

USDA National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee (NWSAC)
October 29-30, 2024
Fort Collins, CO



Tuesday, October 29, 2024, 8:00am – 5:00pm MTN– USDA APHIS Building B, Grays Peak Conference Room, Fort Collins, CO

Welcome and Introductions: Janet L. Bucknall, Deputy Administrator (DA), Wildlife Services (WS)

The NWSAC Chair, John M. Tomeček, called the meeting to order at 8:28am MTN. WS DA, Janet Bucknall, introduced herself and thanked everyone for coming. DA Bucknall conveyed that she greatly values the opinions and perspectives of NWSAC members and that 2024 was a great year for WS and its cooperators and stakeholders. DA Bucknall acknowledged that the government would see a new administration following November's upcoming presidential election and reaffirmed that WS' core mission remains the same. She then turned the meeting over to the National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) Director, Jason Suckow, to provide onsite housekeeping logistics. The session ended with introductions from NWSAC members and WS staff.

NWSAC Members in Attendance:

- Bernard Joseph Petersen, Industry/Producers (NV)
- Calvert Curry Campbell, Industry/Producers (TX)
- Catherine Denise Urbigkit, Industry/Producers (WY)
- David Lynn McEwen, Industry/Producers (MT)
- Harry Owen Snelson, Non-Government Organization (NC) *Did not attend the afternoon session.
- James E. Higgins, Airport Wildlife Management (FL)
- Jerrold Lowell Belant, Academia (MI)
- John Michael Tomeček, Academia (TX)
- Joseph A. Kipp, Industry/Producers (MT)
- Mark Dean Smith, Academia (AL)
- Lisa Ann Murphy, Academia (PA)
- Sherri Wilson Russell, State/County Government and Associations (MO)
- Suzanne Asha Stone, Non-Government Organization (ID)
- William Bowman Seeley, Non-Government Organization (MT)
- Ellary Tucker-Williams, Non-Government Organization (ID)
- Ericca Gandolfo, Non-Government Organization (DC)

NWSAC Members Not in Attendance:

- Burton Patrick Pfliger, Industry/Producers (ND)
- Ronald James Regan, State/County Government and Associations (MD)
- Christopher William de Nijs, State/County Government and Associations (CA)
- Andrew Prosser, Industry/Producers (MS)

WS Staff Present:

- Janet L. Bucknall, Deputy Administrator
- Jessica Fantinato, Associate Deputy Administrator
- Jason Suckow, National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) Director
- Keith Wehner, Eastern Region Director
- Wendy Anderson, Western Region Director
- David Reinhold, Operational Support Staff (OSS) Director
- Dr. Julie Lenocho, National Wildlife Disease Program Coordinator
- Dr. Dana Cole, National Feral Swine Management Program Coordinator
- Robert Hudson, Assistant Eastern Regional Director
- Brett Dunlap, Assistant Eastern Regional Director
- Terry Smith, Assistant Western Regional Director
- Scott Alls, Assistant Western Regional Director
- Kendra Cross, Deputy Director of Operations (OSS)
- Kim Clapper, WS Chief of Staff, Office of the Deputy Administrator
- Elizabeth Miller, Staff Wildlife Biologist (OSS)
- Kevin Williams, Travel Program Specialist (OSS)

Public Visitors Present:

- Lauren McCain, Animal Welfare Institute, Denver, CO
- Kathy Kipp, Blackfeet Nation member and spouse of NWSAC member, Joseph Kipp
- Liam Kipp, Blackfeet Nation member and grandson of NWSAC member, Joseph Kipp
- Anne Dunigan, Senior Program Analyst, APHIS PPD

National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) Update: Jason Suckow, Director (Fort Collins, CO)

NWRC Director, Jason Suckow, provided several NWRC updates to include the creation and development of the Bio-Archive Storage Facility (BAS) and the Wildlife Disease Diagnostics Laboratory (WDDL), coordination with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources regarding a bovine tuberculosis (bTB) vaccine for white-tailed deer, and information and updates for various toxicant registration processes (bromethalin, alpha-chloralose, Indian mongoose toxicant, GonaCon-Equine, etc.). Additionally, Director Suckow discussed the Economics Project's study and associated pending publication demonstrating the financial benefits of conducting wildlife hazard management at airports, and the Mississippi Field Station's work in assisting the oyster community with aquaculture/wildlife-related needs. Director Suckow mentioned several FY25 NWRC priorities to include finalizing the WDDL, pursuing International Organization for Standardization (ISO) certification, avian predator research, and moving forward (WS as lead) with another International Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Symposium. The update ended with a Q&A session between NWSAC members and WS.

Eastern Region Update: Keith Wehner, Director (Richmond Hill, GA)

WS Eastern Region Director, Keith Wehner, provided updates and priorities of the Eastern Region (ER) to include selecting Brett Dunlap as its new Assistant Regional Director (vice John McConnell) and developing an Eastern Region Aviation Program to meet the ongoing and future

aviation needs (rabies management, feral swine management, surveillance, FLIR work, darting, etc.) of the region. Additionally, Director Wehner discussed black vulture damage management and a recent symposium that occurred during The Wildlife Society (TWS) conference in Baltimore, MD in October. The afternoon-long symposium featured several presentations from wildlife professionals regarding black vulture research, operations, management, and population information. The ER is exploring options for hosting a multi-day vulture symposium, like the International CWD Symposium. Lastly, Director Wehner provided an update on the Wildlife Bio-Security Assessment project and responded to questions from NWSAC members.

Western Region Update: Wendy Anderson, Director (Fort Collins, CO)

WS Western Region Director, Wendy Anderson, provided Western Regional (WR) program updates to include hiring two new Assistant Regional Directors (Scott Alls and Terry Smith) and 7 new State Directors in FY24. Additionally, the WR split the WS WA/AK program into two separate state programs and combined the WS NE and KS programs to meet state and regional program needs. To address the WR's leadership changes, a Leadership Transition training was provided to help develop the WR team. FY24 was a busy year for wildlife attacks on humans, especially in CA, but AZ, CO, NV, OR, and TX saw increases in attacks as well. Due to WS' long-term expertise in predator damage management, these issues were effectively addressed and managed. Lastly, Director Anderson updated the NWSAC on the first ever National Wolf Workshop that occurred in FY24 and closing out the OIG inspection regarding the Standards of Evidence for Mexican wolf investigations. WR FY25 priorities discussed during the update included the WS NE/KS merger, addressing raven damage management, and coordinating with the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service on annual work plans. The update ended with a Q&A session between NWSAC members and WS.

National Rabies Management Program Update: Jessica Fantinato, Associate Deputy Administrator (Riverdale, MD)

On behalf of Rich Chipman, National Coordinator (Concord, NH), Jessica Fantinato provided updates on the National Rabies Management Program (NRMP) to include raccoon rabies, rabies management in TX, and WS' response involving a rabid kitten in NE. Additionally, to address the NRMP's flat budget since 2009 as well as the 2023 recommendations made by the NWSAC, WS was able to secure \$18 million in CCC funds, dedicated towards rabies management and replenishing the rabies bait bank. Other NRMP updates included information on vampire bat work, a recent PPD assessment of the NRMP, postponement of fall rabies work in areas affected by Hurricane Helene (which will resume in spring 2025), ongoing OneHealth collaborations between WS rabies operations and research programs, the FY24 USAHA rabies resolution, and ongoing rabies mongoose work in Puerto Rico.

Airport Wildlife Hazards Program Update: Jessica Fantinato, Associate Deputy Administrator (Riverdale, MD)

On behalf of Mike Begier, National Coordinator (Riverdale, MD), Jessica Fantinato presented Airport Wildlife Hazards Program (AWHP) updates to include internal WS trainings, increased requests for overseas work, ongoing collaborations with the Department of Defense in the GIS and data modeling fields, receiving the 300,000th strike report in the National Wildlife Strike Database in FY24, and updates regarding the Known Aviation Risk workbook. ADA Fantinato also remarked on the Economic Project's research project/paper (previously noted by NWRC Director Suckow), ongoing work to understand aircraft lighting deterrents to vultures, drone work for hazing birds, and the AWHP's continued collaboration with the WS National Training Academy. Following the AWHP updates, ADA Fantinato addressed questions from the NWSAC.

National Feral Swine Damage Management Program Update: Dr. Dana Cole, Coordinator (Fort Collins, CO)

Program Coordinator Dr. Dana Cole, provided National Feral Swine Damage Management Program (NFSP) updates to include ongoing efforts to move states to lower detection level categories (IA was recently moved to elimination status), allowing elimination states to acquire monitoring and engagement resources via funded proposals, and continuing internal WS collaboration towards these efforts. NFSP embarked on several highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) surveillance efforts in FY24 to include work with the Agricultural Research Service to identify H5 antibodies in feral swine, enhanced targeted HPAI surveillance (CA, TX, NC), and NFSP's overall continued efforts to evaluate HPAI in feral swine. Other updates included sodium nitrite work (making it less consumable to non-targets), increasing aviation assets in the ER for feral swine management, continued efforts towards African Swine Fever (ASF) preparedness (i.e., collaborating with Canada to develop "Squeal on Pigs), CWD research, development of an economic report noting the savings and benefit of reducing feral swine, and co-leading a workshop with the WS National Wildlife Disease Program regarding ASF response. NFSP Coordinator Cole noted that the NFSP's priorities for FY25 included continued efforts in moving states towards feral swine elimination status, sodium nitrite and CWD research, playing close attention to the Farm Bill, and monitoring for emerging feral swine disease threats.

National Wildlife Disease Program Update: Dr. Julie Lenocho, Coordinator (Fort Collins, CO)

Program Coordinator, Dr. Julie Lenocho, provided National Wildlife Disease Program (NWDP) updates to include maintaining both a national and local global awareness system for disease management, emergency deployments, poultry CCC work, to date more than 10,000 HPAI detections in wild birds has occurred since 2021, hiring priorities and challenges, HPAI targeted surveillance, HPAI mammal surveillance, recording HPAI morbidity and mortality, and surveillance of feral swine diseases and other zoonotics or diseases with agricultural implications like plague, tularemia, brucellosis, and hantavirus. Following updates, Dr. Lenocho responded to questions from the NWSAC.

The meeting broke for lunch at 12:00 pm MTN, and attendees reconvened at 1:30 pm MTN.

Committee Discussion and Recommendations: NWSAC Chairperson

The afternoon session resumed at 1:33 pm MTN. NWSAC members reviewed and discussed the previous 2023 recommendations (19 total), noting those that would be kept, removed, and amended. The meeting adjourned at 3:30 pm MTN, with NWSAC members agreeing to work on recommendation amendments and any new recommendations (based on the day's discussions) to have ready for the following day.

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- Terry Smith, Assistant Western Regional Director
- Scott Alls, Assistant Western Regional Director
- Doug Eckery, Assistant Director (NWRC)
- Kendra Cross, Deputy Director of Operations (OSS)
- Kim Clapper, WS Chief of Staff, Office of the Deputy Administrator
- Elizabeth Miller, Staff Wildlife Biologist (OSS)
- Kevin Williams, Travel Program Specialist (OSS)

Additional Attendees/Presenters:

- Jenny Lester Moffitt, MRP Under Secretary

Public Visitors Present:

- Lauren McCain, Animal Welfare Institute, Denver, CO
- Kathy Kipp, Blackfeet Nation member and spouse of NWSAC member, Joseph Kipp
- Liam Kipp, Blackfeet Nation member and grandson of NWSAC member, Joseph Kipp
- Anne Dunigan, Senior Program Analyst, APHIS PPD

Committee Discussion and Recommendations: NWSAC Chairperson

Throughout the day, NWSAC members reviewed and discussed the previous 2023 recommendations (19 total), amending 12, keeping 7 “as is”, and adding 2 new recommendations for a total of 21 recommendations to submit to the Secretary (see below).

1

Funding (Status: Amended) Motion to retain/revise, passed.

Recommendation: We recommend to the Secretary of Agriculture that baseline funds to support integrated wildlife damage management be substantially increased by a request in the President's budget. Failure to do so would be a failure to fulfill the mission of the program. Any new mandates or directives should be accompanied with new funding in the President's budget.

We recognize that WS is a sought-after leader in the management of conflicts related to wildlife, and that their services are increasingly in-demand in a world where human-wildlife conflicts are increasingly common and diverse.

We further recommend that the Secretary of Agriculture proactively collaborate with the Secretary of Defense on areas of shared responsibilities. Regarding continued delivery of program mission to the American people, we recommend that any increase in implementation or maintenance of programs or policies required by the Department (i.e. information technology, vehicles and vehicle monitoring, etc.) be supported by new funds from the Department that are not part of existing WS funds. Failure to do so would force a reduction in mission delivery or increased costs to cooperators by an unfunded mandate, which is unacceptable to the spirit of the program's mission.

We further recommend that all programs be evaluated for necessary increases to funding in the President's budget based on increased costs of goods and services, as well as inflation, since the time of the last increase to base funding. We recognize the cooperative nature of the program but recommend that the Secretary of Agriculture carefully consider and evaluate the balance of cost-sharing, where some cooperators bear a disproportionately high cost for delivering the mission. We recommend the Secretary of Agriculture seek additional funds in the President's budget to address these funding needs. Special attention should be focused on, but not limited to:

- Livestock Protection
- Airport Wildlife Hazards Program
- Property Protection
- Human Health and Safety

NWSAC recognizes that the success of the mission relies on recruiting and retaining the right staff, and developing those staff. NWSAC further recommends that the Secretary pursue opportunities to improve recruitment and retention of a superior workforce by increasing rates of pay across the program through new funds requested in the President's budget. NWSAC also recommends careful attention be paid to site-specific position complexities, scope, and level of contacts as related to position descriptions.

NWSAC further recommends that the Department review and revise human resources policies that are limiting workforce development and succession planning, such as leadership training and lack of career ladder opportunities.

2

Registration of Wildlife Toxicants (Status: Keep) Motion to keep, passed.

Recommendation: We recommend to the Secretary of Agriculture that WS continue the process of development and registration of wildlife toxicants and expedite the process where possible.

3

Communication (Status: Amended) Motion to retain/revise, passed.

Recommendation: We recommend to the Secretary of Agriculture to develop, execute, and evaluate a time limited and multi-faceted outreach campaign to proactively communicate to the broader American public the relevancy and value of Wildlife Services.

4

National Rabies Program (Status: Amended) Motion to retain/revise, passed.

Recommendation: Considering the National Rabies Program has not received a base funding increase since FY2017, We strongly recommend to the Secretary of Agriculture to seek new funding above the current level in the President's budget for the management of rabies in the United States in the interest of human and animal health and safety, including but not limited to raccoon rabies in the east, canine rabies on the Texas-Mexico border, and vampire bat rabies risk in southern border states. In addition, the NWSAC recommends sustained, additional funding for research, development, and use of more efficient and effective vaccines with the goal of control of terrestrial rabies and elimination of raccoon rabies by 2063.

5

Tribal Nations (Status: Amended) Motion to retain/revise, passed.

Recommendation: We recommend the Secretary of Agriculture, in securing their trust responsibilities and in compliance with executive order 14112, sections 4 and 5, continue to work with the Office of Management and Budget to identify and provide additional and accessible funding and programming through WS to federally recognized Native Tribal governments and Native Tribal organizations to fulfill the Federal government's trust responsibilities and address the wildlife damage and disease management research, training, and communication needs of tribal nations.

6

Department of Interior Interagency Agreement (Status: Keep) Motion to keep, passed.

Recommendation: We recommend the Secretary of Agriculture engage the Secretary of Interior to seek an increase in Department of the Interior (DOI) funding for WS above the existing agreement level through an existing interagency agreement framework for conflict resolution involving large predator management in furtherance of restoration of species listed under the Endangered Species Act. The NWSAC specifically recommends additional resources be allocated for conflict resolution involving large predators, including, but not limited, to grizzly bears and wolves.

Recognizing the success of the current program and the increased demand for services, NWSAC recommends financial support for program enhancement, technology and training for safety and efficiency, and a continued commitment to program support for the 5-year post delisting period.

7

Aquaculture (Status: Keep) Motion to keep, passed.

Recommendation: We recommend to the Secretary of Agriculture the continued resources and efforts to assist farmers with the lethal and non-lethal management of migratory and non-migratory birds that prey on aquaculture.

Specifically:

- To continue ongoing efforts in the control of Double Crested Cormorants
- To add additional focus to the American White Pelican and the Great Blue Heron in the non-lethal and lethal management program
- To support regional resource management and additional funding for the management of these species by leveraging resources and working in a cooperative environment with all state and federal agencies, tribal governments, and tribal organizations.
- To enhance, maintain, and assist in the innovation of non-lethal control methods (Roost dispersal, drone utilization, lighting technology)
- To work in conjunction with USFWS to determine and further implement the most efficient methods of population control to help reduce further bird depredation, disease introduction/spread, and ecosystem disruptions and habitat degradation that the Double Crested Cormorants and American White Pelican are directly attributing to in the aquaculture and natural resources environment.

8

Avian Predators (Status: Amended) Motion to retain/revise, passed.

Recommendation: We recommend and encourage the Secretary of Agriculture to continue working with the Secretary of the Interior to mitigate livestock depredation and property damage by avian predators. NWSAC recommends the Secretary seek new funds in the President's budget to support management of wildlife damage from avian species.

The NWSAC further encourages the Secretary of Agriculture to continue working with the Secretary of the Interior to mitigate livestock depredation, crop depredations, and property damage by avian predators and wild birds damaging agricultural resources following an integrated wildlife damage management approach. Additionally, we encourage both Secretaries to aid and facilitate the joint WS-USFWS staff biologist position for the management of complex migratory bird issues.

We recommend that the Secretary of Agriculture create, fund, and support a comprehensive wildlife damage management program to address damage caused by black vultures. Such a program would include technical assistance, habitat management, non-lethal conflict prevention and lethal control.

9

One Health Initiative (Status: Amended) Motion to retain/revise, passed.

Recommendation: We recommend that the Secretary of Agriculture encourage WS to continue to recognize that the health of animals, people, and the environment are inextricably linked and enhance One Health initiatives within strategic planning and implementation of Wildlife Services' programs. We appreciate and commend the current program efforts and partnerships between the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, tribal governments and organizations, states, universities, non-governmental organizations, and others. The NWSAC recommends using this collaborative approach to advance program priorities, such as helping to prevent the rise in zoonotic disease outbreaks in animals and people and addressing other program challenges.

We recommend the Secretary of Agriculture direct sufficient additional funds from avian health, emergency response, and other budget line items and sources outside of WS, to WS to enable full staffing, equipping, and training of their national disease program. We specifically recommend increasing the number of permanent disease biologists to at least 45 nationwide and providing adequate resources to support both the biologists and incident management teams.

10

Aviation Center (Status: Amended) Motion to retain/revise, passed.

Recommendation: We recommend the Secretary of Agriculture advocate for the sustainment of the Wildlife Services Aviation Training and Operation Center (WS-ATOC) in Cedar City, Utah. Support should be commensurate with the growth and expansion of the WS Aviation Program, the modernization and standardization of the WS aircraft fleet, the development and implementation of new and innovative training techniques, and pilot recruitment and retention.

NWSAC further recommends the Secretary of Agriculture work to acquire additional aircraft from military or other agencies and seek substantial increases in funding to support the Wildlife Services program's aviation operations in the President's budget.

11

Spring Loaded Ejector Devices (Status: Amended) Motion to retain/revise, passed.

Recommendation: We recommend that the Secretary of Agriculture continue to support the use of spring-loaded ejector devices (SLEDs) as a delivery method to mitigate wildlife diseases, manage wildlife damage, and other uses.

12

Research (Status: Amended) Motion to retain/revise, passed.

Recommendation: We recommend that the Secretary of Agriculture encourage the development of studies and reviews that integrate economic and ecological effects of wildlife damage management for the protection of American agriculture and natural resources, including objective science-based reviews that consider the value of wildlife management for the promotion of healthy ecosystems and society.

NWSAC also encourages WS research on emerging wildlife conflict issues and techniques to minimize conflicts including the use of animals in livestock protection, wildlife deterrence, detection and monitoring.

13

Chronic Wasting Disease (Status: Keep) Motion to keep, passed.

Recommendation: We recommend to the Secretary of Agriculture that WS:

- Work collaboratively with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Geological Survey to assist state and tribal agencies tasked with managing Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD).
- Recognize the National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) as a premier research facility for applied research on CWD in wild cervids.
- Seek new funding for research including methods to increase the timeliness of test results for both specimens collected from living and dead cervids, vaccine development, and other research priorities related to CWD.
- Work towards planning 5th International CWD Symposium in partnership with other involved agencies

14

Feral Swine Damage Management (Status: Amended) Motion to retain/revise, passed.

Recommendation: We strongly recommend to the Secretary of Agriculture to seek new funding in the President's budget to expand the feral swine damage management program to address the increasing need for management of this species. We also urge the Secretary of Agriculture to explore new technologies for feral swine damage management and eradication, including methods of inhibiting reproduction in feral swine.

WS is encouraged to continue work with state feral swine task forces, tribal agencies, and the National Wild Pig Task Force to deliver state specific and national objectives for feral swine monitoring, surveillance, research, damage control and eradication.

NWSAC commends WS for the exemplary work done in the Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot Program under the 2018 Agriculture Improvement Act, and strongly encourages improvement and expansion under future Agriculture Improvement Acts.

NWSAC recommends that WS works towards the development of objective metrics to increase funding above base for states identified as “Level 5” feral swine management states. We further recommend that WS institutes a 5-year review period for states identified as “Level 1,” to ensure that adequate work toward eradication is conducted.

NWSAC further recommends the establishment of new funding in the President’s budget for expanded monitoring for feral swine along international borders to allow for early detection and management of new feral swine invasions.

Also, the NWSAC recommends the Secretary of Agriculture to continue work to convey the risks associated with feral pork for those that hunt, process, and consume feral pork, as feral swine have been shown to be the hosts for numerous zoonotic diseases and parasites.

15 Workforce Planning (Status: Keep) Motion to keep, passed.

Recommendation: *We recommend to the Secretary of Agriculture that WS identify opportunities to strengthen its workforce. This should include programs and additional funding in the President’s budget to attract a diverse group of new, early-career individuals, including seasonal and volunteer opportunities, and retain and advance existing personnel by encouraging and providing access to career development and training, and recognizing and rewarding individual and team performance and achievements.*

Furthermore, the NWSAC recommends that the Secretary of Agriculture direct WS to continue to systematically review and evaluate current position descriptions to allow for deviations and revisions that reflect job scope, complexity, and level of personal contacts.

16 Data Science Support Unit (Status: Keep) Motion to keep, passed.

Recommendation: *We recommend to the Secretary of Agriculture that WS support and secure additional critical funding in the President’s budget for a data science support unit that furthers current WS efforts in collaboration with the NWRC. Specifically, we recommend resources for acquiring additional capacity that supports data analytics, geo-spatial technology, and associated modelling to integrate internal and external data sources and conduct integrated modeling and syntheses.*

17 Large Predator Conflict Mitigation (Status: Amended) Motion to retain/revise, passed.

Recommendation: *The NWSAC recognizes Wildlife Services’ leadership in promoting successful nonlethal wildlife coexistence resolution measures in managing livestock and predator conflicts. As a result, many livestock producers report significant reduction in losses due to proactive measures in an integrated fashion, such as human presence (e.g. range riders), carcass management, livestock protection animals, lighting, sound deterrents, fencing, fladry, and more.*

We recommend the Secretary of Agriculture engage the Secretary of Interior to seek additional Department of the Interior (DOI) funding for WS through an existing interagency agreement framework for proactive measures to minimize potential conflicts involving large predators. These measures can include but are not limited to site evaluations of high risk or chronic depredation conflicts, recommendations, and assistance implementing non-lethal deterrents.

The NWSAC recommends the Secretary encourage collaboration between the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and WS regarding coordination and implementation of programs such as Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to improve wildlife damage management.

18 Disaster Response (Status: Keep) Motion to keep, passed.

Recommendation: We recommend the Secretary of Agriculture establish an expedited approval process for WS personnel to provide disaster response upon request from a designated official in a local/state/Federal disaster within 24hrs; and work to secure funding from either, or both, the Commodity Credit Corporation and Supplemental Disaster Programs to support such response.

19 Support for Airport Wildlife Hazards Program (AWHP) and Associated Research (Status: Amended) Motion to retain/revise, passed.

Recommendation: The NWSAC commends the work at airports and research on methods to mitigate wildlife hazards to civil and military aviation.

NWSAC strongly recommends to the Secretary of Agriculture to seek new funding in the President's budget to fortify and expand the Airport Wildlife Hazards Program support to address current and increasing need for management and research to reduce wildlife hazards to aviation.

We recommend that the Secretary of Agriculture further support ongoing NWRC studies to develop economic modeling that measures return on investment of airport wildlife biologists, and risk modeling to gauge total bird strike risk at military airports. These models will enable cooperators to defend annual WS support agreement budgets and prioritize resourcing of emergent requirements.

The NWSAC also recommends that NWRC continue focused research on identification of effective mitigation procedures for large avian hazards, especially black and turkey vultures.

Finally, given the wide scope of efforts across many WS programs to mitigate severe vulture hazards to aviation, livestock, and infrastructure; recommend WS host a vulture damage management summit to identify the scope of vulture management risks and costs, ongoing mitigation procedures and projects, new research desired, and any sources of potential funding.

20 Wildlife Bio-Security Assessments (WBA) (Status: New) Motion to retain, passed.

Recommendation: Given the ongoing outbreak of HPAI in wildlife and commercial poultry, we recommend the Secretary of Agriculture expand the current Wildlife Biosecurity Assessment (WBA) Pilot Program to a nationwide program available to all states with commercial poultry production. Creation of this WBA program would significantly reduce the risk of disease (e.g., HPAI and others) introduction.

Additionally, the Secretary of Agriculture should expand WBA to other animal production industries (e.g., domestic swine, bovine) to proactively prepare for possible introductions of other diseases (e.g. African Swine Fever).

We further recommend the Secretary pursue new funding in the President's budget to support these activities.

21 Wildlife Disease Diagnostics Laboratory (WDDL) (Status: New) Motion to retain, passed.

Recommendation: We recognize the growing impact of wildlife diseases on society and the environment. We further recognize that WS has established a highly collaborative and premier Wildlife Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (WDDL) and Biological Archive Storage (BAS) facility integral to regional, national, and global One Health Initiatives.

We strongly recommend the Secretary of Agriculture seek new funding in the President's budget to expand and sustain the WDDL and BAS facility to address the increasing need for research and management of wildlife diseases. Specifically, we recommend the following:

- Research grade and support wildlife disease scientists to further WS mission to support regional, national, and global needs. Research is critical to support monitoring and surveillance to mitigate threats posed to agriculture and human and animal health.
- To ensure long-term funding to support maintenance costs of WDDL operations
- Increased ultra-cold storage capacity and supporting infrastructure to meet increasing national demand to serve sample archival purposes for up to 5 million samples.
- Bioarchivists and technicians to manage and maintain database emphasizing sample and data governance.

The meeting broke for lunch at 12:00 pm MTN, and attendees reconvened at 1:30 pm MTN. NWSAC and WS staff took group photos prior to resuming NWSAC recommendation discussions.

Following the recommendations discussion and a quick break, the NWSAC Chair called the meeting back to order at 3:04 pm MTN, at which time MRP Under Secretary (U/S) Jenny Lester Moffitt provided remarks.

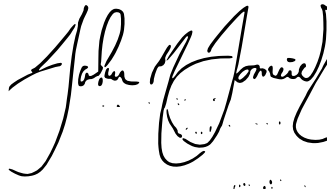
MRP Remarks: Jenny Lester Moffitt, Under Secretary (U/S), Marketing and Regulatory Programs, (MRP)

U/S Moffitt started by thanking WS for organizing the meeting and recognized previous and new NWSAC members, as well as the NWSAC chair and co-chair for leading the committee. U/S Moffitt highlighted the importance of OneHealth and WS' and the NWSAC's roles in that space. She also noted FY25 challenges for USDA. A Q&A session followed between the U/S and NWSAC members.

Following the U/S' remarks, WS DA Bucknall closed the meeting, thanking the NWSAC and mentioning her upcoming retirement. The meeting adjourned at 3:52 pm MTN.

Federal Register Comments Received on November 15, 2024: Docket No. APHIS-2024-0049-0001, marked "November 2024 NWSAC Comments Docket No. APHIS-2024-0049-0001" (ATTACHED)

Reviewed and Approved by NWSAC Chair, John Michael Tomeček:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John M. Tomeček". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "J" and "T".