

National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee  
Riverdale, Maryland  
August 24-25, 1999

Tuesday, August 24, 1999

Bill Clay welcomed the new members of the Committee. He said that Bobby Acord, former Deputy Administrator of Wildlife Services, has been named as the Associate Administrator of APHIS and introduced Enrique Figueroa, Deputy Under Secretary, Marketing and Regulatory Programs. Bill also introduced other members of APHIS and Wildlife Services who were there to assist the Committee: Michael Tadel, Martin Mendoza, Dave Bergmann, Carrie Joyce, Joanne Garrett, Pete Poulos, Gary Larson, Mike Worthen, Dick Curnow, Martha Beach, Cindy Smith, Julie Anderson, and Dave Hayes.

Dr. Figueroa expressed his appreciation to the group for their participation. He stressed the importance that the group represented a diverse group of industry organizations and he reviewed the variety of the work which WS is involved in (wildlife management, conservation of wildlife, maintain balance and healthy ecosystems). He discussed the need for alternative control methods and working with other government agencies to solve problems. He mentioned NWRC's new state-of-the-art Wildlife Science building for development of new techniques for predator control. He also discussed the important role of Wildlife Services to protect crops, forests, aquaculture, and threatened and endangered species, and human health and safety.

Bill Clay introduced Bobby Acord, Associate Administrator, of APHIS. Bobby said the dynamics of the group has changed over the years. It initially represented only agriculture interests but now represented academia, environmental interests, animal health interests, the transportation industry, and others. WS has increased its interests in many areas, for example, aquaculture, sunflowers, wildlife health, and zoonotic diseases. These were all recommendations by the committee. We have had a more comprehensive evaluation of NEPA and have 5 employees doing environmental assessments. We also have a more professional workforce. We are more involved in threatened and endangered species, we have rejuvenated research methods, we have a new National Wildlife Research Center and new Wildlife Science Building. The recommendations of the committee have had a tremendous impact on the program. However, there is still a lot which needs to be done. Explosive wildlife populations are causing resources to become strained. We are also going to need to keep pace with society's expectations. He said he looked forward to the recommendations of the committee and sitting down with Under Secretary Dunn and Deputy Under Secretary Figueroa to discuss the recommendations.

Jim Butler asked how long it would be before there would be a new Deputy for WS. Bobby said that the process would take approximately 6 months.

Cindy Smith reviewed the recommendations made by the last committee and the decision document.

Bill Clay talked about the challenge of developing methods that are acceptable to society and protecting agriculture within our existing resources. NWRC has invested more than \$40 million in developing nonlethal methods over the past 5 years and this effort must continue. Bill read the committee charter. He explained that after the recommendations were made, a decision document would be prepared by the staff and go forward to the Secretary. He opened up the meeting for nominations of a chairman. Jim Butler, Texas A&M University, was nominated as chairman and Clait Braun, Colorado Division of Wildlife, was nominated as vice chairman.

Dr. Butler discussed the importance of the name change to Wildlife Services because it reflects the work being done by the program. He stressed the importance of the committee having a meeting in Fort Collins. He said that everyone's issues will be included in the minutes and all issues will be recorded and reviewed. He asked for a copy of Dr. Figueroa's remarks and a copy was provided to all committee members. Dr. Butler asked the committee members to introduce themselves and who they represent (Austin Jones, Bear Creek Fisheries, Mark Zaunbrecher, Louisiana Rice Growers Association, Jerome Carl, Pennsylvania farmer, Scott Nelson, North Dakota sunflower grower, Joe Harper, West Virginia livestock producer, Clait Braun, Colorado Division of Wildlife, Terry Mansfield, California Department of Fish and Game, Gayne Fearneyhough, Texas Department of Health, Don Lein, Cornell University, Caroline Kennedy, Defenders of Wildlife, Gloria Tom, Navajo Nation, Fish and Wildlife Department, John Baucus, Seiben Ranch Company, Diane Gansauer, Colorado Wildlife Federation, Russell Ives, Rose Exterminator Company, and Camilla Fox, Animal Protection Institute. Members not present were Deloyd Satterthwaite, Ellison Ranching Company, Enrique Guerra, San Vincente Ranch, Paul Eschenfelder, Airline Pilots Association, and Rosemary Hearn, Lincoln University

Bill Clay discussed the budget process and how it works. We are always working 2 years in advance. At the end of FY 99 we have already submitted the FY 2001 budget (it is submitted to APHIS, then the Department (OBPA), and then to OMB. OMB makes its recommendations to the President. We are given general guidelines and then we also have initiatives (for example, wolf control, airport work, and others).

Dick Curnow provided an overview of projects at NWRC. He handed out a Final Report for 1996 Research Needs Assessments. He said there were over 100 stated research needs. These were then prioritized. Dick discussed the most recent non-lethal methods development. He talked about guard dogs being a good tool and that ARS has also done research on the use of guard dogs.

Cindy talked about WS' workforce plan. The program looks at the strategic plan, looks at where they want to be, where they want employees to be so that you can have the right number of people with the proper skills in the right locations. WS is presently updating its plan. We are

presenting focusing on technical skills (airport training, pesticide certification, etc.) We are also focusing more on good leadership skills (taking advantage of other leadership programs in APHIS, OPM, and also critical skills and the Leadership Excellence Program. We have also had a skills assessment program. We identified 12 skills and employees applied to this program. The LEP program had 10 graduates from the first class. The class this time is larger. It has 18. The program was also expanded to individuals other than wildlife biologists. The idea of this program is to continue to build leadership skills. Participants will have an individual development plan identifying training and other forms of leadership development during the program. They will also have a 30-60 day developmental assignment.

Gary Larson gave an overview of work in the Eastern Region. The Eastern Region includes 31 States from Minnesota to Louisiana, which includes Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Some of our programs include, beaver management, work on 100+ airports, work on aquaculture in 3 States where biologists are doing work on doublecrested cormorants, livestock protection in 3 States, Minnesota is totally federally funded (we had a congressional directive in 1992), in Wisconsin we have a small program for trapping of wolves, and rabies work. The East is presently conducting an economic analysis of rabies. Loss of human life from rabies is not a big issue in the U.S.; however, it is estimated that it costs the U.S. \$450 million to live with rabies. We have white tailed deer management work in 8 States, including Michigan, threatened and endangered species work in 8 States, Canada goose work (there are 1 million Canada geese in each of the flyways. We cannot relocate Canada geese anywhere (we need more alternatives). We also have 1-800 numbers in 4 States, providing technical assistance.

A question was asked about what work is done in conjunction with other agencies regarding white tailed deer. Gary answered that each State has been asked to assist in some way. The work we do involves airports, military installations, parks, and sometimes reduction programs in urban and suburban areas as well.

Mike Worthen gave an overview of work in the Western Region. Our major emphasis in the West is control of coyotes, bear, and mountain lion. Each State has authority to manage the local wildlife. WS has formalized agreements with those agencies. Our policy is that we work upon request and we work with the requesting agency. We work on big game protection (bighorn sheep). We also work on wolf recovery. We have a large program in Guam on the brown tree snake. We employ 30+ people for that program. We have 3 NEPA coordinators in the West. We have completed 40 NEPA documents. With rabies, we have had a program in Texas since 1995 and a huge bait dropping program. We have two specialists who oversee the guard dog program. Around 80 to 90 percent of the producers in the West use guard dogs. We do blackbird work in the Dakotas to help reduce blackbird damage to sunflowers. We do airport safety work with most major States to minimize strikes at airports. We also do work concerning geese and human health and safety. A couple of areas where we have problems are: wolf control - we had a deficit of \$70,000. APHIS gave us some contingency funding to address this shortfall in FY 1999.

Dave Hayes gave a report on the NEPA process. He said there are 3 employees in the West and 1 in the East who work on NEPA; and Rick Wadleigh in the NEPA coordinator for WS. He said that categorical exclusions (CE) are used for one-time projects. If we think there is a necessity for an environmental assessment (EA), we contact Federal and local agencies and begin to coordinate issues, concerns, and alternatives. EA's require public involvement. We send out letters and maintain lists of interested organizations and individuals.. They are given 30 days to respond. We send out these letters to interested parties to see if an action is going to impact their group. We get about a 10 percent response rate. We keep an administrative file on correspondence. Anyone who has responded is sent a pre-decision document with a 30 day comment period. We look at the responses and finalize the EA. We also put a notice in the papers, and after the pre-decisional document is reviewed, we write a final EA and send it to be signed. Anyone who has commented on the EA, receives a copy of it. Every year we review our EA's and sit down with the agencies involved. If there are new issues or new alternatives to be considered, we may supplement it or amend the EA. If a new decision is made, we send out information on that. In the West, we have 40 predator control EA's.

Following the NEPA update, the committee started making recommendations in draft form.

Wednesday, August 25, 1999

Jim Butler - We will be reviewing and finalizing recommendations today. Please do not share the recommendations that you receive today until they are sent forward to the Secretary.

#### **National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee Recommendations**

1. The Committee supports new funding for a national position within Wildlife Services to coordinate airport/bird problem identification, provide for training of wildlife specialists working for airport authorities, and to maintain the FAA/USDA bird/aircraft strike database.

Motion by: Dr. Clait Braun  
Seconded by: Mr. Russell Ives  
For: 15  
Against: 1 (Caroline Kennedy)

2. The Committee recommends continued support for oral rabies vaccination programs in the United States. Wildlife Services should continue to provide leadership in the development and implementation of oral rabies vaccination programs through participation in the planning, logistical development, and personnel support for existing and developing programs.

Motion by: Dr. Malcomb Gayne Fearneyhough  
Seconded by: Ms. Camilla Fox  
For: Unanimous  
Against:

3. The Committee recommends that the cost for acquisition and continued maintenance of turbine aircraft recommended in the "Safety Review, Evaluation, and Recommendations Concerning the USDA, APHIS Services Aviation Program" be provided through new funding sources and that recurring expenses associated with maintenance of those aircraft be made a recurring budget item.

Motion by: Dr. Malcomb Gayne Fearneyhough  
Seconded by: Mr. Terry Mansfield  
For: 14  
Against: 2 (Camilla Fox and Caroline Kennedy)

4. The Committee recommends that the Secretary of Agriculture encourage the USDA/APHIS Center for Epidemiology and Animal Health section of National Animal Health Monitoring Service to contract with Wildlife Services where wildlife is considered in the annual surveys of animal health and management issues.

Motion by: Dr. Donald Lein  
Seconded by: Dr. Malcomb Gayne Fearneyhough  
For: 13  
Against: 1 (Camilla Fox)  
Abstain: 2 (Caroline Kennedy, Diane Gansauer)

5. The Committee recommends that the Secretary of Agriculture encourage the agencies responsible for food safety (USDA, VS, FSIS; HHS, FDA, CDC), water quality (EPA, CDC, USDA), wildlife (USDI), animal (USDA, ARS, VS) and human health (HHS, CDC, FDA) to provide funding and cost share with Wildlife Services and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USDI) to conduct surveys on migratory and non-migratory waterfowl and birds on the incidence and prevalence of harmful microorganisms.

Motion by: Dr. Don Lein  
Seconded by: Dr. Clait Braun  
For: Unanimous  
Against:

6. Whereas blackbirds cause significant damage to rice, sunflowers, and other grain crops and often threaten human health and safety; Whereas the Wildlife Services (WS) program provides invaluable assistance in the form of technical assistance, direct control, and research to agricultural producers and other citizens; therefore, the WS Advisory Committee recommends that the Secretary of Agriculture continue to fund and support projects conducted by the operations and research divisions of the WS program to reduce blackbird damage to various resources.

Specifically, the Committee recommends that WS conduct research to determine the economic impact of blackbird damage to rice and sunflowers and to provide information relative to the status of blackbird population in North America so that sound management decisions pertaining to wildlife damage control can be made.

Motion by: Mr. Mark Zaunbrecher  
Seconded by: Mr. Austin Jones  
For: 15  
Against: 1

7. The Committee commends the National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) on its continued innovative research efforts and recommends that a formal process be developed that facilitates technological information transfer from the NWRC to Wildlife Services (WS) operations through systematic training at WS field locations and NWRC headquarters in Fort Collins, Colorado. In addition, the Committee recommends that an appropriate process be developed and implemented to ensure that field personnel disseminate this information to WS customers.

Motion by: Ms. Camilla Fox  
Seconded by: Mr. Joseph Harper  
For: Unanimous  
Against:

8. The Committee recommends that Wildlife Services develop a strategy to implement APHIS Directive 1040.1, Relationships With Native Americans and Tribal Governments.

Motion by: Ms. Gloria Tom  
Seconded by: Mr. Austin Jones  
For: Unanimous  
Against:

9. The Committee recommends that Wildlife Services seek funding and cultivate partnerships with State and private organizations to disseminate information on human/wildlife interactions, and particularly how to avoid conflicts with wildlife in urban settings. In conjunction with efforts by State wildlife agencies, public outreach efforts should communicate the value of wildlife to the public and the role of scientifically-based wildlife management including wildlife damage control, in sustaining healthy wildlife populations and habitats.

Motion by: Ms. Diane Gansauer  
Seconded by: Mr. Russell Ives  
For: 14  
Against: 2 (Jerome Carl and Scott Nelson)

10. The Committee recognizes the need for funding to operate and fully utilize the new research facilities of the Wildlife Services National Wildlife Research Center. The Secretary is encouraged to seek increased funding for WS Methods Development to cover increased facility operation and maintenance costs and to allow full utilization of this modern wildlife research complex in Fort Collins, Colorado. The Committee further recommends that Wildlife Services invite input and recommendations from the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA) in developing the 5-year needs assessment for the National Wildlife Research Center.

Motion by: Mr. Terry Mansfield  
Seconded by: Dr. Clait Braun  
For: Unanimous  
Against:

11. The Committee recommends that the Secretary of Agriculture pursue additional funding for Wildlife Services and cooperatively with the Secretary of Interior for the Fish and Wildlife Service, to develop and implement cost-effective programs to control Canada goose and mid-continent light goose populations where control by public hunting is not feasible or does not result in sufficient population reductions.

Motion by: Mr. Terry Mansfield  
Seconded by: Mr. Jerome Carl  
For: Unanimous  
Against:

12. The Committee recommends that the Secretary, to the extent allowed by law, request reimbursement of funds from respective Federal agencies that are spent by Wildlife Services for the reintroduction, recovery, and management of threatened and endangered species.

Motion by: Mr. John Baucus  
Seconded by: Mr. Scott Nelson  
For: 14  
Against: 1 (Caroline Kennedy)  
Abstain: 1 (Camilla Fox)

13. Demands for Wildlife Services (WS) expertise and new areas of conflict between human interest and wildlife have increased over the past 15 years with very limited increase in program budgets. The Committee recommends that WS evaluate priorities and program effectiveness to place emphasis on core activities, consistent with enabling legislation and the agency's mission.

When Congress chooses to expand the activities of WS, the Secretary should convey to Congress, the Administration, and Office of Management and Budget that Congressional directives to WS should be supported by sufficient additional funding.

Motion by: Mr. John Baucus  
Seconded by: Dr. Malcomb Gayne Fearneyhough  
For: 14  
Against: 2 (Caroline Kennedy and Camilla Fox)

14. The Committee again urges APHIS to seek new funding from Congress to allow WS to provide initial wildlife hazard evaluation and follow-up monitoring visits at airports.

Motion by: Mr. Russell Ives  
Seconded by: Ms. Diane Gansauer  
For: 13  
Against: 3 (Clait Braun, Caroline Kennedy, Camilla Fox)

15. The Committee recommends that the Secretary does all in his power to protect and enhance the WS program infrastructure (i.e., offices, equipment, supplies, vehicles, supervisory and administrative personnel) which provides the framework for WS to carry out its mission of providing Federal leadership in managing problems caused by wildlife.

Motion by: Dr. James Butler  
Seconded by: Mr. Austin Jones  
For: Unanimous  
Against:

16. Aquaculture is the fastest growing source of protein in the United States. The Committee recommends that new funding for aquaculture problems be increased and allocated to States in proportion with aquaculture industry activity in those States.

Motion by: Mr. Austin Jones  
Seconded by: Mr. Jerome Carl  
For: 14  
Against: 2 (Camilla Fox and Caroline Kennedy)

17. The Committee again urges the Secretary to conduct its next meeting at the National Wildlife Research Center in Fort Collins, Colorado.

Motion by: Dr. James Butler  
Seconded by: Mr. Mark Zaunbrecher  
For: Unanimous  
Against:

18. Recognizing that annual workplans between Wildlife Services, U.S. Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management fall within the purview of the Sunshine Act, the Committee