

# USDA Forest Service Update

## September 2008



### **SUBJECT: Proposed Forest Service Manual Amendment - Predator Damage Management in Wilderness**

**SUMMARY:** On June 7, 2006, the The Forest Service published a *Federal Register* notice proposing to revise its directives on predator damage management in wilderness areas. These proposed directives would conform agency direction regarding predator damage management with provisions in the 2004 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services Division (APHIS-WS) and the Forest Service. The proposed directives would bring Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2300, Chapter 2320-Wilderness Management, into conformance with FSM 2600, Chapter 2650-Animal Damage Management, which was revised May 4, 1995. Comments received in response to this notice will be considered in development of the final directives for predator damage management on National Forest System lands, including wilderness. The public comment period closed on September 7, 2006. Over 74,000 comments were received and the proposal is currently under review.

**Current status:** In November the Forest Service will begin consultation with Indian Tribes on the proposed changes to the directives. Consideration of the results along with review of other comments incorporated into a Final policy published when complete, potentially in early 2009.

#### **The amendments to FSM 2323.33c would:**

1. Recognize the authority of APHIS-WS and States to conduct predator damage management activities in wilderness.
2. Reaffirm Forest Service policy for sustaining predator populations within ecosystems.
3. Provide a framework for the Forest Service and APHIS-WS to cooperate in development of annual work plans and management objectives, and preparing environmental analyses for predator damage management activities.
4. Clarify Forest Service policy regarding use of pesticides for predator damage management in wilderness.
5. Clarify that the use of aircraft for predator damage management in wilderness requires Regional Forester approval.

FSM 2651.6 also provides direction for predator management in wilderness. The proposed amendment to this section corrects an inadvertent error in current direction by clarifying that only one of the following conditions must be met in order to engage in wildlife or fish damage management activities:

1. Protect public health and safety.
2. Protect Federally listed threatened or endangered species.
3. Prevent serious loss of domestic stock.

Current direction requires that all three conditions be met before predator management activities may be implemented.

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