

National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee Meeting
Riverdale Conference Center
Riverdale, MD
August 17-19, 2004

Tuesday, August 17, 2004

Committee Members in Attendance:

Joel Alderete, New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau
Nina Baucus, Sieban Ranch Company
Jeff Baxter, Baxter Land Company
Regan Beck, Rancher
Clait Braun, Grouse, Inc. (Chair)
Seniora Ann Burdette, Urban Wildlife
Joe Harper, Sheep Producer
Eric Koens, Cattle Industry
Terry Mansfield, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, OSPR
Debra Miller, Veterinary Diagnostic and Investigational Lab, UGA
Bruce Morrison, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
Scott Nelson, Farmer
Ira New Breast, Native American Fish and Wildlife Society
John Ostrom, Aviation Industry
Maurice Shelton, Sheep and Goat Industry
Elizabeth Stallman, The Humane Society of the U.S. (Vice Chair)
Patti Strand, National Animal Interest Alliance
Hugh Warren, Catfish Farmers of America
Mark Zaunbrecher, Sweet Lake Land and Oil Company, Inc

Committee Members Not in Attendance:

Cathy Liss, Animal Welfare Institute

Welcome and Introductions

The National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee (NWSAC) met in the Riverdale Conference Center in Riverdale, MD. The meeting was called to order at 8:00 a.m., on August 17, 2004.

Bill Clay, Deputy Administrator, Wildlife Services (WS), welcomed the group. Mr. Clay then asked each member of the Committee to introduce themselves and give their affiliation and/or what part of the Agriculture community they represented. Following the introductions, Mr. Clay presented each member of the Committee with a Certificate of Appointment.

After the Committee members had received their certificates, Mr. Clay gave an overview of the 3-day agenda. Mr. Clay informed the Committee that Mr. Bill Hawks, Undersecretary of Agriculture had planned to provide opening remarks at this morning's

session, but was unable to attend due to recent weather related events in Florida that required his presence. Mr. Clay expressed his appreciation to the Committee for their attendance. Mr. Clay reminded the Committee of WS expanding role in wildlife disease issues and other human health and public safety initiatives and the economic importance of the WS program in its efforts to reduce losses due to wildlife. He urged the Committee to work together to develop sound focused recommendations to present to the Secretary.

Review and Update of Last NWSAC Meeting Recommendations

Last years NWSAC meeting was conducted in June 2003 in Riverdale, Maryland and produced 13 recommendations for consideration by the Secretary of Agriculture. Martin Mendoza, WS Associate Deputy Administrator, reported to the Committee on the status of last year's Committee recommendations. Each recommendation was briefly reviewed and discussed with the Committee.

WS Program Updates

Mike Worthen, Western Regional Director, Charles Brown, Eastern Regional Director, and Kathleen Fagerstone, Acting Director of the National Wildlife Research Center provided an overview of WS program activities. Discussions of ongoing operational programs included the development of an aviation training facility to promote safe operations of WS aviation activities, increasing efforts to implement wildlife disease programs, and increased hazard abatement programs at the nation's civilian and military airports. NWRC was described as a state-of-the-art facility. Since the last Committee meeting a new research lab has been established in Kingsville, Texas, that focuses on feral pig management and control. Rabies activities, airport safety, and immunocontraceptive research were recurring themes.

Election of the Chair and Vice Chair

Bill Clay reviewed the NWSAC Charter and discussed the roles, duties and processes for voting for a new Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee. He referred the Committee to APHIS Department Regulation 1043-27: Renewal of the National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee. He then asked the members for a motion to elect a Chair and Vice-Chair. By majority vote, Clait Braun and Elizabeth Stallman were elected as Chair and Vice Chair respectively for this year's NWSAC meeting.

Dr. Braun then took control of the meeting and thanked the Committee for his election. His first order of business was to inform the Committee how he proposed to handle the recommendation procedure process. He suggested to the Committee that they make every effort to limit the number of recommendations to very specific issues. He viewed his responsibility to keep the Committee focused on developing germane succinct recommendations. He then asked each Committee member to identify any concerns, issues, recommendations, or topics that they wished to have addressed over the next 3 days.

Committee discussion topics covered a wide range of issues from predation control for livestock to the consideration of an increased presence by WS in urban wildlife damage issues. Much discussion focused on the budgetary needs of the WS program and what

efforts the committee could make to voice support for increased budget initiatives. The issue of increased training for WS field personnel was raised and the need for the Agriculture community as a whole to “educate” the public on wildlife damage issues and their impact on agricultural production. Support was voiced for continued WS efforts in research to refine wildlife contraceptives and to continue the development of repellants and chemicals as viable management tools to control wildlife damage. Following this discussion, all topics were previewed by the Chairman and grouped into similar categories for ease of discussion. Each member was asked to continue these discussions among themselves and return on Wednesday with recommendations that can be presented to the Committee as a whole.

A motion was made to adjourn for the day. The Committee will reconvene at 8:00 a.m., on Wednesday, August 18, 2004.

Wednesday, August 18, 2004

Discussion of Recommendations

Prior to the discussion of individual recommendations, Dr. Braun advised the group that he would prefer to have Committee consensus on a recommendation. If consensus could not be achieved, then the Committee would be asked to vote on the recommendation. He again stated the importance of keeping the number of recommendations at a manageable level and that recommendations should be concise and focused.

Recommendations developed for consideration by the Secretary are as follows (Vote count is shown as Yes, No, Abstain. Vote total is 19, however on several occasions all members of the committee were not present during the voting):

1. The Committee recommends the Secretary seek an increase in funds allocated by Congress for protection of rice crops from blackbirds in Louisiana including adjustments for inflation and increasing resource needs.

The House of Representatives has recommended continued funding of work to protect rice from blackbirds in Louisiana in 2005, although at a reduced amount (\$125,000 or a \$25,000 reduction) which will decrease the services that WS performs. Estimated cost = \$333,000 for field operations.

Y (17) N (0) A (2)

2. The Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture seek \$560,000 in additional annual funding for the NWRC to expedite research to develop and register repellents, lethal and non-lethal management techniques for protecting rice, and to continue support for operational baiting.

Y (18) N (0) A (1)

3. The Committee recommends the Secretary seek additional funding to comply with NEPA requirements.

Y (16) N (0) A (3)

4. The Committee recommends the Secretary fund the vacant Minnesota Wildlife Services State office in the Twin Cities area.

Y (18) N (0) A (1)

5. The Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture work with the Secretary of the Interior to develop a cooperative arrangement between Wildlife Services and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to issue Migratory Bird depredation permits in a timely manner.

Y (19) N (0) A (0)

6. The Committee recommends the Secretary seek new project funding of \$250,000 for the NWRC for research to develop an avicide specific to blackbirds and starlings that would allow increased protection for crops, feedlots, dairy and human health.

Y (18) N (0) A (1)

7. The Committee recommends the Secretary coordinate with the Secretaries of Interior, Homeland Security, Health and Human Services, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and appropriate state, tribal, and territorial agencies to expand and continue implementation of a state driven, federally supported, scientifically sound wildlife disease program

This program would include research, surveillance, monitoring, management and disposal techniques (including laboratory waste and waste water treatment, and disposal processes) and activities. This includes continued expansion of the wildlife disease biologist program to station a minimum of one biologist per State and U.S. Territory

Y (19) N (0) A (0)

8. The Committee recommends the Secretary support new funding for wildlife rabies vaccination programs for control and elimination of raccoon, fox, and coyote rabies, and to seek new funding for the development and implementation of the skunk, mongoose, and bat rabies vaccination programs.

Y (19) N (0) A (0)

9. The Committee recommends the Secretary work with the Secretaries of Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Interior, and appropriate state, tribal, and territorial agencies to identify and implement needed controls and/or restrictions on importation and interstate movement of exotic and wild animals, and domestic pets to safeguard humans, livestock, and native wildlife from exotic, emerging, and resurging infectious wildlife diseases and parasites.

Y (19) N (0) A (0)

10. The Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture seek adequate additional funding to ensure that WS is able to meet the Federal mandate for converting to narrow band radio spectrum.

Y (19) N (0) A (0)

11. The Committee recommends the Secretary seek new funding for Wildlife Services to increase research concerning feral pigs, including, but not limited to, identifying property and ecological damage, expanding distribution, associated disease risks, and development of control methods (especially contraception research).

Y (19) N (0) A (0)

12. The Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture provide additional funding to adequately support the Aviation Training Center. The Committee commends WS on establishment of the Aviation Training Center.

Y (18) N (0) A (1)

13. The Committee recommends the Secretary reaffirm protection of livestock and agriculture as a high priority for Wildlife Services and seek additional new funds for their protection without reduction of any present funding.

Y (18) N (0) A (1)

A motion was made to adjourn and reconvene at 8 a.m. on Thursday, August 19.

Thursday, August 19, 2004

Prior to continuing yesterday's recommendation discussion and voting, Dr. Braun asked the Committee to consider the location and time for next year's meeting. It was decided by the Committee that next year's session should be held at the National Wildlife Research Center sometime in early to mid June. WS staff agreed to begin preliminary planning for that place and time.

The Committee then continued its discussion and development of recommended actions:

14. The Committee recommends the Secretary, in cooperation with the Secretary of the Interior, seek additional funding and/or new funding for support of Wildlife Services to resolve increasing conflicts involving humans, livestock, and other domestic animals resulting from restored and expanding wolf populations.

Y (18) N (0) A (1)

15. The Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture encourage Wildlife Services to collaborate on solutions to wildlife damage in urban settings with national, regional, state and local governmental entities, and private organizations, especially the

U.S. Conference of Mayors, The National Association of Counties, and the National League of Cities with the objective to develop an urban Wildlife Damage Management Business Plan.

This plan would define objectives, a general action plan, and projected staffing needs and budget to conduct wildlife damage management programs of differing complexity within differing size cities, towns, counties, or other defined urban environments.

Parts of the initial collaboration should be directed at identifying and prioritizing wildlife damage issues in urban environments and scoping for funding schemes which could be facilitated through cost sharing with the Federal Government through congressionally directed appropriations or other funding mechanisms.

Y (17) N (1) A (0)

16. The Committee recommends the Secretary maintain full funding in FY05 to support the NWRC.

Y (17) N (0) A (1)

17. The Committee recommends the Secretary assess and update APHIS Directive 1040.1 dated 9-8-95, "Relationships with Native Americans and Tribal Governments", especially as related to wildlife issues.

Y (17) N (1) A (0)

18. The Committee further reiterates and recommends the Secretary support additional funding to fully implement Wildlife Services' MIS 2000 project as soon as practical.

Y (16) N (0) A (1)

19. The Committee recommends the Secretary enter into discussions with the Department of Transportation, specifically the Federal Aviation Administration, to seek adequate funding to manage wildlife hazards at airports. Further the Committee recommends the Secretary cooperate with the Secretary of Transportation to seek legislative approval to establish a "user fee" to be applied to each commercial airline ticket to provide funding for Wildlife Services wildlife hazard management activities at airports.

Y (17) N (0) A (0)

20. The Committee recommends to the Secretary that Wildlife Services along with the Federal Aviation Administration take a leadership role in aviation safety/wildlife management issues and encourage them to continue to actively support industry working groups such as the Bird Strike Committee-USA in an effort to develop collaborative solutions to the aircraft/wildlife strike problem.

Y (16) N (0) A (1)

21. The Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture coordinate with the Secretary of Health and Human Services to increase awareness and discuss funding mechanisms for WS disease activities that affect public health

Y (15) N (0) A (2)

22. The Committee recommends the Secretary request new funds to improve the comprehensive communications plan to specifically inform the public using all media, of the importance of American Agriculture and the adverse economic impact of wildlife damage, wildlife effects on public health and safety, an urbanization (with related wildlife issues).

Y (8) N (8) A (1) – **This recommendation failed**

In addition to the above recommendations, the Committee voted unanimously to commend WS efforts in developing and implementing employee training in the face of growing challenges. Further the Committee encourages the promotion of traditional and innovative training programs, especially in the implementation of changing and emerging techniques.

Prior to concluding the discussion of the recommendations and the recommendation development process, committee member Elizabeth Stallman led a discussion on the distinctions between policy and operations when determining the content and validity of Committee recommendations. She asked for a review of the Committee Charter to ensure consistency in the application of Committee actions from year to year, to ensure that limitations on the scope and number of recommendations would be done according to objective criteria, and to ensure fair consideration of recommendations by all stakeholders represented on the NWSAC. It was decided by the Committee that WS staff would provide the Committee copies of Committee recommendations from the previous 2 years so that committee members would have the opportunity to review previous actions prior to developing current year recommendations.

Administrative Issues

During yesterday's session, Cathy Timms, Travel Management Specialist gave a briefing to the Committee members on how to complete their travel vouchers for reimbursement. At the conclusion of today's session, Terry Hall of the APHIS Policy and Program Development office gave the Committee a brief explanation of the Federal Advisory Committee Act and associated federal budgetary procedures.

At the conclusion of the official business of the Committee, the Committee requested that Dr. Fagerstone, give a brief update on wildlife contraception research studies currently underway at the NWRC. Dr. Fagerstone complied with a presentation that reviewed existing research studies and preliminary findings.

Dr. Braun adjourned the Committee at noon, August 19, 2004