



Weed and Vertebrate Committee

CACASA Winter Conference
Tuesday, October 8, 2013, 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm
Holiday Inn, Capitol Plaza, 300 J Street, Sacramento

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
Dennis Bray - Alameda
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 1:10 pm by Chairman Ron Ross.

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

II. **Approval of Minutes ~ group**

It was M/S/C to approve the minutes of the September 12, 2013, Weed and Vertebrate Committee Conference Call meeting.

III. **New Business**

a. Sonoma County Wildlife Services Program and CEQA ~ Tony Linegar

Tony discussed the public records request in the spring of 2013 sent initially to Sonoma, Mendocino, and Placer Counties from the Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF) based in Sonoma County requesting 10 years of USDA/APHIS/Wildlife Services records and alleging that the WS program is not in compliance with CEQA. The California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW) was also named as not meeting its mandate of protecting wildlife in the State. Because of this, Sonoma County is essentially the test case for this issue. Tony shared with the group the steps that his County Counsel is taking to address these issues, including a draft initial study for CEQA analysis.

ALDF wants counties to move to the “non-lethal” type program in Marin County which uses electric fences, hazing devices, night-penning of livestock, and guard dogs for protection from predators as a replacement program for the WS program. One of the major issues with the Marin program is that the electric fences impact wildlife corridors, particularly when enclosing large acreages, essentially shut them off, and kill a lot of wildlife. Marin County also has fewer ranchers and less open space than Sonoma County. The Marin program: 1) puts predatory animal control back into the hands of the private landowners with: no prohibition for ranchers from using lethal measures, no tracking of takes (i.e. number and species killed) or how they



were taken; 2) is not more wildlife friendly; 3) is not practical for large acreages or large numbers of livestock; and 4) has environmental impacts.

Issues:

- ✓ CDFW should be a partner and involved in the process, but is reluctant to participate.
- ✓ CDFW methodology and data is used for the EAs
- ✓ Work is performed under CDFW issued depredation permits on behalf of the ranchers and CDFW benefits from the services of the specialists working under these permits
- ✓ Need to meet with California Secretary for Natural Resources Laird and his staff with regard to CDFW participation and engagement in this issue

b. Wildlife Services update ~ Dennis Orthmeyer, State Director, USDA/APHIS/Wildlife Services

- Dennis thanked the CACASA representatives for meeting with Bill Clay and Kevin Shea at USDA/APHIS as well as with elected officials in Washington, D.C.
- Government shutdown effects:
 - ✓ 85% of California WS employees are deemed essential due to cooperative funding
 - ✓ 14 WS airport biologists and all but 2 County WS specialists are working
 - ✓ No district supervisors or administrative staff are working
- FY 2014 budget:
 - ✓ increase in feral swine management funding by \$20 million still in the budget
 - ✓ 75% decrease to disease biologist program
 - ✓ San Diego County – feral swine eradication project of a small population
USFS/State Parks/CDFW are working together on this
Time frame: 3 – 5 years
 - ✓ Sutter Buttes – meetings on feral swine project
 - ✓ Work with CDFW on county programs for feral swine
- Gas cartridges:
 - ✓ EPA proposal will be published in the Federal Register with full implementation that would result in a complete shutdown of gas cartridge use in the Central Valley
 - ✓ Perhaps the EPA proposal can be modified for California use due to comments and concerns received from California with regard to the impacts on agriculture
 - ✓ John Eisemann, Registration Manager at NWRC, is the WS contact on this issue
- NEPA – EA:
 - ✓ 4 district mammal EAs have been sent out for cooperator review and comment
They were scheduled to go out for public comment by October 15th, but it will be later due to the federal shutdown
Once that is completed, they will issue a FONSI and move forward
 - ✓ Dates for the remaining Statewide EAs for game species are dependent on CDFW
 - End of October 2013 for feral swine EA
 - January 2014 for beaver EA (need CDFW modeling section stream habitat analysis)
 - January 2014 for bear EA
 - Mountain lion EA is dependent on new statewide population estimate from CDFW and the Mountain Lion Foundation (new data research and technology)
 - Need current and up-to-date data for all EAs

c. CDFW Wolf Management Plan update ~ Pat Griffin

- This is more of a “people” issue than a “wolf” issue



- How you feel and how you act depends on your reaction to the wolf issue
- There is a diverse group of people in California and we all react differently to this issue
- Most of California is pro “wolf”
- OR7 is currently 20 miles north of the Siskiyou County border in Oregon where he has been since last April

- Issues:
 - ✓ How do you do a wolf management plan when there are no wolves in the State?
 - ✓ Proposal to list the wolf as an endangered species in California – how can you list it if it isn't here
 - ✓ No known documented populations in California at this time
 - ✓ Federal government is considering delisting the wolf (current wolf population figures: more than 100 in Oregon and Washington, 1700+ in northern Rockies, 4500 in the western Great Lakes area, 65,000 in Canada and Alaska)
 - ✓ Wolves take less than 1% of livestock predation (coyotes take a much higher percentage), the majority of the producers aren't affected, and they tend to impact only a few producers. However, the impact on those few producers is significant.
 - ✓ In addition to predation, wolves cause decreased conception rates, cause weight loss in animals, cause stress to livestock (and producers), and increase management costs.

CDFW created a stakeholder advisory group to make recommendations on how to manage wolves and limit conflicts with livestock. In addition to livestock representatives (CCA, CWGA, CFBF), the group is made up of hunting interests (Mule Deer Foundation, Rocky Mountain Elk foundation, California Deer Association), numerous environmental organizations, CACASA representatives (Pat Griffin and Rick Gurrola), and a University of California Cooperative Extension representative. Two subgroups have been formed: wolf-livestock conflict subgroup (Pat is participating in this subgroup) and the wolf-ungulate interactions subgroup.

CDFW is tasked to protect and conserve the wolf. The operating principles for the CDFW Wolf Management Plan process include an emphatic statement that CDFW will not reintroduce wolves into California. Goal is to make sure that all concerns are mitigated and that the livestock industry is protected. Public release of the CDFW Wolf Management Plan is proposed by 2015.

IV. Other Agenda Items

There were no other agenda items.

V. Adjournment ~

The Weed and Vertebrate Committee meeting was adjourned by Chairman Ross at 2:12 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathi Boze

Cathi Boze, Secretary

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