

NATIONAL WILDLIFE SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (NWSAC) MEETING
 Summary/Decision Document
 June 19-20, 2007

RECOMMENDATION	TARGET	DECISION
<p>1. The National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee (NWSAC) recommends the Secretary of Agriculture support the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wildlife Services (WS) future budget initiatives and mandates without redirection of existing resources.</p>	<p>1. Ongoing</p>	<p>1. The Department recognizes the importance of WS activities in preventing damage to agriculture resources, as well as to natural resources, private property, and human health and safety. However, the Department must prioritize initiatives and program activities consistent with the President's management agenda and balanced budget priorities.</p>
<p>2. The NWSAC recommends to the Secretary of Agriculture that due to the current limitation of only one USDA-approved oral rabies vaccine (ORV) for wildlife use, WS investigate and research be expedited on ORV's that are currently approved by Canada and/or the European Union, to make some of these ORV options available to the WS Rabies Management Program to enhance and improve rabies management.</p>	<p>2. Ongoing</p>	<p>2. The Department concurs with this recommendation.</p>
<p>3. The NWSAC recommends to the Secretary of Agriculture, that APHIS establish a separate funding path for WS facility security. The purpose of which is to maintain traditional WS responsibilities, functions and research independent of and without infringement by security funding requirements.</p>	<p>3. Ongoing</p>	<p>3. The Department recognizes the importance on securing APHIS facilities to minimize the threat to employees, the local community, and the environment from outside groups. APHIS personnel will continue to work with Department officials to provide appropriate levels of facility and personnel security.</p>
<p>4. The NWSAC recognizes aerial operations as an integral tool of wildlife damage management, including but not limited to aerial hunting activities. Therefore, the Committee recommends aerial hunting activities be continued as an essential tool in wildlife damage management.</p>	<p>4. Ongoing</p>	<p>4. The Department concurs. WS aerial operations will continue to be available to WS personnel as part of its integrated wildlife damage management approach to resolve human/wildlife conflicts.</p>
<p>5. The NWSAC recommends the Secretary of Agriculture support WS plans and initiatives to provided needed increases in research staff to develop sampling and diagnostic methods for wildlife disease surveillance by the National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC).</p>	<p>5. Ongoing</p>	<p>5. WS established a Wildlife Disease Research and diagnostics program in 2003. In FY 2008, WS received approximately \$497,000 to investigate the interaction between feral swine and the AI virus. For FY 2009, APHIS requested an increase of \$1.481 to continue to assess the interaction between feral swine and avian influenza. In addition, WS plans to conduct ground breaking ceremonies for a 25,000 sq ft BSL 3 laboratory and diagnostics facility in FY 2009. These capabilities will allow WS to better address disease risks and implement control measures at the wildlife-agricultural interface.</p>

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<p>6. The NWSAC recommends the Secretary of Agriculture seek sustained funding in the President's annual budget requests to Congress to support the APHIS, WS, Wildlife Disease Surveillance, Monitoring, Emergency Response and Research Program. This Program should include two wildlife disease biologists per state and U.S. territory, and support collaboration of the WS, NWRC with the National Animal Health Laboratory Network and appropriate state, territorial and tribal agencies.</p>	<p>6. Ongoing</p>	<p>6. The Department supports the development of an Interagency Wildlife Disease Strategy for the United States. Currently, the Wildlife Disease and Emergency Response System (SERS) consists of 45 wildlife disease biologists (23 of which were added in FY 2007), a National Coordinator, Assistant Coordinators, and support staff. As additional funds become available, the SERS program will be increased to 100 wildlife disease biologists, including an expansion of the border surveillance system along the Canadian border and major ports of entry.</p>
<p>7. The NWSAC recommends the Secretary of Agriculture seek \$7.4 million for WS (\$2.8 million for Operation and \$4.6 million for Methods Development) in the President's FY 2009 budget to replace money lost from unfunded directives and to fulfill mandated avian influenza research and disease associated with feral swine. Redirection of funding is not possible for future years and sustained annual funding to adequately maintain these programs must be identified. [The Operations line lost \$2.8 million in FY 2007 from unfunded earmarks previously used to support various human-wildlife conflict concerns. As well, in FY 2007 the Methods Development line lost \$1.4 million in unfunded earmarks used to support the Berryman Institute and graduate research studies at the Texas, Utah, and Mississippi field stations. FY 2008 President's budget redirects and additional \$3.2 million in the Methods Development line to fulfill mandated avian influenza research and diseases associated with feral swine.]</p>	<p>7. FY 2008</p>	<p>7. The Department recognizes the importance of sustained funding for WS operational and methods development activities and supports these activities within the Administration's budget priorities for FY 2009.</p>
<p>8. The NWSAC recommends the Secretary of Agriculture seek sustained funding from the President's annual budget requests to Congress for the APHIS, WS, NWRC to expand contraceptive research, especially for predator control/management, the use of field trials to aid in cost/benefit analysis of the technique, and encourage implementation of these methods as appropriate.</p>	<p>8. Ongoing</p>	<p>8. WS scientists have spent several years studying the relationship of coyote populations to livestock depredation management. Most recently, immunocontraceptive vaccines such as GnRH and PZP have also been tested. WS will continue the evaluation and use of reproductive intervention techniques as appropriate. The Department supports funding for these activities but must prioritize initiatives and program activities consistent with the President's management agenda and balanced budget priorities.</p>

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<p>9. The NWSAC recommends the Secretary of Agriculture conduct an inventory of the number and specific types of traps currently in its possession. The Committee further recommends a goal of WS to have a trap monitor on every trap, where such use is practical and appropriate.</p>	<p>9. Ongoing</p>	<p>9. In FY 2008, WS inventoried 42,821 foothold traps, 18,360 body gripping traps, and 13,156 cage/culvert traps. The Department concurs with this recommendation on trap monitors.</p>
<p>10. The NWSAC recommends the Secretary of Agriculture cooperate with appropriate federal, state, tribal, private, and non-governmental organizations and agencies to jointly fund and implement the “Initiative for a Health Fish and Wildlife Resource for the United States.”</p>	<p>10. Ongoing</p>	<p>10. The Department recognizes the need to develop an interagency wildlife disease management strategy for the United States and looks forward to being an active partner in implementation of the National Fish and Wildlife Health Initiative through participation in an established interagency steering committee. The Department further supports the initiative through an integration of the WS’ SERS that can serve as a valuable constituent and a critical component of the Initiative. This agency activity currently assists state, tribal, university, and other federal programs in monitoring wildlife health and responding to emergency disease outbreaks.</p>
<p>11. The NWSAC recommends the Secretary of Agriculture, through the NWRC, evaluate the feasibility of developing a cost effective model to accurately estimate coyote populations. If such evaluation proves that a model can be developed, the Committee further recommends that NWRC seek new funding to complete this project.</p>	<p>11. Ongoing</p>	<p>11. WS has evaluated the feasibility of developing models to estimate/index coyote populations and a number of techniques and models have been discussed and evaluated over the years. In 1999 – 2000, a WS scientist developed a computer model (SWARM) that integrates coyote population processes with livestock depredation. Between 2000 and 2003, WS scientists published several articles on the use of the SWARM modeling software system to compare the efficacy of livestock damage mitigation approaches on territorial coyote population. These assessments have all indicted that while no single model fits all coyote population estimation situations, there are a number of techniques and models that have been discussed, evaluated, and published over the years that can fit particular situations. WS will continue to apply these models as appropriate.</p>
<p>12. The NWRC recommends the Secretary of Agriculture recognize and support the completion of a Memorandum of Understanding between USDA, APHIS, WS and the National Pest Management Association.</p>	<p>12. FY 2008</p>	<p>12. The Department concurs with this recommendation. The MOU will be finalized this fiscal year.</p>

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<p>13. The NWSAC recommends to the Secretary of Agriculture that as funds become available, a WS qualified airport wildlife biologist position be established in every state to provide consultation and assistance to the FAA with the evaluation of airport wildlife hazard management plans.</p>	<p>13. Ongoing</p>	<p>13. The Department concurs with this recommendation and supports this activity. However, the Department must prioritize initiatives and program activities consistent with the President's management agenda and balanced budget priorities.</p>
<p>14. The NWSAC recommends to the Secretary of Agriculture that APHIS, WS develops the sustainable capacity to address human/wildlife conflicts including livestock depredation associated with expanding populations of wolves and grizzly bears.</p>	<p>14. Ongoing</p>	<p>14. The Department concurs with this recommendation. The Department will continue to provide necessary resources to address the human/wildlife conflicts. However, the Department must prioritize initiatives and program activities consistent with the President's management agenda and balanced budget priorities.</p>
<p>15. The NWSAC recommends to the Secretary of Agriculture that the agency research and evaluate the technology of remote unmanned aerial vehicles, along with emerging detection and surveillance technologies, for use as a wildlife damage management tool for WS, recognizing that manned aerial operations are, and will continue to be, an integral tool for WS operations.</p>	<p>15. Done</p>	<p>15. WS has evaluated the feasibility of the types and use of remote unmanned aerial vehicles, associated costs, and expertise required. While emerging detection and surveillance technologies in unmanned aerial vehicles have improved significantly and could eventually be employed for use as a wildlife damage management tool, there are several issues that do not make this recommendation feasible at this time. The biggest issue is the FAA is currently re-evaluating regulation of these types of operations and will establish new guidelines. There is no timeline for when this evaluation will be completed. While the initial purchase cost of these platforms is relatively inexpensive, the second is the cost of additional resources and requirements needed to maintain and operate these systems is significant. In addition, a Certificate of Authorization (COA) must be applied for and received from the FAA in order to fly in non-restricted airspace. Currently, this COA must be renewed annually. Due to these concerns, and the unknowns surrounding outcome of the FAA evaluation, the Department recommends this issue be revisited once the FAA completes their study and establishes specific guidelines and requirements.</p>