for human exposure either through direct contact with the chemical or exposure to the chemical from wildlife that have been exposed. Under the alternatives identified, the use of chemical methods would be limited to immobilizing drugs, reproductive inhibitors, and repellents. A list and description of chemical methods available for use under the identified alternatives can be found in Appendix B and will be discussed further in Chapter 4. The use of chemical methods is regulated by the EPA through the FIFRA, by the FDA, and by State laws and regulations. WS' use of chemical methods is further discussed in WS' programmatic FEIS (USDA 1997).

Safety of Non-Chemical Methods Employed

Non-chemical methods employed to reduce damage and threats to safety caused by geese, if misused, could potentially be hazardous to human safety. Non-chemical methods are also discussed in detail in Appendix B. The cooperator requesting assistance is made aware through a MOU, cooperative service agreement, or a similar document that those devices agreed upon could potentially be used on property owned or managed by the cooperator to resolve the waterfowl damage management request.

Effects of Not Employing Methods to Reduce Threats to Human Safety

An additional issue identified is the concern for human safety from not employing methods or not employing the most effective methods to reduce the threats that geese can pose. The risks to human safety from diseases associated with goose populations were addressed previously. The low risk of disease transmission from geese does not lessen the concerns of cooperators requesting assistance to reduce threats from zoonotic diseases. Increased public awareness of zoonotic events has only heightened the concern of direct or indirect exposure to zoonoses. Not adequately addressing the threats associated with potential zoonoses could lead to an increase in incidences of injury, illness, or loss of human life.

Additional concern is raised with inadequately addressing threats to human safety associated with aircraft striking geese at airports in the State. Geese have the potential to cause severe damage to aircraft and can

[7]A complete list of chemical and non-chemical methods available for use under the identified alternatives, except the alternative with no damage management (Alternative 1), can be found in Appendix B. However, listing methods neither implies that all methods will be used by WS to resolve requests for assistance nor does listing of methods imply that all methods will be used to resolve every request for assistance.

threaten the safety of passengers. Limiting or preventing the use of certain methods to address the potential for aircraft striking geese could lead to higher risks to passenger safety. This issue will be fully evaluated in Chapter 4 in relationship to the alternatives.

Issue 7 - Effects on the Regulated Harvest of Canada Geese

Another issue commonly identified is a concern that goose damage management activities conducted by WS would affect the ability to harvest geese during the regulated hunting season by reducing local goose populations. Potential impacts could arise from the use of non-lethal or lethal damage management methods. Non-lethal methods used to reduce or alleviate damage caused by geese are used to reduce the goose densities through dispersal in damage management areas. Similarly, lethal methods used to reduce damage associated with geese could lower goose densities in areas where damage is occurring resulting in a reduction in the availability of geese during the regulated harvest season. WS' goose damage management activities would primarily be conducted on populations in areas where hunting access is restricted (*e.g.*, airports) or has been ineffective (*e.g.*, urban areas). The use of non-lethal or lethal methods often disperses geese from areas where damage is occurring to areas outside the damage area which could serve to move geese from those less accessible areas to places accessible to hunters.

2.3 ISSUES CONSIDERED BUT NOT ANALYZED IN DETAIL WITH RATIONALE

Additional issues were also identified by WS during the scoping process of this EA that were considered but will not receive detailed analyses for the reasons provided. The following issues were considered but will not be analyzed in detail:

Appropriateness of Preparing an EA for Such a Large Area

A concern was raised that an EA for an area as large as the State of Rhode Island would not meet the NEPA requirements for site specificity. Wildlife damage management falls within the category of federal or other regulatory agency actions in which the exact timing or location of individual activities cannot usually be predicted well enough ahead of time to accurately describe such locations or times in an EA or an EIS. Although WS can predict some of the possible locations or types of situations and sites where some kinds of wildlife damage will occur, the program cannot predict the specific locations or times at which affected resource owners will determine a damage problem has become intolerable to the point that they request assistance from WS. In addition, the WS program would not be able to prevent such damage in all areas where it might occur without resorting to destruction of wild animal populations over broad areas at a much more intensive level than would be desired by most people, including WS and state agencies. Such broad scale population management would also be impractical or impossible to achieve within WS' policies and professional philosophies.

Lead agencies have the discretion to determine the geographic scope of their NEPA analyses (Kleppe v Sierra Club, 427 U.S. 390, 414 (1976), CEQ 1508.25). Ordinarily, according to APHIS procedures implementing the NEPA, WS' individual wildlife damage management actions may be categorically excluded (7 CFR 372.5(c)). The intent in developing this EA is to determine if the proposed action would potentially have significant individual and/or cumulative impacts on the quality of the human environment that would warrant the preparation of an EIS or a finding of no significant impact. This EA addresses impacts for managing damage and threats to human safety associated with Canada geese in the State to analyze individual and cumulative impacts and to provide thorough analyses.

In terms of considering cumulative effects, one EA analyzing impacts for the entire State would provide a more comprehensive and less redundant analysis than multiple EAs covering smaller areas. If a determination is made through this EA that the proposed action would have a significant impact on the

quality of the human environment, then an EIS would be prepared. In addition, the WS program in Rhode Island would continue to only conduct Canada goose damage management in a very small area of the State where damage is occurring or likely to occur.

WS' Impact on Biodiversity

The WS program does not attempt to eradicate any species of native wildlife in the State. WS operates in accordance with applicable international, federal, and state laws and regulations enacted to ensure species viability. Methods available are employed to target individual geese or groups of geese identified as causing damage or posing a threat of damage. Any reduction of a local population or group is frequently temporary because immigration from adjacent areas or reproduction replaces the animals removed. WS operates on a small percentage of the land area of Rhode Island and only targets those geese identified as causing damage or posing a threat. Therefore, impacts on biodiversity associated with goose damage management will not adversely affect biodiversity in the State.

A Loss Threshold Should Be Established Before Allowing Lethal Methods

One issue identified through WS' implementation of the NEPA processes is a concern that a threshold of loss should be established before employing lethal methods to resolve damage and that wildlife damage should be a cost of doing business. Some damage and economic loss can be tolerated by cooperators until the damage reaches a threshold where damage becomes an economic burden. The appropriate level of allowed tolerance or threshold before employing lethal methods would differ among cooperators and damage situations. Establishing a threshold would be difficult or inappropriate to apply to human health and safety situations.

In a ruling for Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, et al. vs. Hugh Thompson, Forest Supervisor for the Dixie National Forest, et al., the United States District Court of Utah denied the plaintiffs' motion for a preliminary injunction. In part, the court found that a forest supervisor needs only show that damage from wildlife is threatened, to establish a need for wildlife damage management (Civil No. 92-C-0052A January 20, 1993). Thus, there is judicial precedence indicating that it is not necessary to establish a criterion such as a percentage of loss of a particular resource to justify the need for wildlife damage management actions.

Canada Goose Damage Management Should Not Occur at Taxpayer Expense

An issue identified through the development of WS' programmatic FEIS is the concern that wildlife damage management should not be provided at the expense of the taxpayer or that activities should be fee-based (USDA 1997). Funding for Canada goose damage management activities is derived from federal appropriations and through cooperative funding. Activities conducted in the State for the management of damage and threats to human safety from geese will be funded through cooperative service agreements with individual property owners or associations. Therefore, funding for damage management activities is derived primarily from those entities requesting assistance from WS.

Cost Effectiveness of Management Methods

The CEQ does not require a formal, monetized cost benefit analysis to comply with the NEPA. Consideration of this issue is not essential to making a reasoned choice among the alternatives being considered. However, the methods determined to be most effective to reduce damage and threats to human safety caused by geese and that prove to be the most cost effective will receive the greatest application. As part of an integrated approach using WS' Decision Model, evaluation of methods will continually occur to allow for those methods that are most effective at resolving damage or threats to be

employed under similar circumstance where geese are causing damage or pose a threat. Additionally, management operations may be constrained by cooperator funding and/or objectives and needs.

Canada Goose Damage Should Be Managed By Private Nuisance Wildlife Control Agents

Private nuisance wildlife control agents could be contacted to reduce goose damage for property owners. Some property owners would prefer to use a private nuisance wildlife control agent because the nuisance wildlife agent is located in closer proximity and thus could provide the service at less expense, or because they prefer to use a private business rather than a government agency. However, some property owners would prefer to contract with a government agency. In particular, large industrial businesses and cities may prefer to use WS because of security and safety issues and reduced administrative burden.

Effects from the Use of Lead Ammunition in Firearms

Questions have arisen about the deposition of lead into the environment from ammunition used in firearms to lethally take birds. As described in Appendix B, the lethal removal of Canada geese with firearms by WS to alleviate damage or threats would occur using a rifle or shotgun. In an ecological risk assessment of lead shot exposure in non-waterfowl birds, ingestion of lead shot was identified as the concern rather than just contact with lead shot or lead leaching from shot in the environment (Kendall et al. 1996). To address lead exposure from the use of shotguns, the standard conditions of depredation permits issued by the USFWS pursuant to the MBTA for the lethal take of birds requires the use of non-toxic shot. To alleviate concerns associated with lead exposure in wildlife, WS will only use non-toxic shot as defined in 50 CFR §20.21(j) when using shotguns to take all waterfowl.

Take of Canada geese by WS in the State occurs primarily from the use of shotguns. However, the use of rifles could be employed to lethally take geese. To reduce risks to human safety and property damage from bullets passing through birds, the use of rifles is applied in such a way (*e.g.*, caliber, bullet weight, distance) to ensure the bullet does not pass through birds. Birds that are removed using rifles will occur within areas where retrieval of all bird carcasses for proper disposal is highly likely (*e.g.*, at roost sites). With risks of lead exposure occurring primarily from ingestion of shot and bullet fragments, the retrieval and proper disposal of bird carcasses will greatly reduce the risk of scavengers ingesting or being exposed to lead.

However, deposition of lead into soil could occur if, during the use of a rifle, the projectile passes through a bird, if misses occur, or if the bird carcass is not retrieved. Laidlaw et al. (2005) reported that, because of the low mobility of lead in soil, all of the lead that accumulates on the surface layer of the soil is generally retained within the top 20 cm (about 8 inches). In addition, concerns occur that lead from bullets deposited in soil from shooting activities could contaminate water, either ground water or surface water, from runoff. Stansley et al. (1992) studied lead levels in water that was subjected directly to high concentrations of lead shot accumulation because of intensive target shooting at several shooting ranges. Lead did not appear to "transport" readily in surface water when soils were neutral or slightly alkaline in pH (*i.e.*, not acidic), but lead did transport more readily under slightly acidic conditions. Although Stansley et al. (1992) detected elevated lead levels in water in a stream and a marsh that were in the shot "fall zones", the study did not find higher lead levels in a lake into which the stream drained, except for one sample collected near a parking lot where it was believed the lead contamination was due to runoff from the parking lot, and not from the shooting range areas. The study also indicated that even when lead shot is highly accumulated in areas with permanent water bodies present, the lead does not necessarily cause elevated lead contamination of water further downstream. Muscle samples from two species of fish collected in the water bodies with high lead shot accumulations had lead levels that were well below the accepted threshold standard of safety for human consumption (Stansley et al. 1992).

Craig et al. (1999) reported that lead levels in water draining away from a shooting range with high accumulations of lead bullets in the soil around the impact areas were far below the "action level" of 15 parts per billion as defined by the EPA (*i.e.*, requiring action to treat the water to remove lead). The study found that the dissolution (*i.e.*, capability of dissolving in water) of lead declines when lead oxides form on the surface areas of the spent bullets and fragments (Craig et al. 1999). Therefore, the transport of lead from bullets or shot distributed across the landscape is reduced once the bullets and shot form crusty lead oxide deposits on their surfaces, which serves to naturally further reduce the potential for ground or surface water contamination (Craig et al. 1999). These studies suggest that, given the very low amount of lead being deposited and the concentrations that would occur from WS' activities to reduce goose damage using rifles, as well as most other forms of dry land small game hunting in general, lead contamination of water from such sources would be minimal to nonexistent.

Since Canada geese can be taken under several depredation orders without the need to obtain a depredation permit from the USFWS, WS' assistance with removing geese would not be additive to the environmental status quo since those geese removed by WS using firearms could be lethally removed by the entities experiencing damage using the same method in the absence of WS' involvement. The amount of lead deposited into the environment may be lowered by WS' involvement in goose damage management activities due to efforts by WS to ensure projectiles do not pass through but are contained within the bird carcass which limits the amount of lead potentially deposited into soil from projectiles passing through the carcass. The proficiency training received by WS' employees in firearm use and accuracy increases the likelihood that birds are lethally removed humanely in situations that ensure accuracy and that misses occur infrequently which further reduces the potential for lead to be deposited in the soil from misses or from projectiles passing through carcasses. In addition, WS' involvement ensures bird carcasses lethally removed using firearms will be retrieved and disposed of properly to limit the availability of lead in the environment and ensures bird carcass are removed from the environment to prevent the ingestion of lead in carcasses by scavengers. Based on current information, the risks associated with lead bullets that are deposited into the environment from WS' activities due to misses, the bullet passing through the carcass, or from bird carcasses that may be irretrievable would be below any level that would pose any risk from exposure or significant contamination of water or soils. As stated previously, when using shotguns, only non-toxic shot would be used by WS.

Impacts of Dispersing Geese to other Areas

Another issue often raised is that the dispersal of geese from one location to alleviate damage or conflicts can result in new damage or conflicts at a new location. While the original complainant may see resolution to the goose damage when the birds are dispersed, the recipient of the geese may see the goose problem as imposed on them. Thus, on the whole, there is no resolution to the original goose problem (Mott and Timbrook 1988). Bird species are usually dispersed using a combination of harassment methods including pyrotechnics, propane cannons, and electronic distress calls (Booth 1994). A similar continuing conflict can develop when severe habitat alteration is used to disperse geese. This concern is heightened in large metropolitan areas where the likelihood of dispersed geese finding a new location and not coming into conflict is very low. WS has minimized the impact of dispersing geese in urban/suburban areas by creating a management option to reduce the number of geese using a location that are responsible for creating the conflict problem.

In urban areas, WS often works with the community or municipal leaders to address goose damage involving large concentrations of geese that are likely affecting several people. Therefore, WS often consults not only with the property owner where roosts are located but with community leaders to allow for community-based decision-making on the best management approach. In addition, when seeking funding for goose damage management activities, funding is often provided by the municipality where the geese are located which allows for goose damage management activities to occur within city limits where

the damage is occurring. This allows for geese that have been dispersed and begin to cause damage or pose threats to be addressed effectively and often times, before those geese become well-established in a new location. The community-based decision-making approach to goose damage management in urban areas is further discussed under the proposed action alternative in Chapter 3. Therefore, this issue was not analyzed further.

A Site Specific Analysis Should be Made for Every Location Where Goose Damage Management Could Occur

The underlying intent for preparing an EA is to determine if a proposed action might have a significant impact on the human environment. WS' EA development process is issue driven, meaning issues that were raised during the interdisciplinary process and through public involvement that were substantive, were used to drive the analysis and determine the significance of the environmental impacts of the proposed action and the alternatives. Therefore, the level of site specificity must be appropriate to the issues listed.

The analysis in this EA was driven by the issues raised during the scoping process during the development of the EA. In addition to the analysis contained in this EA, WS' personnel use the WS Decision Model (Slate et al. 1992, USDA 1997) described in Chapter 3 as a site specific tool to develop the most appropriate strategy at each location. The WS Decision Model is an analytical thought process used by WS' personnel for evaluating and responding to wildlife damage management requests.

As discussed previously, one EA analyzing impacts for the entire State will provide a more comprehensive and less redundant analysis than multiple EAs covering smaller areas and allows for a better cumulative impact analysis. If a determination is made through this EA that the proposed action would have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment, then an EIS would be prepared.

Effects on Human Health from Consumption of Geese Donated

Of concern under this issue is the consumption of waterfowl meat donated to charitable organization after being lethally taken by WS. Of recent concern is the potential for lead bullet fragments to be present in meat that has been processed for human consumption. In addition, the potential for the spreading of zoonotic diseases or other contaminants in geese processed and donated for human consumption is also a concern.

In order to address potential health concerns associated with consuming geese, Canada geese donated for human consumption may be tested for exposure to substances such as organophosphate and carbamate insecticides, lead, mercury, arsenic, organochlorines, and organic chemicals prior to distribution. The entity selecting the capture/euthanize (and donation for charitable consumption) program would be responsible for all costs associated with legal and appropriate donation for human consumption. Poultry processing facilities utilized for this process would be in compliance with existing USDA regulations pertaining to the processing and handling of fowl (*e.g.*, turkeys, chickens).

Geese immobilized using alpha-chloralose would not be donated for human consumption with disposal of carcasses occurring by deep burial or incineration. Geese taken by any method for disease sampling or in an area where zoonotic diseases of concern are known to be prevalent and of concern to human health after consuming processed goose meat would not be donated for consumption and would be disposed of by deep burial or incineration.

WS' activities to alleviate damage or threats associated with geese in the State will only occur after receiving a request for direct operational assistance. Therefore, the decision to process geese for human

consumption that were taken by WS would be the sole responsibility of the entity requesting assistance. WS will not process and/or donate processed goose meat to charitable organizations and would not be involved with the processing and/or donation of the meat to charitable organizations.

CHAPTER 3: ALTERNATIVES

Chapter 3 contains a discussion of the alternatives which were developed to address the identified issues discussed in Chapter 2. Alternatives were developed for consideration based on the issues using the WS Decision model (Slate et al. 1992, USDA 1997) and based on information in the resident Canada goose management FEIS developed by the USFWS (USFWS 2005). The alternatives will receive detailed environmental impacts analysis in Chapter 4 (Environmental Consequences). Chapter 3 also discusses alternatives considered but not analyzed in detail, with rationale. Minimization measures and SOPs for waterfowl damage management in Rhode Island are also discussed in Chapter 3.

3.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE ALTERNATIVES

The following alternatives were developed to address the identified issues associated with managing damage caused by Canada geese in the State:

Alternative 1 – No Canada Goose Damage Management Conducted by WS

This alternative precludes any and all activities by WS to reduce threats to human health and safety, and alleviate damage to agricultural resources, property, and natural resources. WS would not be involved with any aspect of goose damage management in the State. All requests for assistance received by WS to resolve damage caused by geese would be referred to the RIDEM, the USFWS, municipalities, and/or to private entities.

Despite no involvement by WS in resolving damage and threats associated with Canada geese in the State, those persons in Rhode Island experiencing damage caused by geese could continue to resolve damage by employing those methods legally available and permitted for use. Canada geese could continue to be lethally taken in Rhode Island pursuant to depredation orders or through the issuance of depredation permits by the USFWS. In addition, Canada geese could be lethally taken during the regulated harvest seasons in the State. All methods described in Appendix B would be available for use by those experiencing damage or threats except for the use of alpha chloralose which can only be used by WS. Currently, no reproductive inhibitors are registered for use to manage goose damage in the State.

Alternative 2 – Canada Goose Damage Management by WS through Technical Assistance Only

Under this alternative, WS would provide those cooperators requesting assistance with managing damage and threats associated with Canada geese with technical assistance only. Technical assistance would provide those cooperators experiencing damage or threats associated with geese with information, demonstrations, and recommendations on available and appropriate methods available. The implementation of methods and techniques to resolve or prevent damage is the responsibility of the requester with no direct involvement by WS. In some cases, WS may provide supplies or materials that are of limited availability for use by private entities. Technical assistance may be provided through a personal or telephone consultation, or during an on-site visit with the requester. Generally, several management strategies are described to the requester for short and long-term solutions to damage problems; those strategies are based on the level of risk, need, and the practicality of their application. In some instances, wildlife-related information provided to the requestor results in tolerance/acceptance of the situation. In other instances, management options are discussed and recommended. Only those methods legally available for use by the appropriate individual would be recommend or loaned by WS. Similar to Alternative 1, those methods described in Appendix B would be available to those experiencing damage or threats associated with geese in the State except for alpha chloralose. No reproductive inhibitor is currently registered for use to manage goose damage in the State. If a reproductive inhibitor

becomes registered in the State, the recommendation of the use of the inhibitor to those experiencing damage would be dependent on the availability of the product to the public.

Canada geese could be lethally taken during the annual harvest seasons, under depredation permits issued by the USFWS, and pursuant to depredation orders established by the USFWS when certain criteria of those orders are met.

This alternative would place the immediate burden of operational damage management work on the resource owner, other governmental agencies, and/or other private entities. Those persons experiencing damage or threats could take action using those methods legally available to resolve or prevent goose damage as permitted by federal, state, and local laws and regulations or those persons could take no action.

Alternative 3 - Continuing the Current Integrated Approach to Managing Canada Goose Damage (Proposed Action/No Action)

This alternative, the no action/proposed action alternative, would continue the current 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 Canada geese in the State. A major goal of the program would be to resolve and prevent goose damage and to reduce threats to human safety. To meet this goal, WS, in coordination with the USFWS and the RIDEM, would continue to respond to requests for assistance with, at a minimum, technical assistance, or when funding is available, operational damage management. Funding could occur through federal appropriations or from cooperative funding. The adaptive approach to managing damage associated with geese would integrate the use of the most practical and effective methods to resolve a request for damage management as determined by site-specific evaluation to reduce damage or threats to human safety for each request. City/town managers, agricultural producers, property owners, and others requesting assistance would be provided information regarding the use of appropriate non-lethal and lethal techniques.

Non-lethal methods include, but are not limited to: habitat/behavior modification, lure crops, visual deterrents, dogs, live traps, exclusionary devices, frightening devices, chemical immobilization, reproductive inhibitors, and chemical repellents (see Appendix B for a complete list and description of potential methods). Lethal methods considered by WS include: live-capture followed by euthanasia and shooting. Euthanasia would occur through the use of cervical dislocation or by asphyxiation using carbon dioxide once geese are live-captured using other methods. Carbon dioxide is an acceptable form of euthanasia for birds while cervical dislocation is a conditionally acceptable[8] method of euthanasia (AVMA 2007).

Appendix B contains a thorough discussion of the methods available for use in an integrated wildlife damage management approach to address requests for assistance to manage damage or reduce threats to human safety. WS' programmatic FEIS contains additional discussion on adaptive management using an integrated approach to address damage to resources and threats to human safety (USDA 1997). As part of an integrated approach, WS may provide technical assistance and direct operational assistance to those experiencing damage associated with geese.

[8] The AVMA (2007) defines conditional acceptable as "...[methods] *that by the nature of the technique or because of greater potential for operator error or safety hazards might not consistently produce humane death or are methods not well documented in the scientific literature".*

Technical Assistance Recommendations

Under the proposed action, WS would provide technical assistance to those persons requesting goose damage management as part of an integrated approach to managing damage. Technical assistance would occur as described in Alternative 2 of this EA. Technical assistance is further discussed in WS' programmatic FEIS (USDA 1997).

The WS program in the State regularly provides technical assistance to individuals, organizations, and other federal, State, and local government agencies for managing goose damage. Technical assistance includes collecting information about the species involved, the nature and extent of the damage, and previous methods that the cooperator has attempted to resolve the problem. WS then provides information on appropriate methods that the cooperator may consider to resolve the damage themselves. Types of technical assistance projects may include a visit to the affected property, written communication, telephone conversations, or presentations to groups such as homeowner associations or civic leagues.

From FY 2006 through FY 2009, WS conducted 34 technical assistance projects in Rhode Island that involved Canada goose damage to agricultural resources, property, natural resources, and threats to human safety.

Operational Damage Management Assistance

Operational damage management assistance includes damage management activities that are directly conducted or supervised by personnel of WS. Operational damage management assistance may be initiated when the problem cannot effectively be resolved through technical assistance alone and there is a written cooperative service agreement between WS and the entity requesting assistance. The initial investigation defines the nature, history, and extent of the problem; species responsible for the damage; and methods available to resolve the problem. The professional skills of WS' personnel are often required to effectively resolve problems, especially if restricted-use chemicals are necessary or if the problems are complex. Operational damage management occurs when WS' employees are directly involved with employing methods when requested to resolve damage associated with geese.

Educational Efforts

Education is an important element of activities because wildlife damage management is about finding balance and coexistence between the needs of people and needs of wildlife. This is extremely challenging as nature has no balance, but rather is in continual flux. In addition to the routine dissemination of recommendations and information to individuals or organizations sustaining damage, WS provides lectures, courses, and demonstrations to producers, homeowners, State and county agents, colleges and universities, and other interested groups. Consulting agencies frequently cooperate with other entities in education and public information efforts. Additionally, technical papers are presented at professional meetings and conferences so that other wildlife professionals and the public are periodically updated on recent developments in damage management technology, programs, laws and regulations, and agency policies.

Research and Development

The National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) provides scientific information and development of methods for wildlife damage management that are effective and environmentally responsible. Research biologists with the NWRC work closely with wildlife managers, researchers, and others to develop and evaluate wildlife damage management techniques. For example, research biologists from the NWRC were involved with developing and evaluating nicarbazin for reducing the hatchability of Canada goose

eggs. Biologists are also currently evaluating diazacon as a reproductive inhibitor in wildlife. NWRC biologists have authored hundreds of scientific publications and reports, and are respected world-wide for their expertise in wildlife damage management research.

WS' Decision Making Procedures

WS' personnel use a thought process for evaluating and responding to damage complaints which is depicted by the WS Decision Model (WS Directive 2.201) and described by Slate et al. (1992). WS' programmatic FEIS provides further discussion and examples of how the Decision Model is used to address damage and threats associated with wildlife (USDA 1997). WS' personnel are frequently contacted after requesters have tried or considered non-lethal methods and found them to be impractical, too costly, or inadequate for effectively reducing damage. WS' personnel assess the problem and then evaluate the appropriateness and availability (legal and administrative) of strategies and methods based on biological, economic, and social considerations. Following this evaluation, methods deemed to be practical for the situation are incorporated into a management strategy. After this strategy has been implemented, monitoring is conducted and evaluation continues to assess the effectiveness of the strategy. If the strategy is effective, the need for further management is ended. In terms of the WS Decision Model, most damage management efforts consist of continuous feedback between receiving the request and monitoring the results of the damage management strategy. The Decision Model is not a written documented process, but a mental problem-solving process common to most, if not all, professions, including WS.

Community Based Decision-Making

The WS program in Rhode Island follows the "co-managerial approach" to solving wildlife damage or conflicts as described by Decker and Chase (1997). Within this management model, WS provides technical assistance regarding the biology and ecology of geese and effective, practical, and reasonable methods available to the local decision-maker(s) to reduce damage or threats. This includes non-lethal and lethal methods. WS and other state and federal wildlife management agencies may facilitate discussions at local community meetings when resources are available. Resource owners and others directly affected by goose damage or conflicts in the State have direct input into the resolution of such problems. They may implement management recommendations provided by WS or others, or may request management assistance from WS, other wildlife management agencies, local animal control agencies, or private businesses or organizations.

Under a community based decision-making process, WS would provide information, demonstration, and discussion on all available methods to the appropriate representatives of the community for which services were requested to ensure a community-based decision is made. By involving decision-makers in the process, damage management actions can be presented to allow for decisions on damage management to involve those individuals that the decision-maker(s) represents. As addressed in the EA, WS would provide technical assistance to the appropriate decision-maker(s) to allow for information on damage management activities to be presented to those represented by the decision-maker(s), including demonstrations and presentation by WS at public meetings to allow for involvement of the community. Requests for assistance to manage waterfowl often originate from the decision-maker(s) based on community feedback or from concerns about damage or threats to human safety. As representatives, the decision-maker(s) are able to provide the information to local interests either through technical assistance provided by WS or through demonstrations and presentation by WS on goose damage management activities. This process allows decisions on goose damage management activities to be made based on local input.

Community Decision-Makers

The decision-maker(s) for a local community or communities (*e.g.*, homeowner or civic association) would be a community president, a Board's appointee, or a governing Board. Those positions are popularly elected residents of the local community who oversee the interests and business of the local community. Those persons would represent the local community's interest and make decisions for the local community or bring information back to a higher authority or the community for discussion and decision-making. If no community president, Board appointee, or governing Board represents the affected resource then WS will provide technical assistance to the individual or locally appointed decision-maker. Identifying the decision-maker for local business communities is more complex since building leases or owners may not indicate whether the business must manage wildlife damage themselves, or seek approval to manage wildlife from the property owner or manager, or from a governing Board. WS would provide technical assistance and make recommendations for damage reduction to the local community or local business community decision-maker(s). Direct control would be provided by WS only if requested by the local community decision-maker, when funding is provided, and if the requested direct operation assistance was compatible with WS' recommendations.

Private Property Decision-Makers

In the case of private property owners, the decision-maker is the individual that owns or manages the affected property. The decision-maker has the discretion to involve others as to what occurs or does not occur on property they own or manage. Due to privacy issues, WS can not disclose cooperator information to others. Therefore, in the case of an individual property owner or manager, the involvement of others and to what degree others are involved in the decision-making process is a decision made by that individual.

Public Property Decision-Makers

The decision maker for local, state, or federal property would be the official responsible for or authorized to manage the public land to meet interests, goals, and legal mandates for the property. WS would provide technical assistance to this person and provide recommendations to reduce damage. Direct control would be provided by WS if requested, when funding is provided, and the requested actions were within the recommendations made by WS.

3.2 EXAMPLES OF CANADA GOOSE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT PROJECTS

Nest/Egg Treatments

Nest/egg treatments have been recommended as part of WS' technical assistance program in the State. Nest treatments include visiting the site during the nesting season of geese and addling or oiling the eggs or removing or destroying the nest and/or eggs of those species in the area where damages were occurring. Nest/egg treatment projects are most commonly conducted in public recreation areas, residential developments, golf courses, and industrial/business parks. For Canada geese, the typical egg treatment methods recommended by WS are oiling and addling. Oiling involves coating eggs with 100% corn oil which prevents air from permeating the egg membrane, effectively destroying the embryo and preventing the egg from hatching. Treated eggs are placed intact back into the nest, where the goose will continue to incubate the eggs. Addling involves shaking eggs vigorously to dislodge the embryo from the egg wall, which destroys the embryo and prevents hatching. As with oiling, the goose will continue to incubate the non-viable eggs when they are placed back into the nest intact.

When oiling or addling occurs through direct operational assistance, the WS program in Rhode Island will adhere to the following protocol: 1) visiting the nests every 7-10 days for a 6-8 week period (last week of March to middle of May); and 2) WS will treat only those eggs that are less than 14 days old.

Dog Harassment

Dog harassment of geese has not been directly used by the WS program in Rhode Island, but is a common practice recommended through technical assistance to private individuals who have the ability to use dogs. Dog harassment is most effective in areas with no water bodies or with single, small (less than two acres) water bodies. This technique requires an ongoing program augmented with other goose damage techniques. Dog harassment projects are most commonly conducted in public recreation areas, golf courses, and industrial facilities. The procedure includes using dogs such as border collies or Labrador retrievers to encourage geese to leave an area. Dog harassment usually occurs after the nesting season but before post-nuptial molt and then again after the molt and into the fall. WS recommends the cooperator visit each site at least three days a week. Dog harassment is recommended and would only be conducted by WS in areas where egg treatment has been done in order to reduce the possibility of young being present during harassment. WS also emphasizes dog harassment activities during the resident Canada goose hunting season.

Waterfowl Round-ups

Canada goose round-ups conducted by WS have included using panel nets or drive/corral traps to capture resident Canada geese during the molt when geese are flightless. In Rhode Island, this capturing method is generally used between the last two weeks in June and the first two weeks in July. During this period, adult geese have undergone the molt of their primary feathers which prevents flight. The juveniles during this period are also flightless or unlikely to fly if the adults do not. Once the birds are captured in the traps they are humanely caught and transferred to commercial poultry crates for transportation off site. Geese that are live-captured may be euthanized either using carbon dioxide or cervical dislocation which are methods of euthanasia considered appropriate by the AVMA for wild birds (AVMA 2007). Carcasses of birds euthanized will be disposed of through incineration or burial unless the cooperating entity has made previous arrangement to have the carcasses donated.

3.3 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT ANALYZED IN DETAIL WITH RATIONALE

Non-lethal Methods Implemented Before Lethal Methods

This alternative would require that all non-lethal methods or techniques described in Appendix B be applied to all requests for assistance to reduce damage and threats to safety from geese in the State. If the use of all non-lethal methods fails to resolve the damage situation or reduce threats to human safety at each damage situation, lethal methods would be employed to resolve the request. Non-lethal methods would be applied to every request for assistance regardless of severity or intensity of the damage or threat until deemed inadequate to resolve the request. Those experiencing damage often employ non-lethal methods to reduce damage or threats prior to contacting WS. Verification of the methods used would be the responsibility of WS. No standard exists to determine requester diligence in applying those methods, nor are there any standards to determine how many non-lethal applications are necessary before the initiation of lethal methods. Thus, only the presence or absence of non-lethal methods can be evaluated. The proposed action described in Alternative 3 is similar to a non-lethal before lethal alternative because the use of non-lethal methods is considered before the use of lethal methods by WS (WS Directive 2.101). Adding a non-lethal before lethal alternative and the associated analysis would not provide additional information to the analyses in the EA.

Use of Lethal Methods Only

This alternative would require the use of lethal methods only to reduce threats and damage associated with geese. However, non-lethal methods can be effective in preventing damage in certain instances. Under WS Directive 2.101, WS must consider the use of non-lethal methods before lethal methods. In those situations where damage could be alleviated using exclusionary devices or other non-lethal methods deemed effective, those methods would be employed or recommended as determined by the decision model of WS. Therefore, this alternative was not considered in detail.

Trap and Translocate Geese Only

Under this alternative, all requests for assistance would be addressed using live-capture methods or the recommendation of live-capture methods. Canada geese would be live-captured using corral traps, nets, or through the use of alpha chloralose (WS only). All geese live-captured through direct operational assistance by WS would be translocated. Translocation sites would be identified and approved by the RIDEM prior to live-capture. Live-capture and translocation could be conducted as part of the alternatives analyzed in detail. However, translocation of wildlife, including geese, could only occur under the authority of the RIDEM and the USFWS. Therefore, the translocation of geese by WS would only occur as directed by the RIDEM and the USFWS. Since WS does not have the authority to translocate geese in the State unless permitted by the RIDEM and the USFWS, this alternative was not considered in detail. In addition, the translocation of geese could occur under any of the alternatives analyzed in detail either by WS or another entity.

Use of Non-lethal Methods Only to Resolve Damage or Threats

Under this alternative, WS would be required to implement only non-lethal methods to resolve damage caused by geese. Non-lethal methods often have a high rate of habituation after multiple applications. To lessen habituation, non-lethal harassment and dispersal techniques require application only when geese are present which can lead to elevated costs from increased monitoring of vulnerable resources.

Exclusionary devices can be effective in preventing access to resources in certain circumstances. The primary exclusionary methods are fencing and other barriers. Exclusion is most effective when applied to small areas to protect high value resources. However, exclusionary methods are neither feasible nor effective for protecting human safety, agriculture, or natural resources from geese across large areas. The proposed action, using an integrated damage management approach, incorporates the use of non-lethal methods when addressing requests for assistance. In those instances where non-lethal methods would effectively resolve damage caused by geese those methods would be used or recommended under the proposed action. Since non-lethal methods would be available for use under the alternatives analyzed in detail, this alternative would not add to the analyses.

Reducing Damage by Managing Canada Goose Populations through the Use of Reproductive Inhibitors

Under this alternative, the only method available to resolve requests for assistance would be the recommendation and the use of reproductive inhibitors to reduce or prevent reproduction in geese responsible for causing damage. Reproductive inhibitors are often considered for use where wildlife populations are overabundant and where traditional hunting or lethal control programs are not publicly acceptable (Muller et. al. 1997). Use and effectiveness of reproductive control as a wildlife population management tool is limited by population dynamic characteristics (*e.g.*, longevity, age at onset of reproduction, population size and biological/cultural carrying capacity), habitat and environmental factors

(*e.g.*, isolation of target population, cover types, and access to target individuals), socioeconomic, and other factors.

Reproductive control for wildlife could be accomplished either through sterilization (permanent) or contraception (reversible). Sterilization could be accomplished through: 1) surgical sterilization (vasectomy, castration, and tubal ligation), 2) chemosterilization, and 3) through gene therapy. Contraception could be accomplished through: 1) hormone implantation (synthetic steroids such as progestins), 2) immunocontraception (contraceptive vaccines), and 3) oral contraception (progestin administered daily).

Although male Canada geese have been successfully sterilized to prevent production of young, this method is only effective if the female does not form a bond with a different male. In addition, vasectomies can only prevent the production of the mated pair. The ability to identify breeding pairs for isolation and to capture a male bird for sterilization becomes increasingly difficult as the number of birds increase (Converse and Kennelly 1994). Geese have a long life span once they survive their first year (Cramp and Simmons 1977, Allan et al. 1995); leg-band recovery data indicates that some geese live longer than 20 years. The sterilization of resident geese would not reduce the damage caused by the overabundance of the goose population since the population would remain relatively stable. Keefe (1996) estimated sterilization of a Canada goose to cost over $100 per bird.

Population modeling indicates that reproductive control is more efficient than lethal control only for some rodent and small bird species with high reproductive rates and low survival rates (Dolbeer 1998). Additionally, the need to treat a sufficiently large number of target animals, multiple treatments, and population dynamics of free-ranging populations place considerable logistic and economic constraints on the adoption of reproduction control technologies as a wildlife management tool for some species.

3.4 MINIMIZATION MEASURES FOR WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

Minimization measures are any features of an action that serves to prevent, reduce, or compensate for impacts that otherwise might result from that action. The current WS program, nationwide and in Rhode Island, uses many such minimization measures and these are discussed in detail in Chapter 5 of WS' programmatic FEIS (USDA 1997). Those minimization measures will be incorporated into activities conducted by WS when addressing goose damage and threats in the State.

Some key minimizing measures pertinent to the proposed action and alternatives include the following:

- The WS Decision Model, which is designed to identify effective wildlife damage management strategies and their impacts, is consistently used and applied when addressing goose damage.

- Non-target animals captured in traps are released unless it is determined that the animal will not survive and/or that the animal cannot be released safely.

- WS consults with the USFWS and the RIDEM to ensure activities do not jeopardize the existence of T&E species.

- All personnel who use chemical methods are trained and certified to use such substances or are supervised by trained or certified personnel.

- Management actions are directed toward specific species or individual animals posing a threat to human safety, causing agricultural damage, causing damage to natural resources, or causing damage to property.

- During the use of live-capture methods, WS' personnel will be present on site to monitor the application of the method to address any live-captured wildlife immediately to minimize the amount of time they are restrained.

3.5 ADDITIONAL MINIMIZATION MEASURES SPECIFIC TO THE ISSUES

Issue 1 - Effects on Canada Goose Populations

- Lethal take of Canada geese by WS will be reported and monitored by WS, by the USFWS, and the RIDEM to evaluate population trends and the magnitude of WS' take of geese in the State.

- WS will only target those individuals or groups of Canada geese identified as causing damage or posing a threat to human safety.

- The WS' Decision Model, designed to identify the most appropriate damage management strategies and their impacts, will be used to determine goose damage management strategies.

- WS will annually monitor goose damage management activities to ensure activities do not adversely affect Canada goose populations in the State.

Issue 2 - Effectiveness of Canada Goose Damage Management Methods

- The appropriateness and effectiveness of methods and techniques will be applied based on the WS Decision Model using site specific inputs.

- WS will continually monitor the results of methods employed to ensure those methods deemed appropriate and most effective are used to resolve goose damage.

Issue 3 - Effects on Non-target Wildlife Species Populations, Including T&E Species

- When conducting goose damage management activities via shooting, identification of the target will occur prior to application.

- As appropriate, suppressed firearms will be used to minimize noise impacts.

- Personnel will use lures, trap placements, and capture devices that are strategically placed at locations likely to capture a target animal and minimize the potential of non-target animal captures.

- Any non-target animals captured in cage traps, nets, or any other restraining device will be released whenever it is possible and safe to do so.

- Personnel will be present during the use of all live-capture methods to ensure non-target species are released immediately or are prevented from being captured.

- WS has consulted with the USFWS and the RIDEM to evaluate activities to resolve goose damage and threats to ensure the protection of T&E species.

- WS will annually monitor activities conducted under the selected alternative, if activities are determined to have no significant impact on the environment and an EIS is not required, to ensure those activities do not negatively impact non-target species

Issue 4 - Humaneness and Animal Welfare Concerns of Methods

- Personnel will be well trained in the latest and most humane devices/methods for removing problem geese.

- WS' personnel will be present during the use of all live-capture methods to ensure geese captured will be addressed in a timely manner to minimize the stress of being restrained.

- WS' use of euthanasia methods will follow those recommended by WS' directives (WS Directive 2.505) and the AVMA (AVMA 2007).

- The NWRC is continually conducting research to improve the selectivity and humaneness of wildlife damage management devices used by personnel in the field.

Issue 5 - Effects on the Aesthetic Values of Canada Geese

- Management actions to reduce or prevent damage caused by geese would be directed toward specific individuals identified as responsible for the damage, identified as posing a threat to human safety, or identified as posing a threat of damage.

- All methods or techniques applied to resolve damage or threats to human safety would be agreed upon by entering into a cooperative service agreement, MOU, or comparable document prior to the implementation of those methods.

Issue 6 - Effects of Management Methods on Human Health and Safety

- Damage management activities will be conducted professionally and in the safest manner possible. Most live-trapping will be conducted away from areas of high human activity. If this is not possible, then live-trapping will be conducted during periods when human activity is low (*e.g.*, early morning).

- Damage management via shooting will be conducted professionally and in the safest manner possible. Shooting will be conducted during time periods when public activity and access to the control areas are restricted. Personnel involved in shooting operations will be fully trained in the proper and safe application of this method.

- All personnel employing chemical methods will be properly trained and certified in the use of those chemicals. All chemicals used by WS will be securely stored and properly monitored to ensure the safety of the public. WS' use of chemicals and training requirements to use those chemicals are outlined in WS Directive 2.430.

- All chemical methods used by WS or recommended by WS will be registered with the FDA, EPA, and/or the RIDEM.

- WS' employees who employ alpha-chloralose participate in approved continuing education to maintain certified to use immobilizing drugs.

- WS would adhere to all established withdrawal times for geese when using immobilizing drugs for the capture of waterfowl that are agreed upon by WS, the USFWS, the RIDEM, and veterinarian authorities. Although unlikely, in the event that WS is requested to immobilize geese either during a period of time when harvest of geese is occurring or during a period of time where the withdrawal period could overlap with the start of a harvest season, WS would euthanize the animal.

Issue 7 - Effects on the Regulated Harvests of Canada Geese

- Management actions to reduce or prevent damage caused by geese in the State would be directed toward specific individuals identified as responsible for the damage, identified as posing a threat to human safety, or identified as posing a threat of damage.

- WS' activities to manage damage and threats caused by geese will be coordinated with and conducted under permits issued by the USFWS and/or the RIDEM.

- WS' lethal take (killing) of geese will be reported to and monitored by the USFWS and the RIDEM to ensure WS' take is considered as part of management objectives for geese in the State.

- WS will annually monitor goose damage management activities to ensure activities do not adversely affect goose populations in the State.

CHAPTER 4: ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Chapter 4 provides information needed for making informed decisions in selecting the appropriate alternative to address the need for action described in Chapter 1 and the issues described in Chapter 2. This chapter analyzes the environmental consequences of each alternative as it relates to the issues identified. The following resource values in Rhode Island are not expected to be significantly impacted by any of the alternatives analyzed: soils, geology, minerals, water quality/quantity, flood plains, wetlands, critical habitats (areas listed in T&E species recovery plans), visual resources, air quality, prime and unique farmlands, aquatic resources, timber, and range. Those resources will not be analyzed further. 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 as a result of any of the proposed alternatives. Those alternatives would meet the requirements of applicable laws, regulations, and Executive Orders including the Clean Air Act and Executive Order 13514.

4.1 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES FOR ISSUES ANALYZED IN DETAIL

This section analyzes the environmental consequences of each alternative in comparison to determine the extent of actual or potential impacts on the issues. Therefore, 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, the RIDEM, and the USFWS.

Issue 1 - Effects on Canada Goose Populations

A common issue is whether damage management actions will adversely affect the viability of the target species' population. Canada geese are considered a harvestable waterfowl species with annual hunting seasons occurring in Rhode Island under frameworks established by the USFWS and implemented in the State by the RIDEM. In addition, geese can be lethally taken through the issuance of depredation permits and through depredation orders established by the USFWS. Therefore, the take of geese can occur during annual hunting seasons and under depredation permits or orders that allow geese to be taken to alleviate damage and threats of damage.

WS maintains ongoing contact with USFWS and the RIDEM and submits annual migratory bird activity reports to the USFWS. The USFWS monitors the total take of geese from all sources and factors in survival rates from predation, disease, and other mortality data. Ongoing contact with USFWS and the RIDEM assures local, State, and regional knowledge of wildlife population trends are considered. As discussed previously, the need for action discusses damage and threats associated with Canada geese.

Alternative 1 – No Canada Goose Damage Management Conducted by WS

Under this alternative, WS would not conduct Canada goose damage management activities in the State. WS would have no direct involvement with any aspect of addressing damage caused by geese and would provide no technical assistance. No take of geese by WS would occur in the State. Canada geese could continue to be lethally taken to resolve damage and/or threats occurring through the issuance of depredation permits by the USFWS or under depredation orders established by the USFWS.

Local goose populations could decline, stay the same, or increase depending on actions taken by those persons experiencing damage. Some resource/property owners may hunt geese or allow other hunters access to hunt geese during the hunting season. The USFWS would continue to issue depredation permits for the take of Canada geese to alleviate damage in the State. Resource/property owners may obtain

depredation permits from the USFWS that allows them to lethally take Canada geese outside of the hunting season and in those areas where hunting is not allowed. Canada goose populations could continue to increase where hunting pressure was low or when an insufficient number of geese are removed under depredation permits issued by the USFWS or the depredation orders. Some local populations of geese would temporarily decline or stabilize where hunting pressure and permitted removal activities were adequate. Some resource/property owners may take illegal, unsafe, or environmentally harmful action against local populations of geese out of frustration or ignorance. While WS would provide no assistance under this alternative, other individuals or entities could conduct lethal damage management resulting in impacts similar to the proposed action.

Since the take of Canada geese by those persons experiencing damage could occur despite no involvement by WS and geese would continue to be harvested during the regulated season at the discretion of the USFWS and the RIDEM, the potential effects on the goose population in the State would be similar among all the alternatives for this issue. Since WS' involvement in goose damage management would only occur after the USFWS has issued a permit for such action, WS' involvement would not be additive to take that could occur since the cooperator requesting WS' assistance could conduct goose damage management activities without WS' direct involvement if permitted by the USFWS or if the take occurred pursuant to a depredation order. Therefore, any actions to resolve damage or reduce threats associated with geese could occur by other entities despite WS' lack of involvement under this alternative.

Alternative 2 – Canada Goose Damage Management by WS through Technical Assistance Only

Canada goose populations in the State would not be directly impacted by WS from a program implementing technical assistance only. However, persons experiencing damage or threats from geese could implement methods based on WS' recommendations. Under a technical assistance only alternative, WS would recommend and demonstrate for use both non-lethal and lethal methods legally available for use to resolve goose damage. Methods and techniques recommended would be based on WS' Decision Model using information provided from the requestor or gathered during a site visit. Requestors may implement WS' recommendations, implement other actions, or take no action. However, those requesting assistance are likely those that would implement damage abatement methods in the absence of WS' recommendations.

Under a technical assistance only alternative, those persons experiencing threats or damage associated with geese in the State could apply for a depredation permit from the USFWS to lethally take geese despite WS' lack of direct involvement in the management action. In addition, take could occur under the depredation orders when the criteria for those orders are met. Therefore, under this alternative the number of geese lethally taken would likely be similar to the other alternatives since take could occur through the issuance of depredation permits by the USFWS or under depredation orders. WS' participation in a management action would not be additive to an action that could occur in the absence of WS' participation.

With the oversight of the USFWS through the issuance of depredation permits and orders for the take of geese and input from the RIDEM, it is unlikely that goose populations would be adversely impacted by implementation of this alternative. Under this alternative, WS would not be directly involved with damage management actions and therefore, direct operational assistance could be provided by other entities, such as the RIDEM, USFWS, municipal authorities, and/or private entities. If direct operational assistance is not available from WS or other entities, it is hypothetically possible that frustration caused by the inability to reduce damage and associated losses could lead to illegal take, which could lead to real but unknown effects on waterfowl populations. People have resorted to the illegal use of chemicals and methods to resolve wildlife damage issues (White et al. 1989, USDA 1997, USFWS 2001, FDA 2003).

Effects and hypothetical risks of illegal killing of geese under this alternative would probably be similar to Alternative 1.

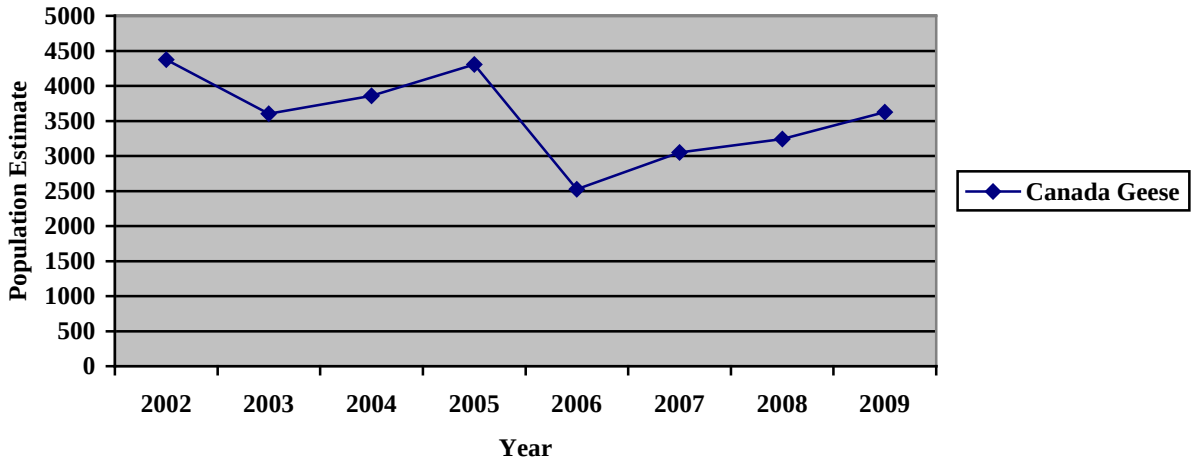
Alternative 3 - Continuing the Current Integrated Approach to Managing Canada Goose Damage (Proposed Action/No Action)

Resident Canada Geese

As discussed previously, Canada geese are considered resident in the State when nesting and/or residing on a year round basis within the State, when nesting in the State during the months of March, April, May, or June, or residing in the State during the months of April, May, June, July, August (Rusch et al. 1995, Ankney 1996, USFWS 2005). Most requests for assistance received by WS occur under the criteria where geese present in the State are considered resident.

The annual population estimates for resident Canada geese in the State from 2002 through 2008 are shown in Figure 1. In 2002, the resident goose population in the State was estimated at 4,373 geese (Klimstra and Padding 2009). In 2009, the resident goose population was estimated at 3,627 geese in the State (Klimstra and Padding 2009). In 1999, the population objective for resident Canada geese in the State was 3,000 individuals (Atlantic Flyway Council 1999). As resident goose populations have increased across the United States, the number of requests for assistance to manage damage associated with geese has also increased (USFWS 2005). Under the selected alternative in the resident Canada goose FEIS developed by the USFWS, several mechanisms were established to allow the States to further manage resident goose populations and goose damage (USFWS 2005). An additional mechanism in place to address increasing resident goose populations was increased opportunities to address resident geese during regulated hunting seasons.

Figure 1 - Resident Canada goose population estimates for Rhode Island, 2002-2009.



As was discussed previously in this EA, Canada geese can be harvested during regulated seasons in the State. Under frameworks developed by the USFWS, the RIDEM allows Canada geese to be harvested during a September hunting season, the regular waterfowl season, and during a late Canada goose season. To manage increasing populations of resident geese across their range, the USFWS established a framework that allowed the States to implement a harvest season in September which was intended to target resident geese specifically. During the September hunting season in 2007, an estimated 200 geese

were harvested statewide (Raftovich et al. 2009). In 2008, the USFWS currently estimates that 1,400 geese were harvested in the State during the September season for geese (Raftovich et al. 2009). During the regular waterfowl season, an estimated 4,800 geese were harvested in the State in 2007 compared to 2,500 geese harvested in the 2008 (Raftovich et al. 2009). During the late goose season in the State, the USFWS estimated 100 geese were harvested during the 2007 season while 200 geese were harvested during the 2008 season (Raftovich et al. 2009).

The take of geese under the depredation orders discussed previously that allow for the take of Canada geese once certain conditions have been met must be reported to the USFWS. Therefore, the cumulative impacts of the proposed action on resident Canada geese populations are based upon the anticipated WS' take, hunter harvest, and authorized take by other entities (*e.g.*, agricultural producers, municipalities, homeowners associations, airports) through the issuance of depredation permits or under the depredation orders. The cumulative take of geese in Rhode Island from 2005 through 2008 is shown in Table 4.1.

Most requests for assistance received by WS to address damage caused by Canada geese occurs during those months when geese present in the State are considered resident. From 2006 through 2009, more than 74% of geese taken by WS in Rhode Island have been taken during the time of year (April through September) when geese are considered resident birds. Therefore, WS' take will be analyzed here as if all birds taken were resident geese. The take of geese by WS did occur during those periods of time from FY 2005 through FY 2009 when geese present in the State could be geese that are not present in the State year round. Distinguishing resident and migratory geese is not possible through visual identification. However, based on those requests received and the type of damage occurring, those geese addressed by WS from FY 2005 through FY 2009 were likely resident geese (*i.e.*, present in the State all year).

WS lethally removed a total of 509 Canada geese in Rhode Island from FY 2005 through FY 2009 which is an average of 102 geese taken by WS annually. With the population of geese estimated at 3,627 geese in the State during 2009, WS' take of 54 geese in FY 2009 to alleviate damage and reduce threats would represent 1.5% of the estimated population. WS' highest level of take occurred in FY 2007 when 151 geese were lethally taken to alleviate damage. WS' take of 151 geese in FY 2007 would represent 5.0% of the estimated statewide goose population in the State during 2007 of 3,050 geese.

Table 4.1 – Cumulative Take of Canada Geese in Rhode Island, 2005-2009

Year	WS' Take[1]	Hunter Harvest			Depredation Take[2]	Total Take
		September	Regular	Late		
2005	80	200	2,800	100	210	**3,390**
2006	97	400	4,500	400	181	**5,578**
2007	151	200	4,800	100	237	**5,488**
2008	127	1,400	2,500	200	250	**4,477**
2009	54	N/A*	N/A	N/A	N/A	**N/A**
TOTAL	**509**	**2,200**	**14,600**	**800**	**878**	**18,933**

[1]WS' take is reported by federal fiscal year

[2]Data provided by the USFWS

*N/A=Information is currently not available

From 2005 through 2008, a total of 2,200 geese were harvested in the State during the September hunting season intended to target resident populations of Canada geese. The highest level of take during the September season occurred during the 2008 season when 1,400 geese were estimated to be harvested in the State. Based on a resident goose population of 3,242 geese estimated in the State during 2008, the take of 1,400 geese during the September season in 2008 which is intended to target resident geese would represent nearly 46% of the estimated statewide population. Despite harvesting nearly 46% of the

estimated resident Canada goose population in the State, the number of geese estimated to be present in the State during the breeding season the following year in 2009 increased to 3,637 geese. The take of geese by WS, the take of geese during the September season, and the take of geese under depredation permits and orders in the State are most likely geese that meet the criteria for resident geese. As shown in Table 4.2, the take of geese by WS, the take of geese during the September season, and depredation take in 2008 accounted for nearly 54.8% of the statewide resident goose population. Despite the take of 54.8% of the estimated goose population in the State during 2008, the 2009 breeding goose estimate of 3,627 geese was higher than the 2008 estimate of 3,242 geese.

Despite the increasing levels of take that occurred on the resident population from 2006 through 2008 in the State, the breeding population estimate continued to increase from 2007 through 2009. The percentage of geese that are taken during the regular waterfowl season and during the late season that would be considered resident birds in the State is unknown. The currently levels of take during those periods when geese taken are resident in the State have not resulted in declines in the resident goose population in the State.

Based on previous requests for assistance, WS anticipates up to 500 geese total could be lethally taken by WS annually in the State based on previous requests for assistance and in anticipation of the need to address additional requests for assistance. Of those 500 geese, up to 150 could be taken during those periods when geese present in the State could be considered as migratory geese. As mentioned previously, those geese addressed by WS during those months when geese present in the State could be considered migratory will be considered migratory despite the possibility that some of the geese take could be resident geese (*i.e.*, present in the State throughout the year).

Table 4.2 – Potential impacts on the resident Canada goose population in Rhode Island from the take of resident geese, 2005 – 2008.

Year	Total Take[1]	Resident Population[2]	% take	Population trend[3]
2005	490	4,306	11.4%	Decline
2006	678	2,525	26.9%	Increase
2007	588	3,050	19.3%	Increase
2008	1,777	3,242	54.8%	Increase

[1]Total take includes WS' take, take during the September season, and take under depredation permits or orders in the State

[2]Adapted from Klimstra and Padding 2009

[3]Trend based on the resident Canada goose population estimate in the State the year following take

WS' take of geese to alleviate damage from FY 2005 through FY 2009 represented 2.8% of the total take of geese that has occurred in the State from 2005 through 2008. WS' take of geese to alleviate damage has been a minor component of the total number of geese taken in the Sate during the regulated harvest seasons and the take of geese under depredation permits or depredation orders. Resident goose populations in the State continue to increase despite the take of geese by WS to alleviate damage, take during the regulated hunting seasons, and the take of geese under the depredation orders and depredation permits. From 2006 through 2009, the population of geese in the State has increased every year. The resident goose population goal for Rhode Island is 3,000 geese (Atlantic Flyway Council 1999). The 2009 resident goose population in the State was estimated at 3,627 geese which exceeds the population goal by nearly 21%.

Under the proposed action, the nests and/or eggs of resident Canada geese could be destroyed by WS as part of an integrated approach to managing damage. Under the proposed action, up to 500 nests could be destroyed annually by WS. WS' take of nests and/or eggs would only occur when permitted by the USFWS through the issuance of depredation permits. WS' take of nests would not exceed 500 annually and would not exceed the level permitted under depredation permits.

Impacts due to nest and egg removal and destruction would have little adverse impact on the resident goose population in Rhode Island. Nest and egg destruction methods are considered non-lethal when conducted before the development of an embryo. Additionally, geese are a long lived species and have the ability to identify areas with regular human disturbance and low reproductive success which causes them to relocate and nest elsewhere when confronted with repeated nest failure. Although there may be reduced fecundity for the individuals affected, this activity has no long term effect on breeding adult geese. Nest and egg removal is not used by WS as a population management method. This method is used by WS to inhibit nesting in an area experiencing damage due to the nesting activity and is employed only at the localized level. Treatment of 95% of all Canada goose eggs each year would result in only a 25% reduction in the population over 10 years (Allan et al. 1995). The resident Canada goose management FEIS developed by the USFWS concluded that a nest and egg depredation order would have minimal impacts on goose populations with only localized reductions in the number of geese occurring (USFWS 2005).

The use of nicarbazin as a reproductive inhibitor is being considered for use in this EA despite the lack of products containing the active ingredient being currently registered for use in the State. Label requirements of OvoControl® G restrict the application of the product to urban areas which limits the extent of the products use for reducing localized waterfowl populations. Based on current information, WS' use or recommendation of nicarbazin formulated under the trade name OvoControl® G would not adversely affect waterfowl populations in Rhode Island since WS' activities will not be additive to those activities that could occur in the absence of WS' use of the product. The resultant reduction in local goose populations from the use of nicarbazin would be highly variable given the variability in the effectiveness of the product to reduce egg hatch in geese. However, given that the effects of nicarbazin are only temporary if birds are not fed an appropriate dose of nicarbazin daily, the reduction in the population could be fully reversed if treated bait is no longer supplied and other conditions (*e.g.*, food, disease) are favorable for population growth.

Based upon past requests for WS' assistance and an anticipated increase in future requests for services, WS anticipates that no more than 500 Canada geese total would likely be killed by WS annually under the proposed action, of which up to 150 could be considered migratory geese. WS anticipates the number of requests to address damage associated with resident Canada geese will increase at airports, municipal parks, golf courses, public beaches, and other public use areas where geese congregate. All take of geese by WS occurs under depredation permits issued by the USFWS. Therefore, the take of geese by WS is considered as part of the management objectives for geese in the State and across the flyway.

Based on the 2008 resident goose population estimate in the State of 3,627 geese, the take of 500 geese by WS would represent less than 13.8% of the estimated statewide population, if all 500 geese were taken during the period when geese would be considered resident geese. Therefore, if the resident Canada goose population in the State remains stable, WS' take of up to 500 geese annually would not exceed 13.8% of the estimated population. Since 2006, survey data of resident goose populations in the State indicate the population has increased 43.6% or nearly 11% per year. As stated previously, the population goal in Rhode Island is 3,000 resident Canada geese. The take of 500 geese by WS would represent 16.7% of the population goal if the goal is reached in the State. All take by WS occurs under depredation permits issued by the USFWS for the take of geese. WS' take of up to 500 geese annually would be dependent upon the USWFS authorizing the take at that level annually. Take by WS would not exceed the permitted take allowed under depredation permits issued by the USFWS. With management authority for migratory birds, the USFWS can adjust allowed take through the regulated harvest season and take under depredation permits and orders to meet population objectives. Therefore, all take by WS is authorized by the USFWS and considered as part of population objectives for geese.

Migratory Canada Geese

As discussed previously, the NAP and the AP of Canada geese could be found in the State under those conditions where geese present in the State would be considered migratory. Under field conditions, distinguishing geese between population segments can be difficult. Determining whether a Canada goose present in the State is migratory or a resident (*i.e.*, present in the State year round) can also be difficult under field conditions. Therefore, for the purposes of this analyses, those Canada geese present in the State from October through March will be considered as migratory geese.

Frameworks have been established by the USFWS and implemented by the RIDEM to allow for the harvest of geese in the State during those months when geese present in the State could be migratory. The September season is intended to manage populations of resident geese but migratory geese could be present in the State. In 2007, an estimated 4,900 geese were taken during the regular and late hunting seasons for geese in the State (Raftovich et al. 2009). An estimated 2,700 geese were harvested in both seasons during the 2008 season (Raftovich et al. 2009).

From FY 2006 through FY 2009, a total of 111 geese (an average of less than 28 geese per year) have been lethally taken by WS in the State during the period when geese present in the State could be considered migratory. However, based on increasing requests for assistance to manage geese, WS may be required to lethally take geese during those months when geese could be considered migratory if deemed appropriate through the use of the WS Decision Model. WS anticipates that requests for the lethal take of geese during those months when geese are considered migratory will occur primarily at airports where geese can pose a threat to human safety and to property. However, requests could be received to reduce damage or threats to other resources. Based on an increase in the number of requests received for the lethal take of geese during those periods of time when geese present in the State would be considered migratory, WS may take up to 150 geese during those periods when geese could be considered migratory.

All take by WS occurs through the issuance of a depredation permit issued by the USFWS which is reported annually to the USFWS. All take of geese during the hunting seasons occur under frameworks established by the USFWS. Take by other entities in the State occurs under depredation permits or depredation orders established by the USFWS with the requirement that take be reported to the USFWS. Therefore, the permitting of the take by the USFWS ensures cumulative take is considered as part of management objectives for Canada geese. WS' take of up to 150 geese that could be considered migratory annually would have represented 3.1% of the number of geese harvested in the State during the 2007 harvest season and 5.6% of the number of geese harvested in the State during the 2008 hunting season. The magnitude of an annual take of up to 5.6% of the number of geese harvested in the State could be considered low. No take of migratory geese will occur by WS without a depredation permit issued by the USFWS. Therefore, WS' take will only occur at the discretion of the USFWS after population objectives for geese are considered.

Wildlife Disease Surveillance

As part of surveillance activities for wildlife diseases, it may be necessary for WS to obtain biological samples from geese (usually a tracheal or cloacal sample taken with a cotton swab). Geese sampled for disease surveillance (if not taken during wildlife damage management projects or from hunter harvest) would be captured live using non-lethal nets or traps. Captured geese would be carefully and humanely restrained (usually in commercial poultry crates) and released unharmed at the capture site after the samples are obtained. There is a possibility that some geese may be injured or killed by capture devices (such as rocket or cannon net assemblies). However, the threat of birds being killed or injured during disease sampling activities is expected to be very minimal to nonexistent. Most samples will involve

geese harvested during the hunting seasons. Therefore, no additional take would occur outside of the take that would already have occurred from the hunting season.

Issue 2 - Effectiveness of Canada Goose Damage Management Methods

A common issue when addressing wildlife damage is the effectiveness of the methods being employed to resolve the damage. When those persons experiencing wildlife damage request assistance from other entities, the damage occurring has likely reached or will reach an economic threshold that is unacceptable to those persons requesting assistance. Therefore, methods being employed to resolve damage must be effective at resolving damage or threats within a reasonable amount of time to prevent further economic loss. The issue of method effectiveness as related to each alternative analyzed in detail is discussed below.

Alternative 1 – No Canada Goose Damage Management Conducted by WS

The methods available to those experiencing damage under this alternative would be similar to those methods that would be available under the other alternatives. The only method that would not be available under this alternative would be the use of alpha chloralose which is restricted to use by WS only. WS would not be directly involved with application of any methods to resolve damage caused by geese in the State under this alternative. The recommendation of methods and the use of methods would be the responsibility of other entities and/or those persons experiencing damage. When available methods are employed as intended, a reasonable amount of effectiveness is expected. If methods are employed incorrectly due to a lack of knowledge of the correct use of those methods or if methods are employed without consideration of the behavior of geese causing damage, those methods being employed are likely to be less effective.

Since those methods available for resolving goose damage would be available to those experiencing damage or threats, the effectiveness of those methods when used as intended would be similar among the alternatives. Those non-lethal methods discussed in Appendix B would be available to those persons experiencing goose damage despite WS' lack of involvement under this alternative. The use of lethal methods under this alternative would continue to be available, including the use of firearms and live-capture followed by euthanasia. Nest destruction and egg oiling/addling would continue to occur under this alternative when permitted by the USFWS. Since WS would not be involved with any aspect of goose damage management under this alternative, the use of methods and the proper application of methods would occur as decided by the persons experiencing damage or by other entities providing assistance.

Alternative 2 – Canada Goose Damage Management by WS through Technical Assistance Only

Under an alternative in which WS would only provide technical assistance to those requesting assistance, those methods described in Appendix B would be recommended and demonstrated, except for alpha chloralose. WS would recommend methods using the WS Decision Model based on information provided by those requesting assistance or through site visits. WS would describe and demonstrate the correct application of those lethal and non-lethal methods available. If those persons receiving technical assistance apply methods as recommended and demonstrated by WS, those methods when employed to resolve goose damage are reasonably anticipated to be effective in resolving damage occurring. Under this alternative, those requesting assistance would be provided information on goose behavior to ensure methods are applied when the use of those methods are likely to be most effective. For example, if live-capture of geese is recommended using corral traps, WS would provide information to those requesting assistance on the appropriate times to employ those methods to ensure geese can be live-captured.

The effectiveness of methods under this alternative would be similar to the other alternatives since the same methods would be available, except alpha chloralose. If methods are employed as intended and with regard to the behavior of geese causing damage, those methods are likely to be effective in resolving damage. The demonstration of methods and the information provided on goose behavior provided by WS through technical assistance under this alternative would likely increase the effectiveness of the methods employed by those requesting assistance. However, if methods are employed that are not recommended or if those methods are employed incorrectly by those requesting assistance, methods could be less effective in resolving damage or threats.

Alternative 3 - Continuing the Current Integrated Approach to Managing Canada Goose Damage (Proposed Action/No Action)

Under the proposed action, WS would continue the use of an adaptive approach using an integration of methods to resolve goose damage. WS would continue to provide both technical assistance and direct operational assistance to those requesting assistance. WS only provides assistance after a request has been received and a cooperative service agreement or other comparable document has been signed by WS and the requesting entity in which all methods used to address geese causing damage are agreed upon. Methods employed to manage goose damage, whether non-lethal or lethal, are often temporary with the duration dependent on many factors, including goose densities in the area, the availability of suitable habitat in the area, and the availability of methods. WS employs only those methods as agreed upon by the requestor after available methods are discussed.

A common issue raised is that the use of lethal methods is ineffective because additional geese are likely to return to the area, either after removal occurs or the following year when birds returns to the area to nest which gives the impression of creating a financial incentive to continue the use of only lethal methods. This assumes geese only return to an area where damage was occurring if lethal methods are used. However, the use of non-lethal methods is also often temporary which could result in geese returning to an area where damage was occurring once those methods are no longer used. The common factor when employing any method is that geese will return if suitable habitat continues to exist at the location where damage was occurring and goose densities are sufficient to occupy all available habitats. Therefore, any reduction or prevention of damage from the use of methods addressed in Appendix B will be temporary if habitat conditions continue to exist. In the case of Canada geese, WS primarily receives requests to reduce or prevent damage caused by geese considered resident in the State. Therefore, any method that disperses or removes geese from areas will only be temporary if habitat continues to exist the following year when geese return to nest.

Dispersing geese using pyrotechnics, repellents, border collies, or any other non-lethal method addressed in Appendix B often requires repeated application to discourage geese which increases costs, moves geese to other areas where they could cause damage, and are temporary if habitat conditions remain unchanged. Dispersing and the translocating of geese could be viewed as moving a problem from one area to another which would require addressing damage caused by those geese at another location. WS' recommendation of or use of techniques to modifying existing habitat or making areas unattractive to geese is discussed in Appendix B. WS' objective is to respond to request for assistance with the most effective methods and to provide for the long-term solution to the problem using WS' Decision Model to adapt methods in an integrated approach to managing goose damage that is agreed upon by the cooperator.

As part of an integrated approach to managing goose damage, WS would have the ability to adapt methods to damage situations to effectively reduce or prevent damage from occurring. Under the proposed integrated approach, all methods, individually or in combination, could be employed as deemed appropriate through WS' Decision Model to address requests for assistance. WS' objective when receiving a request for assistance under the proposed action is to reduce damage and threats to human

safety or to prevent damage from occurring using an integrated approach to managing goose damage. Therefore, under the proposed action, WS would employ methods adaptively to achieve that objective.

Managing damage caused by geese can be divided into short-term redistribution approaches and long-term population and habitat management approaches (Cooper and Keefe 1997). Short-term approaches focus on redistribution and dispersal of geese to limit use of an area where damage or threats were occurring. Short-term redistribution approaches may include prohibiting feeding, hazing with vehicles, dogs, and adverse noise, erecting access barriers such as wire grids or fences, and taste aversion chemicals (Cooper and Keefe 1997). Population reduction by limiting survival or reproduction, removing geese, and habitat modification are considered long-term solutions to managing damage caused by geese (Cooper and Keefe 1997).

Redistribution methods are often employed to provide immediate resolution to damage occurring until long-term approaches can be implemented or have had time to reach the desired result. The USFWS has evaluated and implemented long-term approaches to managing resident Canada goose populations with the intent of reducing damage associated with resident Canada geese (USFWS 2005). Scaring geese and physical barriers are often short-term solutions that move geese to other areas where damages or threats could occur (Smith et al. 1999). Some short-term methods may become less effective in resolving damage as the goose population increases and become more acclimated to human activity (Smith et al. 1999). Long-term solutions to resolving damage would require management of the population (Smith et al. 1999). Cooper and Keefe (1997) found that fencing and harassment with dogs are the only effective short-term approaches to reducing goose damage but likely redistribute the problem elsewhere. Hunting, goose removal, and egg destruction were identified as long-term solutions to resolving goose damage over larger geographical areas by reducing goose populations (Cooper and Keefe 1997). An integrated approach to resolving goose damage is likely the most effective (Smith et al. 1999).

Cooper (1991) reported the removal of geese posing or likely to pose a hazard to air safety at airports considerably reduced the population of local geese, decreased the number of goose flights through airport operations airspace, and significantly reduced goose-aircraft collisions at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. In addition, Dolbeer et al. (1993) demonstrated that an integrated approach (including removal of offending birds) reduced bird hazards at airports and substantially reduced bird collisions with aircraft by as much as 89%. Jensen (1996) also reported that an integrated approach that incorporated the removal of geese, reduced goose-aircraft collisions by 80% during a two year period.

The use of only non-lethal methods to alleviate damage involving other bird species has had similar results requiring constant application and re-application. Chipman et al. (2008) found that crows could be dispersed from roost locations using non-lethal methods but crows would return to the original roost site within 2 to 8 weeks. The re-application of non-lethal methods to disperse crow roosts was required every year to disperse crows from the original roost or from roosts that had formed in other areas where damages were occurring (Chipman et al. 2008). Some short-term methods may become less effective in resolving damage as a bird population increases, as birds become more acclimated to human activity, and as birds become habituated to harassment techniques (Smith et al. 1999, Chipman et al. 2008). Non-lethal methods often require a constant presence at locations when geese are present and must be repeated daily until the desired results are achieved which can increase the costs associated with those activities. During a six-year project using only non-lethal methods to disperse crows in New York, the number of events required to disperse crows remained similar amongst years and at some locations, the number of events required to harass crows increased from the start of the project (Chipman et al. 2008). Long-term solutions to resolving bird damage often require management of the population (Smith et al. 1999) and identifying the habitat characteristics which attract birds to a particular location (Gorenzel and Salmon 1995).

As addressed previous, the methods available for resolving damage would be similar across all the alternatives analyzed. Under the proposed action, the use of alpha chloralose could occur by WS when deemed appropriate. Since all methods, except alpha chloralose, would be available under all the alternatives and when those methods are used as intended with consideration for the behavior of the target species, those methods would be considered effective.

Two chemicals commonly registered with the EPA as goose repellents are methyl anthranilate and anthraquinone. Methyl anthranilate naturally occurs in grapes and is used to flavor food, candy, and soft drinks. Anthraquinone naturally occurs in plants like aloe and is also used to make dye. Both products claim to be unpalatable to geese. Several products are registered for use to reduce goose damage that contain methyl anthranilate and anthraquinone. Formulations containing those chemicals are liquids that are applied directly to susceptible resources, primarily turf. Methyl anthranilate is effective for about four days depending on environmental conditions which is a similar duration experienced when applying anthraquinone as geese continue to feed on treated areas (Cummings et al. 1995, Dolbeer et al. 1998). Dolbeer et al. (1998) found that geese tended to loaf on anthraquinone treated turf, albeit at lower abundance, but the quantity of feces on treated and untreated turf was the same, thus the risk of damage was unabated.

The reproductive inhibitor known as nicarbazin has been registered for use to manage Canada goose populations on a local scale by reducing the likelihood that eggs laid will hatch. Nicarbazin is a complex of two compounds, 4,4'-dinitrocarbanilide (DNC) and 4,6-dimethyl-2-pyrimidinol (HDP) which interferes with the formation of the vitelline membrane that separates the egg yolk and egg white which prevents the development of an embryo inside the egg (EPA 2005). The active component of nicarbazin is the DNC compound with the HDP compound aiding in absorption of DNC into the bloodstream (EPA 2005). Nicarbazin was first developed to treat coccidiosis[9] outbreaks in broiler chickens and has been approved as a veterinary drug by the FDA since 1955 for use in chicken feed to prevent the fungal disease coccidiosis (EPA 2005).

Nicarbazin, as a reproductive inhibitor for geese, has been registered with the EPA as a pesticide pursuant to the FIFRA under the trade name OvoControl® G (Innolytics, LLC, Rancho Sante Fe, CA). OvoControl® G (EPA Reg. No. 80224-5) is a restricted use pesticide registered for use to reduce the egg hatch of geese. The formulation for geese contains 0.5% of the active ingredient nicarbazin by volume as a ready-to-use bait for geese in urban areas and at airports only. Urban areas have been defined by the EPA as municipalities and surrounding areas with a population of 50,000 or more people. Baiting can only occur by applicators certified by the State and only in urban areas such as office parks, recreational parks, malls, hospitals, airports, golf courses, schools, hospitals, restaurants, and commercial sites.

Nicarbazin has been studied as a reproductive inhibitor to reduce the number of geese at problem sites (VerCauteran et al. 2000). Recent testing by the NWRC has shown it to be effective in reducing the hatchability of eggs in Canada geese. Population management from the use of reproductive inhibitors to decrease the hatchability of eggs laid occurs through a reduction in the recruitment of new birds into the population by limiting reproductive output. A reduction in the population occurs when the number of birds being recruited into the population cannot replace those individuals that die from other causes each year which equates to a net loss in the number of individuals in the population leading to a reduction in the overall population. Although not generally considered a lethal method since no direct take occurs, reproductive inhibitors can result in the reduction of a target species' population. WS' use or recommendation of nicarbazin would target local goose populations identified as causing damage or threatening human safety. Although a reduction in local goose populations would likely occur from

[9]Coccidiosis is a fungal pathogen known to infect birds and livestock causing diarrhea, dehydration, and can prevent proper growth of livestock. For more information on coccidiosis, see the EA (USDA 2000).

constant use of nicarbazin, the actual reduction in the local population annually would be difficult to derive prior to the initiation of the use of nicarbazin.

One of the difficulties in calculating an actual reduction in a targeted population prior to application of the bait is that consumption of nicarbazin treated bait as currently formulated does not appear to completely eliminate egg hatch in geese. Current studies on nicarbazin as a reproductive inhibitor has shown variability in hatch rates of target species fed treated baits (VerCauteren et al. 2000, Bynum et al. 2005, Yoder et al. 2006). In addition, geese must consume bait treated with nicarbazin daily in the correct dosage throughout the breeding season to achieve the highest level of effectiveness in reducing egg hatch. Resident Canada geese generally nest from February through June each year (USFWS 2005).

Since the effects of nicarbazin on egg hatch are reversible if no longer provided for consumption, the reduction in a local population of geese from the use of nicarbazin can be maintained at appropriate levels where damages or threats are resolved by increasing or decreasing the amount of nicarbazin treated bait available to target geese. Although localized goose populations would likely be reduced from the use of nicarbazin, the extent of the reduction would be variable given the uncertainty in effectiveness of nicarbazin to reduce egg hatch. When geese were provided nicarbazin at dosage levels found formulated in OvoControl® G, not all eggs laid were infertile (VerCauteren et al. 2000, Bynum et al. 2005, Yoder et al. 2006).

Recent research has indicated that non-lethal harassment programs can reduce goose numbers at specific sites, but those programs do little to reduce the overall population of nuisance geese locally and may shift the problem elsewhere. Preusser et al. (2008) found that 12 of 59 geese banded at a study site in Orange County, New York that were hazed regularly were observed at an unmanaged location 1.2 km away on 161 occasions during 2004. This is similar to findings by Holevinski et al. (2007) who documented hazed radio-marked geese moved an average of 1.18 km at an urban site in Brighton, New York.

Translocating geese to areas where they can be hunted has been found to be an effective method to reduce conflicts with geese at problem sites. Hall and Groniger (2002) found that translocated geese are subject to higher hunting mortality by about 8% than non-relocated geese and that hunting as a management tool reduced the population of geese at Truckee Meadows in Nevada from about 2,000 to 400 geese. Holevinski et al. (2006) found that more translocated adult geese (23.8%) and juvenile geese (22.0%) in New York were harvested than control geese when translocated to an area open to hunting; and that only 7 of 177 translocated geese returned to the original capture site.

Capture and euthanization of nuisance geese to reinforce hazing methods while conducting nest and egg destruction programs may be the most successful management strategy available. Recent research at an airport in the United Kingdom found that through the capture of approximately 287 geese each year over a period of three years, combined with the oiling of 2,980 eggs and hazing geese from problem roost sites, reduced goose movements over the airfield by 63% (Baxter and Robinson 2007).

WS typically institutes an integrated wildlife damage management program that utilizes a broad range of management tools. Lethal methods are used as a part of an integrated approach when non-lethal methods alone are ineffective. The proposed action has the greatest potential of successfully reducing Canada goose conflicts and damage and allows those methods determined to be effective when using WS' Decision Model to be applied to resolve requests for assistance.

Issue 3 - Effects on Non-target Wildlife Species Populations, Including T&E Species

As discussed previously, a concern is often raised about the potential impacts to non-target species, including T&E species, from the use of methods to resolve damage caused by Canada geese. The

potential effects on the populations of non-target wildlife species, including T&E species, are analyzed below.

Alternative 1 – No Canada Goose Damage Management Conducted by WS

Under this alternative, WS would not be directly involved with Canada goose damage management activities in Rhode Island. Therefore, no direct impacts to non-targets or T&E species would occur by WS under this alternative. Geese would continue to be taken during the regulated harvest season, under depredation orders, and through depredation permits issued by the USFWS. Risks to non-targets and T&E species would continue to occur from those persons who implement goose damage management activities on their own or through recommendations by other federal, State, and private entities. Although some risk occurs from those persons that implement goose damage management in the absence of any involvement by WS, those risks are likely low and are similar to those under the other alternatives.

The ability to reduce negative impacts caused by geese would be variable based upon the skills and abilities of the person implementing damage management actions under this alternative. The risks to non-targets and T&E species would be similar across the alternatives since those methods described in Appendix B are available across the alternatives, except for alpha-chloralose. If those methods available are applied as intended, risks to non-targets would be minimal to non-existent. If methods available are applied incorrectly or applied without knowledge of goose behavior, risks to non-target wildlife would be higher under this alternative. If frustration from the lack of available assistance causes those experiencing goose damage to use methods that are not legally available for use, risks to non-targets would be higher under this alternative. People have resorted to the use of illegal methods to resolve wildlife damage that have resulted in the lethal take of non-target wildlife (USDA 1997, White et al. 1989, USFWS 2001, FDA 2003).

Alternative 2 – Canada Goose Damage Management by WS through Technical Assistance Only

Under a technical assistance alternative, WS would have no direct impact on non-target species, including T&E species. Methods recommended or provided through loaning of equipment could be employed by those requesting assistance. Recommendations would be based on WS' Decision Model using information provided by the person requesting assistance or through site visits. Recommendations would include methods or techniques to minimize non-target impacts associated with the methods being recommended or loaned. Methods recommended could include non-lethal and lethal methods as deemed appropriate by WS' Decision Model and as permitted by laws and regulations. Under this alternative, the implementation or consideration of the use of minimization measures recommended by or demonstrated by WS through technical assistance would be the responsibility and at the discretion of those persons experiencing goose damage.

The potential impacts to non-targets under this alternative would be variable and based on several factors. If methods are employed, as recommended by WS, the potential impacts to non-targets are likely similar to the proposed action. If recommended methods and techniques are not followed or if other methods are employed that were not recommended, the potential impacts on non-target species, including T&E species is likely higher compared to the proposed action.

The potential impacts of harassment and exclusion methods to non-target species would be similar to those described under the proposed action. Harassment and exclusion methods are easily obtainable and simple to employ. Since identification of targets occurs when employing shooting as a method, the potential impacts to non-target species are likely low under this alternative.

Those experiencing damage from geese may implement methods and techniques based on the recommendations of WS. The potential for impacts would be based on the knowledge and skill of those persons implementing recommended methods. Potential impacts from providing only technical assistance could be greater than those described in the proposed action if those experiencing damage do not implement methods or techniques correctly. Incorrectly implemented methods or techniques recommended by WS could lead to an increase in non-target take.

If requestors are provided technical assistance but do not implement any of the recommended actions, the potential impacts to non-targets would be lower compared to the proposed action. If those requesting assistance implement recommended methods appropriately and as instructed or demonstrated, the potential impacts to non-targets would be similar to the proposed action. Methods or techniques not implemented as recommended or used inappropriately would likely increase potential impacts to non-targets. Therefore, the potential impacts to non-targets, including T&E species would be variable under a technical assistance only alternative.

Alternative 3 - Continuing the Current Integrated Approach to Managing Canada Goose Damage (Proposed Action/No Action)

The potential adverse affects to non-targets occurs from the employment of methods to address goose damage. Under the proposed action, WS could provide both technical assistance and direct operational assistance to those requesting assistance. Personnel from WS are experienced and trained in wildlife identification and to select the most appropriate methods for taking targeted animals and excluding non-target species. To reduce the likelihood of capturing non-target wildlife, WS would employ the most selective methods for the target species, would employ the use of attractants that are as specific to target species as possible, and determine placement of methods to avoid exposure to non-targets. Minimization methods and SOPs to prevent and reduce any potential adverse impacts on non-targets are discussed in Chapter 3 of this EA. Despite the best efforts to minimize non-target take during program activities, the potential for adverse impacts to non-targets exist when applying both non-lethal and lethal methods to manage damage or reduce threats to safety.

Non-lethal methods have the potential to cause adverse affects to non-targets primarily through exclusion, harassment, and dispersal. Any exclusionary device erected to prevent access of target species also potentially excludes species that are not the primary reason the exclusion was erected; therefore, non-target species excluded from areas may potentially be adversely impacted if the area excluded is large enough. Non-lethal methods that use auditory and visual stimuli to reduce or prevent damage are intended to elicit fright responses in wildlife. When employing those methods to disperse or harass target species, any non-targets in the vicinity of those methods when employed are also likely dispersed from the area. Therefore, non-targets may be dispersed from an area while employing non-lethal dispersal techniques. However, like target species, the potential impacts on non-target species are expected to be temporary with target and non-target species often returning after the cessation of dispersal methods.

Other non-lethal methods available for use under this alternative include drop nets, cannon nets, rocket nets, live traps, repellents, immobilizing drugs, and reproductive inhibitors. Nets are virtually selective for target individuals since activation occurs by attending personnel, with handling of wildlife occurring immediately after deployment of the net. Therefore, any non-targets captured using nets can be released on site. Any potential non-targets captured using non-lethal methods would be handled in such a manner as to ensure the survivability of the animal if released. Even though live-capture does occur from those methods, the potential for death of a target or non-target animal while being restrained or released does exist, primarily from being struck by the cannon or rocket assemblies during deployment. The likelihood of non-targets being struck is extremely low and is based on being present when the net is activated and in a position to be struck. Nets are positioned to envelop wildlife upon deployment and to minimize striking

hazards. Baiting of the areas to attract target species often occurs when using nets. Therefore, sites can be abandoned if non-target use of the area is high.

Only those repellents registered with the EPA pursuant to the FIFRA and registered for use in Rhode Island would be recommended and used by WS under this alternative. Therefore, the use and recommendation of repellents would not have negative impacts on non-target species when used according to label requirements. Most repellents for geese are derived from natural ingredients that pose a very low risk to non-targets when exposed to or when ingested.

Immobilizing drugs are applied through hand-baiting that targets specific individuals or groups of target species. Therefore, immobilizing drugs are only applied after identification of the target occurs prior to application. Pre-baiting and acclimation of geese occurs prior to the application of alpha chloralose which allows for the identification of non-targets that may visit the site prior to application of the bait. All unconsumed bait is retrieved after the application session has been completed. Since sedation occurs after consumption of the bait, personnel are present on site at all times to retrieve geese. This constant presence by WS' personnel will allow for continual monitoring of the bait to ensure non-targets are not present. Based on the use pattern of alpha chloralose by WS, no adverse affects to non-targets are expected from the use of alpha chloralose.

The persistent use of non-lethal methods will likely result in the dispersal or abandonment of those areas where non-lethal methods are employed of both target and non-target species. Therefore, any use of non-lethal methods has similar results on both non-target and target species. Though non-lethal methods do not result in lethal take of non-targets, the use of non-lethal methods can restrict or prevent access of non-targets to beneficial resources. Overall, potential impacts to non-targets from the use of non-lethal methods only would not adversely impact populations since those methods are often temporary.

Since OvoControl® G would be commercially available to those with a certified applicators license, the use of the product could occur under any of the alternatives discussed in the EA; therefore, the effects of the use would be similar across all the alternatives. Under the proposed action, WS could use or recommend nicarbazin under the trade name OvoControl® G as part of an integrated approach to managing damages associated with geese if the product becomes registered for use in Rhode Island. WS' use of nicarbazin under the proposed action would not be additive since the use of the product could occur from other sources, such as private pest management companies or those experiencing damage could become a certified applicator and apply the bait themselves when the appropriate depredation permits are received.

Exposure of non-target wildlife to nicarbazin could occur either from direct ingestion of the bait by non-target wildlife or from secondary hazards associated with wildlife consuming birds that have eaten treated bait. Several label restrictions of OvoControl® G are intended to mitigate risks to non-target wildlife from direct consumption of treated bait (EPA 2005). The label requires an acclimation period that habituates geese to feeding in one location at a certain time period. During baiting periods, the applicator must be present on site until all bait has been consumed. Non-target risks are further minimized by requirements that bait can only be distributed in bait pans or through broadcast application (by hand or mechanical feeders). All unconsumed bait must also be retrieved daily which further reduces threats of non-target consuming treated bait.

In addition, nicarbazin is only effective in reducing the hatch of eggs when blood levels of DNC are sufficiently elevated in a bird species. When consumed by birds, nicarbazin is broken down into the two base components of DNC and HDP which are then rapidly excreted. To maintain the high blood levels required to reduce egg hatch, birds must consume nicarbazin daily at a sufficient dosage that appears to be variable depending on the bird species (Yoder et al. 2005, Avery et al. 2006). For example, to reduce egg

hatch in Canada geese, geese must consume nicarbazin at 2,500 ppm compared to 5,000 ppm required to reduce egg hatch in pigeons (Avery et al. 2006, Avery et al. 2008a). In pigeons, consuming nicarbazin at a rate that would reduce egg hatch in Canada geese did not reduce the hatchability of eggs in pigeons (Avery et al. 2006). With the rapid excretion of the two components of nicarbazin (DNC and HDP) in birds, non-targets birds would have to consume nicarbazin daily at sufficient doses to reduce the rate of egg hatching.

Secondary hazards also exist from wildlife consuming geese that have ingested nicarbazin. As mentioned previously, once consumed, nicarbazin is rapidly broken down into the two base components DNC and HDP. DNC is the component of nicarbazin that limits egg hatchability while HDP only aids in absorption of DNC into the bloodstream. DNC is not readily absorbed into the bloodstream and requires the presence of HDP to aid in absorption of appropriate levels of DNC. Therefore, to pose a secondary hazard to wildlife, ingestion of both DNC and HDP from the carcass would have to occur and HDP would have to be consumed at a level to allow for absorption of the DNC into the bloodstream. In addition, an appropriate level of DNC and HDP would have to be consumed from a carcass daily to produce any negative reproductive affects to other wildlife since current evidence indicates a single dose does not limit reproduction. To be effective, nicarbazin (both DNC and HDP) must be consumed daily during the duration of the reproductive season to limit the hatchability of eggs. Therefore, to experience the reproductive affects of nicarbazin, geese that had consumed nicarbazin would have to be consumed by a non-target species daily and a high enough level of DNC and HDP would have to be available in the goose carcass and consumed for reproduction to be affected. Based on the risks and likelihood of wildlife consuming a treated goose carcass daily and receiving the appropriate levels of DNC and HDP daily to negatively impact reproduction, secondary hazards to wildlife from the use of nicarbazin are extremely low (EPA 2005).

Although some risks to other non-target species besides bird species does occur from the use of OvoControl® G, those risks are likely to be minimal given the restrictions on where and how bait can be applied. Although limited toxicological information for nicarbazin exists for wildlife species besides certain bird species, available toxicology data indicates nicarbazin is relatively non-toxic to other wildlife species (World Health Organization 1998, EPA 2005, California Department of Pesticide Regulation 2007). Given the use restriction of OvoControl® G and the limited locations where bait can be applied, the risks of exposure to non-targets would be extremely low.

Impacts to non-targets from the use of non-lethal methods would be similar to the use of non-lethal methods under any of the alternatives. Non-targets would generally be unharmed from the use of non-lethal methods under any of the alternatives since no lethal take would occur. Non-lethal methods, except for alpha chloralose would be available under all the alternatives analyzed. WS' involvement in the use of or recommendation of non-lethal methods would ensure non-target impacts are considered under WS' Decision Model. Impacts to non-targets under this alternative from the use of and/or the recommendation of non-lethal methods are likely to be low.

WS would also employ and/or recommend lethal methods under the proposed action alternative to alleviate damage. Lethal methods available for use to manage damage caused by geese under this alternative would include the recommendation of take by private entities during the hunting season, shooting, and euthanasia after live capture. The use of firearms is essentially selective for target species since animals are identified prior to application; therefore, no adverse impacts are anticipated from use of this method. Methods used for euthanasia would be limited to cervical dislocation or carbon dioxide administered in an enclosed chamber after geese have been live-captured. Since live-capture of geese using other methods occurs prior to the administering of euthanasia chemicals, no adverse affects on non-targets will occur under this alternative. WS' recommendation that geese be harvested during the regulated season by private entities to alleviate damage would not increase risks to non-targets. Shooting

is essentially selective for target species and non-target take is not likely and would not increase based on WS' recommendation of the method.

While every precaution is taken to safeguard against taking non-targets during operational use of methods and techniques for resolving damage and reducing threats caused by wildlife, the use of such methods can result in the incidental take of unintended species. Those occurrences are rare and should not affect the overall populations of any species under the current program. WS' take of non-target species during activities to reduce damage or threats to human safety associated with Canada geese in Rhode Island is expected to be extremely low to non-existent. No non-targets have been taken by WS during prior goose damage management activities in the State. WS will monitor annually the take of non-target species to ensure program activities or methodologies used in goose damage management do not adversely impact non-targets. Methods available to resolve and prevent goose damage or threats when employed by trained, knowledgeable personnel are selective for target species. WS will annually report to the USFWS and the RIDEM any non-target take to ensure take by WS is considered as part of management objectives established. The potential impacts to non-targets are similar to the other alternatives and are considered to be minimal to non-existent.

T&E Species Effects

Special efforts are made to avoid jeopardizing T&E species through biological evaluations of the potential effects and the establishment of special restrictions or mitigation measures. Mitigation measures and SOPs to avoid T&E effects are described in Chapter 3 of this EA.

Federally Listed Species - The current list of species designated as threatened and endangered in Rhode Island as determined by the USFWS and the National Marine Fisheries Service was obtained and reviewed during the development of this EA. Appendix C contains the list of species currently listed in the State along with common and scientific names. Consultation with the USFWS under Section 7 of the ESA concerning potential impacts of WS' programmatic activities on T&E species was conducted as part of the development of WS' programmatic FEIS (USDA 1997). WS obtained a BO from the USFWS addressing WS' programmatic activities. For the full context of the BO, see Appendix F of WS' programmatic FEIS (USDA 1997).

After review of program activities and methods currently available for use to manage damage and threats associated with geese, WS' goose damage management activities in Rhode Island would not likely adversely affect the small whorled pagonia (*Isotria medeoloides*), hawksbill sea turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), Kemp's ridley sea turtle (*Lepidochelys kempii*), leatherback sea turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*), loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*), green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), shortnose sturgeon (*Acipenser brevirostrum*), piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*), roseate tern (*Sterna dougallii dougallii*), eastern puma (=cougar) (*Puma* (*=Felis*) *concolor couguar*), and the gray wolf (*Canis lupus*). This determination is based on the conclusions made by the USFWS during the 1992 consultation on WS' programmatic activities and subsequent BO (USDA 1997).

The eastern puma and the gray wolf are listed in Rhode Island but are not currently known to occur in the State. WS will abide by all reasonable and prudent measures identified in the BO for the gray wolf when conducting Canada goose damage management.

In addition, WS has determined that the use of goose damage management methods will have no effect on those T&E species listed in Rhode Island that were not included in the 1992 BO or their critical habitats. Those species include the American burying beetle (*Nicrophorus americanus*), northeastern beach tiger beetle (*Cicindela dorsalis dorsalis*), finback whale (*Balaenoptera physalus*), humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*), right whale (*Balaena glacialis* incl. *australis*), sandplain gerardia (*Agalinis*

acuta), and seabeach amaranth (*Amaranthus pumilus*). Furthermore, WS has determined that the use of nicarbazin, alpha-chloralose, and lasers will have no effect on any listed T&E species in the State or their critical habitats. Therefore, WS has determined that the proposed goose damage management program will not likely adversely affect any federally listed T&E species addressed in the 1992 BO issued by the USFWS that are listed in the State and will have no effect on those species listed since completion of the BO and their critical habitats. In addition, WS has determined that the use of lasers, nicarbazin, and alpha-chloralose will have no effect on any T&E species listed in the State.

State Listed Species - WS has obtained and reviewed the list of State listed T&E species in Rhode Island (see Appendix C). Based on a review of the proposed action and the methods available under the proposed action, WS has determined that the proposed goose damage management program will have no effect any of the species listed by the RIDEM in the State.

Issue 4 - Humaneness and Animal Welfare Concerns of Methods

The issue of humaneness and animal welfare concerns associated with methods available for use to manage goose damage has been raised. As described previously, those methods available for use to manage geese would be available under any of the alternatives, when permitted by the USFWS and the RIDEM, except for the use of alpha-chloralose which can only be used by WS. The humaneness of methods available for use in Rhode Island as the use of those methods relates to the alternatives is discussed below.

Alternative 1 – No Canada Goose Damage Management Conducted by WS

Under this alternative, WS would have no involvement in any aspect of goose damage management in Rhode Island. Those experiencing damage or threats associated with geese could continue to use those methods legally available when permitted by the USFWS and the RIDEM. Those methods would likely be considered inhumane by those persons who would consider methods proposed under any alternative as inhumane. The issue of humaneness would likely be directly linked to the methods legally available to the general public since methods are often labeled as inhumane by segments of society no matter the entity employing those methods.

The humaneness of methods would be based on the skill and knowledge of the person employing those methods. A lack of understanding of the target species or methods used could lead to an increase in situations perceived as being inhumane to wildlife despite the method used. Despite the lack of involvement by WS under this alternative, those methods perceived as inhumane by certain individuals and groups would still be available to the general public to resolve damage and threats caused by geese.

Alternative 2 – Canada Goose Damage Management by WS through Technical Assistance Only

The issues of humaneness of methods under this alternative are likely to be perceived to be similar to humaneness issues discussed under the proposed action. This perceived similarity is derived from WS' recommendation of methods that some consider inhumane. WS would not directly be involved with damage management activities under this alternative. However, the recommendation of the use of methods could result in the requestor employing those methods. Therefore, by recommending methods and thus a requestor employing those methods the issue of humaneness would be similar to the proposed action.

WS would instruct and demonstrate the proper use and placement of methodologies to increase effectiveness in capturing geese and to ensure methods are used in such a way as to minimize pain and suffering. However, the efficacy of methods employed by a cooperator would be based on the skill and

knowledge of the requestor in resolving the threat to safety or damage situation despite WS' demonstration. Therefore, a lack of understanding of the behavior of geese or improperly identifying the damage caused by geese along with inadequate knowledge and skill in using methodologies to resolve the damage or threat could lead to incidents with a greater probability of being perceived as inhumane. In those situations, the pain and suffering are likely to be regarded as greater than those discussed in the proposed action.

Alternative 3 - Continuing the Current Integrated Approach to Managing Canada Goose Damage (Proposed Action/No Action)

Under the proposed action, WS would integrate methods using WS' Decision Model as part of technical assistance and direct operational assistance. Methods available under the proposed action could include non-lethal and lethal methods integrated into direct operational assistance conducted by WS. Under this alternative, non-lethal methods would be used by WS which are generally regarded as humane. Non-lethal methods would include resource management methods (*e.g.*, crop selection, limited habitat modification, modification of human behavior), exclusion devices, frightening devices, cage traps, nets, repellents, immobilizing drugs, and reproductive inhibitors.

As discussed previously, humaneness, in part, appears to be a person's perception of harm or pain inflicted on an animal. People may perceive the humaneness of an action differently. The challenge in coping with this issue is how to achieve the least amount of animal suffering. Some individuals believe any use of lethal methods to resolve damage associated with wildlife is inhumane because the resulting fate is the death of the animal. Others believe that certain lethal methods can lead to a humane death. Others believe most non-lethal methods of capturing wildlife to be humane because the animal is generally unharmed and alive. Still others believe that any disruption in the behavior of wildlife is inhumane. With the multitude of attitudes on the meaning of humaneness and the varying perspectives on the most effective way to address damage and threats in a humane manner, agencies are challenged with conducting activities and employing methods that are perceived to be humane while assisting those persons requesting assistance to manage damage and threats associated with wildlife. The goal of WS is to use methods as humanely as possible to effectively resolve requests for assistance to reduce damage and threats to human safety. WS will continue to evaluate methods and activities to minimize the pain and suffering of methods addressed when attempting to resolve requests for assistance.

Some methods have been stereotyped as "humane" or "inhumane". However, many "humane" methods can be inhumane if not used appropriately. For instance, a cage trap is generally considered by most members of the public as "humane". Yet, without proper care, live-captured wildlife in a cage trap can be treated inhumanely if not attended to appropriately. Therefore, the goal is to effectively address requests for assistance using methods in the most humane way possible that minimizes the stress and pain to the animal. Overall, the use of resource management methods, harassment methods, and exclusion devices are regarded as humane when used appropriately.

Although some issues of humaneness could occur from the use of cage traps, nets, repellents, immobilizing drugs, and reproductive inhibitors, those methods, when used appropriately and by trained personnel, would not result in the inhumane treatment of wildlife. Concerns from the use of those non-lethal methods are from injuries to animals while restrained and from the stress of the animal while being restrained or during the application of the method. Pain and physical restraint can cause stress in animals and the inability of animals to effectively deal with those stressors can lead to distress. Suffering occurs when action is not taken to alleviate conditions that cause pain or distress in animals. WS' personnel are present when geese are live-captured which ensures action is taken immediately to alleviate the stress associated with geese being restrained. The presence of WS' personnel on-site also ensures geese live-

captured are addressed immediately to minimize the stress associated with the handling of geese and to prevent injury.

The use of nicarbazin would generally be considered as a humane method of managing local populations of geese. Nicarbazin reduces the hatchability of eggs laid by geese and appears to have no adverse affects on geese; consuming bait daily does not appear to adversely affect those chicks that do hatch from parents fed nicarbazin (Avery et al. 2006, Avery et al. 2008a). Nicarbazin has been characterized as a veterinary drug since 1955 by the FDA for use in broiler chickens to treat outbreaks of coccidiosis with no apparent ill effects to chickens. Based on current information, the use of nicarbazin would generally be considered humane based on current research.

Alpha-chloralose is used by WS as a sedative to live-capture geese with a full recovery occurring over a period of time. When using alpha-chloralose, WS' personnel would be present on site to retrieve birds that become sedated. Some concern occurs that geese may drown if sedation occurs while they are loafing on water. WS will ensure that those birds that may become sedated while on water are retrieved using a boat and/or a canoe through the use of hand capture or hand nets.

Overall, the use of resource management methods, harassment methods, and exclusion devices are regarded as humane when used appropriately. Although some concern arises from the use of live-capture methods and immobilizing drugs, the stress of animals is likely temporary.

Under the proposed action, lethal methods could also be employed to resolve requests for assistance to resolve or prevent goose damage and threats. Lethal methods would include shooting and euthanizing methods. The euthanasia methods being considered for use under the proposed action are cervical dislocation and carbon dioxide. The AVMA guideline on euthanasia lists cervical dislocation and carbon dioxide as acceptable methods of euthanasia for free-ranging birds which can lead to a humane death (AVMA 2007). The use of cervical dislocation or carbon dioxide for euthanasia would occur after the animal has been live-captured and away from public view. Although the AVMA guideline also lists gunshot as a conditionally acceptable method of euthanasia for free-ranging wildlife, there is greater potential the method may not consistently produce a humane death (AVMA 2007).

Some people have concerns over the potential for separation of goose family groups through management actions. This could occur through harassment (*e.g.*, pyrotechnics, dogs) and lethal control methods. However, it is not uncommon for family units to experience change. Bellrose (1980) cites several sources which list annual mortality rates of juvenile geese ranging from 7 to 19% during the hatching to fledgling stage. Biologists believe that juvenile birds have a good likelihood of survival without adult birds once the juvenile reaches fledgling stage, which occurs by July for most juvenile birds in Rhode Island. Therefore, molting juvenile geese that escape capture would most likely survive to adulthood (Mississippi Flyway Council Technical Section 1996). Separated adults form new pair bonds and readily breed with new mates (Moser et al. 1991).

Research and development by WS has improved the selectivity and humaneness of management techniques. Research is continuing to bring new findings and products into practical use. Until new findings and products are found practical, a certain amount of animal suffering could occur when some methods are used in situations where non-lethal damage management methods are not practical or effective. Personnel from WS are experienced and professional in their use of management methods. Consequently, management methods are implemented in the most humane manner possible under the constraints of current technology. The use of firearms to alleviate goose damage and/or threats in the State could be used under any of the alternatives by those experiencing damage regardless of WS' direct involvement. Therefore, the issue of humanness associated with shooting would be similar across any of the alternatives since firearms could be employed when permitted by the USFWS and the RIDEM to

alleviate goose damage and threats. Those persons who view a particular method as humane or inhumane would likely continue to view those methods as humane or inhumane under any of the alternatives. Minimization measures and SOPs that would be incorporated into WS' activities to ensure methods are used by WS as humanely as possible are listed in Chapter 3.

Issue 5 - Effects on the Aesthetic Values of Canada Geese

People often enjoy viewing, watching, and knowing Canada geese exist as part of the natural environment and gain aesthetic enjoyment in such activities. Those methods available to alleviate damage are intended to disperse and/or remove the geese. Non-lethal methods are intended to exclude or other make an area less attractive which disperses birds to other areas. Similarly, lethal methods are intended to remove those birds identified as causing damage or posing a threat of damage. The effects on the aesthetic value of geese as it relates to the alternatives are discussed below.

Alternative 1 – No Canada Goose Damage Management Conducted by WS

Under the no goose damage management by WS alternative, the actions of WS would have no impact on the aesthetic value of geese in Rhode Island. Those experiencing damage or threats from geese would be responsible for researching, obtaining, and using all methods as permitted by federal, State, and local laws and regulations. Canada geese would continue to be dispersed and lethally taken under this alternative in the State. Lethal take would continue to occur during the regulated harvest season, through depredation orders, and through the issuance of depredation permits from the USFWS.

Since geese will continue to be taken under this alternative, despite WS' lack of involvement, the ability to view and enjoy geese would likely be similar to the other alternatives. The lack of WS' involvement would not lead to a reduction in the number of geese dispersed or taken since WS' has no authority to regulate take or the harassment of geese in the State. The USFWS and the RIDEM with management authority over Canada geese would continue to adjust all take levels based on population objectives for geese in the State. Therefore, the number of geese lethally taken annually through hunting and depredation permits are regulated and adjusted by the USFWS and the RIDEM.

Those experiencing damage or threats would continue to use those methods they feel appropriate to resolve goose damage or threats, including lethal take. WS' involvement in goose damage management is therefore, not additive to the geese already taken in the State. The impacts to the aesthetic value of geese would be similar to the other alternatives.

Alternative 2 – Canada Goose Damage Management by WS through Technical Assistance Only

If those persons seeking assistance from WS were those persons likely to conduct goose damage management activities in the absence of WS' involvement, then technical assistance provided by WS would not adversely affect the aesthetic value of geese in the State similar to Alternative 1. Geese could be lethally taken under this alternative by those entities experiencing goose damage or threats which would result in localized reductions in the presence of geese at the location where damage was occurring. The presence of geese where damage was occurring would be reduced where damage management activities are conducted under any of the alternatives. Even the recommendation of non-lethal methods is likely to result in the dispersal of geese from the area if those non-lethal methods recommended by WS are employed by those receiving technical assistance. Therefore, technical assistance provided by WS would not prevent the aesthetic enjoyment of geese since any activities conducted to alleviate goose damage could occur in the absence of WS' participation in the action, either directly or indirectly.

Under this alternative, the effects on the aesthetic values of geese would be similar to those addressed in the proposed action. Those persons requesting assistance have often reached a damage-level that has exceeded the economic threshold of that individual and therefore, the social acceptance level of geese has reached a level where assistance is requested. Based on recommendations, methods are likely to be employed by the requestor based on those recommendations that will result in the dispersal and/or removal of a goose population responsible for damage or threatening safety.

The impacts on aesthetics from a technical assistance program would only be lower than the proposed action if those individuals experiencing damage are not as diligent in employing those methods as WS would be if conducting an operational program. If those persons experiencing damage abandoned the use of those methods then geese would likely remain in the area and available for viewing and enjoying for those interested in doing so.

Alternative 3 - Continuing the Current Integrated Approach to Managing Canada Goose Damage (Proposed Action/No Action)

Under the proposed action, methods would be employed that would result in the dispersal, exclusion, or removal of individuals or small groups of geese to resolve damage and threats. In some instances where geese are dispersed or removed, the ability of interested persons to observe and enjoy geese will likely temporarily decline.

Even the use of exclusionary devices can lead to dispersal of wildlife if the resource being damaged was acting as an attractant. Thus, once the attractant has been removed or made unavailable, wildlife will likely disperse to other areas where resources are more vulnerable.

The use of lethal methods would result in temporary declines in local populations resulting from the removal of geese to address or prevent damage and threats. The goal under the proposed action is to respond to requests for assistance and to manage those geese responsible for the resulting damage. Therefore, the ability to view and enjoy geese will still remain if a reasonable effort is made to locate geese outside the area in which damage management activities occurred. Those geese removed by WS are those that could be removed by the person experiencing damage with the appropriate depredation permit issued by the USFWS, under depredation orders, or during the regulated hunting season.

All activities are conducted by WS where a request for assistance has been received and only after agreement for such services have been agreed upon by the cooperator. Some aesthetic value would be gained by the removal of geese and the return of a more natural environment, including the return of native wildlife and plant species that may be suppressed or displaced by high densities of geese. Any removal of geese by WS using lethal methods in the State would occur after the appropriate depredation permits are received from the USFWS.

Since those geese removed by WS under this alternative could be removed through a depredation permit issued to the resource owner/manager, removed under depredation orders, or removed during the hunting season, WS' involvement in taking geese would not likely be additive to the number of geese that could be taken in the absence of WS' involvement. In many cases, WS acts as the agent of the property owner or manager under a depredation permit issued to the owner or manager. In those cases, the take of geese could occur by the property owner or manager and WS' actions would not be additive to the number of geese that could be taken in the absence of WS' involvement.

WS' take of geese from FY 2005 through FY 2009 has been of low magnitude when compared to the total mortality from other sources. WS' activities are not likely additive to the geese that would be taken in the absence of WS' involvement. Although geese removed by WS are no longer present for viewing or

enjoying, those geese would likely be taken by the property owner or manager under the depredation permit issued to the owner or manager by the USFWS, through a depredation order, or during hunting seasons. Given the limited take proposed by WS under this alternative when compared to the known sources of mortality of geese, WS' goose damage management activities conducted pursuant to the proposed action would not adversely affect the aesthetic value of geese. The impact on the aesthetic value of geese and the ability of the public to view and enjoy geese under the proposed action would be similar to the other alternatives and is likely low.

Issue 6 - Effects of Management Methods on Human Health and Safety

Concerns are often raised regarding the effects that methods can have on human safety, either from direct exposure of the public to the method or indirectly from the public when encountering geese. The issue of human safety is discussed as it relates to each alternative in the following subsections.

Alternative 1 – No Canada Goose Damage Management Conducted by WS

Under the no goose damage management alternative, WS would not be involved with any aspect of managing damage associated with geese in the State, including technical assistance. Due to the lack of involvement in managing damage caused by geese, no impacts to human safety would occur directly from WS. This alternative would not prevent those entities experiencing threats or damage from geese from conducting damage management activities in the absence of WS' assistance. The direct burden of implementing permitted methods would be placed on those experiencing damage.

Similar to the other alternatives, immobilizing drugs would not be available under this alternative to those experiencing damage or threats from geese. Since most methods available to resolve or prevent goose damage or threats are available to anyone, the threats to human safety from the use of those methods are similar between the alternatives. However, methods employed by those not experienced in the use of methods or are not trained in their proper use, could increase threats to human safety. Overall, the methods available to the public, when applied correctly and appropriately, pose minimal risks to human safety.

Alternative 2 – Canada Goose Damage Management by WS through Technical Assistance Only

Under this alternative, WS would be restricted to making recommendations of methods and the demonstration of methods only to resolve damage. WS would only provide technical assistance to those requesting assistance with goose damage and threats. Although hazards to human safety from non-lethal methods exist, those methods are generally regarded as safe when used by trained individuals who are experienced in their use. Risks to human safety from the use of non-lethal methods were considered low when evaluated in a formal risk assessment conducted as part of the development of WS' programmatic FEIS (USDA 1997). Risks to human safety associated with non-chemical methods such as resource management methods (*e.g.*, crop selection, limited habitat modification, modification of human behavior), exclusion devices, frightening devices, and live-capture methods were considered low based on their use profile for alleviating damage associated with wildlife (USDA 1997). Although some risk of fire and bodily harm exists from the use of pyrotechnics and propane cannons, when used appropriately and in consideration of those risks, they can be used with a high degree of safety.

Under a technical assistance only alternative, the use of nets (*e.g.*, rocket nets, cannon nets) would not be available to the general public but could be employed by other federal and state agencies. Personnel employing nets are present at the site during application to ensure the safety of the public and operators. Although some fire and explosive hazards exist with rocket nets during ignition and storage of the explosive charges, safety precautions associated with the use of the method, when adhered to, pose

minimal risks to human safety and primarily occur to the handler. Nets would not be employed in areas where public activity is high which further reduces the risks to the general public. Nets would be employed in areas where public access is restricted whenever possible to reduce risks to human safety. Overall, nets would pose minimal risks to the public.

The use of chemical methods would also be available under this alternative. Chemical methods available would include repellents. Most repellents require ingestion of the chemical to achieve the desired affects on target species. Repellents that require ingestion are intended to discourage foraging on vulnerable resources and to disperse birds from areas where the repellents are applied. The active ingredients of repellents that are currently registered for use to disperse geese include methyl anthranilate and anthriquinone. Methyl anthranilate (grape derivative) and anthraquinone (plant extract) are naturally occurring chemicals. Repellents, when used according to label directions, are generally regarded as safe especially when the ingredients are considered naturally occurring. Some risk of exposure to the chemical occurs to the applicator and to others from the potential for drift as the product is applied. Some repellents also have restrictions on whether application can occur on edible plants with some restricting harvest for a designated period after application. All restrictions on harvest and required personal protective equipment would be included on the label and if followed, would minimize risks to human safety associated with the use of those products.

The recommendation by WS that geese be harvested during the regulated hunting season which is established by the USFWS and the RIDEM would not increase risks to human safety above those risks already inherent with hunting geese. Recommendations of allowing hunting on property owned or managed by a cooperator to reduce Canada goose populations which could then reduce damage or threats would not increase risks to human safety. Safety requirements established by the USFWS and the RIDEM for the regulated hunting season will further minimize risks associated with hunting. Although hunting accidents do occur, the recommendation of allowing hunting to reduce localized goose populations will not increase those risks.

The recommendation of shooting with firearms as a method of direct lethal take could occur under this alternative. Safety issues due arise related to misusing firearms and the potential human hazards associated with firearms use when employed to reduce damage and threats. When used appropriately and with consideration for human safety, risks associated with firearms are minimal. If firearms are employed inappropriately or without regard to human safety, serious injuries could occur. Under this alternative, recommendations of the use of firearms by WS would include human safety considerations. Since the use of firearms to alleviate goose damage would be available under any of the alternatives and the use of firearms by those persons experiencing goose damage could occur whether WS was consulted or contacted, the risks to human safety from the use of firearms would be similar among all the alternatives.

If non-chemical methods are employed according to recommendations and as demonstrated by WS, the potential risks to human safety would be similar to the proposed action. If methods are employed without guidance from WS or applied inappropriately, the risks to human safety could increase. The extent of the increased risk would be unknown and variable. Non-chemical methods inherently pose minimal risks to human safety given the design and the extent of the use of those methods.

Reproductive inhibitors are formulated on bait and are administered to target wildlife through hand-baiting and subsequent consumption of treated bait. Therefore, the current concern, outside of transport and storage, is the risks directly to the handler and support staff during the handling and distributing the bait on the ground for consumption.

Threats to human safety from the use of nicarbazin will likely be minimal if labeled directions are followed. The use pattern of nicarbazin will also ensure threats to public safety are minimal. The label

requires an acclimation period which assists with identifying risks, requires the presence of the applicator at the location until all bait is consumed, and requires any unconsumed bait to be retrieved. The EPA has characterized nicarbazin as a moderate eye irritant. The FDA has established a tolerance of nicarbazin residues of 4 parts per million allowed in uncooked chicken muscle, skin, liver, and kidney (21 CFR 556.445). The EPA characterized the risks of human exposure as low when used to reduce egg hatch in Canada geese. The EPA also concluded that if human consumption occurred, a prohibitively large amount of nicarbazin would have to be consumed to produce toxic effects (EPA 2005). Based on the use pattern of the nicarbazin and if label instructions are followed, risks to human safety will be low with the primary exposure occurring to those handling and applying the product. Safety procedures required by the label, when followed, will minimize risks to handlers and applicators.

Given the use profile of many methods to manage damage and threats associated with geese, the risks to human safety from the use of those methods are low (USDA 1997). The cooperator requesting assistance is also made aware of threats to human safety associated with the use of those methods. Minimization measures and SOPs for methods are discussed in Chapter 3 of this EA. Risks to human safety from activities and methods recommended under this alternative would be similar to the other alternatives since the same methods would be available. If misused or applied inappropriately, any of the methods available to alleviate goose damage could threaten human safety. However, when used appropriately methods available to alleviate damage would not threaten human safety.

Alternative 3 - Continuing the Current Integrated Approach to Managing Canada Goose Damage (Proposed Action/No Action)

Under the proposed action, those methods discussed in Appendix B, would be integrated to resolve and prevent damage associated with geese in the State. WS' would use the Decision Model to determine the appropriate method or methods that would effectively resolve the request for assistance. Those methods would be continually evaluated for effectiveness and if necessary, additional methods could be employed. Non-lethal and lethal methods could be used under the proposed action. WS would continue to provide technical assistance and/or direct operational assistance to those persons seeking assistance with managing damage or threats from geese. Risks to human safety from technical assistance conducted by WS would be similar to those risks addressed under the other alternatives. The use of non-lethal methods as part of an integrated approach to managing damage that would be employed as part of direct operational assistance by WS would be similar to those risks addressed the other alternatives.

The risks to human safety from those methods that would be available under any of the alternatives were addressed under Alternative 2 (technical assistance only alternative) as those methods relate to use by those entities experiencing damage or threats of damage. The only method not available under the other alternatives is the use of alpha-chloralose to immobilize geese which is only available to WS' personnel. One minimizing measure which further reduces the risks to human safety when WS is directly involved with applying those methods is the knowledge and training received by WS' personnel. WS' employees who conduct goose damage management activities are knowledgeable in the use of methods, wildlife species responsible for causing damage or threats, and WS' directives. That knowledge is incorporated into the decision-making process inherent with the WS' Decision Model that is applied when addressing threats and damage caused by geese. When employing lethal methods, WS' employees considered risks to human safety when employing those methods based on location and method. Risks to human safety from the use of methods is likely greater in urban areas when compared to rural areas that are less densely populated. Consideration is also given to the location where damage management activities will be conducted based on property ownership. If locations where methods will be employed occur on private property in rural areas where access to the property is controlled and monitored, the risks to human safety from the use of methods is likely less. If damage management activities occur at parks or near other

public use areas, then risks of the public encountering damage management methods and the corresponding risk to human safety increases.

Safety issues due arise related to misusing firearms and the potential human hazards associated with firearms use when employed to reduce damage and threats. To help ensure safe use and awareness, WS' employees who use firearms to conduct official duties are required to attend an approved firearm safety training course and to remain certified for firearm use must continually attend a safety training course (WS Directive 2.615). WS' employees who carry and use firearms as a condition of employment, are required to sign a form certifying that they have not been convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence. A thorough safety assessment will be conducted before firearms are deemed appropriate to alleviate or reduce damage and threats to human safety when conducting activities. WS will work closely with cooperators requesting assistance to ensure all safety issues are considered before the use of firearms is deemed appropriate. All methods, including firearms, must be agreed upon with the cooperator to ensure the safe use of methods. A risk assessment conducted during the development of WS' programmatic FEIS, determined the risks to human safety from the use of firearms was low based on the use profile of the method (USDA 1997).

Immobilizing drugs could be used as non-lethal methods of capture under this alternative. Alpha chloralose could be used to immobilize geese under this alternative. The primary application of immobilizing drugs occurs once a target species has been pre-baited and acclimated to being fed at a location. Therefore, outside of transport and storage, the primary concern to human safety occurs to the handler and support staff during handling and distribution of the drug. WS' personnel are present on-site during the application of treated bait and any uneaten bait is retrieved after each baiting session. Alpha chloralose is administered according to recommended methods and doses from published sources (see Appendix B).

Of additional concern with the use of immobilizing drugs is the potential for human consumption of meat from geese that have been immobilized. Since geese are harvested during a regulated harvest season and consumed, the use of immobilizing drugs is of concern. The intended use of immobilizing drugs is to live-capture geese. Canada geese are conditioned to feed during a period in the day when consumption of treated bait ensures geese do not disperse from the immediate area where the bait is applied. However, it could be possible for target geese to leave the immediate area where baiting is occurring after consuming bait. Alpha-chloralose is primarily used to target geese that are incapable of flight which reduces the risks that target birds will leave the immediate area once treated bait is consumed. To mitigate this risk, withdrawal times are often established. A withdrawal time is the period of time established between when the animal was immobilized to when it is safe to consume the meat of the animal by humans. Withdrawal periods are not well defined for free-ranging wildlife species for all drugs. In the event that WS is requested to immobilize geese either during a period of time when harvest of geese is occurring or during a period of time where a withdrawal period could overlap with the start of a harvest season, WS would not use immobilizing drugs. In those cases other methods would be employed.

All WS' personnel who handle and administered immobilizing drugs will be properly trained. WS' employees handling and administering immobilizing drugs are required to be trained according to WS Directive 2.430. Training and adherence to agency directives will ensure the safety of employees administering any drugs. Geese euthanized by WS after the use of immobilizing drugs will be disposed of by deep burial or incinerated to ensure the risks to human safety from euthanized geese are minimal (WS Directive 2.515). All euthanasia will occur in the absence of the public to further minimize risks. Minimization measures and SOPs are further described in Chapter 3 of this EA.

The recommendation by WS that geese be harvested during the regulated hunting season which is established by the RIDEM under frameworks determined by the USFWS would not increase risks to

human safety above those risks already inherent with hunting geese. Recommendations of allowing hunting on property owned or managed by a cooperator to reduce goose populations which could then reduce goose damage or threats would not increase risks to human safety. Safety requirements established by the USFWS and the RIDEM for the regulated hunting season will further minimize risks associated with hunting. Although hunting accidents do occur, the recommendation of allowing hunting to reduce localized goose populations will not increase those risks.

No adverse affects to human safety have occurred from WS' use of methods to alleviate goose damage in Rhode Island from FY 2005 through FY 2009. The risks to human safety from the use of non-lethal and lethal methods, when used appropriately and by trained personnel, is considered low.

Issue 7 - Effects on the Regulated Harvest of Canada Geese

Another common concern is the potential effects of damage management activities on the ability to harvest target species during the regulated hunting season in the State. Methods are intended to disperse or remove target species from an area where damage is occurring which could reduce the opportunities to harvest geese during the regulated harvest season. Canada geese can be harvested in the State during an early September season, the regular waterfowl season, and a late season.

Alternative 1 – No Canada Goose Damage Management Conducted by WS

WS would have no impact on regulated goose hunting under this alternative. WS would not be involved with any aspect of goose damage management. The USFWS and the RIDEM would continue to regulate goose populations through adjustments in allowed take during the regulated harvest season and through depredation orders or permits.

Alternative 2 – Canada Goose Damage Management by WS through Technical Assistance Only

WS would have no impact on regulated goose hunting since WS would not lethally remove geese under this alternative. However, resource/property owners may remove geese under depredation permits and depredation orders issued by the USFWS resulting in impacts similar to the proposed action and the other alternatives. The recommendation of non-lethal methods could disperse or exclude geese from areas under this alternative which could limit the ability of those interested to harvest geese in the damage management area. However, the goose population would be unaffected by WS under this alternative.

Alternative 3 - Continuing the Current Integrated Approach to Managing Canada Goose Damage (Proposed Action/No Action)

The magnitude of take of geese addressed in the proposed action would be low when compared to the goose mortality from all known sources. When WS' proposed take of geese was included as part of the known mortality of geese and compared to the estimated goose population, the impact on the goose population was below the level of removal required to lower population levels. The USFWS and the RIDEM will determine the number of geese taken annually by WS through the issuance of depredation permits.

Canada goose damage management activities conducted by WS will occur after consultation and approval by the USFWS. With oversight by the USFWS, the number of geese allowed to be taken by WS will not limit the ability of those interested to harvest geese during the regulated season. All take by WS will be reported to the USFWS annually to ensure take by WS is incorporated into population management objectives established for goose populations. Based on the limited take proposed by WS and the oversight of by the USFWS and the RIDEM, WS' take of up to a total of 500 Canada geese annually, of

which 150 could be taken during periods when geese present in the State could be considered migratory, will have no effect on the ability of those interested to harvest geese during the regulated harvest season.

4.2 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTION BY ISSUE

Cumulative impacts, as defined by CEQ (40 CFR 1508.7), are impacts to the environment that result from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts may result from individually minor, but collectively significant, actions taking place over time.

WS will continue to coordinate goose damage management activities and will report all take of geese to the USFWS annually. WS will also annually monitor program activities to ensure those activities are within the scope analyzed in this EA.

The WS program would be the primary federal program providing direct operational assistance with managing damage caused by geese; however, some state and local government agencies may conduct damage management activities in Rhode Island as well. Through ongoing coordination with those agencies, WS is aware of such activities and may provide technical assistance in such efforts. WS does not normally conduct direct damage management activities concurrently with such agencies in the same area, but may conduct goose damage management activities at adjacent sites within the same time frame. In addition, commercial pest control companies may conduct goose damage management activities in the same area. The potential cumulative impacts analyzed below could occur either as a result of WS' goose damage management program activities over time, or as a result of the aggregate effects of those activities combined with the activities of other agencies and individuals.

Issue 1 - Effects on Canada Goose Populations

Evaluation of activities relative to target species indicated that program activities will likely have no cumulative adverse affects on goose populations when targeting those geese responsible for damage. WS' actions would be occurring simultaneously, over time, with other natural processes and human generated changes that are currently taking place. These activities include, but are not limited to:

- Natural mortality of Canada geese
- Human-induced mortality of Canada geese through private damage management activities
- Annual harvest of Canada geese during regulated hunting seasons
- Human and naturally induced alterations of wildlife habitat
- Annual and perennial cycles in wildlife population densities

All those factors play a role in the dynamics of Canada goose populations. In many circumstances, requests for assistance arise when some or all of those elements have contrived to elevate target species populations or place target species at a juncture to cause damage to resources. The actions taken to minimize or eliminate damage are constrained as to scope, duration, and intensity for the purpose of minimizing or avoiding impacts to the environment. WS uses the Decision Model to evaluate damage occurring, including other affected elements and the dynamics of the damaging species; to determine appropriate strategies to minimize effects on environmental elements; applies damage management actions; and subsequently monitors and adjusts/ceases damage management actions (Slate et al. 1992, USDA 1997). This process allows WS to take into consideration other influences in the environment, such as those listed above, in order to avoid cumulative adverse impacts on target species.

With management authority over Canada geese in Rhode Island, the USFWS and the RIDEM can adjust take levels, including the take of WS, to ensure population objectives for geese are achieved. Consultation and reporting of take by WS will ensure the USFWS and the RIDEM considers any activities conducted by WS.

WS' take of Canada geese in Rhode Island from FY 2005 through FY 2009 was of a low magnitude when compared to the total known take. WS' annual take of geese in the State will occur under depredation permits issued by the USFWS. The USFWS and the RIDEM considers all known take when determining population objectives for geese in the State and adjusts the number of geese that will be taken during the regulated hunting season and the number of geese taken for damage management purposes to achieve the population objectives. Any take by WS will occur at the discretion of the USFWS and the RIDEM and any goose population declines or increases will be the collective objective for goose populations established by the USFWS and the RIDEM. Therefore, the cumulative take of geese annually or over time by WS will occur at the desire of the USFWS and the RIDEM as part of management objectives for Canada geese in the State.

No cumulative adverse impacts on target and non-target wildlife are expected from WS' goose damage management actions based on the following considerations:

1. Historical outcomes of WS' damage management activities on wildlife

Canada goose damage management activities are conducted by WS only at the request of a cooperator to reduce damage that is occurring or to prevent damage from occurring and only after methods to be used are agreed upon by all parties involved. Only those geese identified as causing damage or posing a threat of damage are targeted by WS. WS annually monitors activities to ensure any potential impacts are identified and addressed. WS works closely with State and federal resource agencies to ensure damage management activities are not adversely impacting goose populations and that WS' activities are considered as part of management goals established by those agencies. Historically, WS' activities to manage damage caused by geese in Rhode Island have not reached a magnitude that would cause adverse impacts to Canada goose populations in the State based on the increasing trends observed for resident geese in the State.

2. SOP and mitigation strategies built into the WS program

SOPs and mitigation measures are designed to reduce the potential negative effects of WS' actions on geese, and are tailored to respond to changes in wildlife populations which could result from unforeseen environmental changes. This would include those changes occurring from sources other than WS. Alterations in programs are defined through SOP and mitigation measures, and implementation is insured through monitoring, in accordance with the WS' Decision Model (Slate et al. 1992).

3. Current status of potentially affected wildlife species

Natural and human-induced mortality patterns for geese are expected to remain essentially unchanged in Rhode Island. This is true of elements outside WS' programs and the programs themselves. As a result, no cumulative adverse affects are expected from repetitive programs over time in the fairly static set of conditions currently affecting wildlife in Rhode Island.

Issue 2 - Effectiveness of Canada Goose Damage Management Methods

As discussed in Chapter 2, the effectiveness of any damage management program could be defined in terms of losses or risks potentially reduced or prevented which is based on how accurately practitioners

diagnosis the problem, the species responsible for the damage, and how actions are implemented to correct or mitigate risks or damages. The most effective approach to resolving any damage problem is to use an adaptive integrated approach which may call for the use of several management methods simultaneously or sequentially (USDA 1997, Courchamp et al. 2003).

Effectiveness is based on the types of methods employed, the application of the method, restrictions on the use of the method(s), the skill of the personnel using the method and, for WS' personnel, the guidance provided by WS' Directives and policies. The goal of the WS' program is to reduce damage, risks, and conflicts with wildlife as requested. WS recognizes that localized population reduction could be short-term and that new individuals may immigrate, be released at the site, or be born to animals remaining at the site (Courchamp et al. 2003). The ability of an animal population to sustain a certain level of removal and to eventually return to pre-management levels, however, does not mean individual management actions are unsuccessful, but that periodic management may be necessary.

Correlated with the effectiveness of methods at reducing or alleviating damage are the costs associated with applying methods to reduce damage or threats. If methods are ineffective at reducing or alleviating damage or if methods require re-application after initially being successful, the costs associated with applying those methods increases. An analysis of cost-effectiveness in many bird damage management situations is difficult or impossible to determine because the value of benefits may not be readily calculable and personal perspectives differ about damage. For example, the potential benefit of eliminating geese from defecating on public beaches could reduce incidences of illness among an unknown number of users. Since some bird-borne diseases are potentially fatal, or severely debilitating, the value of the benefit may be high. However, no studies of disease problems with and without bird damage management have been conducted, and, therefore, the number of cases prevented because of damage management are not possible to estimate. Also, it is rarely possible to conclusively prove that geese are responsible for individual disease cases or outbreaks which were discussed in the EA in Chapter 1.

As part of an integrated approach to managing goose damage, WS would have the ability to adapt methods to damage situations to effectively reduce or prevent damage from occurring. Under the proposed integrated approach, all methods, individually or in combination, could be employed as deemed appropriate through WS' Decision Model to address requests for assistance. WS' objective when receiving a request for assistance under the proposed action is to reduce damage and threats to human safety or to prevent damage from occurring using an integrated approach to managing goose damage. Therefore, under the proposed action, WS would employ methods adaptively to achieve that objective.

In regards to the effectiveness of methods used, Avery (2002) cited studies where lethal damage management reduced losses to crops (Elliott 1964, Larsen and Mott 1970, Palmer 1970, Plesser et al. 1983, Tahon 1980, Glahn et al. 2000 as cited in Avery 2002) and those lethal methods posed little danger to non-target species (Glahn et al. 2000). Avery (2002) also stated that it seems reasonable that local, short-term crop protection can be achieved through reduction in depredating bird populations; however, quantification of the relationship between the numbers of birds killed and the associated reduction in crop damage is lacking. Avery (2002) stated that studies demonstrating economic benefit from the use of lethal methods are lacking but did not state that lethal methods to resolve damage are not economically effective. Many publications indicate that the use of non-lethal methods require repeated application to achieve the desired result (see Smith et al. 1999, Gorenzel et al. 2000, Gorenzel et al. 2002, Avery et al. 2008b, Chipman et al. 2008). Long-term solutions to resolving bird damage often require management of the population (Smith et al. 1999) and identifying the habitat characteristics which attract birds to a particular location (Gorenzel and Salmon 1995).

The CEQ does not require a formal, monetized cost-benefit analysis to comply with the NEPA (40 CFR 1508.14) and consideration of that issue is not essential to making a reasoned choice among the alternatives being considered. WS' programmatic FEIS (USDA 1997) states:

"Cost effectiveness is not, nor should it be, the primary goal of the APHIS WS program. Additional constraints, such as the environmental protection, land management goals, and others, are considered whenever a request for assistance is received. These constraints increase the cost of the program while not necessarily increasing its effectiveness, yet they are a vital part of the APHIS WS Program."

In a ruling for Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, et al. vs. Hugh Thompson, Forest Supervisor for the Dixie NF, et al., the court denied plaintiffs' motion for preliminary injunction. In part the court found that it was only necessary to show that damage from wildlife is threatened, to establish a need for wildlife damage management (U.S. District Court of Utah 1993).

As stated in the EA, WS only provides assistance after a request has been received and a cooperative service agreement or other comparable document has been signed by WS and the requesting entity in which all methods used to address geese causing damage are agreed upon. Methods employed to manage goose damage, whether non-lethal or lethal, are often temporary with the duration dependent on many factors discussed in the EA. WS' employs only those methods as agreed upon by the requestor after available methods are discussed.

Concern is often raised that geese only return to an area where damage was occurring if lethal methods are used which creates a financial incentive to continue the use of only lethal methods. However, as stated throughout the EA, the use of non-lethal methods are also often temporary which could result in geese returning to an area where damage was occurring once those methods are no longer used. Canada geese will return if suitable habitat continues to exist at the location where damage was occurring and goose densities are sufficient to occupy all available habitats. Therefore, any reduction or prevention of damage from the use of methods addressed in the EA will be temporary if habitat conditions continue to exist. Any method that disperses or removes geese from areas will only be temporary if habitat continues to exist the following year when geese return to nest. Dispersing geese using pyrotechnics, repellents, dogs, or any other non-lethal method addressed in the EA often requires repeated application to discourage geese which increases costs, moves geese to other areas where they could cause damage, and are temporary if habitat conditions remain unchanged. Dispersing and the relocating of geese could be viewed as moving problem geese from one area to another which would require addressing damage caused by those geese at another location. WS' recommendation of or use of techniques to modifying existing habitat or making areas unattractive to geese was addressed in the EA and in Appendix B. Therefore, WS' objective is to respond to request for assistance with the most effective methods and to provide for the long-term solution to the problem using WS' Decision Model to adapt methods in an integrated approach to managing goose damage that is agreed upon by the cooperator. WS' legislative authority to manage wildlife damage was also addressed in the EA.

Issue 3 - Effects on Non-target Wildlife Species Populations, Including T&E Species

Potential effects on non-target species from conducting goose damage management arise from the use of non-lethal and lethal methods to alleviate or prevent those damages. The use of non-lethal methods during activities to reduce or prevent damage caused by geese has the potential to exclude, disperse, or capture non-target wildlife. However, the effects of non-lethal methods are often temporary and often do not involve the take (killing) of non-target wildlife species. When using exclusion devices and/or repellents, both target and non-target wildlife can be prevented from accessing the resource being damaged. Since exclusion does not involve lethal take, cumulative impacts on non-target species from the use of exclusionary methods will not occur but would likely disperse those individuals to other areas.

Exclusionary methods are often expensive and require constant maintenance to ensure effectiveness. Therefore, the use of exclusionary devices would be somewhat limited to small, high-value areas and not used to the extent that non-targets are excluded from large areas that would cumulatively impact populations from the inability to access a resource, such as potential food sources or nesting sites. The use of visual and auditory harassment and dispersion methods are generally temporary with non-target species returning after the cessation of those activities. Dispersal and harassment do not involve the take (killing) of non-target species and similar to exclusionary methods are not used to the extent or at a constant level that would prevent non-targets from accessing critical resources that would threaten survival of a population.

The use of lethal methods or those methods used to live-capture target species followed by euthanasia also have the potential to impact non-target wildlife through the take (killing) or capture of non-target species. Capture methods used are often methods that are set to confine or restrain target wildlife after being triggered by the applicator. Capture methods are employed in such a manner as to minimize the threat to non-target species by placement in those areas frequently used by target wildlife, using baits or lures that are as species specific as possible, and modification of individual methods to exclude non-targets from capture. Most methods described in Appendix B are methods that are employed to confine or restrain wildlife that are subsequently euthanized using humane methods since relocation is currently not allowed by the RIDEM without a permit. With all live-capture devices, non-target wildlife captured can be released on site if determined to be able to survive following release. Minimization and SOPs are intended to ensure take of non-target wildlife is minimal during the use of methods to capture target wildlife.

The use of firearms and euthanasia methods are essentially selective for target species since identification of an individual is made prior to the application of the method. Therefore, the use of those methods will not impact non-target species.

Chemical methods available for use under the proposed action are repellents, nicarbazin, and alpha-chloralose which are described in Appendix B. Except for repellents that are applied directly to the affected resource, all chemical methods are employed using baits that are highly attractive to target species and used in areas where exposure to non-targets are minimal. The use of those methods requires an acclimation period and monitoring of potential bait sites for non-target activity. All chemicals will be used according to product label which ensure that proper use will minimize non-target threats. WS' adherence to Directives, SOPs, and mitigation measures governing the use of chemicals also ensures non-target hazards are minimal.

All chemical methods will be tracked and recorded to ensure proper accounting of used and unused chemicals occurs. All chemicals will be stored and transported according the WS and Department of Transportation regulations. The amount of chemicals used or stored by WS will be minimal to ensure human safety. Based on this information, WS' use of chemical methods, as part of the proposed action, will not have cumulative impacts on non-targets.

All label requirements of those chemical methods will be followed to minimize non-target hazards. As required by the label for nicarbazin and alpha chloralose, an acclimation period occurs and sites are monitored for non-target use as outlined in the label. Once sites are baited, applicators are present on site until all bait is consumed. If birds are observed feeding on bait, those sites are abandoned. All unconsumed bait must be retrieved after application.

Repellents may also be used or recommended by the WS program in Rhode Island to manage goose damage. The active ingredient in numerous commercial repellents is methyl anthranilate which has been categorized by the EPA as "generally recognized as safe". Methyl anthranilate is a derivative of grapes

and used as a flavoring in food and as a fragrance in cosmetics. Other repellents available contain the active ingredient anthraquinone, which is a naturally occurring plant extract. Characteristics of these chemicals and potential use patterns indicate that no significant cumulative impacts related to environmental fate are expected from their use in WS' programs in Rhode Island when used according to label requirements.

The methods described in Appendix B all have a high level of selectivity and can be employed using SOPs and minimization measures to ensure minimal impacts to non-targets species. No non-targets were taken by WS during goose damage management activities from FY 2005 through FY 2009. Based on the methods available to resolve goose 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 under the proposed action of non-targets will not cumulatively impact non-target species. WS' has reviewed the T&E species listed by the RIDEM and the USFWS and has determined that goose damage management activities proposed by WS will have no effect on T&E species not addressed in the BO issued by the USFWS on WS' programmatic activities (USDA 1997). The USFWS concurred in the BO with WS' determination that WS' programmatic activities would not adversely affect those T&E species addressed as part of WS' programmatic consultation. In addition, the use of lasers, nicarbazin, and alpha-chloralose will have no effect on any listed species in the State based on the use patterns of those methods. WS has also determined that goose damage management activities will have no effect on T&E species and species of concern that are listed by the RIDEM. Cumulative impacts will be minimal on non-targets from any of the alternatives discussed.

Issue 4 - Humaneness and Animal Welfare Concerns of Methods

WS continues to seek new methods and ways to improve current technology to improve the humaneness of methods used to manage damage caused by wildlife. Cooperation with individuals and organizations involved in animal welfare continues to be an agency priority for the purpose of evaluating strategies and defining research aimed at developing humane methods.

Methods involving the use of live-capture devices, chemicals, and euthanasia methods occur while WS' personnel are present on the site to ensure any wildlife confined or restrained are addressed in a timely manner to minimize distress of the animal. All euthanasia methods used for live-captured geese will be applied according to AVMA guidelines for free-ranging wildlife. Shooting will occur in limited situations and personnel will be trained in the proper use of firearms to minimize pain and suffering of geese taken by this method.

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 minimization measures and SOPs that guide WS in the use of methods to address damage and threats associated with geese in the State, the cumulative impacts on the issue of method humaneness are minimal. All methods will be evaluated annually to ensure measures and SOPs are adequate to ensure those methods continue to be used to minimize suffering and that wildlife captured are addressed in a timely manner to minimize distress.

Issue 5 - Effects on the Aesthetic Values of Canada Geese

The activities of WS would result in the removal of geese from those areas where damage or threats were occurring. Therefore, the aesthetic value of geese in those areas where damage management activities were being conducted would be reduced. However, for some people, the aesthetic value of a more natural environment would be gained by reducing goose densities, including the return of native wildlife and plant species that may be suppressed or displaced by high goose densities.

Some people experience a decrease in aesthetic enjoyment of wildlife because they feel that overabundant species are objectionable and interfere with their enjoyment of wildlife in general. Continued increases in numbers of individuals or the continued presence of geese may lead to further degradation of some people's enjoyment of any wildlife or the natural environment. The actions of WS could positively affect the aesthetic enjoyment of wildlife for those people that are being adversely affected by the target species identified in this EA.

Canada goose population objectives are established and enforced by the USFWS and the RIDEM through regulating the take of geese during the statewide hunting season, through depredation orders, and through the issuance of depredation permits after consideration of other known mortality factors. Therefore, WS has no direct impact on the status of the goose population since all take by WS occurs at the discretion of the USFWS and the RIDEM. Since those persons seeking assistance could remove geese from areas where damage is occurring through the established depredation orders or through depredation permits issued by the USFWS and the RIDEM, WS' involvement would have no effect of the aesthetic value of geese in the area where damage was occurring. When a depredation permit has been issued by the USFWS to a property owner and/or manager that is experiencing damage caused by geese, the removal of geese under that permit would likely occur whether WS was involved with taking the geese or not. Under the established depredation orders, take can occur without need for a depredation permit when certain conditions are met. Take can also occur during the regulated hunting season for geese in the State.

Therefore, the activities of WS are not expected to have any cumulative adverse affects on this element of the human environment if occurring at the request of a property owner and/or manager and a permit has been issued by the USFWS who is responsible for regulating a resident wildlife species, like Canada geese.

Issue 6 - Effects of Management Methods on Human Health and Safety

Non-Chemical Methods

All non-chemical methods described in Appendix B are used within a limited time frame, are not residual, and do not possess properties capable of inducing cumulative adverse impacts on human health and safety. All non-chemical methods are used after careful consideration of the safety of those employing methods and to the public. All capture methods are employed where human activity is minimal to ensure the safety of the public. All methods are agreed upon by the requesting entities which are made aware of the safety issues of those methods when entering into a MOU, cooperative service agreement, or other comparable document between WS and the cooperating entity. SOPs and minimization measures also ensure the safety of the public from those methods used to capture or take wildlife. A formal risk assessment conducted by APHIS determined that WS' non-chemical methods, when used as intended, poses a low risk to human safety (USDA 1997). Firearms used to alleviate or prevent damage, though hazards do exist, are employed to ensure the safety of employees and the public.

WS has received no reports or documented any adverse affects to human safety from WS' goose damage management activities conducted from FY 2005 through FY 2009. Personnel employing non-chemical methods will 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 non-chemical methods, those methods will not cumulatively impact human safety.

Chemical Methods

Chemical methods available for use under the proposed action are repellents, reproductive inhibitors, and immobilizing drugs. Immobilizing drugs are administered to target individuals using methods that ensure the identification of the target animal. The immobilizing drugs discussed in Appendix B require consumption of the drug by the target animal. WS' personnel are present at bait sites during the application of treated bait which reduces the risks to human safety. All unconsumed bait is also retrieved after each baiting session which further reduces risks to human safety. Immobilized geese may also be euthanized using cervical dislocation or carbon dioxide which are described in Appendix B. Euthanasia methods would only be administered after geese have been properly restrained. WS' personnel are required to attend training courses and be certified in the use of immobilizing drugs and euthanasia methods to ensure proper care and handling occurs, to ensure the proper doses are administered, and to ensure human safety. WS' personnel will continue to be trained in the proper handling and administering of immobilizing drugs and euthanasia methods to ensure human safety.

All chemical methods will be tracked and recorded to ensure proper accounting of used and unused chemicals occurs. All chemicals will be stored and transported according to FDA, Department of Transportation, and the Drug Enforcement Agency regulations, including the directives of WS. The amount of chemicals used or stored by WS will be minimal to ensure human safety.

Repellents available for use to disperse geese from areas of application must be registered with the EPA according to FIFRA. Many of the repellents currently available for use have active ingredients that are naturally occurring and are generally recognized as safe. Although some hazards exist from the use of repellents, hazards occur primarily to the handler and applicator. When repellents are applied according to label requirements, no adverse affects to human safety are expected.

Nicarbazin was not registered for use as a goose reproductive inhibitor in the State during the development of the EA. However, since the method is registered with the EPA in accordance with the FIFRA, WS is considering the use of nicarbazin in anticipation of the product being registered for use. As with other chemical methods, the primary hazards from the use of nicarbazin occurs to those persons that handle and apply the product. The label requires that personnel applying the product be present at the site of application until the entire product has been consumed. All unconsumed bait must be retrieved after each baiting session which reduces the risks to the public. Based on the use patterns of nicarbazin, the cumulative impact from the use of the product appears to be minimal. As with chemical methods registered with the EPA, the use of those products according to label requirements minimizes cumulative risks, including risks to human safety.

No adverse affects have been report to or identified by WS from the use of chemical methods during goose damage management conducted by WS from FY 2005 through FY 2009. When chemical methods are applied as intended and when safety guidelines are followed, no adverse affects to human safety are expected. The primary risk of exposure to chemical methods occurs to handlers and applicators. WS' personnel who use and apply chemical methods will be trained according to federal, state, and local laws and regulations, including WS' directives. Based on this information, the use of chemical methods as part of the proposed action by WS will not have cumulative impacts on human safety.

Issue 7 - Effects on the Regulated Harvest of Canada Geese

As discussed previously in this EA, the magnitude of WS' goose take for damage management purposes from FY 2005 through FY 2009 was low when compared to the total take of geese and when compared to the estimated statewide population. Since all take of geese is regulated by the USFWS and the RIDEM, the take of geese by WS that would occur annually and cumulatively would occur pursuant to goose

population objectives established by the USFWS and the RIDEM. WS' take of up to 500 resident Canada geese annually, of which no more than 150 will be taken during those months when geese could be considered migratory geese to alleviate damage would be a minor component to the known take that occurs annually. With oversight of goose take, the USFWS and the RIDEM maintains the ability to regulate take by WS to meet management objectives for geese in the State. Therefore, the cumulative take of geese is considered as part of the USFWS and RIDEM objectives for goose populations in the State. Any changes in the population of Canada geese in the State would occur at the direction and the discretion of the USFWS and the RIDEM since all take by WS occurs only when a depredation permit has been issued for the take by the USFWS.

CHAPTER 5: LIST OF PREPARERS AND PERSONS CONSULTED

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APPENDIX A

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APPENDIX B

CANADA GOOSE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT METHODS AVAILABLE FOR USE OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE WS PROGRAM IN RHODE ISLAND

In selecting damage management techniques for specific damage situations, consideration is given to the responsible species and the magnitude, geographic extent, duration and frequency, and likelihood of wildlife damage. Consideration is also given to the status of target and potential non-target species, local environmental conditions and impacts, social and legal aspects, and relative costs of damage reduction options. The cost of damage reduction may sometimes be a secondary concern because of the overriding environmental, legal, and animal welfare considerations. Those factors are evaluated in formulating damage management strategies that incorporate the application of one or more techniques.

A variety of methods are potentially available to the WS program in Rhode Island relative to the management or reduction of damage from geese. Various federal, State, and local statutes and regulations and WS directives govern WS' use of damage management tools and substances. WS develops and recommends or implements damage management strategies based on resource management, physical exclusion, and wildlife management approaches. Within each approach there may be available a number of specific methods or tactics. The following methods and materials are recommended or used in technical assistance and direct damage management efforts of the WS program in Rhode Island.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Resource management includes a variety of practices that may be used by resource owners to reduce the potential for wildlife damage. Implementation of these practices is appropriate when the potential for damage can be reduced without significantly increasing a resource owner's costs or diminishing his/her ability to manage resources pursuant to goals. Resource management recommendations are made through WS technical assistance efforts.

Habitat Alteration: Habitat alteration can be the planting of vegetation unpalatable to wildlife or altering the physical habitat (Conover and Kania 1991, Conover 1992). Conover (1991a, 1991b) found that even hungry Canada geese refused to eat some ground covers such as common periwinkle (*Vinca minor*), English ivy (*Hedera helix*) and Japanese pachysandra (*Pachysandra terminalis*). Planting less preferred plants or grasses to discourage geese from a specific area could work more effectively if good alternative feeding sites are nearby (Conover 1985). However, the manipulation of turf grass varieties in urban/suburban, heavy use situations such as parks, athletic fields and golf courses is often not feasible. Varieties of turf grass that grow well and can withstand regular mowing and regular/heavy human use include: Kentucky blue grass, red fescue, perennial bent grass, perennial rye grass and white clover. All of these grasses are appealing to most waterfowl. The turf grass varieties that are not appealing to some waterfowl such as, tall fescue, orchard grass and timothy, do not withstand regular mowing and/or regular/heavy human use.

Vegetative barriers can be placed at shorelines to impede goose movements. Restricting a bird's ability to move between water and land will deter them from an area, especially during molts (Gosser et al. 1997). However, people are often reluctant to make appropriate landscape modifications to discourage waterfowl activity (Breault and McKelvey 1991, Conover and Kania 1991). Unfortunately, both humans and waterfowl appear to find lawn areas near water attractive (Addison and Amernic 1983), and conflicts between humans and waterfowl will likely continue wherever this interface occurs.

Removal of water bodies would likely reduce the attractiveness of an area to geese. Urban/suburban geese tend to feed near bodies of water with a distant view over short grass (Conover and Kania 1991). Draining/removal of water bodies are considered unreasonable and aesthetically unacceptable. The draining of wetlands is strictly regulated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Department of Environmental Protection. A U.S. Corp of Engineers Section 404 permit may be necessary before actions are taken to drain bodies of water or wetlands.

Lure Crops: Lure crops are food resources planted to attract wildlife away from more valuable resources (*e.g.*, crops). This method is largely ineffective for urban geese since food (turf) resources are readily available. For lure crops to be effective, the ability to keep birds from surrounding fields would be necessary, and the number of alternative feeding sites must be minimal (Fairaizl and Pfeifer 1988). Additionally, lure crops reduce damage for only a short time (Fairaizl and Pfeifer 1988) and damage by geese is generally continuous. The resource owner is limited in implementing this method contingent upon ownership of, or otherwise ability to manage the property. Unless the original goose-human conflict is resolved, creation of additional goose habitat could increase future conflicts.

Lure crops may be planted on some land held in private ownership, such as conservation clubs, throughout Rhode Island. These plantings may provide some additional food or act as an attractant for geese. However, it is highly unlikely they contribute to conflicts with geese or act as significant goose attractants.

Modify Human Behavior: Artificial feeding of geese by people attracts and sustains more birds in an area than could be supported by natural food supplies. This unnatural food source exacerbates damage by geese. The elimination of feeding of geese is a primary recommendation made by WS, and many local municipalities and homeowners associations have adopted policies and ordinances prohibiting it. Some parks have posted signs, and there have been efforts made to educate the public on the negative aspects of feeding geese. However, sometimes people do not comply, and the policies are poorly enforced in some areas.

Alternatively, some entities do not prohibit the feeding of geese because the goose population in the location has not exceeded the public's tolerance for damage. It is unlikely that the feeding of geese in these locations would significantly contribute to conflicts with waterfowl in other communities or locations.

Alter Aircraft Flight Patterns: In cases where the presence of geese at airports results in threats to human safety, and when such problems cannot be resolved by other means, the alteration of aircraft flight patterns or schedules may be recommended. However, altering operations at airports to decrease the potential for hazards is not feasible unless an emergency situation exists. Otherwise, the expense of interrupted flights and the limitations of existing facilities make this practice prohibitive.

Some military airbases can restrict sorties for short periods of time when this type of management action does not impact mission critical operations. Altering flight schedules at military airbases has been implemented to decrease the potential hazard caused by flocking species of birds such as geese.

Removal of Domestic Waterfowl: Flocks of urban waterfowl are known to act as decoys and attract migrating waterfowl (Crisley et al. 1968, Woronecki 1992). Rabenold (1987) and Avery (1994) reported that birds learn to locate food resources by watching the behavior of other birds. The removal of domestic waterfowl from ponds removes birds that act as decoys in attracting other waterfowl. Domestic and feral waterfowl could also carry diseases which threaten wild populations. Property or resource owners may be reluctant to remove some or all decoy birds because of the enjoyment of their presence.

PHYSICAL EXCLUSION AND DETERRENTS

Physical exclusion and deterrents restrict the access of wildlife to resources and/or alter behavior of target animals to reduce damage. These methods provide a means of appropriate and effective prevention of goose damage in many situations. When T&E species exist on a site, certain methods will not be incorporated in management plans.

Electric Fence: The application of electrified fencing is generally limited to rural settings, due to the possibility/likelihood of electricity interacting with people and pets. Limits of this application arise where there are multiple landowners along the wetland, pond, or lake, and the size of the field and its proximity to bodies of water used by geese. Perceptions from Minnesota on the effectiveness of electric fences were high (Cooper and Keefe 1997). While electric fencing may be effective in repelling geese in some urban settings, its use is often prohibited in many municipalities for human safety reasons. Problems that typically reduce the effectiveness of electric fences include; vegetation on fence, flight capable geese, fencing knocked down by other animals (*e.g.*, white-tailed deer and dogs), and poor power.

Barrier Fence: The construction or placement of physical barriers has limited application for geese. Barriers can be temporary or permanent structures. Lawn furniture/ornaments, vehicles, boats, snow fencing, plastic hazard fencing, metal wire fencing, and multiple strand fencing have all been used to limit the movement of geese. The application of this method is limited to areas that can be completely enclosed and do not allow geese to land inside enclosures. Similar to most abatement techniques, this method has been most effective when dealing with small numbers of breeding geese and their flightless young along wetlands and/or waterways. Unfortunately, there have been situations where barrier fencing designed to inhibit goose nesting has entrapped young and resulted in starvation (Cooper 1998). The preference for geese to walk or swim, rather than fly, during this time period contributes to the success of barrier fences. Geese that are capable of full or partial flight render this method useless, except for enclosed areas small enough to prevent landing. However, site specific habitat alterations have merit, provided that landscape designs are based on biological diversity and human safety objectives.

Surface Coverings: Geese may be excluded from ponds using overhead wire grids (Fairaizl 1992, Lowney 1993). Overhead wire grids have been demonstrated to be most applicable on ponds $\leq$ two acres, but wire grids may be considered aesthetically unappealing to some people. Wire grids render a pond unusable for boating, swimming, fishing, and other recreational activities. The expense of maintaining wire grids may be burdensome for some people.

Balls approximately five inches in diameter can be used to cover the surface of a pond. A “ball blanket” renders a pond unusable for boating, swimming, fishing, and other recreational activities.

Visual Deterrents: Reflective tape has been used successfully to repel some birds from crops when spaced at three to five meter intervals (Bruggers et al. 1986, Dolbeer et al. 1986). Mylar flagging has been reported effective at reducing migrant Canada goose damage to crops (Heinrich and Craven 1990). Flagging is impractical in many locations and has met with some local resistance due to the negative aesthetic appearance presented on the properties where it is used. Other studies have shown reflective tape ineffective (Tobin et al. 1988, Bruggers et al. 1986, Dolbeer et al. 1986, Conover and Dolbeer 1989). While sometimes effective for short periods of time, reflective tape has proven mostly ineffective in deterring resident geese.

Dogs: Dogs can be effective at harassing waterfowl and keeping them off turf and beaches (Conover and Chasko 1985, Castelli and Sleggs 2000). Around water, this technique appears most effective when the body of water to be patrolled is less than two acres in size (Swift 1998). Although dogs can be effective in keeping waterfowl off individual properties, they do not contribute to a solution for the larger problem

of overabundant waterfowl populations (Castelli and Sleggs 2000). Swift (1998) and numerous individuals in New Jersey have reported that when harassment with dogs ceases, the number of geese return to pre-treatment numbers. WS has recommended and encouraged the use of dogs where appropriate.

Repellents: To use chemical repellents for goose damage management in Rhode Island, State regulations governing use of restricted chemicals must be followed.

Methyl Anthranilate is an artificial grape flavoring used in foods and soft drinks for human consumption that is the active ingredient in many bird repellents. Repellents containing the active ingredient methyl anthranilate could be used or recommended by WS to reduce goose damage. Methyl anthranilate has been shown to be nontoxic to bees (LD_{50} > 25 micrograms/bee[10]), nontoxic to rats in an inhalation study (LC_{50} > 2.8 mg/L[11]), and of relatively low toxicity to fish and other invertebrates. Methyl anthranilate is naturally occurring in concord grapes and in the blossoms of several species of flowers and is used as a food additive and perfume ingredient (Dolbeer et al. 1992). It has been listed as "Generally Recognized as Safe" by the FDA (Dolbeer et al. 1992).

Methyl anthranilate has been shown to be a promising repellent for many bird species (Dolbeer et al. 1993). It is registered for applications to turf or to surface water areas used by unwanted birds. Cummings et al. (1995) reported that methyl anthranilate repelled Canada geese from grazing turf for four days. However, Belant et al. (1996) found it ineffective as a grazing repellent when applied at 22.6 and 67.8 kg/ha which is the label rate and triple the label rate, respectively. Methyl anthranilate is water soluble therefore, moderate to heavy rain or daily watering and/or mowing render methyl anthranilate ineffective.

Another potentially more cost-effective method of methyl anthranilate application is by use of a fog-producing machine (Vogt 1997). The fog drifts over the area to be treated and is irritating to the birds while being non-irritating to any humans that might be exposed. Fogging applications must generally be repeated 3-5 times after the initial treatment before the birds abandon a treatment site. Applied at a rate of about .25 l/acre of water surface, the cost is considerably less than when using the turf or water treatment methods.

Anthraquinone is a naturally occurring chemical found in many plant species and in some invertebrates as a natural predator defense mechanism, has shown effectiveness in protecting rice seed from red-winged blackbirds and boat-tailed grackles (Avery et al. 1997). It has also shown effectiveness as a foraging repellent against Canada goose grazing on turf and as a seed repellent against brown-headed cowbirds (Dolbeer et al. 1998).

Hazing: In some locations and circumstances, hazing geese is a useful component of a goose damage management program. Hazing reduces losses in those instances when the affected geese move to more acceptable areas. Achieving that end has become more difficult as the local goose population increases. Birds hazed from one area where they are causing damage, frequently move to another area where they cause damage (Brough 1969, Conover 1984, Summers 1985, Swift 1998). Smith et al. (1999) noted that others have reported similar results and that some techniques (*e.g.*, habitat modifications or scare devices) that were effective for low to moderate population levels tend to fail as flock sizes increase and geese become more accustomed to human activity. Generally speaking, birds tend to habituate to hazing techniques (Zucchi and Bergman 1975, Blokpoel 1976, Summers 1985, Aubin 1990).

[10] An LD_{50} is the dosage in milligrams of material per kilogram of body weight, or, in this case in micrograms per individual bee, required to cause death in 50% of a test population of a species.
[11] An LC_{50} is the dosage in milligrams of material per liter of air required to cause death in 50% of a test population of a species through inhalation.

Scarecrows: The use of scarecrows has had mixed results. Effigies depicting alligators, humans, floating swans and dead geese have been employed, with limited success for short time periods in small areas. An integrated approach (swan and predator effigies, distress calls and non-lethal chemical repellents) was found to be ineffective at scaring or repelling nuisance waterfowl (Conover and Chasko 1985). While Heinrich and Craven (1990) reported that using scarecrows reduced migrant Canada Goose use of agricultural fields in rural areas, their effectiveness in scaring geese from suburban/urban areas is severely limited because geese are not afraid of humans as a result of nearly constant contact with people. In general, scarecrows are most effective when they are moved frequently, alternated with other methods, and are well maintained. However, scarecrows tend to lose effectiveness over time and become less effective as waterfowl populations increase (Smith et al. 1999).

Distress Calls: Aguilera et al. (1991) found distress calls ineffective in causing migratory and resident geese to abandon a pond. Although, Mott and Timbrook (1988) reported distress calls as effective at repelling resident geese 100 meters from the distress unit, the birds would return shortly after the calls stopped. The repellency effect was enhanced when pyrotechnics were used with the distress calls. In some situations, the level of volume required for this method to be effective in urban/suburban areas would be prohibited by local noise ordinances. A similar device, which electronically generates sound, has proven ineffective at repelling migrant waterfowl (Heinrich and Craven 1990).

Lasers: The use of lasers as non-lethal avian damage control tools, have recently been evaluated for a number of species (Blackwell et al. 2002); research on this potential tool has been conducted in a replicated format only for double-crested cormorants (Glahn et al. 2000). In experimental situations, Canada geese have exhibited avoidance reactions to lasers under low light conditions (Blackwell et al. 2002), and a field test of lasers at a Pennsylvania site demonstrated effectiveness of lasers in dispersing large flocks of geese off of a lake, with nearly no habituation to the technique (Cepek et al. 2001). The integrated use of lasers as part of goose damage management programs by WS in Rhode Island may increase program effectiveness, and would be incorporated as appropriate. Wide scale public use of lasers is not typically recommended at this time, pending additional research (on effectiveness and impacts) on its use as a goose damage management tool. In some situations (neighborhoods, schools, hospitals), use of lasers may enhance integrated control programs since they are silent and do not fire a projectile.

Lasers are available with a power of 5 mW (moderate power) and 68 mW (low power). The difference between the lasers is beam intensity and diameter (Glahn et al. 2000). The lasers do not appear to present any detectable ocular hazards to cormorants but do present human safety concerns (Glahn et al. 2000). Both the Desman and Dissuader laser devices which would be used by WS to disperse birds are classified as Class-IIIB lasers (OSHA 1991). Lasers in lower ranges of Class-IIIB do not produce hazardous diffuse reflection unless someone intentionally stares at the laser closer to the diffuser. The lasers can cause temporary flash blindness, afterimage, and glare in people. It is recommended that lasers not be pointed a people (Glahn et al. 2000). The cost of lasers may be a disadvantage to their use (Glahn et al. 2000).

Pyrotechnics: Pyrotechnics (screamer shells, bird bombs, and 12-gauge cracker shells) have been used to repel many species of birds (Booth 1994). Aguilera et al. (1991) found 15mm screamer shells effective at reducing resident and migrant Canada geese use of areas of Colorado. However, Mott and Timbrook (1988) and Aguilera et al. (1991) doubted the efficacy of harassment and believed that moving the geese simply redistributed the problem to other locations. Fairaizl (1992) and Conomy et al. (1998) found the effectiveness of pyrotechnics highly variable among different flocks of waterfowl. Some flocks in urban areas required continuous harassment throughout the day with frequent discharges of pyrotechnics. The waterfowl usually returned within hours. A minority of resident Canada goose flocks in Virginia showed no response to pyrotechnics (Fairaizl 1992). Some flocks of Canada geese in Virginia have shown quick

response to pyrotechnics during winter months suggesting migrant geese made up some or all of the flock (Fairaizl 1992). Shultz et al. (1988) reported fidelity of resident Canada geese to feeding and loafing areas is strong, even when heavy hunting pressure is ongoing. Mott and Timbrook (1988) concluded that the efficacy of harassment with pyrotechnics is partially dependent on availability of alternative loafing and feeding areas. Although one of the more effective methods of frightening geese away, more often than not they simply move geese to other areas. There are also safety and legal implications regarding their use. Discharge of pyrotechnics is inappropriate and prohibited in some urban/suburban areas. Pyrotechnic projectiles can start fires, ricochet off buildings, pose traffic hazards, and trigger dogs to bark incessantly, annoy and possibly injure people. Use of pyrotechnics in certain municipalities would be constrained by local firearm discharge and noise ordinances.

Propane Cannons: Propane cannons are generally inappropriate for urban/suburban areas due to the repeated loud explosions, which many people would consider a serious and unacceptable nuisance and potential health threat (hearing damage). Although a propane cannon can be an effective dispersal tool for migrant geese in agricultural settings, resident geese in urban areas are more tolerant of noise and habituate to propane cannons relatively quickly.

POPULATION MANAGEMENT

Potential methods of managing the local goose population include capture and relocation, contraception, egg destruction, hunting, shooting, and capture and euthanize. The advantages of lethal damage management by WS are that it would be applied directly to the problem population, its effects are obvious and immediate, and it carries no risk that the birds will return or move and create conflicts elsewhere. The primary disadvantage is that it is sometimes more socially controversial than other techniques. The use of lethal methods to reduce goose damage can be very effective at alleviating damage and the most economical approach to reducing damage when compared to non-lethal methods (Cooper and Keefe 1997). Additionally, capture and removal of geese is the most cost efficient lethal method to reduce damage, except for hunting (Cooper and Keefe 1997). Moreover, the use of lethal methods has longer effectiveness than non-lethal methods because it would likely take months to years before the original local population level of geese returned. Lethal methods would also reduce conflicts among resource owners whereas non-lethal actions only move the geese among resource owners (*i.e.*, spread the damage) (Cooper and Keefe 1997, Smith et al. 1999), and possibly leave resource owners with the fewest financial means burdened with the geese and the damage.

Capture and Relocation: Geese are live captured through the use of non-chemical (panel nets, rocket nets, drive traps, net guns, dip nets, by hand) or chemical (alpha-chloralose) methods. Upon capture, birds are transferred to waterfowl crates for relocation to suitable habitat away from the capture site. To discourage the return of geese to capture sites the primary wing feathers of relocated geese are typically clipped. Geese with clipped wings are able to fly after their next molting. As appropriate, WS would consult with the USFWS and/or RIDEM to coordinate capture, transportation, and selection of suitable relocation sites.

Smith (1996) reported that groups of juvenile geese relocated from urban to rural settings can effectively eliminate these geese from urban areas, retain them at the release site, include them in the sport harvest, and expose them to higher natural mortality. Smith (1996) also reported that multiple survival models indicated that survival estimates of relocated juveniles were half of those of urban captured and released birds.

Ultimately, the relocation of resident geese from metropolitan communities can assist in the reduction of overabundant populations (Cooper and Keefe 1997), and has been accepted by the general public as a method of reducing waterfowl populations to socially acceptable levels (Fairaizl 1992). In addition, the

removal of geese posing or likely to pose a hazard to air safety at airports has been demonstrated to reduce the population of local geese and decrease the number of flights through the airport operations airspace; and resulted in increased air safety at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (Cooper 1991).

Relocation of resident geese has the potential to spread disease into populations of other and/or migrating waterfowl.

Sterilization: Sterilization has not been proven to be an effective method for reducing goose damage. Although, Canada geese have been successfully vasectomized to reduce to prevent gosling production, this method is only effective if the female does not form a bond with a different male. In addition, vasectomies can only prevent the production of the mated pair. The ability to identify breeding pairs for isolation and to capture a male goose for vasectomization becomes increasingly difficult as the number of geese increase (Converse and Kennelly 1994). Canada geese have a long life span once they survive their first year (Cramp and Simmons 1977, Allan et al. 1995); leg-band recovery data indicate that some geese live longer than 20 years. The sterilization of resident Canada geese would not reduce the damage caused by the overabundance of the goose population since the population of Canada geese would remain relatively stable. Keefe (1996) estimated sterilization to cost over $100 per goose.

Nicarbazin (NCZ) (OvaControl–G™) is an EPA registered chemical reproductive inhibitor that can be used to reduce Canada goose egg production and viability. NCZ is registered for use at site specific locations in highly populated urban areas. The user of this chemical product must adhere to all EPA use restrictions. VerCauteren et al. (2000) examined the use of NCZ to reduce Canada goose egg production and viability, and found that NCZ did experimentally reduce egg viability, but that there were difficulties in delivery methods and acceptance of treated feed. Canada geese have a long life span once they survive their first year (Cramp and Simmons 1977, Allan et al. 1995); leg-band recovery data indicate that some geese live longer than 20 years. The use of NCZ would not reduce the damage caused by the overabundance of the goose population since the population of Canada geese would remain relatively stable.

NCZ is not currently registered for use in Rhode Island. If and when this chemical method becomes available for use, and prior to WS operational use of this method, WS will review and update this EA for NEPA compliance, as appropriate.

Nest/Egg Destruction: Egg addling, oiling, freezing, egg replacement, or puncturing can be effective in reducing recruitment into the local population (Christens et al. 1995, Cummings et al. 1997). Throughout the Canada goose nesting season, goose eggs may be treated or destroyed to eliminate reproduction on the site, which may slow the growth of the local population and increase the effects of goose harassment activities. Geese typically lay one egg every 1-2 days for a total of 4-8 eggs/nest; the incubation period for goose eggs is approximately 28 days.

While egg removal/destruction can reduce production of young, merely destroying an egg does not reduce a population as quickly as removing immature or breeding adults (Cooper and Keefe 1997). Similar to other species of long-lived waterfowl which require high adult mortality to reduce populations (Rockwell et. al 1997), it is likely that adult resident Canada geese must be removed to reduce the population to a level deemed acceptable to communities. Approximately five eggs must be removed to have the effect of stopping one adult from joining the breeding population (Rockwell et al. 1997, Schmutz et al. 1997). Keefe (1996) estimated egg destruction to cost $40 for the equivalent of removing one adult goose from the population. To equal the effect of removing an adult bird from a population, all eggs produced by that bird during its entire lifetime must be removed (Smith et al. 1999). Furthermore, egg removal efforts must be nearly complete in order to prevent recruitment from a small number of surviving nests that

would offset control efforts (Smith et al. 1999). Cooper and Keefe (1997), Rockwell et al. (1997), and Schmutz et al. (1997) reported that waterfowl egg destruction is only fractionally effective in attaining population reduction objectives, and that nest/egg destruction is not an efficient or cost-effective damage management or population reduction approach.

Nest destruction is the removal of nesting materials during the construction phase of the nesting cycle. Nest destruction is generally only applied when dealing with a single bird or very few birds. This method is used to discourage birds from constructing nests in areas which may create nuisances for home and business owners. Heusmann and Bellville (1978) reported that nest removal was an effective but time-consuming method because problem bird species are highly mobile and can easily return to damage sites from long distances, or because of high populations. This method poses no imminent danger to pets or the public.

Egg addling/destruction is a method of suppressing reproduction in local nuisance bird populations by destroying egg embryos prior to hatching. Egg addling is conducted by vigorously shaking an egg numerous times which causes detachment of the embryo from the egg sac. Egg destruction can be accomplished in several different ways, but the most commonly used methods are manually gathering eggs and breaking them, or by oiling or spraying the eggs with a liquid which covers the entire egg and prevents the egg from obtaining oxygen (see egg oiling below). Although WS does not commonly use egg addling or destruction, it is a valuable damage management tool and has proven effective in some applications.

Egg oiling is a method for suppressing reproduction of nuisance birds by spraying a small quantity of corn oil on eggs in nests. The oil prevents exchange of gases and causes asphyxiation of developing embryos and has been found to be 96-100% effective in reducing hatchability (Pochop 1998, Pochop et al. 1998). The method has an advantage over nest or egg destruction in that the incubating birds generally continue incubation and do not re-nest. The EPA has ruled that use of corn oil for this purpose is exempt from registration requirements under FIFRA. To be most effective, the oil should be applied anytime between the fifth day after the laying of the last egg in a nest and at least five days before anticipated hatching. This method is extremely target specific and is less labor intensive than egg addling.

The Mississippi Flyway Giant Canada Goose Management Plan (Mississippi Flyway Council Technical Section 1996), states that to effectively reduce resident goose populations, an increase in adult and immature mortality rates, combined with reproductive control, is necessary. Reproductive control alone cannot reduce the population in an acceptable time; treatment of 95% of all eggs each year would result in only a 25% reduction over 10 years (Allan et al. 1995). In contrast, reducing annual survival of resident Canada geese by just 10% would reduce a predicted growth rate of more than 15%/year to a stable population, assuming moderate recruitment (Atlantic Flyway Council 1999). In addition, nest destruction is estimated to cost significantly more than other forms of population management (Cooper and Keefe 1997). Egg destruction, while a valuable tool, has fallen short as a single method for reducing local goose populations. Many nests cannot be found by resource managers in typical urban-suburban settings due to the difficulties in gaining access to search the hundreds of private properties where nests may occur. In addition, geese which have eggs oiled in successive years may learn to nest away from the water making it more difficult to find nests.

Capture with Alpha Chloralose: Alpha chloralose is a central nervous system depressant used as an immobilizing agent to capture and remove pigeons, waterfowl and other birds. It is labor intensive and in some cases, may not be cost effective (Wright 1973, Feare et al. 1981). Alphachloralose is typically delivered as well contained bait in small quantities with minimal hazards to pets and humans; single bread or corn baits are fed directly to the target birds. WS personnel are present at the site of application during baiting to retrieve the immobilized birds. Unconsumed baits are removed from the site following each

treatment. Alpha-chloralose was eliminated from more detailed analysis in USDA (1997) based on critical element screening; therefore, environmental fate properties of this compound were not rigorously assessed. However, the solubility and mobility are believed to be moderate and environmental persistence is believed to be low. Bioaccumulation in plants and animal tissue is believed to be low. The compound is slowly metabolized, with recovery occurring a few hours after administration (Schafer 1991). The dose used for immobilization is designed to be about two to 30 times lower than the LD_{50}. Mammalian data indicate higher LD_{50} values than birds. Toxicity to aquatic organisms is unknown (Woronecki et al. 1990), but the compound is generally not soluble in water and, therefore, should remain unavailable to aquatic organisms. Factors supporting the determination of this low potential included the lack of exposure to pets, non-target species and the public, and the low toxicity of the active ingredient. Other supporting rationale for this determination included relatively low total annual use and a limited number of potential exposure pathways. The agent is currently approved for use by WS as an INAD by the FDA, rather than as a pesticide.

Alpha chloralose may be used only by WS personnel to live capture geese. Pursuant to FDA restrictions, geese captured with alpha chloralose for subsequent euthanasia must be killed and buried or incinerated, or be held alive for at least 30 days, at which time the birds may be killed and processed for human consumption.

Toxicants: All pesticides are regulated by the EPA. There are currently no toxicants registered with the EPA for use on geese and therefore none would be used by WS.

Hunting: WS sometimes recommends that resource owners consider legal hunting as an option for reducing goose damage. Although legal hunting is impractical and/or prohibited in many urban-suburban areas, it can be used to reduce some populations of resident geese. Legal hunting also reinforces harassment programs (Kadlec 1968). Zielske et al. (1993) believed legal hunting would not reduce resident Canada geese populations where there is limited interest in legally hunting resident geese. However, hunting has had a major impact on the distribution of geese in the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metro Area of Minnesota (Cooper and Keefe 1997). They reported goose densities during the summer in hunted areas of the Metro Area (which comprised only 23% of the area) were significantly lower (three times lower) than densities in unhunted areas. Similarly, Conover and Kania (1991) reported that Canada geese were more likely to cause damage in areas that goose hunting was prohibited. Even in urban/suburban areas (*e.g.*, golf courses and green spaces) there may be locations where controlled hunting would be effective in reducing goose damage. In Rhode Island, Canada geese are legally harvested during three different seasons.

Shooting: Shooting geese can be highly effective in removing birds from specific areas and in supplementing harassment. Shooting is the practice of selectively removing target birds. Shooting a few individuals from a larger flock can reinforce birds' fear of harassment techniques. Shooting is used to reduce goose problems when lethal methods are determined to be appropriate. The birds are killed as quickly and humanely as possible. In Rhode Island, shooting Canada geese, pursuant to USFWS regulations authorizing such take, is conducted primarily by farmers, airport personnel, municipal and county park personnel, and others.

Capture and Euthanize: The most efficient way to reduce the size of resident goose population is to increase mortality among adult geese. Nationwide, hunting is the major cause of goose mortality, but geese may seldom be available to hunters in an urban-suburban environment (Conover and Chasko 1985, Smith et al. 1999). For purposes of lethal control, geese are usually captured with panel nets, rocket nets, drive traps, net guns, dip nets, and/or by hand. Panel nets as described by Costanzo et al. (1995) are lightweight, portable panels (approximate size 4' x 10') that are used to herd and surround geese into a moveable catch pen. This method is equally efficient on hard (pavement) and soft (field) surfaces, and

can be employed in such a way as to reduce stress on captured birds (place the catch pen in a shaded area) and control other impacts (place far from roadways). Rocket netting involves the setting of bait in an area that would be completely contained within the dimensions of a manually propelled net. The launching of the rocket net occurs too quickly for the birds to escape. Rocket netting may take place anytime during the year. Using a net gun to capture geese can be conducted anytime during the year by firing a net from a shoulder mounted gun. Geese that are captured and euthanized would be buried, incinerated, or processed for charitable donation by the requesting resource or property manager.

APPENDIX C

ENDANGERED AND THREATENED SPECIES IN RHODE ISLAND

State Listed Threatened and Endangered Species of Rhode Island (T-Threatened, E-Endangered)

Listings and occurrences for Rhode Island

Notes:

- This report shows the listed species associated in some way with this state.
- This list does not include experimental populations and similarity of appearance listings.
- This list includes non-nesting sea turtles and whales in State/Territory coastal waters.
- This list includes species or populations under the sole jurisdiction of the National Marine Fisheries Service.
- Click on the highlighted scientific names below to view a Species Profile for each listing.

Summary of Animals listings

Animal species listed in this state and that occur in this state (12 species)

Status	Species
E	Beetle, American burying (*Nicrophorus americanus*)
T	Plover, piping except Great Lakes watershed (*Charadrius melodus*)
E	Sea turtle, hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*)
E	Sea turtle, Kemp's ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*)
E	Sea turtle, leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*)
T	Sea turtle, loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*)
E	Sturgeon, shortnose (*Acipenser brevirostrum*)
E	Tern, roseate northeast U.S. nesting pop. (*Sterna dougallii dougallii*)
T	Tiger beetle, northeastern beach (*Cicindela dorsalis dorsalis*)
E	Whale, finback (*Balaenoptera physalus*)
E	Whale, humpback (*Megaptera novaeangliae*)
E	Whale, right (*Balaena glacialis (incl. australis)*)

Animal species listed in this state that do not occur in this state (2 species)

Status	Species
E	Puma (=cougar), eastern (*Puma (=Felis) concolor cougar*)
E	Wolf, gray Lower 48 States, except where delisted and where EXPN. Mexico. (*Canis lupus*)

Animal listed species occurring in this state that are not listed in this state (1 species)

Status	Species
T	Sea turtle, green except where endangered (*Chelonia mydas*)

Summary of Plant listings

Plant species listed in this state and that occur in this state (2 species)

Status	Species
E	Gerardia, sandplain (*Agalinis acuta*)
T	Pogonia, small whorled (*Isotria medeoloides*)

Plant species listed in this state that do not occur in this state (1 species)

Status	Species
T	Amaranth, seabeach (*Amaranthus pumilus*)

RARE NATIVE ANIMALS OF RHODE ISLAND
Revised: March, 2006

ABOUT THIS LIST

The list is divided by vertebrates and invertebrates and is arranged taxonomically according to the recognized authority cited before each group. Appropriate synonomy is included where names have changed since publication of the cited authority.

The Natural Heritage Program's *Rare Native Plants of Rhode Island* includes an estimate of the number of "extant populations" for each listed plant species, a figure which has been helpful in assessing the health of each species. Because animals are mobile, some exhibiting annual long-distance migrations, it is not possible to derive a population index that can be applied to all animal groups. The status assigned to each species (see definitions below) provides some indication of its range, relative abundance, and vulnerability to decline. More specific and pertinent data is available from the Natural Heritage Program, the Rhode Island Endangered Species Program, and the Rhode Island Natural History Survey.

STATUS. The status of each species is designated by letter codes as defined:

(FE) Federally Endangered (7 species currently listed)

(FT) Federally Threatened (2 species currently listed)

(SE) State Endangered Native species in imminent danger of extirpation from Rhode Island. These taxa may meet one or more of the following criteria:

1. Formerly considered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for Federal listing as endangered or threatened.
2. Known from an estimated 1-2 total populations in the state.
3. Apparently globally rare or threatened; estimated at 100 or fewer populations range-wide.

Animals listed as State Endangered are protected under the provisions of the Rhode Island State Endangered Species Act, Title 20 of the General Laws of the State of Rhode Island. This law states, in part (20-37-3):

"No person shall buy, sell, offer for sale, store, transport, export, or otherwise traffic in any animal or plant or any part of any animal or plant whether living or dead, processed, manufactured, preserved or raw if such animal or plant has been declared to be an endangered species by either the United States secretaries of the Interior or Commerce or the Director of the R. I. Department of Environmental Management."

(ST) State Threatened Native species that are likely to become State Endangered in the future if current trends in habitat loss or other detrimental factors remain unchanged. In general, these taxa have 3-5 known or estimated populations and are especially vulnerable to habitat loss.

(C) Concern Native species not considered to be State Endangered or State Threatened at the present time, but are listed due to various factors of rarity and/or vulnerability. Species listed in this category may warrant endangered or threatened designation, but status information is presently not well known.

(SH) State Historical Native species which have been documented for the state during the last 100 years, but which are currently unknown to occur. When known, the year of the last documented occurrence in Rhode Island is included.

FUTURE REVISIONS

The listing of rare species is an ongoing process requiring annual revisions to reflect the best scientific information available concerning the circumstances of rarity, as well as our increased knowledge of the native fauna. Submission of additional data on species currently listed, or on other species which may warrant listing, is encouraged. Information may be sent to:

Rhode Island Natural Heritage Program
Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
Division of Planning & Development
235 Promenade Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02908
Telephone: (401) 222-2776 ext.4308

Rhode Island Endangered Species Program
Rhode Island Dept. of Environmental Management
Division of Fish and Wildlife
Great Swamp Management Area
West Kingston, Rhode Island 02892
Telephone: (401) 789-0281

INVERTEBRATES

The task of evaluating the status of invertebrates in Rhode Island has been initiated for several selected groups. At this time the list primarily includes freshwater bivalves (clams and mussels) and the following insect groups: lepidopterans (moths and butterflies), odonates (dragonflies and damselflies), silphids (burying beetles), and cicindelids (tiger beetles). Additional taxa will be added in the future upon the completion of further research and inventory. The following publications are a partial listing of taxonomic references:

Boyd, H.P. and Associates. 1982. *Checklist of Cicindelidae: The Tiger Beetles*. Plexus Publishing, Marlton, New Jersey. 1-31.

Hodges, R.W., et. al. 1983. *Check list of the Lepidoptera of America north of Mexico*. E.W. Classey Ltd. and Wedge Entomological Research Foundation. 1-284.

Johnson, R.I. 1980. *Zoogeography of North American Unionacea (Mollusca: Bivalvia) north of the maximum Pleistocene glaciation*. Bull. Museum Comparative Zoology. 149:77-189.

Paulson, D.R. and S.W. Dunkle. 1999. *A checklist of North American Odonata, including English name, etymology, type locality, and distribution*. Slat. Mus. Nat. Hist. Occ. Pap. 56.

BIVALVE MOLLUSKS

Unionoida (freshwater mussels)

Margaritiferidae (pearlshells)

Margaritifera margaritifera	Eastern Pearlshell	SE

Unionidae (unionid mussels)

Alismidonta varicosa	Brook Floater	SH (1897)
Lampsilis radiata	Lampmussel	C
Ligumia nasuta	Eastern Pond Mussel	C
Strophitus undulatus	Squawfoot	C

CRUSTACEANS

Amphipoda (amphipods)

Crangonyctidae (freshwater amphipods)

Synurella chamberlaini	Coastal Swamp Amphipod	C

INSECTS

Coleoptera (beetles)

Cicindelidae (tiger beetles)

Cicindela dorsalis dorsalis	Northeastern Beach Tiger Beetle	FT/SH (1978)
Cicindela formosa generosa	Pine Barrens Tiger Beetle	ST
Cicindela hirticollis	Seabeach Tiger Beetle	ST
Cicindela limbalis	Claybanks Tiger Beetle	C
Cicindela marginata	Salt Marsh Tiger Beetle	ST
Cicindela patruela	Barrens Tiger Beetle	SH (1921)
Cicindela purpurea	Purple Tiger Beetle	C
Cicindela rufiventris	Red-bellied Tiger Beetle	C
Cicindela tranquebarica	Dark-bellied Tiger Beetle	ST

Silphidae (burying beetles)

Nicrophorus americanus	American Burying Beetle	FE

Staphylinidae (rove beetles)

Lordithon niger	Black Lordithon Rove Beetle	C

Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths)

Lycaenidae (coppers, hairstreaks, elfins, & blues)

Lycaena epixanthe	Bog Copper	C
Satyrium acadica	Acadian Hairstreak	C
Satyrium caryaevorum	Hickory Hairstreak	C
Mitoura hesseli	Hessel's Hairstreak	C
Incisalia henrici	Henry's Elfin	C
Incisalia irus	Frosted Elfin	ST
Incisalia polia	Hoary Elfin	C
Fixsenia favonius ontario	Northern Hairstreak	C
Parrhasius m-album	White M Hairstreak	C

Nymphalidae (brush-footed butterflies)

Speyeria idalia	Regal Fritillary	SH (1990)
Boloria bellona	Meadow Fritillary	C
Enodia anthedon	Northern Pearly Eye	C

Hesperiidae (skippers)

Erynnis brizo	Sleepy Duskywing	C
Erynnis persius	Persius Duskywing	SH (1950)
Poanes massasoit	Mulberry Wing	C
Poanes viator zizaniae	Broad Winged Skipper	C
Atrytonopsis hianna	Dusted Skipper	C

Noctuidae (noctuid moths)

Abagrotis crumbi benjamini	Benjamin's Abagrotis	C
Acronicta lanceolaria	A Noctuid Moth	C
Apharetra purpurea	Blueberry Sallow	C
Aplectoides condita	A Noctuid Moth	C
Grammia speciosa	An Arctiid Moth	C
Lithophane viridipallens	Pale Green Pinion Moth	C
Metarranthis pilosaria	Coastal Swamp Metarranthis	C
Papaipema appassionata	Pitcher Plant Borer	C
Papaipema leucostigma	Columbine Borer	SH
Spartiniphaga inops	Spartina Borer	C
Zale sp. (*)	Pine Barrens Zale	C
Zale submediana	A Noctuid Moth	C

(*) a full scientific name for this species has not been published.

Saturniidae (saturnid moths)

Citheronia regalis	Royal Walnut Moth	SH (1939)
Citheronia sepulcralis	Pine Devil	SH
Hemileuca maia maia	Barrens Buckmoth	C

Odonata (dragonflies and damselflies)

Coenagrionidae (pond damselflies)

Enallagma pictum	Scarlet Bluet	C
Enallagma recurvatum	Pine Barrens Bluet	C
Lestes unguiculatus	Lyre-tipped Spreadwing	C
Nehalennia integricollis	Southern Sprite	ST

Gomphidae (clubtails)

Ophiogomphus aspersus	Brook Snaketail	ST
Progomphus obscurus	Common Sanddragon	C
Stylurus scudderi	Zebra Clubtail	ST
Stylurus spiniceris	Arrow Clubtail	C

Aeshnidae (darners)

Aeshna mutata	Spatterdock Darner	C
Anax longipes	Comet Darner	C

Corduliidae (emeralds)

Cordulegaster obliqua	Arrowhead Spiketail	C
Neurocordulia obsoleta	Umber Shadowdragon	C
Somatochlora georgiana	Coppery Emerald	C
Williamsonia lintneri	Ringed Boghaunter	SE

Libellulidae (common skimmers)

Leucorrhinia glacialis	Crimson-ringed Whiteface	ST
Libellula auripennis	Golden-winged Skimmer	C

VERTEBRATES

The following reference is used:

August, P.V., Enser, R.W. and L.L. Gould. 2001. *Vertebrates of Rhode Island.* Vol. 2. Biota of Rhode Island. Rhode Island Natural History Survey, Kingston, RI.

FISH

Petromyzontidae (lampreys)

Lampetra appendix	American Brook Lamprey	ST

Acipenseridae (sturgeons)

Acipenser oxyrhynchus	Atlantic Sturgeon	SH
Acipenser brevirostrum	Shortnose Sturgeon	FE (SH)

AMPHIBIANS

Plethodontidae (lungless salamanders)

Gyrinophilus porphyriticus	Northern Spring Salamander	C

Pelobatidae (spadefoot toads)

Scaphiopus holbrookii	Eastern Spadefoot	SE

Ranidae (true frogs)

Rana pipiens	Northern Leopard Frog	C

REPTILES

Note: Several reptiles are covered under regulations of the Rhode Island Division of Fish and Wildlife, which identifies several species as "protected", i.e., that possession without a permit is prohibited at all times. Species designated under these regulations are indicated by "P" in the status column.

Cheloniidae (sea turtles) - offshore waters only.

Caretta caretta	Loggerhead Sea Turtle	FT
Eretmochelys imbricata	Hawksbill Sea Turtle	FE
Lepidochelys kempii	Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle	FE

Dermochelyidae (leatherback turtles) - offshore waters only.

Dermochelys c. coriacea	Atlantic Leatherback	FE

Emydidae (turtles)

Clemmys guttata	Spotted Turtle	P
Clemmys insculpta	Wood Turtle	C/P
Malaclemys t. terrapin	Northern Diamondback Terrapin	SE/P
Terrapene carolina	Eastern Box Turtle	P

Colubridae (colubrid snakes)

Carphophis amoenus	Eastern Worm Snake	C
Elaphe obsoleta	Black Rat Snake	C
Heterodon platirhinos	Eastern Hognose Snake	C
Thamnophis sauritus	Eastern Ribbon Snake	C

Viperidae (vipers)

Crotalus horridus	Timber Rattlesnake	SH (1972)/P

BIRDS

Note: Birds are listed based on the status of *breeding* populations in Rhode Island.

Podicipedidae (grebes)

Podilymbus podiceps	Pied-billed Grebe	SE

Ardeidae (herons)

Botaurus lentiginosus	American Bittern	SE
Ixobrychus exilis	Least Bittern	ST
Ardea herodias	Great Blue Heron	C
Ardea albus	Great Egret	C
Egretta caerulea	Little Blue Heron	C
Egretta thula	Snowy Egret	C
Bubulcus ibis	Cattle Egret	C
Nycticorax nycticorax	Black-crowned Night Heron	C

Nyctanassa violacea	Yellow-crowned Night Heron	C
Threskiornithidae (ibises)		
Plegadis falcinellus	Glossy Ibis	C
Anatidae (swans, geese, ducks)		
Anas crecca	Green-winged Teal	C
Anas discors	Blue-winged Teal	C
Anas strepera	Gadwall	C
Lophodytes cucullatus	Hooded Merganser	C
Accipitridae (eagles, hawks)		
Haliaeetus leucocephalus	Bald Eagle	FT
Pandion haliaetus	Osprey	C
Circus cyaneus	Northern Harrier	SE
Accipiter striatus	Sharp-shinned Hawk	SH (1939)
Accipiter cooperii	Cooper's Hawk	C
Accipiter gentilis	Northern Goshawk	C
Falco peregrinus	Peregrine Falcon	SE
Rallidae (rails, gallinules)		
Rallus elegans	King Rail	C
Rallus longirostris	Clapper Rail	C
Porzana carolina	Sora	C
Gallinula chloropus	Common Moorhen	SH (1970)
Charadriidae (plovers)		
Charadrius melodus	Piping Plover	FT
Haematopodidae (oystercatchers)		
Haematopus palliatus	American Oystercatcher	C
Scolopacidae (sandpipers)		
Catoptrophorus semipalmatus	Willet	C
Bartramia longicauda	Upland Sandpiper	SE
Laridae (gulls, terns)		
Sterna dougallii	Roseate Tern	FE/SH (1979)
Sterna antillarum	Least Tern	ST
Tytonidae (barn owls)		
Tyto alba	Barn Owl	SE
Strigidae (owls)		

Asio otus	Long-eared Owl	C
Aegolius acadicus	Northern Saw-whet Owl	C
Caprimulgidae (goatsuckers)		
Chordeiles minor	Common Nighthawk	C
Picidae (woodpeckers)		
Dryocopus pileatus	Pileated Woodpecker	C
Tyrannidae (flycatchers)		
Empidonax virescens	Acadian Flycatcher	C
Alaudidae (larks)		
Eremophila alpestris	Horned Lark	C
Hirundinidae (swallows)		
Hirundo pyrrhonota	Cliff Swallow	SH (1991)
Troglodytidae (wrens)		
Troglodytes troglodytes	Winter Wren	C
Cistothorus palustris	Marsh Wren	C
Parulidae (warblers)		
Vermivora chrysoptera	Golden-winged Warbler	SH (1960)
Parula americana	Northern Parula	ST
Dendroica caerulescens	Black-throated Blue Warbler	ST
Dendroica cerulea	Cerulean Warbler	SE
Dendroica fusca	Blackburnian Warbler	ST
Protonotaria citrea	Prothonotary Warbler	C
Helmitheros vermivorus	Worm-eating Warbler	C
Icteria virens	Yellow-breasted Chat	SE
Emberizidae (sparrows)		
Pooecetes gramineus	Vesper Sparrow	SH (1984)
Ammodramus henslowii	Henslow's Sparrow	SH (1940)
Ammodramus savannarum	Grasshopper Sparrow	ST
Ammodramus maritimus	Seaside Sparrow	C
Zonotrichia albicollis	White-throated Sparrow	C
Junco hyemalis	Dark-eyed Junco	C

MAMMALS

Soricidae (shrews)			
	Sorex fumeus	Smoky Shrew	C
	Sorex palustris	Water Shrew	C
Leporidae (rabbits, hares)			
	Sylvilagus transitionalis	New England Cottontail	C
Muridae (mice)			
	Synaptomys cooperi	Southern Bog Lemming	C
Felidae (cats)			
	Lynx rufus	Bobcat	ST
Balaenopteridae (rorquals)			
	Balaenoptera physalus	Fin Whale	FE
	Megaptera novaeangliae	Humpback Whale	FE
Balaenidae (right whales)			
	Eubalaena glacialis	North Atlantic Right Whale	FE