

National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee Meeting

Riverdale Conference Center

Riverdale, MD

June 24-25, 2003

Tuesday, June 24, 2003

Committee Members in Attendance:

Clait Braun, Grouse, Inc. (Chair)

John Baucus, Sieban Ranch Company (Vice Chair)

Geoffrey Andrews, Farmer

Jeff Baxter, Baxter Land Company

Regan Beck, Rancher

Eugene Chafe, Senske Pest Control Company

John Hadidian, Urban Wildlife Program of the HSUS

Caroline Kennedy, Defenders of Wildlife

Donald Lein, Cornell University

Cathy Liss, Animal Welfare Institute

Terry Mansfield, Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Debra Miller, University of Georgia

Scott Nelson, Farmer

Rochelle Oxarango, Oxarango Lamb and Wool

Deloyd Satterthwaite, Ellison Ranching Company

Mark Zaunbrecher, Sweet Lake Land and Oil Company, Inc

Committee Members Not in Attendance:

Gerald Chacon, New Mexico State University

Michael D. Fox, Native American Fish and Wildlife Service

Joe Harper, Sheep Producer

H. Austin Jones, Bear Creek Fisheries, Inc.

Welcome and Introductions

The National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee (NWSAC) convened in the Riverdale Conference Center in Riverdale, Maryland, at 8:00 am on Tuesday, June 24, 2003. The meeting was called to order by Bill Clay, Deputy Administrator, Wildlife Services (WS). Bill welcomed the group and introduced the WS personnel in attendance and acknowledged the new program hires. Even though the committee has requested alternative locations (Fort Collins, Sandusky, Logan), Bill informed the committee that the meeting was taking place in Riverdale again this year, due to budget constraints. Should adequate funding be made available in future years, Bill assured the committee that alternative meeting sites would be considered.

Bill gave Cindy Smith, recently transferred Associate Deputy Administrator, a plaque in recognition of her service to the program. Cindy's new position is Deputy Administrator

for Biotechnology and Regulatory Services. Bill stated that he expected it to take at least a year to fill Cindy's vacated position.

Bill then gave the committee a brief overview of the FY 2003 budget. He highlighted the expanding WS disease program and informed the committee that WS would be filling 22 new positions for disease monitoring and surveillance efforts. He anticipated that wildlife disease work would continue to be a rapidly expanding and important role for WS. He also mentioned WS's expanding role in the invasive species area with success in identifying several methods for invasive species control work in Guam and Hawaii. Dick Curnow then described the new facilities at the National Wildlife Research Center.

Review and Update of Last NWSAC Meeting Recommendations

Bill Clay introduced Martin Mendoza, WS' Assistant Deputy Administrator. Martin invited the committee members to tour the new APHIS Emergency Response Center in the Riverdale building at the conclusion of the meeting, time permitting. Martin then reported on the status of last year's committee recommendations. The previous committee meeting was held in Riverdale, Maryland in June, 2002.

Discussion of Recommendations

Dr. Clait Braun, Committee Chairman, advised the group on how this year's meeting would be conducted. Recommendations would be developed by the committee members working together (he asked that the committee try to limit to no more than 20) and would then be presented to the group for discussion and voting. Committee members could vote for, against, or abstain. Voting would be recorded in the minutes.

The Chairman then asked each member to discuss specific topics that they would like to see addressed by the committee. Each member identified a number of issues for consideration by the committee at large. The Chairman stated his intention to place the different committee recommendations into the following categories: funding, safety, wildlife disease, invasive species, information transfer, damage control, and staffing.

The committee then developed a preliminary list of recommendations; they were put into categories by the Chairman who then assigned these preliminary recommendations to different subgroups within the committee. The subgroups were charged with developing specific recommendation language for review by the committee as a whole. Prior to adjournment, several preliminary recommendations (approximately 30) were discussed and refined so that votes could be taken the next day. The Chairman asked that group members consider merging and revising the preliminary recommendations prior to tomorrow's session.

Tuesday's session was adjourned at 5 pm.

Wednesday, July 25, 2003

The meeting was reconvened at 8:00 am. Patti Linkous (OSS staff) provided the group information for preparing and submitting their travel vouchers.

The Chairman began the morning session by revisiting yesterday's preliminary recommendations and merging/editing them into specific recommendations for discussion and voting. The recommendations addressed by the committee were as follows:

1. The Committee recommends that the Secretary of Agriculture work with the Secretary of Interior to develop a migratory bird permitting system that allows Wildlife Services to issue depredation permits.

13 - Yes
3 - No
0 - Abstain

2. The Committee recommends that the Secretary of Agriculture encourage Wildlife Services to develop a method to evaluate health risks associated with the movements of large blackbird flocks, a real time method of monitoring flock movements, and a plan for intervention. This would assist with controlling potential disease transfer, populations, and depredation.

14 - Yes
1 - No
1 - Abstain

3. The Committee recommends that the Secretary enter into discussions with the Department of Transportation, particularly the Federal Aviation Administration, and the Department of Defense, through existing Memoranda of Understanding to seek adequate funding to manage wildlife hazards at airports. The Committee recognizes the important role of Wildlife Services in assessing and managing hazards at airports and strongly supports the recent creation of the position of National Airports Coordinator.

16 - Yes

4. The Committee recommends that the Secretary expedite the appointment of the Associate Deputy Administrator for Wildlife Services to fully staff the national office in these times of increasing responsibilities and seek Senior Executive Service classification for the Director of Wildlife Services' National Wildlife Research Center. This classification would place important Wildlife Services' functions on an equal basis with other APHIS programs.

16 - Yes

5. The Committee recommends the Secretary restore Wildlife Services' budget to the FY 2003 level plus 5 percent, and to fund ongoing projects and Committee recommendations. Specifically, the Committee recommends \$2 million in funding for full implementation of MIS 2000.

15 - Yes
1 - Abstain

6. The Committee recommends that the Secretary seek \$2.5 million for 10 full-time staff and research operating funds to conduct the high priority research identified for the National Wildlife Research Center in Fort Collins, Colorado.

16 - Yes

7. The Committee recommends that the Secretary fund the National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee meeting at a level of \$25,000 to allow for the annual meeting to adequately discuss all the issues.

16 - Yes

8. The Committee recommends that the Secretary seek \$2.95 million to eradicate the Brown Tree Snake on Guam and \$1.65 million to control Coqui and Greenhouse frogs in Hawaii in cooperation with State, Territorial, and other federal agencies.

15 - Yes

1 - Abstain

9. The Committee recommends that the Secretary seek funding for Wildlife Services to immediately develop and implement an emergency response team in each State, to consist of at least 1 biologist, and 1 biological technician trained in wildlife disease surveillance, monitoring, and management. These personnel would be responsible for ongoing wildlife disease surveillance and monitoring and be immediately available in the event of disease outbreaks and chemical or natural disasters to travel and join the taskforce to bring these events under control.

14 - Yes

2 - Abstain

10. The Committee recommends that the Secretary seek funds for increased staffing of State agencies and encourage WS to further develop wildlife disease surveillance, reporting, and wildlife population dynamics, by including increased staffing of State departments of wildlife and agriculture and provide for testing of specimens at the federal NVSL of Veterinary Service and State and University animal disease diagnostic laboratories. Further, these wildlife disease data will be available to the national animal health laboratory network for disease monitoring of all animals by federal, state and industry for zoonotic animal and emerging diseases and acts of bioterrorism.

3 - Yes

11 - No

2 - Abstain

The majority considered this recommendation more appropriate for the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

11. The Committee encourages the Secretary to work with the Secretaries of Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Interior, and appropriate State agencies to identify

the need to control the importation, and interstate movement of all exotic animals and wildlife to safeguard both humans and animals from exotic, emerging, and resurging diseases.

6 - Yes

9 - No

1 - Abstain

The majority considered this recommendation more appropriate for the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

12. The Committee recommends that the Secretary seek additional funding to accomplish the wildlife rabies vaccination program for control and elimination of raccoon, fox, and coyote rabies and to initiate skunk, mongoose, and bat rabies vaccination programs. The Committee commends WS on their leadership in these vaccination programs and encourages them to work with the stakeholders in finalizing the international wildlife rabies vaccination plan.

16 - Yes

13. The Committee recommends that the Secretary seek additional funding to resolve conflicts with humans and livestock resulting from expanding eastern and western wolf populations.

15 - Yes

0 - No

1 - Abstain

14. The Committee recommends that the Secretary seek funding for Wildlife Services to test coyote sterilization through multiple field studies, conducted in cooperation with private landowners or livestock producers.

16 - Yes

15. The Committee recommends the Secretary adequately fund the field application of techniques and equipment, proven effective as developed in the research program.

13 - Yes

2 - No

(a voting member had departed)

16. The Committee recommends the Secretary adequately fund the purchase of those tools and methods developed by the NWRC that have proven effective in reducing damage and to make those devices available to its customers.

5 - Yes

10 - No

(a voting member had departed)

Additional Discussion

Several topics of interest were considered by the committee, but were determined by the Chairman as issues that were not appropriate for elevation to the Secretary. These were not recommendations per se, but were discussed as individual topics and voted on by the committee to reflect a "level of interest." In most instances they were viewed as issues that dealt with specific/narrow WS day-to-day field activities. The Chairman requested that they be included in the minutes. The topics were as follows:

(The votes were Yes, No, and Abstain in that sequence).

1. The committee suggested that WS consider the development of a business plan for wildlife disease surveillance and monitoring to be able to communicate with stakeholders on how surveillance and monitoring will be conducted. Vote: 10-4-1
2. The committee suggested that WS consider surveying field personnel to identify the adequacy of information transfer between research and operations. Vote: 9-6-0
3. The committee suggested that WS consider compiling data on the cost and results of aerial hunting operations. Vote: 5-10-0.
4. The committee suggested that WS consider summarizing invasive vertebrate species data and use this to identify the highest priority research needs. Vote: 9-5-1
5. The committee suggested that WS consider aggressively pursuing efforts to raise public awareness of the benefits of the WS program. Vote: 12-3-0
6. The committee suggested that WS consider incorporating in MIS 2000 a stepwise decision-making model. Vote: 11-4-0
7. The committee suggested that WS estimate the cost to implement the latest available technology to limit animal trap time to 24 hours. Vote: 9-6-0
8. The committee suggested that WS establish scientific expert panels to provide effective, coordinated wildlife disease research and management programs. Vote: 16-0-0
9. The committee suggested that WS work with FWS to discuss the effective use of trap technology (tranquilizer tabs, electronic monitoring) for wolf activity. Vote: 13-2-0

The committee recognized and commended the outreach efforts implemented by WS to date to increase public awareness and to provide information to the public.

In addition, there was considerable discussion on the collection of useful data in conjunction with the development of MIS. It was suggested that in the course of daily field operations, WS personnel have significant opportunities to collect additional basic biological information that may have future application. The committee encouraged WS to consider this type of supplemental data collection. The committee requested that WS compile a list of the type of data that it feels can be reasonably collected (by species) and will be useful, and provide this listing to the committee at the next meeting. The committee did not want supplemental data collection to negatively impact ongoing field activities.

The committee requested the opportunity to review the completed minutes of this meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 PM (EDT) on Wednesday, June 25, 2003.