

## DECISION

### SUPPLEMENT TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT: REDUCING FERAL HOG DAMAGE THROUGH AN INTEGRATED WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM IN THE STATE OF GEORGIA

United States Department of Agriculture  
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service  
Wildlife Services

#### INTRODUCTION

An environmental assessment (EA) was prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wildlife Services (WS) program to evaluate alternative approaches to managing damage caused by feral swine (*Sus scrofa*) in the State of Georgia (USDA 2005). Based on the analyses in the EA and review of public comments, a Decision and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) were signed for the EA on April 11, 2005 that selected the proposed action alternative. The proposed action alternative in the EA evaluated a program using multiple methods to address the need to manage damage associated with feral swine.

To evaluate the activities WS conducted since issuing the Decision for the EA in 2005, WS prepared a supplement to the EA in 2011. Based on the evaluation in the supplement to the EA developed in 2011, WS issued a new Decision and FONSI that was signed on November 1, 2011. Since the Decision and FONSI were signed in 2011, WS has begun evaluating the use of aircraft to address feral swine damage. To evaluate the potential environmental consequences of using aircraft to remove feral swine and for monitoring feral swine populations in the State, WS prepared an additional supplement to the EA.

#### AUTHORITY AND COMPLIANCE

WS is authorized by law to reduce damage caused by animals through the Act of March 2, 1931 (46 Stat. 1468; 7 USC 426-426b), as amended and the Act of December 22, 1987 (101 Stat. 1329-331, 7 USC 426c). The authorities of other federal, state, and local entities were discussed in Section 1.1 of the EA and those authorities remain appropriate. WS would continue to comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations pursuant to WS Directive 2.210, including the Airborne Hunting Act and the Fish and Wildlife Act. WS would continue to coordinate activities to alleviate or prevent feral swine damage with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GDNR).

The EA, the supplements to the EA, and this Decision ensures WS' actions comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), with the Council on Environmental Quality guidelines (40 CFR 1500), and with APHIS' NEPA implementing regulations (7 CFR 372). All damage management activities conducted by WS, including disposal requirements, would be conducted consistent with applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations and policies, including WS' Directives.

#### PURPOSE

The purpose of the EA remains as addressed in Section 1.2 of the EA (USDA 2005), as supplemented by the 2011 Decision and FONSI. To evaluate potential environmental effects associated with the use of aircraft to alleviate damage or threats of damage associated with feral swine, WS prepared a supplement to the EA. The supplement was also prepared to ensure previous activities to manage damage and threats of damage were conducted by WS within the scope of analyses in the EA. The supplement allows WS to

communicate to the public the analysis of individual and cumulative impacts of the proposed action since 2011.

## **NEED FOR ACTION**

The need for action to manage damage and threats associated with feral swine in Georgia arises from requests for assistance received by WS. Section 1.3 of the EA and the supplement prepared in 2011 provide a description of the need for action to address threats and damages associated with feral swine in the State. Feral swine are not native to Georgia or any part of North America. Feral swine have been considered one of the most prolific wild mammals in North America (Barrett and Birmingham 1994). Given adequate nutrition, a feral swine population can reportedly double in just four months (Barrett and Birmingham 1994). Feral swine may begin to breed as young as four months of age and sows can produce two litters per year (Mayer and Brisbin 2009). During the development of the EA, the feral swine population in the State was estimated to be increasing (USDA 2005) and the population is likely continuing to increase (Wild Hog Working Group 2012).

Studies found that shooting feral swine from an aircraft using a pilot and gunner could rapidly reduce local populations of feral swine (Hone 1990, Saunders 1993, Saunders and Bryant 1988). To address increasing feral swine populations in the State and to address requests for assistance, WS prepared the supplement to the EA to evaluate the potential environmental consequences of using aircraft to remove feral swine and for monitoring feral swine populations in the State. The use of aircraft would be in addition to the use of those methods discussed in the EA and the 2011 supplement and would be part of an integrated methods approach to resolving damage caused by feral swine.

## **RELATIONSHIP OF THE EA TO OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS**

The APHIS and cooperating agencies are in the process of preparing a programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to address feral swine damage management in the United States, American Samoa, Mariana Islands, United States Virgin Islands, Guam, and Puerto Rico. When WS issues the Record of Decision (ROD) for the EIS, WS would review the EA for consistency with the findings in the EIS and the ROD. Based on the findings in the EIS and the ROD, WS could supplement the EA, as needed, pursuant to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the NEPA implementing regulations of the USDA and the APHIS.

## **WS' RECORD KEEPING**

WS continues to maintain a Management Information System to document assistance provided when addressing wildlife damage in the State. The EA addresses the Management Information System maintained by WS in Section 1.5 (USDA 2005).

## **PROPOSED ACTION**

The proposed action alternative was briefly described in Section 1.6 of the EA and further described in Chapter 3 of the EA (USDA 2005). The Decision and FONSI for the EA issued in 2005 selected the proposed action alternative, which implemented an integrated methods approach to managing damage associated with feral swine in the State. The proposed action alternative continued the implementation of an adaptive approach utilizing non-lethal and lethal techniques, as deemed appropriate using the WS Decision Model, to reduce damage and threats. Under the proposed action alternative, WS could respond to requests for assistance by: 1) taking no action, if warranted, 2) providing only technical assistance to property owners or managers on actions they could take to reduce damages caused by feral swine, or 3)

provide technical assistance and direct operational assistance to a property owner or manager experiencing damage.

## **DECISIONS TO BE MADE**

Based on the scope of the EA, and the supplements to the EA, the decisions to be made would be:

- Should WS continue to conduct damage management to alleviate feral swine damage and threats
- Should WS continue to implement an integrated methods strategy
- If not, should WS attempt to implement one of the alternatives to an integrated methods strategy
- Would continuing the proposed action alternative or the other alternatives result in significant effects to the environment requiring the preparation of an EIS

## **SCOPE OF ANALYSIS**

The EA and the supplements to the EA analyzed the potential impacts of alternative approaches to managing damage associated with feral swine that could be conducted on federal, state, county, municipal, and private land in Georgia. The analyses were based on damage management activities that were occurring or activities that occurred previously where WS and a cooperating entity entered into a MOU, work initiation document, or other comparable document. The EA and the supplements also addressed the potential impacts of conducting damage management approaches on those lands where additional MOUs, work initiation documents, or other comparable documents could be signed in the future.

The EA evaluates managing damage associated with feral swine under four alternatives to reduce threats to human health and safety and to resolve damage to property, natural resources, and agricultural resources when such management is requested by a cooperator. Feral swine can be found nearly statewide and throughout the year in Georgia; therefore, damage or threats of damage could occur wherever feral swine occur. The analyses in the EA and the supplements are intended to apply to any action taken by WS to alleviate damage or threats of damage associated with feral swine that may occur in any locale and at any time within the State. The EA and the supplements emphasize major issues as they relate to specific areas; however, the issues addressed apply wherever feral swine damage and the resulting damage management activities could occur. The standard WS Decision Model (Slate et al. 1992) would be the site-specific procedure for individual actions conducted by WS. The site specificity of the EA will remain as addressed in Section 1.8.4 of the EA (USDA 2005).

The GDNR has jurisdiction over the management of feral swine and has specialized expertise in identifying and quantifying potential adverse effects to the human environment from damage management activities. WS would continue to coordinate activities to alleviate or prevent feral swine damage with the GDNR.

WS made the supplement to the EA available to the public for review and comment by a legal notice published daily in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* from December 4 through December 6, 2013. WS also made the supplement available to the public for review and comment by posting a notice of availability on the APHIS website at [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife\\_damage/nepa.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/nepa.shtml) beginning on November 26, 2013. WS also sent notices of availability directly to agencies, organizations, and individuals with probable interest in feral swine damage management. The public involvement period ended on January 10, 2014. WS received one comment letter during the public comment period in support of activities conducted by WS to manage feral swine in the State.

## **AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

Feral swine damage or threats of damage could occur statewide in Georgia wherever feral swine occur. However, feral swine damage management would only be conducted by WS when requested by a landowner or manager and only on properties where a MOU, work initiation document, or other comparable document was signed between WS and a cooperating entity. The affected environment was addressed in Section 2.1 of the EA and remains appropriate to those activities addressed in the supplement to the EA.

## **ISSUES ANALYZED IN DETAIL**

Issues related to feral swine damage management in Georgia were defined and preliminary alternatives were identified through consultation with the GDNR. The EA and the supplement were also made available to the public for review and comment through notices published in local media and through direct notification of interested parties.

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

- Issue 1 - Effects on feral hog populations
- Issue 2 - Effects on other wildlife species, including T&E species
- Issue 3 - Effects on human health and safety
- Issue 4 - Humaneness and animal welfare concerns of methods used

Those issues identified during the development of the EA were evaluated in the supplement to the EA by each issue as those issues related to WS' activities conducted since the last Decision was signed in 2011. Each of those issues was also evaluated as those issues relate to conducting the proposed action alternative as described in the proposed supplement, including activities to address the use of aircraft.

## **ISSUES ADDRESSED BUT NOT IN DETAIL WITH RATIONALE**

In addition to those issues analyzed in detail, additional issues were identified during the development of the EA but were not considered in detail. The rationale for the decision not to analyze those issues in detail was discussed in Section 2.3 of the EA. WS has reviewed the issues not considered in detail as described in the EA and has determined that the analysis provided in the EA has not changed and is still appropriate.

## **ALTERNATIVES ANALYZED IN DETAIL**

The following four alternatives were developed to respond to the issues identified in Chapter 2 of the EA.

- Alternative 1 – Technical Assistance Only
- Alternative 2 – Integrated Feral Hog Damage Management Program (Proposed Action/No Action)
- Alternative 3 – Non-lethal Feral Hog Damage Management Only By WS
- Alternative 4 – No Federal WS Feral Hog Damage Management

The EA contains a detailed description and discussion of the alternatives and the effects of the alternatives on the issues identified.

## **WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT METHODS**

The strategies and methods available to WS to alleviate damage or threats of damage caused by feral swine were addressed in Section 3.2 of the EA (USDA 2005). Those methods would continue to be appropriate to activities conducted by WS and would continue to be available for use. The current supplement to the EA evaluated the use of aircraft, including shooting from aircraft, as a possible method that WS could use as part of an integrated methods approach under the proposed action alternative.

## **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT ANALYZED IN DETAIL**

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

## **STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES**

The WS program uses many standard operating procedures that improve the safety, selectivity, and efficacy of activities to manage damage associated with feral swine. Standard operating procedures are discussed in Section 3.4 of the EA. Those standard operating procedures would be incorporated into activities conducted by WS when addressing feral swine damage and threats in Georgia. WS' employees participating in any aspect of aerial wildlife operations would receive training in their role and responsibilities during the operations. All WS' personnel would follow the policies and directives set forth in WS' Directive 2.620; WS' Aviation Operations Manual; WS' Aviation Safety Manual and its amendments; Title 14 CFR; and Federal Aviation Regulations, Part 43, 61, 91, 119, 133, 135, and 137.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES FOR ISSUES ANALYZED IN DETAIL**

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

Based on the analyses in the EA and the 2011 supplement to the EA, the Decisions issued in 2005 and 2011 determined the need for action and the issues identified in the EA were best addressed by selecting Alternative 2 (proposed action/no action alternative). Based on those evaluations, the implementation of the selected alternative would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment (USDA 2005). Between FY 2011 and FY 2012, WS implemented a damage management program that responded to requests for assistance using an adaptive integrated methods approach as described under Alternative 2 in the EA, as supplemented by the 2011 Decision. The current supplement to the EA evaluates the implementation of Alternative 2 during FY 2011 and FY 2012 to ensure individual and cumulative activities conducted pursuant to the alternative were and would continue to be within the impact parameters evaluated in the EA based on current information and methods. Potential impacts of Alternative 1, Alternative 3, and Alternative 4 on the human environment related to the major issues have not changed from those described in the EA.

The following resource values in Georgia are not expected to be significantly impacted by any of the alternatives analyzed in the EA and the supplement: soils, geology, minerals, water quality/quantity, flood plains, wetlands, critical habitats (areas listed in threatened or endangered species recovery plans), visual resources, air quality, prime and unique farmlands, aquatic resources, timber, and range. The activities

proposed in the alternatives would have a negligible effect on atmospheric conditions, including the global climate. Meaningful direct or indirect emissions of greenhouse gases would not occur because of any of the alternatives. Those alternatives would meet the requirements of applicable laws, regulations, and Executive Orders, including the Clean Air Act and Executive Order 13514.

The following issues were analyzed in detail in the current supplement as they relate to those activities conducted by WS under the selected alternative during FY 2011 and FY 2012 and those additional activities proposed in the supplement to the EA:

### ***Issue 1 - Effects on feral hog populations***

Under the proposed action alternative (Alternative 2), WS provides technical assistance and direct operational assistance using methods described in the EA and the 2011 supplement in an integrated approach in which all or a combination of methods may be employed to resolve a request for assistance. Lethal methods could be employed to remove an individual feral swine or a group of feral swine that were identified as responsible for causing damage or the threat of damage; however, WS would only use lethal methods when requested by the cooperating entity. Therefore, the use of lethal methods could result in local population reductions in the area where damage or threats were occurring. The number of individuals removed from the population under the proposed action would be dependent on the number of requests for assistance received, the number of individuals causing damage, and the efficacy of methods employed.

WS' damage management activities conducted during FY 2011 and FY 2012 were site specific, and although local populations of feral swine may have been reduced, there was no probable adverse effect on populations of feral swine from WS' activities. Based on those quantitative and qualitative parameters addressed in the EA, the 2011 supplement to the EA, and the current supplement to the EA, the take levels addressed under the proposed action alternative (Alternative 2) have been and would continue to be of low magnitude when compared to population trend data, population estimates, and harvest data. Therefore, based on the analyses in the EA, the 2011 supplement, and the current supplement, WS' previous activities have not had an adverse effect on feral swine populations in the State. In addition, the GDNR views any reduction in the population of feral swine as providing some benefit to the native environment in Georgia (USDA 2005).

The current supplement to the EA also considered the use of aircraft to aid in alleviating or preventing feral swine damage. Under the proposed action alternative, aerial operations could include the use of aircraft for surveillance and monitoring, as well as, WS' employees shooting feral swine from aircraft. Under Alternative 4, WS would only conducted surveillance and monitoring of feral swine using aircraft. Surveillance and monitoring activities would use aircraft to locate feral swine, to determine the size of a local population, and when using radio telemetry, to locate radio collared swine. Since the number of feral swine that WS could lethally remove annually would remain as analyzed in the EA and the use of aircraft would not result in direct mortality of feral swine, the use of aircraft to lethally remove feral swine or for surveillance would not affect the population of feral swine in the State.

### ***Issue 2 - Effects on other Wildlife Species, including T&E Species***

Another issue often raised is the potential impacts to populations of wildlife that could be taken as non-targets during damage management activities. While every precaution would be taken to safeguard against taking non-targets during operational use of methods and techniques for resolving damage, the use of such methods could result in the incidental take of unintended species. Since the Decision and FONSI were signed for the 2011 supplement to the EA, no lethal take of non-target species occurred by WS during damage management activities targeting feral swine. No adverse effects to non-targets were

observed or reported to WS during damage management activities. The primary methods used by WS for removing feral swine have been shooting and the use of live-traps. Shooting is essentially selective for target species since identification of the target occurs prior to application. Non-target species are usually not affected by WS' use of firearms, except for the occasional scaring that may result from discharging a firearm. In those cases, non-target wildlife may temporarily leave the immediate vicinity of scaring, but would most likely return after conclusion of the action in the absence of direct reinforcement. Although there are several cage trap designs available to live-capture feral swine, the type of trap most commonly used by WS is the "corral" trap. Corral traps generally do not contain overhead panels, which allow non-target species the ability to escape, if able. In addition, the corral traps are checked at least daily, which ensures any non-target species could be released.

No threatened or endangered species were taken or adversely affected by WS' actions conducted during FY 2011 and FY 2012. As part of the development of this supplement to the EA, WS re-initiated consultation with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) under Section 7 of the ESA (see Appendix B in the current supplement for a list of species and WS' determinations). The USFWS concurred with the effects determination made by WS (R. B. Goodloe, USFWS pers. comm. 2013).

An additional concern that WS identified was the potential for low-level aircraft flights to disturb wildlife, including T&E species. Low-level aircraft flights would be associated with the use of firearms from aircraft and from the use of aircraft for wildlife surveillance. Aerial operations would typically be conducted with aircraft between the months of December and April when the foliage has fallen; however, aircraft could be used at any time of year. The amount of time spent conducting aerial operations would vary depending on the severity of damage and the number of feral swine causing damage. Time spent conducting aerial operations would also depend upon the size of the area where damage or threats were occurring and the weather, as low-level aerial activities would be restricted to visual flight rules and would be impractical in high winds or at times when animals were not easily visible.

A number of studies have looked at responses of various wildlife species to aircraft overflights. The National Park Service (1995) reviewed the effects of aircraft overflights on wildlife and suggested that adverse effects could occur to certain species. Some species will frequently or at least occasionally show an adverse response to even minor overflights. In general though, it appears that the more serious potential adverse effects occur when overflights are chronic (*i.e.*, they occur daily or more often over long periods). Chronic exposures generally involve areas near commercial airports and military flight training facilities. Aerial operations conducted by WS rarely occur in the same areas on a daily basis and little time is actually spent flying over those particular areas.

### ***Issue 3 - Effects on Human Health and Safety***

Management activities conducted by WS during FY 2011 and FY 2012 did not result in any injuries or illness to any members of the public or to WS' personnel. No injuries or illnesses from WS' activities were reported to WS during FY 2011 and FY 2012. The potential impacts of program activities on human health and safety have not changed from those analyzed in the EA. Based on the analyses in the EA, when WS' activities are conducted according to WS' directives, standard operating procedures, according to federal, state, and local laws, and to label requirements, those activities pose minimal risks to human safety (USDA 2005).

Aerial wildlife operations, like any other flying, may result in an accident. WS' pilots and crewmembers would be trained and experienced to recognize the circumstances that lead to accidents. For those reasons addressed in the current supplement, the risk of ground fires or fuel/oil pollution from aviation accidents would be considered low. In addition, based on the history and experience of the program in aircraft accidents, it appears the risk of significant environmental damage from such accidents is exceedingly low.

#### *Issue 4 - Humaneness and Animal Welfare Concerns of Methods Used*

WS' personnel are experienced and professional in their use of management methods. When employing methods to resolve damage, methods would be applied as humanely as possible. Methods employed since the completion of the EA and their potential impacts on humaneness and animal welfare have not changed from those analyzed in the EA.

Of concern would be the humaneness of using firearms to shoot feral swine from aircraft. The use of firearms as a method was addressed in the EA (USDA 2005). Therefore, the issue of humaneness associated with the use of a firearm was addressed in the EA. The goal of WS would be to address requests for assistance using methods, including shooting from an aircraft, in the most humane way possible that minimizes the stress and pain to the animal (see WS Directive 2.505).

#### **CUMULATIVE IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTION**

No cumulative adverse effects have been identified from program activities implemented over time based on analyses contained in the EA, from monitoring reports, from analyses contained in the 2011 supplement, or from the analyses in the current supplement. WS continues to implement an integrated damage management program that adapts to each request for assistance. WS would only target those feral swine causing damage or posing a threat of damage and only after a request for assistance was received. Under the proposed action, the lethal removal of feral swine by WS would not have significant impacts on statewide feral swine populations when known sources of mortality were considered. The unintentional take of non-targets would not reach a magnitude where significant cumulative effects would occur to a species' population.

WS' activities have been conducted on a small portion of the land area of the State and although the number of feral swine present at a specific location could decrease from WS' activities, those activities would not reach a level where populations would be adversely affected from those actions.

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

WS has received no reports or documented any adverse effects to human safety from damage management activities targeting feral swine conducted by WS during FY 2011 and FY 2012. Personnel employing methods would continue to be trained to be proficient in the use of those methods to ensure the safety of the applicator and to the public. Based on the use patterns of methods, those methods would not cumulatively affect human safety. WS employs methods as humanely as possible by applying measures to minimize pain and that allow wildlife captured to be addressed in a timely manner to minimize distress. Through the establishment of WS' Directives and standard operating procedures that guide WS in the use of methods to address damage, the cumulative effects on the issue of method humaneness would be minimal.

Population objectives would continue to be established and enforced by the GDNR. Therefore, WS would have no direct effect on the status of feral swine populations since the GDNR could restrict WS' activities to meet population objectives. Since those persons seeking assistance could remove feral swine from areas where damage was occurring, WS' involvement would have no effect on the aesthetic value of feral swine in the area where damage was occurring.

## DECISION AND RATIONALE

Based on the analyses of the alternatives developed to address those issues analyzed in detail within the EA, including individual and cumulative impacts of those alternatives, I, the decision-maker, have made the following decision.

### *Decision*

I have carefully reviewed the current supplement to the EA, the 2011 supplement to the EA, the analyses in the EA, the associated Decision/FONSI, and the monitoring reports. I find the proposed action alternative (Alternative 2), as supplemented, to be environmentally acceptable, addressing the issues and needs while balancing the environmental concerns of management agencies, landowners, advocacy groups, and the public. The analyses in the EA and the supplements to the EA adequately address the identified issues, which reasonably confirm that no significant impact, individually or cumulatively, to wildlife populations or to the quality of the human environment are likely to occur from the proposed activities addressed in the EA or the supplement to the EA. Therefore, the analysis in the EA, as supplemented, remains valid and does not warrant the completion of an EIS.

Based on analyses in the EA and the supplements to the EA, the issues identified are best addressed by continuing the proposed action alternative (Alternative 2), as supplemented, and applying the associated standard operating procedures discussed in Chapter 3 of the EA. The proposed action alternative, as addressed in the supplements, would successfully address feral swine damage management using a combination of the most effective methods and does not adversely affect the environment, property, human safety, and/or non-target species, including threatened or endangered species. The proposed action alternative, as supplemented, would offer the greatest chance of maximizing effectiveness and benefits to resource owners and managers while minimizing cumulative effects on the quality of the human environment that might result from the program's effect on target and non-target species populations. In addition, the proposed action, as supplemented, would present the greatest chance of maximizing net benefits while minimizing adverse effects to public health and safety. The proposed action, as supplemented, would also offer a balanced approach to the issues of humaneness and aesthetics when all facets of those issues are considered. Further analysis would be triggered if changes occur that broaden the scope of damage management activities, that affect the natural or human environment, or from the issuance of new environmental regulations. Therefore, it is my decision to continue the implementation of the proposed action/no action alternative (Alternative 2) as described in the EA and as supplemented.

### *Finding of No Significant Impact*

Based on the analyses provided in the EA, the 2005 Decision/FONSI, the 2011 supplement, the 2011 Decision/FONSI, the monitoring reports, and the current supplement, there continues to be no indications that WS' activities have had or would have a significant impact, individually or cumulatively, on the quality of the human environment. I agree with this conclusion and therefore, find that an EIS should not be prepared. This determination is based on the following factors:

1. Managing damage caused by feral swine, as conducted by WS in Georgia, is not regional or national in scope.
2. Based on the analyses in the EA and in the supplements, the methods available would not adversely affect human safety based on their use patterns.

3. The proposed action, as supplemented, would continue to have no significant impact on unique characteristics, such as park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wild and scenic areas, or ecologically critical areas. WS' standard operating procedures and adherence to laws and regulations that govern impacts on elements of the human environment would assure that significant adverse impacts were avoided.
4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not highly controversial. Although there may be opposition to killing feral swine, this action is not controversial in relation to size, nature, or effects. Based on consultations with the USFWS and the GDNR, the proposed action, as supplemented, is not likely to cause a controversial disagreement among the appropriate resource professionals.
5. Based on the analysis in the EA, the supplements to the EA, and the accompanying administrative file, the effects of the proposed damage management program on the human environment would not be significant. The effects of the proposed activities are not highly uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks.
6. The proposed action, as supplemented, does not establish a precedent for future actions. This action would not set a precedent for future actions that may be implemented or planned within the State.
7. No significant cumulative effects were identified in the analyses conducted in the EA and the supplements.
8. The proposed activities would not affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor would they likely cause any loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.
9. As part of the current supplement, WS re-initiated consultation with the USFWS pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. The USFWS has concurred with WS' determinations for federally listed threatened or endangered species.
10. WS has complied with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and would continue to comply with all applicable laws.

***Rationale***

The rationale for this decision is based on several considerations. This decision takes into account public comments, social/political and economic concerns, public health and safety, and the best available science. The foremost considerations are that: 1) WS would only conduct damage management at the request of landowners/managers, 2) management actions would be consistent with applicable laws, regulations, policies and orders, and 3) no cumulative effects to the environment were identified in the analysis. As a part of this Decision, the WS program in Georgia would continue to provide effective and practical technical assistance and direct management techniques that reduce damage and threats of damage.



Charles S. Brown, Director-Eastern Region  
USDA/APHIS/WS  
Raleigh, North Carolina

Date

3/10/14

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