

**National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee Meeting**

USDA Center at Riverside  
Oklahoma City Memorial Conference Center  
4700 River Road  
Riverdale, MD 20737

**Tuesday, August 5, 2008**

Committee Members in Attendance:

Ms. Nina C. Baucus; American Sheep Industry Association, Inc.  
Dr. Scott Bender; The Navajo Nation, Arizona  
Ms. Karen Elaine “Maggie” Brasted; The Humane Society of the United States  
Dr. Clait E. Braun; The Ornithological Council, The Wildlife Society (Chair)  
Mr. Howard B. Dew; Oregon Forest Industries Council  
Mr. Michael T. Freeze; National Aquaculture Association  
Mr. Robert E. Frost; U. S. Animal Health Association (Vice Chair)  
Mr. Bryce R. Reece; Wyoming Wool Growers Association; American Sheep Industry Association, Inc.  
Ms. Andrea L. Reed; Animal Welfare Institute  
Dr. Robert Howard Schmidt; Utah State University  
Dr. Stephen M. Schmitt; Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies; American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians  
Dr. J. Maurice Shelton; Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers’ Association; American Sheep Industry Association, Inc.  
Mr. Scott W. Steckel; National Pest Management Association  
Ms. Patti L. Strand; National Animal Interest Alliance  
Mr. Dan Wiltse; National Sunflower Association

Committee Members not in Attendance:

Mr. Joel A. Alderete; New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau  
Mrs. Chantel R. Depp; Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Mr. Mathew J. Hogan; Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies  
Mr. John E. Ostrom; Metropolitan Airports Commission  
Mr. Richard D. Turner; National Association of State Aviation Officials

Welcome and Introductions – Bill Clay

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 a.m. by Wildlife Services (WS) Deputy Administrator Bill Clay. The WS Management Team and staff personnel were introduced. Under Secretary of Marketing and Regulatory Programs Bruce Knight and APHIS Administrator Cindy Smith were welcomed. It was noted that five Committee members were unable to attend, but that a quorum was present. The National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee (NWSAC) members introduced themselves and their representation.

### Opening Remarks – Under Secretary Bruce Knight

Under Secretary Knight complemented WS commitment to working with the advisory committee and spoke about the incredibly important role of the committee in providing a balanced perspective to wildlife management issues. He acknowledged the difficulty in finding non-lethal and lethal means to address conflicts at the wildlife/human/livestock interface while still upholding society's values and beliefs. The Under Secretary charged the committee to be bold in the advice they provide and pragmatic in their expectations.

### Administrator's Remarks – Administrator Cindy Smith

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Administrator acknowledged the critical role of the NWSAC and the importance of the committee's recommendations to APHIS/WS and our stakeholders. She then brought the committee up to date on WS activities since the last NWSAC meeting. The WS programmatic safety review was emphasized and referred to as a model for the rest of APHIS. The WS International Capacity Building Plan, the WS role in the North American Rabies Management Plan, and WS increasing role in the wildlife disease arena were briefly discussed.

### Certificates of Appointment

Under Secretary Knight and APHIS Administrator Smith presented the NWSAC members with their certificates of appointment.

### UC Davis' Western Institute for Food Safety and Security Thanks WS

NWSAC member Bob Frost, in behalf of UC Davis and the Western Institute of Food Safety and Security (WIFSS), thanked the leadership of APHIS WS for being "Public Health's Ultimate Long-term Partner". WS was the only "boots in the field" agency willing to work with WIFSS in the 2006 California E. coli 0157:H7 leafy green outbreak. WS expertise in trapping feral pigs enabled the scientists to culture E. coli and found 15% of the pigs to be carrying the pathogen. This partnership exemplifies the important role WS plays in the wildlife, livestock, plant and human health interface in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America. The outbreak was linked to consumption of fresh, bagged baby spinach, with 26 states and Canada reporting 205 cases of illness and 3 deaths.

### Deputy Administrator's Remarks

Bill Clay provided an overview of the WS organizational structure, history, and national program priorities. WS partnerships and cooperation with other agencies and organizations and WS emergency response capability were highlighted. Background information on the WS programmatic safety review was provided, and Bill explained how the review was conducted along with the very positive nature of the general review results. Several of the major review recommendations were brought up to the committee and what WS is doing to implement them. The recent hiring of the National Aviation Coordinator and the review finding that "the WS explosives safety program could serve as a model for other agencies" were cited as examples of how WS is meeting the safety needs of its employees. Important WS initiatives were discussed including development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the National Pest Management Association, the expansion of invasive species and wildlife disease work, emergency management response, and international capacity building.

### Regional Updates

Western Regional Director Jeff Green provided a state-by-state summary of current WS activities in the West and emphasized the importance of cooperation with the States and constituent groups. Eastern Regional Director Charles Brown presented an overview of important Eastern Region activities. National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) Director Larry Clark gave a summary of NWRC role, organizational structure, and research priorities.

### Rabies Program Update

Rich Chipman, WS Assistant Rabies Coordinator, spoke on the success and challenges in wildlife rabies management in the United States. A brief history of WS involvement in wildlife rabies control and accomplishments was presented along with an overview of the North American Rabies Plan.

### 2007 NWSAC Recommendations

Last year's NWSAC meeting was held June 19-20, 2007 in Logan, Utah. Associate Deputy Administrator Martin Mendoza presented the 15 recommendations from last year's meeting along with the corresponding Agency decisions. The WS Management Team addressed questions and concerns about the results of the 2007 meeting.

### Review of Charter and Rules of Order

Bill Clay discussed the committee's structure, terms of appointment, meetings, and USDA Departmental Regulation 1043-27 dated November 13, 2007, which reestablishes the NWSAC and serves as its charter. Bill asked the committee to adopt Robert's Rules of Order or similar rules for conducting business. The committee was cautioned about making too many recommendations citing a maximum of 20 recommendations as a good target. The committee was advised that once a Chair and Vice Chair are elected, the Chair will assume control of the meeting and decide what agenda items to address. WS personnel will not be involved in the meeting from that point on, but will observe and be available to provide guidance and technical information, answer questions and provide administrative assistance.

The next order of business was to elect a Chairman and Vice Chairman to serve the next 2 years. Clait Braun expressed interest in serving as committee Chairman, was nominated by Robert Frost, and was elected without opposition. Robert Frost was nominated for Vice Chairman and unanimously elected. With the election of the committee leadership, WS turned the meeting over to Dr. Braun along with a list of issues for the committee to consider. Dr. Braun offered suggestions on how the committee will operate.

### Discussion of Agenda Topics

Robert's Rules of Order were adopted by the committee. A motion was made by Robert Schmidt and seconded by Patti Strand not to allow proxy votes. The motion carried, and proxy votes will not be allowed.

The committee Chair asked the membership to provide their top three issues for discussion as a precursor to developing recommendations for the Secretary's consideration. The committee members presented between 0 and 4 issues each. Thirty-eight (38) issues were presented and briefly discussed by the committee:

Scott Steckel

1. No issues to bring forth as a recommendation, but did request a clarification of WS' interpretation of the term "urban rodent".

Robert Schmidt

1. Research done by WS is not being incorporated by WS. Brought up lack of 24 hour trap check throughout all states, whether state law or not, and inquired about what WS doing to try to minimize pain and suffering of trapped animals?
2. Most members were committed to a constituency and thought at least one NWSAC member should be invited to attend every WS State conference so that member could bring issues back to the group.
3. Serious concern about what WS is doing about work force diversity, hiring women and minorities in operations, particularly in the west.

Andrea Reed

1. Requested clarification on WS progress in implementing elements stated in the 1997 Letter of Understanding with the European Union to end leghold trap use. Additionally, asked if all leghold traps utilized by WS meet Best Management Practices (BMP) standards.
2. How is information being transferred to the field personnel on nonlethal methods, as well as innovative approaches and uses, and how is WS ensuring field personnel use that information?
3. Extreme weather events – What is WS doing regarding emergency preparedness (cooperation with NOAA, FEMA, National Weather Service and what WS is doing with traps and baits in the field during emergency weather events)?

Bryce Reece

1. Continued erosion of funding for WS core mission: Will be bringing back recommendation #1 from 2007 recommendations for review and possible revision by the Committee.
2. Livestock Guarding Animals – Livestock producers have adopted and adapted the use of livestock guarding animals as part of their predation management practices since WS first brought the technology to them more than 25 years ago. Currently, there is no recognized source of expertise and educational and technical resource that producers can utilize. WS should employ one livestock guard animal specialist in each Region to help producers learn how to continue to use/manage/adopt/adapt this technology.

Maggie Brasted

1. To what degree are research results used in the field?

2. Impacts on birds from WS activities – does WS have a national plan on blackbirds, waterfowl, robins, all birds?
3. Consider transparency of WS program to the public. Felt that WS may be too close to its constituency base and not well known to the general public, thus more people need to know what services WS provides.

Howard Dew

1. General funding.
2. All things on last year's list of NWSAC issues.
3. Black bear damage – tree peeling. Evaluate the early spring bear feeding program in OR. What are the implications?
4. Elk transplant program – study feasibility. Oregon elk populations are increasing in places they have never been before.

Dan Wiltse

1. Funding – assessing costs and priorities.
2. Federal funding should be maintained for sunflower/blackbird issues in ND and SD.
3. WS cooperation with all agencies at all levels. (See 2007 NWSAC recommendation #10). Stress cooperative funding.

Pattie Strand

1. Re-emphasized previous recommendation from Bryce Reece on need for livestock guard dogs and guard dog specialists.
2. Expressed need to prioritize last year's funding proposals.

Steve Schmitt

1. Support future avian influenza (AI) funding (includes pass-down to State agencies with no strings attached).
2. Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) – recommend WS to continue work in Michigan. Continue funding for disease work. WS is only entity working with the wildlife/livestock interface.
3. Support TB research to develop a vaccine, preferably oral. Stated prior vaccine research conducted in Iowa should be continued.

Maurice Shelton

1. Support livestock (industry assistance). Provide needed funding.
2. Continue to enhance research for new tool development (for predation management).
3. Exercise care in taking on new initiatives (weakens traditional core area effectiveness).

Mike Freeze

1. Funding – increase funding for WS operations.
2. Birds – Relative to double-crested cormorant (DCC) Depredation Orders 21.47 and 21.48 that expire in 2009, request the Secretary of Interior to reveal: a revised

EIS (will it be done?), if the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) will support international DCC management, and what WS role will be.

Robert Frost

1. Back up the Bio-security Level 3 facility at the WS National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) in Ft. Collins, Colorado.

Scott Bender

1. Request that aerial operations be conducted on tribal lands for predator management where tribal subsistence hunting is conducted
2. Research (same as Recommendation #2 last year).
3. Support international capacity building.
4. AI funding routed to APHIS Veterinary Services (VS) – wants to ensure that WS work will not be left out.

Nina Baucus

1. Concerned that WS may be spreading itself too thin. More thought needed on prioritizing projects, as well as concern about duplicating work done by VS and USFWS.
2. Funding – recommend APHIS elevate work conducted by VS and WS; where VS is getting funding for work duplicated by WS, WS should get the funding, not VS.
3. Wants WS to develop a sustainable plan for dealing with wolf predation.

Clait Braun

1. Airport safety – Believes that wildlife on airports is too abundant and wants continued or expanded support for airport safety.
2. Feral swine.
3. Invasive species.

Chairman Braun charged the committee membership with converting their respective recommendations into one or two sentences before the meeting resumes tomorrow morning. The committee will discuss each recommendation and then vote on which to forward to the Secretary of Agriculture.

Meeting adjourned for the day at 5:00 PM.

**Wednesday, August 6, 2008**

The meeting was re-adjourned at 8:00 AM.

The committee discussed, combined, and withdrew some of the initial recommendations. Subgroups were formed to draft language for the final recommendations. This work was performed throughout the day, with committee members charged with reading all drafted

recommendations at night to prepare themselves for final discussions and voting slated for the following morning.

The day's session was adjourned at 5:00 PM

**Thursday, August 7, 2008**

Recommendations developed by the Committee for consideration by the Secretary are as follows. The Committee vote is shown as Y (yes), N (no), or A (abstain). Background information was provided by the Committee member submitting the recommendation.

***Recommendation 1.*** The National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture confer with the Secretary of the Interior to obtain any proposed plans for revised National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents on the management of double-crested cormorants, the issuance of new depredation orders or extensions of existing orders, the endorsement of international management of double-crested cormorants and Wildlife Services role in these plans.

Approved:    Y (15)            N (0)            A (0)

Background: The double-crested cormorant depredation orders 21.47 and 21.48 were issued in 2003 based on an earlier Environmental Impact Statement. These orders are set to expire on April 30, 2009.

***Recommendation 2.*** The National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee recommends to the Secretary of Agriculture that Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 wild bird surveillance funding remain sufficient to maintain the early detection activities and capabilities of Wildlife Services and State, Tribal cooperators.

Approved:    Y (14)            N (0)            A (1)

Background: The USDA/APHIS/WS HPAI- H5N1 and VS Low Path Avian Influenza funding line items were combined and there is concern that monies may be reduced for WS and state wildlife agency surveillance activities. This agency line item blending could potentially result in an unfunded WS mandate(s) or even loss of early HPAI H5N1 detection capability.

***Recommendation 3.*** The National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee recommends to the Secretary of Agriculture that Wildlife Services (WS) unique expertise in international capacity building in behalf of the United States Department of Agriculture continue to be considered a critical outreach responsibility of WS.

Approved: Y (14) N (1) A (0)

Background: WS is one of the best received USDA programs “public relation” outreach programs recognized by many Nations of the world. The critical resources and positive interactions provided by WS to the international community, particularly in the areas of wildlife rabies management and avian influenza surveillance not only reflect positively on USDA but also provide an invaluable resource for both WS and other USDA programs. In addition this capacity building can offer an additional protection to the United States through early interdiction beyond our borders with our international partners. Further, with increasing travel funding restrictions occurring, a priority system should be considered for personnel that have the greatest area expertise and capacity building abilities with WS international partners to maintain a minimal level of travel resources to support this capacity.

**Recommendation 4.** The National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee (NWSAC) recommends the Secretary of Agriculture continue to expedite Wildlife Services (WS) investigation, research and field trials of oral rabies vaccines (ORVs) that are currently approved by Canada and/or the European Union. NWSAC further recommends the Secretary assist making these ORV options available in a timely manner to the WS Rabies Management Program to enhance and improve rabies management and emergency response.

Approved: Y (15) N (0) A (0)

Background: There continues to be only one supplier and one approved ORV available to the WS rabies management program for wildlife rabies control. The current vaccine is less than optimal for many of the rabies reservoir species that WS must vaccinate to eradicate terrestrial rabies and the need for additional oral rabies vaccines is critical to the success of the program. Additionally, the lack of other ORV providers (competitors) to the sole provider of the current ORV to the WS rabies management program continues to stymie overall ORV development, improvements and cost containment. Due to the dynamic unpredictable nature of rabies management, the development of a strategic ORV stockpile to address unanticipated rabies emergencies would help to both provide a rapid response capacity and may lessen the need for supplemental emergency funding requests when these outbreaks occur.

**Recommendation 5.** The National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee recommends to the Secretary of Agriculture that Wildlife Services make their expertise available to First Nations, Alaskan and other Native communities for the protection of traditional cultural and subsistence agriculture, livestock and wildlife food resources, including wolf management.

Approved: Y (9) N (6) A (0)

Background: Many Native American communities, due to vast distances, rough topography, and limited economic resources are critically dependent upon subsistence

agriculture, livestock production and wildlife harvest to provide basic food needs. These practices are deeply ingrained in the cultural fabric of these communities. Often, minimal losses to these critical resources may have a dramatic negative economic, community and cultural impact. WS unique expertise in aerial hunting, as one of many wildlife damage management techniques, would provide a valuable management tool within the overall management and protection of these critical economic and cultural resources.

**Recommendation 6.** The National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture place in the President’s budget funding at current levels to sustain research directed toward methodologies of disease control and population reduction of feral swine.

Approved:    Y (12)            N (0)            A (3)

Background: Feral swine carry diseases that can negatively impact livestock including pseudorabies and swine brucellosis. Feral swine abundance and distribution are also increasing in many states. These increasing populations have been implicated in contamination of vegetable crops with *E. coli*.

**Recommendation 7.** The National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee recommends that the Secretary of Agriculture seek new Federal funding for additional coordinators for airport safety.

Approved:    Y (15)            N (0)            A (0)

Background: Airport safety is a national issue as wildlife species can be attracted to open spaces at airports. Collisions of aircraft with a variety of wild animals attracted to these open spaces have been demonstrated to negatively affect human health and safety (fatalities, injuries). There is a need to fill staff regional coordinator positions for airport safety.

**Recommendation 8.** The National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee requests the Secretary of Agriculture reaffirm support for sustained funding for research and management efforts to prevent establishment of, reduce, and where possible, to eliminate injurious, vertebrate invasive species that negatively impact wildlife, aquaculture, agriculture, forestry and human health.

Approved:    Y (13)            N (2)            A (0)

Background: Invasive species of wildlife have been demonstrated to negatively affect livestock and agricultural producers as many invasive species have no natural predators in their newly colonized habitats. Further, human health has also been negatively impacted by some invasive species.

**Recommendation 9.** The National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture seek new funds to continue and enhance Wildlife Services

research program to develop new tools and methodologies to limit adverse effects of increasing populations of depredating wildlife species on aquaculture, agriculture, forestry and human health.

Approved: Y (14) N (1) A (0)

Background: Effective management of wildlife populations depredating on livestock and agricultural production is contingent upon continued research to develop new and improved, cost effective, methods to manage specific wildlife species.

**Recommendation 10.** The National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture seek new funding to support the replacement of 25% of all traps not meeting the BMP standards each of the next four years to expeditiously achieve the goals of the BMP: animal welfare, efficiency, selectivity, practicality, and safety.

Approved: Y (11) N (4) A (0)

Background: Federal funds are currently being used to develop Best Management Practices and Wildlife Services has expressed its desire to replace noncompliant traps as soon as possible.

**Recommendation 11.** The National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee (NWSAC) recommends the Secretary of Agriculture clearly define the missions of the United States Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services (WS) and Veterinary Services (VS) regarding wildlife, domestic animal, human conflict and disease protocol. NWSAC recommends the Secretary of Agriculture adopt realistic divisions of budgetary line items and eliminate shared budgetary line items for WS and VS.

Defeated: Y (4) N (6) A (5)

**Recommendation 12.** The National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee recommends to the Secretary of Agriculture that Wildlife Services identify new initiatives and continue current initiatives to increase the proportion of women and minorities in Operations, and develop a time line for this effort.

Defeated: Y (3) N (12) A (0)

**Recommendation 13.** The National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture request Wildlife Services to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the extent to which research results from the National Wildlife Research Center that are implemented by field personnel in both the delivery of technical assistance and direct control services.

Defeated: Y (3) N (11) A (1)

**Recommendation 14.** The National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee recommends to the Secretary that State Directors require their field staff to check all traps and trapping devices as frequently as possible, and no less frequently than required by law, with live-capture devices being checked within a 24-hour period whenever practical.

Defeated: Y (3) N (12) A (0)

**Recommendation 15.** The National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee (NWSAC) recommends the Secretary of Agriculture direct Wildlife Services (WS) to prioritize goals and operations used to control wildlife depredation of aquaculture, agriculture, forestry and safeguarding public health and safety. NWSAC further recommends the Secretary support future budget initiatives and mandates for WS without redirection of existing resources and vigorously resist any attempts to reduce the agency’s budget recommendations or force redirections which do not contain new funding.

Approved: Y (10) N (2) A (3)

Background: Under Secretary Bruce Knight, in his remarks to the NWSAC in both 2007 and 2008, emphasized the importance of the advisory committee’s role in assisting the agency in anticipating the future needs of the public and industry. The NWSAC is concerned by the continual erosion of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, WS budget for its core and basic areas of emphasis, namely operations, methods and aquaculture. WS has increased responsibilities during its tenure with USDA and especially within the last few years without appropriate annual budget increases. The future will demand additional manpower, resources and infrastructure to enable WS to fulfill its role. WS needs a budget that will alleviate the “rob Peter to pay Paul” syndrome. NWSAC has spent a great deal of time recommending to the Secretary that “new money” be found. The reality of the budget process is that has not happened. The Committee continues its strong belief and recommendation to the Secretary that WS budget woes and constraints must be alleviated.

**Recommendation 16.** The National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture support Wildlife Services (WS) initiative to secure the planning and construction of an approximate 25,000 sq ft BSL 3 laboratory and diagnostics facility at the National Wildlife Research Center. Additional needs after construction include adequate increases in research staff to develop sampling and diagnostic research methods for wildlife disease surveillance that will allow WS to better address disease risks and implement control measures at the wildlife, agriculture and human health interface, and support emergency diagnostic and surge capacity needs.

Approved: Y (14) N (0) A (1)

Background: The WS NWRC is the premier facility for cutting-edge research on developing methods to prevent, reduce, or alleviate damage caused by wildlife to livestock and agricultural production including forestry and aquaculture. It is also involved with developing methods for surveillance of wildlife borne diseases (e.g.,

rabies, pseudorabies, chronic wasting disease, etc.). Planning for a BSL 3 laboratory and facility have been stalled by lack of agreements with private funders/developers to build the facility on budget and on time.

**Recommendation 17.** The National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture requests Wildlife Services create educational materials regarding impact on wildlife disease and rabies management programs posed by intentional importation and human translocation of wildlife, feral dogs and cats.

Approved: Y (12) N (1) A (2)

Background: Human relocation of feral dogs from foreign countries to U.S. shelters and rescue groups is a rapidly growing enterprise. Likewise the intentional human translocation of feral cats to feral cat colonies and shelters is also increasing. Translocation of species whether wildlife, feral dogs and cats poses increased disease threats, including rabies to humans and animals.

**Recommendation 18.** The National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee recommends to the Secretary of Agriculture that Wildlife Services seek new funding from Congress to add new positions within the Agency charged with being a resource on the use of livestock guarding animals as a non-lethal method of livestock protection.

Approved: Y (10) N (3) A (2)

Background: WS historically has been a leader in development and promotion of non-lethal methods of livestock protection. One management tool that was introduced to the livestock community by the Agency that was rapidly accepted by producers was the use of livestock guarding animals to aid in the protection of livestock and property. Due to limited budgets and continual efforts directed towards development of new methods and new priorities, the agency has deferred emphasis on development of new techniques and tools using this very important method of non-lethal control to other entities.

**Recommendation 19.** The National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture continue to support the use of approved toxicants for predator control which are used by the Wildlife Services program.

Approved: Y (12) N (2) A (1)

Background: WS has responded to public interests by developing and registering effective toxicants to manage wildlife causing damage to livestock, forestry, agricultural production, aquaculture as well as those wild animals creating human health issues through infectious diseases.