

Frequently Asked Questions

APHIS National Feral Swine Damage Management

Record of Decision

Q: What is a Record of Decision (ROD)?

A: A Record of Decision (ROD) states the agency's decision from the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). It identifies the alternatives considered in the EIS, specifies the environmentally preferable alternative, explains the rationale for the decision, and reveals the means by which the agency will avoid or minimize environmental harm.

Q: What decision did APHIS make in the ROD?

A: USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) decided to select the preferred alternative, Alternative 2 in the FEIS, to implement and lead a nationally coordinated, integrated feral swine damage management program in partnership with federal, state, territorial, and tribal agencies. APHIS will allocate resources to APHIS-WS programs serving states and territories with feral swine populations to improve baseline operational capacity for feral swine damage management and provide cost-share opportunities. Additional resources will be strategically allocated to meet the national objective of reducing the range and size of the feral swine population in the United States and protecting specific vulnerable resources (e.g., threatened and endangered species). The new program will also include a national component to emphasize research, monitoring, education, and other coordinated support actions.

The selected program incorporates the use of a full range of legally available nonlethal and lethal methods for feral swine damage management. It will be implemented according to applicable federal, state, tribal, territorial and local laws and management objectives for feral swine.

Q: Why did APHIS select Alternative 2?

A: APHIS selected Alternative 2 because it is not only balanced in its ability to meet the program goal and objectives to reduce feral swine damage to agriculture and other resources, it will also benefit the environment by reducing feral swine damage to natural and cultural resources, and will have a low risk of adverse environmental effects. The ROD also identified Alternative 2 as the environmentally preferable alternative.

Q: Why did APHIS propose a national approach to managing feral swine damage?

A: Until now, feral swine damage has been managed by APHIS and its partner agencies at the State and local level. These efforts have reduced localized damages in many areas, but they have not been able to keep up with the increasing threats and damages from the rapidly expanding populations and range of feral swine. Because of the seriousness of the growing feral swine problem, APHIS determined that a national, coordinated effort was needed to better assist Tribes, States, Territories, individuals, and organizations that request assistance.

Q: What is the population and range of feral swine?

A: Feral swine are rapidly expanding their populations and range across the U.S. The population is currently estimated to exceed six million animals in 41 states, an increase from 17 states in 1982. They are found in 40 percent of all counties in the U.S., and in most States including AL, AR, AZ, CA, CO FL, GA, HI, IA, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MD, MI, MO, MS, NC, ND, NE, NH, NJ, NM, NV, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA, SC, TN, UT, VA, VT, WA, WI, and WV. Feral swine also occur in Guam, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Q: What is the nature of feral swine damage?

A: Feral swine can cause significant damage to many resources from rooting, wallowing, trampling, predation, as disease carriers, and from their aggressive nature. They multiply rapidly, travel in groups, and can thrive in a wide range of habitat types. Feral swine damage crops, property, and historic sites, and they prey on livestock and wildlife, including endangered species. They contaminate water, damage soils, and harm native habitats. Feral swine have also caused vehicle collisions and are aggressive to people.

Q: What alternatives were considered?

A: The EIS reviewed five alternatives which differed primarily in terms of resource allocation strategies.

Alternative 1 was the current APHIS feral swine damage management program before the ROD was issued. APHIS managed this program at the state and territorial level and responded to local requests to manage feral swine damage.

Alternative 2 was the preferred alternative that was selected in the ROD and is described above.

Alternative 3 would have increased funding at the APHIS state program levels to establish or substantially augment the baseline operational ability for addressing feral swine damages.

Alternative 4 would have increased funding to establish and augment APHIS' ability for national feral swine damage management projects and strategic local projects.

Alternative 5 would have established a grant-making program to states, territories, tribes, organizations representing native peoples, and research institutions.

Q: What environmental effects were analyzed in the EIS?

A: The alternative strategies for managing feral swine damage were compared by evaluating how the program activities, including the use of feral swine control methods, would affect a number of environmental and socio-economic resources. The effects of the alternatives on each of these issues were evaluated in detail in Chapter 4 of the FEIS.

1. Effects on threatened and endangered animals and plants and critical habitats.
2. Effects on other non-target animals.
3. Effects on soils, vegetation and water quality.

4. Odor/air quality effects.
5. Effects on recreation including feral swine hunting opportunities; opportunities for hunting other game species; effects on the aesthetic enjoyment of the natural environment; and disturbance to recreationists.
6. Climate change impacts.
7. Effects on human health and safety.
8. Socio-cultural impacts including cultural/historic resources; effects on Tribes, traditional cultures and ceremonial values; and humaneness and ethical perspectives.
9. Economic effects.

Alternative 2 was identified as providing the best balance in terms of potential benefits to environmental resources, while having only minor and short term adverse effects on most of the environmental resources studied.

Q: Who was involved in the EIS development?

A: APHIS was the lead agency in preparing the EIS, and was responsible for its scope, content and resulting decision. The APHIS programs most closely involved with the proposal were Wildlife Services, Veterinary Services, and International Services. Several cooperating agencies assisted APHIS based on their legal jurisdiction and technical expertise. These were USDA Forest Service; U.S. Department of the Interior (USDI) Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and National Invasive Species Council; Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies; and National Association of State Departments of Agriculture. The USDI Fish and Wildlife Service and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service also participated.

Q. Who can I contact about feral swine damage management programs in my area?

A: You may contact Dr. Dale Nolte, Feral Swine Program Manager, USDA-APHIS-WS National Wildlife Research Center, 4101 LaPorte Avenue, Fort Collins, CO 80521; (970) 266-6049; or at dale.l.nolte@aphis.usda.gov.

You may also obtain information on feral swine damage management programs in your area by contacting the APHIS Wildlife Services state office nearest you. Contact information for the APHIS-Wildlife Services state offices can be found at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wps/portal/aphis/ourfocus/wildlifedamage/sa_program_overview, by contacting Dr. Dale Nolte listed above, or by calling (866) 4USDA-WS (866-487-3297).

Q: How can I review the EIS and the ROD?

A: The EIS and ROD are available on the APHIS feral swine EIS webpage <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife-damage/fseis>. Printed and cd copies of the ROD may be obtained by sending a request to Kim Wagner, USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services, 732 Lois Dr. Sun Prairie, WI, 53590 or calling (608) 837-2727.

Q: How can I receive future notices about feral swine damage management?

A: Interested individuals can register for electronic updates on this or other APHIS activities from the APHIS Stakeholder Registry at <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDAAPHIS/subscriber/new>.