

DECISION  
AND  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
FOR WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT  
TO PROTECT PROPERTY, HEALTH AND SAFETY  
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

## I. INTRODUCTION

Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wildlife Services, has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) that analyzes alternatives for a wildlife damage management program to protect property, health and safety. The EA incorporates by reference the findings of the Animal Damage Control (ADC) Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This EA is tiered to the EIS.

The action proposed is to continue the current cooperative wildlife damage management program in Hawaii to protect human health, safety and property. The EA analyzes projects and their potential impacts as conducted by WS on behalf of private and public cooperating parties in Hawaii. The analysis does not include projects conducted on behalf of federal cooperators. The analysis examines human health and safety related projects to control fecal accumulations and ectoparasite infestations associated with roosting or nesting birds or mammals such as feral cats. The broad categories of property protection include structures, facilities, equipment, landscaping and commodities that may be damaged by birds and mammals. The present analysis does not include activities to manage wildlife hazards affecting aviation or the protection of agriculture or natural resources. Between federal fiscal years 1993 and 1997, Wildlife Services in Hawaii received 158 requests for assistance to protect property, health and safety from wildlife and feral animals. The cost of damages associated with these 158 incidents was estimated by the cooperators to be about \$874,312 or an average of \$174,862 per year.

Wildlife Services is the Federal Government agency authorized to manage wildlife that create human health and safety hazards or damage property. The agency's authority comes from the Animal Damage Control Act of March 2, 1931, as amended, and pursuant to the Rural Development, Agriculture, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 1988. WS cooperates with individual producers to control wildlife damages and depredations to agriculture.

The Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources (HDLNR) permits WS to take bird species when necessary to protect human health, safety and property. WS keeps the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) informed of wildlife damage management activities, and complies with Section 7 requirements of the Endangered Species Act.

The USFWS, HDLNR, Hawaii Department of Agriculture and the State Historic Preservation Officer cooperated with WS to determine whether or not WS activities were in compliance with relevant laws, regulations, policies, orders and procedures.

This analysis examined the environmental consequences and compares alternative methods of addressing proposed wildlife management in the State of Hawaii. The analysis and supporting documentation are available for review from WS (720 O'Leary St. S.W., Olympia, WS 98502).

## II. DECISION AND RATIONALE

I have carefully reviewed the EA and the input resulting from the interagency and public involvement process. I believe that the issues identified in the analysis are best addressed by selecting Alternative 1 - Continue the Current Program.

Alternative 1 is the preferred alternative. It best addresses all issues identified in the EA and provides the environmental safeguards that address concerns about the human environment. Alternative 1 is reasonable and fully compatible with agreements between WS and its cooperators. It provides a service to the public with no significant adverse effects on the environment. All wildlife damage management will be conducted in a manner consistent with the Endangered Species Act of 1973 and an informal consultation that has been completed with the USFWS.

## III. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A number of local organizations and individuals were notified of the availability of the Predecisional Environmental Assessment. In addition, a formal notice was published on March 23, 1999 in the Honolulu Advertiser, a newspaper with statewide distribution to solicit comments on the draft. Notice was also placed in The Environmental Notice, a publication of the Office of Environmental Quality Control. Only one comment was received from this public input process.

Public input into WS actions was also achieved on the national level through the National Animal Damage Control Advisory Committee (NADCAC) made up of 20 individuals representing agricultural, wildlife management, animal welfare, and public health interests. Committee members serve a 2-year term, and can be on the committee for three consecutive 2-year terms. NADCAC meets annually, usually in the Washington, D.C. area. Notices are published in the Federal Register announcing solicitations for membership and announcing meeting dates and locations. NADCAC was authorized in 1986, and is one method that WS uses to obtain public input into the program.

WS went beyond the minimum requirements for public notice (APHIS Implementing Procedures 7 CRF 372.8(b)(3)) by soliciting public input at the predecisional stage. The documentation on the

public involvement effort is available for public review.

#### IV. MAJOR ISSUES

The following issues were identified as being important to the scope of the analysis (40 CFR 1508.25): effectiveness of the WS operations to protect human health, safety and property, impacts on federally listed threatened and endangered species, impacts on migratory birds, humaneness of techniques, and impacts to target species.

A concern was raised by the Maui Humane Society regarding the use of snares to control animals. The use of untended cable neck snares to control feral pigs and goats on [REDACTED] lands, state natural areas, [REDACTED] preserves and national parks in Hawaii is considered inhumane by some individuals and groups. Hundreds of cable neck snares are set in an area and left untended for months. The practice results in some immediate death but more often the animal is caught in a manner that causes it to die over a long period of time. WS has maintained a strict policy of frequent equipment checks and has not supported the use of snares in the manner described above. In Hawaii a cage trap must be checked within 48 hours. Any leg trap or leg snare must be checked within 24 hours but more often they are checked within 12 hours. WS personnel are experienced and professional in their use of control methods so that they are as humane as possible.

#### V. ALTERNATIVES

The following four alternatives were developed to respond to the above issues. A summary of the effects of the alternatives is contained in the EA.

I reached my decision based on the following review of the alternatives developed from the EA.

Alternative 1 - Current Program (No Action) - The No Action alternative is a procedural NEPA requirement (40 CFR 1502.1(d)), it is a viable alternative that was selected and served as the baseline for comparing the other alternatives. This alternative embraces the current program as described in Section 1.3 of the PEA and includes both active and inactive projects. WS may enter into new agreements but the program would not change. The No Action alternative, as defined here is consistent with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) definition.

Alternative 2 - No WS Operational Program - Technical Assistance Only - This alternative would terminate the WS program to directly control damages to property and threats to health and safety within the State of Hawaii but would allow WS to provide technical assistance and make recommendations when requested. Examples of technical assistance may include providing training on bird and animal damage identification and demonstrations on how to use various scare and barrier techniques. Under this alternative, the property owner could carry out the control work under permit by the FWS, if migratory birds were involved, and the Hawaii Department of

Land and Natural Resources if any other bird were involved. This alternative was not selected because it would limit WS involvement in any wildlife damage problem and reduce the level of expertise and accountability to successfully alleviate the problem and address society's concerns.

Alternative 3 - Non-Lethal Before Lethal Control Program - The Non-Lethal Before Lethal Control Program alternative would require the use of all practical non-lethal methods prior to WS recommending or using lethal controls to resolve wildlife damage problems. This alternative was not selected since lethal methods serve to reinforce non-lethal methods making the latter more effective. If target species populations are not threatened by lethal take, there is no scientific justification for restricting that take.

Alternative 4 - Expanded WS Program to Protect Property, Health and Safety - The expanded program would include all aspects of the current program with the addition of staff and inclusion of operations to more effectively serve the future needs of producers on all the islands. Control methods would be similar but operations would be expanded to other properties. This alternative was not selected since the expansion of the current WS program would be dependent upon the need of such services and funding support by the producers or other agencies.

#### FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The Environmental Assessment of Wildlife Damage Management to Protect Property, Health and Safety indicates that there will not be a significant impact on the quality of the human environment as a result of the proposed action. I agree with this conclusion, and therefore, determine that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will not be prepared. This determination is based on consideration of the following factors which are addressed in the EA:

1. The proposed activities to manage wildlife damage to protect property, health and safety will not significantly affect public health and safety.
2. The proposed activities will not have an impact on unique characteristics of the geographical areas such as historical or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.
3. The effects on the human environment of the proposed activities are not highly controversial.
4. The effects of the proposed activities are not highly uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks.
5. The proposed activities do not establish a precedent for future actions.

6. There are no significant cumulative effects identified by this assessment.
7. The proposed activities do not affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or will cause a loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources, including interference with native Hawaiian traditional uses or sacred sites.
8. The proposed activities will fully comply with the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. An informal Section 7 consultation for the proposed activities has been completed.
9. The proposed activities will not threaten a violation of Federal, State or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

For additional information concerning this decision, please contact Gary Oldenburg, USDA APHIS WS, 720 O'Leary Street, NW, Olympia WA 98502 or Tim J. Ohashi, USDA APHIS WS, 2275 Koapaka Street, Suite H420, Honolulu, HI 96819.

Reviewed By:

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J. Gary Oldenburg  
State Director  
WA/HI/AK/Pacific Islands  
Wildlife Services  
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture

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Date

Approved By:

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Michael V. Worthen  
Director, Western Region  
Wildlife Services  
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture

7/30/99

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Date