



Weed and Vertebrate Committee

CACASA Spring Conference
Hyatt Vineyard Creek
Santa Rosa
Wednesday, May 14, 2014

Minutes

Committee Members

Ron Ross, Chair – San Benito
Cathi Boze, Secretary - Mariposa
Vince Guise – Contra Costa
Mike Boitano - Amador
Patrick Griffin - Siskiyou
Nathan Reade – Inyo/Mono

Alternates

Les Wright - Fresno
Kevin Wright - Calaveras
Joe Moreo – Modoc/Lassen
John Snyder - Riverside

I. **Call to Order/ Roll Call ~**

The Weed and Vertebrate Committee meeting was called to order at 12:07 pm by Chairman Ron Ross.

Committee members present: Ron Ross, Cathi Boze, Vince Guise, Mike Boitano, Nathan Reade, Les Wright, Kevin Wright, Joe Moreo, and John Snyder.

II. **Approval of Minutes ~ group**

It was M/S/C to approve the minutes of the April 3, 2014, Weed and Vertebrate Committee Conference call meeting.

III. **Old Business**

a. Weed-Free Forage ~ Ron Ross

Ron briefly discussed the Weed-Free Forage system, expanded scope, and the multi-agency MOU. Currently there are no USFS closure orders on federal lands in California.

- ❖ There are new partners for the recently signed MOU, including the California Department of Fish & Wildlife.
- ❖ To the committee, the biggest problem is the identification of the hay when it is certified
- ❖ The committee would like to see the use of colored twine.
- ❖ Issues with twine inventory – who keeps it? Who pays for it? Inventory control?
- ❖ The committee is looking into a program where arrangements are made with a twine manufacturer.
- ❖ Under this program, manufacturers will only provide colored twine to certified producers who have posted county inspections.
- ❖ By the CACASA Winter Conference, there should be a proposed program to discuss.

b. Status on EIR and Wildlife Services Operations ~ Eric Lauritzen/Tony Linegar

- ❖ Tony provided background on the EIR issue and public records request in the Spring of 2013 sent to Sonoma County alleging that the WS program was not in compliance with CEQA.



- ❖ Eric discussed the meeting with Bill Clay, Deputy Administrator for USDA/APHIS/Wildlife Services, while the CACASA delegation was in Washington D.C, and the need for CEQA analysis and compliance in California. There was a commitment from Wildlife Services to assist with the development of the EIR in California and Bill Clay stated that Wildlife Services would pay up to 80% of the cost for the CEQA analysis. It was also stipulated that CDFA would be the lead agency and that other stakeholders would participate fully in the process.
- ❖ Per Michele Dias, CDFA General Counsel, CDFA is developing a RFP for an initial study for a statewide CEQA which includes the cost for the initial study and costs of funding the program.
- ❖ Tony discussed the local impact in Sonoma County – they have changed over to county wildlife specialists (they have lost their 1 USDA Wildlife Services staff) and are re-creating the federal process at the local level.
- ❖ Various options: draft initial study for Sonoma County is available to use as a template (first step in CEQA compliance)
mitigated local negative declaration

IV. New Business

a. Wildlife Services Update ~ Wade Carlson, USDA APHIS Wildlife Services - Central District Supervisor

USDA APHIS Wildlife Services Update (Dennis Orthmeyer, WS State Director, was unable to attend the Weed & Vertebrate Committee Meeting due to jury duty)

- 1) *Federal budget FY 14.* WS received their FY 14 budget the last week of April
 - a. Their base budget for FY 14 was set at the FY 13 sequestration level. A 150K reduction from start of FY 13
 - b. They received a cut in their national disease biologist and sampling budget
 - c. They received 325K base increase for feral swine work across the state. Also received special project funds for San Diego County for an isolated feral swine population which are to be reallocated each year
 - d. Update on the progress of federal funding to allow a 50/50 split in county programs? CACASA may have discussed this in their meeting with Bill Clay and Kevin Shea, but CA WS has had no discussion with Bill or Kevin on this matter.
 - e. Cooperative County WS budgets this year increased 1%. Accounted for 1% increase in APHIS charges, but 1% COLA absorbed by CA WS. A point of interest is that the federal budget for FY 15 has proposed 3.5% COLA increase.
- 2) *USDA Office of Inspector General (OIG) auditors were in CA in April*
 - a. Met with State Director and State office staff
 - b. Selected WS District Supervisors (Shuler, Ono, Covington)
 - c. Spent day in field with selected Wildlife Specialists (Kern, San Luis Obispo, El Dorado, Yolo, Sutter, Mendocino, and Lassen Counties)
 - d. OIG was also provided opportunity to talk to and meet with WS cooperators.
 - e. OIG may be reaching out to Agricultural Commissioners. Dennis Orthmeyer contacted a few (El Dorado and Sutter among others) that they mentioned, but they may contact more.
- 3) *CA WS NEPA*
 - a. Last January WS set out an aggressive task of completing Environmental Assessments (EAs) for their work in CA.



- b. WS has completed 4 mammal EAs and their feral swine EA
- c. The EAs were ready in December. However, they had to wait to receive an informal Section 7 Endangered Species consult from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. They received it in mid-April and will be moving forward to sending the documents out for public comment once the WS Director is back in the office.
- 4) *CEQA/NEPA update*
 - a. Working to get update from CDFA and Farm Bureau
 - b. CDFA will be at the Weed & Vertebrate Committee meeting, they may give update
 - c. WS is committed to working to a combined CEQA/NEPA document and funding the effort
- 5) *APHIS Stake holder registry*
 - a. Sign up and receive notification on all APHIS and Wildlife Services news releases and Environmental documents that are released.
 - b. Use this URL: [accounts/USDAAPHIS/subscriber/new](https://accounts.USDAAPHIS/subscriber/new)
- 6) *Best course of action to prevent further erosion of the tools available to Wildlife Services for predator management.*
 - a. Continue to be strong combined and individual voices against proposed changes at the Fish and Game Commission.
 - b. Work with Farm Bureau, Cattleman's Association, and Woolgrowers to be a loud combined group protecting agriculture.
 - c. Continue to work with your state representative
 - d. Wildlife Services will continue to work with all the groups supplying information on the impacts
 - e. Due to sequestration, WS lost funding for aerial operations; funding has now been restored to work with the cooperators
 - f. Explore CDFA Codes for predator control, designation, etc. for additional support to Fish and Game Commission
- 7) *UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE - FARM SERVICE AGENCY Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP):*
 The Agricultural Act of 2014 (2014 Farm Bill) authorized the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) to provide benefits to livestock producers for livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality caused by adverse weather. In addition, LIP covers attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law, including wolves and avian predators (ravens and eagles). LIP payments are equal to 75 percent of the market value of the applicable livestock on the day before the date of death of the livestock as determined by the Secretary.

Wildlife Services will be working with FSA to verify predator damage under this program.

b. AB 2402 Weed Management Legislation ~ Doug Johnson, California Invasive Plant Council (Cal-IPC)

Doug gave an update on Cal-IPC projects around the State. Cal-IPC has been evolving from a focus on risk management and mapping to work with regulatory partners to prioritize projects and obtain funding for on-the-ground implementation.

- ❖ Currently there are 4 funded Sierra projects: Central Sierra (3 weeds), Sierra meadows, North Sierra fire (broom), and Sierra permitting (dyers woad and Spanish broom).



- ❖ 4 regional projects are in the works: Northwest (knotweeds and other riparian target species), North Central (riparian and upland target species), Bay Area (riparian target species), and South Central Coast.
- ❖ Other projects with funding: DOD (Camp Pendleton, Fallbrook Naval Weapons Center, Vandenburg AFB, Beale AFB, and Ft. Hunter Liggett), State Parks (ID guides for early detection), San Mateo County Coast (prioritizing early eradication target species), and San Diego (mapping and treating early eradication target species).

Other items of interest:

- ❖ 23rd Cal-IPC Symposium will be held at Chico State University from October 8 – 11, 2014. The focus will be on water and weeds. For example, yellow starthistle uses one million acre feet per year in the Central Valley (more than annual grasses use in the Central Valley and enough water to fill Lake Shasta ¼ full).
- ❖ ASTM Standard – developing a national standard for evaluating, assessing, and listing invasive plants.
- ❖ WHIPPET – a new on-line tool available in beta version to prioritize weed populations for eradication.
- ❖ National weed mapping – building CalWeedMapper functions into national mapping databases (University of Georgia)

Discussion of AB 2402 (Buchanan) that would have provided \$2.5 million in funding for noxious weed management (structured at 60% for the WMAs, 20% for research (including mapping and prioritization), and 20% to CDFA to administer the program as well as renewing funding for the biocontrol program).

- ❖ Supported by over 100 organizations from the Farm Bureau to the Sierra Club -- including agriculture, environmentalists, sporting groups, and water agencies
- ❖ Status: it passed the Assembly Ag Committee, but was placed on suspense in the Assembly Appropriations Committee due to the funding source – general fund dollars.
- ❖ Looking forward - the current plan is to build support through the Governor's Drought Task Force, the California Biodiversity Council chaired by Natural Resources Agency Secretary Laird, and CISAC chaired by Secretary Ross.

V. Adjournment ~

The Weed and Vertebrate Committee meeting was adjourned by Chairman Ross at 1:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathi Boze

Cathi Boze, Secretary

"A Weed (or two) a Day, That's All I Ask!"