

**National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee Meeting**

National Wildlife Research Center

Fort Collins, CO

June 21 – 23, 2005

*Tuesday, June 21, 2005*

**Committee Members in Attendance:**

Joel Alderete, New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau  
Nina Baucus, Sieban Ranch Company  
Jeff Baxter, Baxter Land Company  
Clait Braun, Grouse Inc. (Chair)  
Seniora Ann Burdette, Urban Wildlife  
Cathy Liss, Animal Welfare Institute  
Debra Miller, Veterinary Diagnostic and Investigational Lab, UGA  
Bruce Morrison, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission  
Scott Nelson, National Sunflower Association  
Ira New Breast, Native American Fish and Wildlife Society  
John Ostrom, Aviation Industry  
Maurice Shelton, Sheep and Goat Industry – Texas A&M University  
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:**

Regan Beck, Rancher  
Joe Harper, Sheep Producer  
Eric Koens, Cattle Industry  
Terry Mansfield, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, OSPR

**Welcome and Introductions**

The National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee (NWSAC) met at the Wildlife Services, National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) in Fort Collins, CO. The meeting was called to order at 8:25 a.m., on June 21, 2005.

Bill Clay, Deputy Administrator, Wildlife Services (WS), welcomed the group and expressed his appreciation for the committee's commitment to providing the Secretary of Agriculture with recommendations that would further the mission of Wildlife Services. Mr. Clay introduced the WS management team and informed the Committee that Mr. Bill Hawks, Undersecretary of the Marketing and Regulatory Program, USDA would be

joining them on Thursday morning. Bill Clay mentioned that Mr. Hawks had announced his resignation, but that the resignation would not be effective until the appointment of Mr. Hawks' successor. Until then, Mr. Hawks will continue with his current activities within USDA.

Bill Clay introduced Richard Bruggers, Director of NWRC, who then welcomed the committee to the NWRC and introduced the NWRC management team. Dr. Bruggers gave a brief overview of the NWRC headquarters and its eight field stations. An award was presented to William Dusenberry, Program Manager of Facilities Planning and Development, for his assistance with formulating and allocating the NWRC budget during a crucial time of extreme budget cuts.

### **WS Program Updates**

NWRC Program Managers Mark Tobin, Dale Nolte, Kathy Fagerstone, and Bob McLean provided research program updates in the areas of bird damage and research; mammal damage and research; product development and registration; and wildlife disease research, monitoring, and surveillance. Gail Keirn, APHIS Legislative and Public Affairs Specialist, presented her plans to enhance communications and information transfer between the NWRC and WS operational staff, as well as between the NWRC and the public. Ms. Keirn noted that her focus for the first few years will be to improve communications between the NWRC and WS operational staff. In addition, she will expand the outreach efforts of WS to the public through various media. Mike Fall, NWRC Wildlife Biologist, discussed national trap testing issues. Mr. Fall provided an update on the progress of the Best Management Practices for trapping, a project of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Tom Hoffman, Acting Regional Director, WS Western Region, presented an update on WS Aerial Operations activities, including the use of aircraft by WS and the key focus areas for ongoing strategic planning. Tom DeLiberto, National Wildlife Disease Coordinator, provided updates on the development of wildlife disease surveillance and emergency response capabilities by WS. Richard Chipman, New York State Director, provided an update on oral rabies vaccination activities.

### **Review of Charter and Rules of Order**

Bill Clay referred the Committee to the USDA Departmental Regulation dated February 17, 2005, which renews the NWSAC and acts as a charter for the committee. He noted the charter is general in nature to provide the Committee with greater flexibility. Mr. Clay reminded the Committee that in the past, the NWSAC budget had been decreased, but the Committee had been successful in recommending and receiving an increased budget from \$18,000 to \$24,000. Bill Clay turned the meeting over to Clait Braun, Chair of the NWSAC.

Mr. Braun briefly reviewed the agenda with the Committee members who then accepted the agenda with no changes or additions. Mr. Braun strongly encouraged the Committee members to each focus on one of their most pressing issues, and then to bring those

issues to the table the following day and develop 15 – 20 recommendations. Final recommendations to the Secretary would be approved by consensus or unanimous vote.

### **Update on Last Committee Meeting Recommendations**

Last year's NWSAC meeting was conducted in August 2004 in Riverdale, MD and produced 22 recommendations for consideration by the Secretary of Agriculture. Martin Mendoza, WS Associate Deputy Administrator, reported to the Committee the status of last year's Committee recommendations, and stressed the importance of the recommendations to be used by the Secretary when formulating the budget.

The Committee toured the NWRC facilities and then adjourned for the day.

*Wednesday, June 22, 2005*

### **GPRA, FOIA Policy, and NEPA**

Bill Clay opened the meeting with a brief discussion on the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Policy, and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements. GPRA requires all Federal programs to establish goals and document performance. WS has five performance indicators (Endangered Species, Beaver Management, Airports, Aquaculture, and Brown Tree Snake) which are intended to be representative of all WS programs and are used to support budget requests and the President's budget. These reports are considered internal working documents and can be made available to the public (if releasable) but only through a FOIA request. WS does not develop, implement, or interpret FOIA policies. APHIS establishes and enforces FOIA policy, and all FOIA requests must be referred to the APHIS Legislative and Public Affairs and FOIA offices. APHIS' FOIA policy remains unchanged. WS maintains centralized access to environmental (NEPA) documents, posts final documents on the WS website, and provides public notification of the availability of such documents. WS has no plans to make NEPA documents available online while the comment periods for individual documents are open. APHIS NEPA implementing regulations indicate that anything with a national or regional affect must be published in the Federal Register, while anything impacting a local area must be published in local newspapers to satisfy the public notification requirement of NEPA.

### **Administrative Issues**

Linda Love, NWRC Administrative Support Assistant, briefed the Committee on how to complete their travel vouchers for reimbursement. Nicole Lorimer, NWRC IT Specialist, will provide the attending Committee members a CD that contains the PowerPoint presentations from June 21, 2005. This CD will be provided to those not in attendance upon request.

### **Discussion of Recommendations**

Clait Braun began the discussion of recommendations by reviewing each recommendation from 2004 with Committee members to determine which recommendations the Secretary and WS had adequately resolved, and which recommendations needed further consideration by the Secretary. Each Committee member was given the opportunity to present concerns and issues to the committee before Mr. Braun divided them into teams to develop recommendations.

Hugh Warren moved and Joel Alderete seconded the motion to recommend that WS provide the Advisory Committee an annually updated, 10-year compilation of NWSAC recommendations and the actions resulting from the recommendations. The motion was passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

*Thursday, June 23, 2005*

### **Closing Remarks**

APHIS Under Secretary, Bill Hawks, addressed the Committee, mentioning his announced resignation and thanking the Committee for their invaluable service to WS throughout the years he has served with APHIS. Mr. Hawks extended additional thanks to the outgoing members Clait Braun, Joe Harper, Terry Mansfield, Scott Nelson, and Mark Zaunbrecher.

### **Review/Finalization of Committee Recommendations**

Clait Braun continued with the meeting by reviewing the draft recommendations from June 22, 2005, and having the teams continue with the development and finalization of their recommendations.

Patti Strand moved, Bruce Morrison seconded, and the Committee passed unanimously the following language be included in the minutes:

The Committee urges USDA to collaborate with 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 un-owned domestic pets to safeguard humans, livestock, and native wildlife from exotic, emerging, and/or resurging disease and parasites.

This is a concern of the Committee, but will not be forwarded as a recommendation to the Secretary of Agriculture.

There was discussion regarding recovery costs and permitting issues.

Nina Baucus moved, Hugh Warren seconded, and the Committee passed unanimously a recommendation to WS to implement a process by which WS could recover reasonable expenses from non-cooperators.

John Ostrom moved that a representative from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service be invited to make a presentation at the next NWSAC meeting regarding permitting issues. Scott Nelson seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.

Bruce Morrison moved, John Ostrom seconded, and the Committee passed unanimously the request that WS recognize the contribution of outgoing members of NWSAC in an appropriate manner.

**Recommendations developed for consideration by the Secretary of Agriculture are as follows (Vote count is shown as Yes, No, Abstain. Vote total was 16, however, on several occasions all members of the committee were not present during the voting):**

1. The Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture continue to recognize the need for base support for the Wildlife Disease Surveillance and Monitoring program and to seek an additional \$5.5 million annually to fully implement the program to maximize its ability to respond to federal and state disease emergencies (or seasonal needs) while allowing for continuous (routine) Wildlife Disease Surveillance and Monitoring coverage of all states and U.S. territories, including border surveillance. This expansion should ultimately include 2 Wildlife Disease Biologists per state and U.S. territory.

**Approved: Y(16) N(0) A(0)**

2. The Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture seek additional funding in the amount of \$5 million for the Oral Rabies Vaccination program, including the development of new vaccines for control and elimination of raccoon, fox, coyote, skunk, and mongoose rabies, and seek supplemental funding in the amount of \$10 million for the development and implementation of a bat rabies control program.

**Approved: Y(16) N(0) A(0)**

3. The Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture seek \$1.5 million of supplemental annual funding to sustain requirements of Homeland Security for protection of WS facilities without subtraction from existing annual budgets.

**Approved: Y(16) N(0) A(0)**

4. The Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture reaffirm protection of livestock and agriculture from offending animals as a high priority of WS, and seek additional funding for their protection to implement field programs for control of offending wildlife.

**Approved: Y(16) N(0) A(0)**

5. The Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture seek supplemental funding for WS 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 contraceptive research).

**Approved: Y(16) N(0) A(0)**

6. The Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture support, in cooperation with the appropriate federal, state, and tribal agencies, the International Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies, the U.S. Animal Health Association, the Conservation Trust, The Wildlife Society, the Wildlife Disease Association, and other appropriate non-governmental organizations, development of a Wildlife Disease Strategy for the United States as recommended by the Delegates to the 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the US/Canada/Mexico Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation & Management.

The Committee further recommends that the Secretary seek supplemental funding in the amount of \$7.5 million for the development and implementation of a United States Wildlife Disease Strategy.

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

7. The Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture seek \$4.2 million in new funds to control Double-crested Cormorant damage to natural resources and aquaculture.

**Approved: Y(14) N(2) A(0)**

8. The Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture seek an additional \$700,000 for NWRC to expedite research to develop and register an avicide, repellants, and management techniques specific to blackbirds and starlings, and to continue support of operational baiting in rice and sunflowers.

**Approved: Y(14) N(0) A(2)**

9. The Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture support new funding for research into non-lethal dispersal and innovative lethal or non-lethal control of depredating animals including but not limited to crows, blackbirds, Canada geese, coyotes, fish-eating birds, and whistling ducks.

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

10. The Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture in cooperation with the Dept of Transportation, specifically the FAA, seek adequate funding to manage wildlife hazards at airports.

**Approved: Y(13) N(0) A(1)**

11. The Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture seek an increase in funds (\$183,000) 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 of \$125,000 (a \$25,000 reduction) which will decrease the service that WS performs.

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

12. The Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture seek dialogue and cooperation with the Secretary of the Interior on all levels, in allocating one source of additional funding to increase field resource capacity for WS to resolve increasing conflicts involving humans, livestock, and other domestic animals resulting from restored and expanding wolf populations.

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

13. The Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture seek new funding for the National Wildlife Research Center to conduct research on methods of preventing wildlife from obtaining food from trash transfer facilities and landfills as these sources may have serious consequences for airport safety, threatened and endangered species, and human health and safety.

**Approved: Y(12) N(0) A(2)**

14. The Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture seek new funding to develop and implement a program to provide cost sharing on non-lethal methods to prevent wildlife damage to agricultural resources.

**Approved: Y(10) N(4) A(0)**

15. The Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture have WS along with the collaboration of national, regional, state and local government entities, and private organizations, especially the US Conference of Mayors, the National Association of Counties, and the National League of Cities develop a business plan from the Urban/Suburban concept paper that addresses solutions to wildlife damage in urban settings.

**Approved: Y(16) N(0) A(0)**

16. The Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture work with the Secretary of Interior to develop a cooperative arrangement between Wildlife Services and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to process and respond to migratory bird depredation permit applications in a timely (7 days) manner.

**Approved: Y(14) N(2) A(0)**

17. The Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture that any funding for conservation of the Ivory-billed woodpecker not be diverted or reallocated from existing and future Wildlife Services budgets.

**Approved: Y(13) N(0) A(1)**

18. The Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture investigate the feasibility of a national program, working with cooperators such as State Wildlife

Agencies, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, NGO's, and private industry to provide limited compensation for damage and depredation by specific individual or groups of wildlife.

**Approved: Y(10) N(4) A(0)**

19. The Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture initiate discussions with the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, State Wildlife Agencies, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to establish a task force to work with college and university wildlife programs to identify and study population numbers of depredating wildlife species specifically in the area of agriculture practices that are impacted by said species. The intent of these studies is to explore management options to address present and future wildlife agriculture conflict issues such as depredation and wildlife diseases, as well as public health and safety issues, while minimizing detriment to wildlife species.

**Approved: Y(7) N(3) A(4)**

20. The Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture approve a working capital fund for Wildlife Services for capital property management.

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

21. The Committee recommends the Secretary of Agriculture continue to improve and replace techniques that are unnecessarily injurious (based on scientific evidence) with improved techniques that are less injurious (whether lethal or nonlethal), effective (both short term and long term), and economical.

**Failed: Y(6) N(7) A(1)**

Bill Clay closed the meeting by expressing thanks to Clait Braun for his professional and thorough performance of chairing the Committee for the past two years. He also extended his thanks to the entire Committee for their contributions.

The time frame for the next meeting was discussed and all present agreed that June was the best time for them to meet again. An exact date and location was not determined. The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m.