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STATE/FEDERAL/PRIVATE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM RELATIONSHIPS IN WILDLIFE DAMAGE CONTROL

by Rene M. Bollengier, Jr. 1/

Introduction - On December 19, 1985, Congress transferred the Animal Damage Control (ADC) program from Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Department of the Interior, to Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The transfer of personnel and equipment was officially completed on April 1, 1986. The transfer brought to USDA personnel with hundreds of years of collective animal damage control experience in agricultural and non-agricultural types of man/wildlife conflicts.

Philisophy of Animal Damage Control - Since the transfer of ADC to Agriculture, there has been concern expressed that problem solving, especially by "taking" of animals, will become the major direction of the Eastern ADC effort. We, as professional wildlife biologists, know that responsible ADC must consider environmental values, including the wildlife species causing damage. In this respect, we approach problems with two major considerations; we must attempt to solve or minimize the losses, and do so in a way that wildlife resources and environmental surroundings will be least impacted. ADC biologists in the East have functioned under these standards for many years. As we continue to provide assistance with ADC needs, we must also continue to consider these values and the impacts our recommendations may have.

Approach to Animal Damage Control - The Eastern program utilizes an integrated approach to ADC. Problem solving is accomplished by a variety of techniques including: technical assistance; education-information, either direct or through Cooperative Extension Services; and direct assistance to indivuduals with specialized needs. We also feel it is important that those who provide this special assistance have a strong background in wildlife biology as well as ADC.

Solutions to specific problems may involve a combination of strategies. With the transfer of ADC to USDA, ADC biologists have the opportunity to become more involved with "hands-on" problem solving. The term "operational control" in the East includes more than "taking" of offending animals when necessary. It includes recommending problem prevention techniques such as fencing and/or better husbandry to prevent future losses.

Cooperative Efforts - For many years under the FWS, ADC personnel conducted their programs under various types of agreements with other Federal, State, and individual cooperators. In most cases, emphasis in these states dealt with problems caused by migratory birds. This emphasis was due to FWS regulatory authority and responsibility for migratory birds, primarily due to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Now, with ADC in USDA/APHIS, it has become possible to assist with problems caused by resident as well as migratory bird species. With this reality, APHIS/ADC has become further involved in Eastern States with wildlife species that have been traditionally regulated by the States. In this respect, the Eastern ADC region has adopted a policy that we are here to FILL A NEED or ENHANCE existing programs where invited. We have no intent or desire to get into turf battles with other Federal or State agencies conducting ADC programs.

Our State Directors coordinate all cooperative efforts with State agencies, such as, Department(s) of Fish and Game, Agriculture, and in some cases health. Cases in point: In New Hampshire, we married the State Fish and Game ADC program with APHIS/ADC efforts. This approach enhanced ADC efforts for cooperators and user groups by providing added resources to do the job more effectively and to assure better program coordination. In New York, at the request of the New York Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYDAM) and after coordinating with the New York Department of Environmental Conservation, ADC entered into an agreement with NYDAM to handle coyote/sheep problems and enhance black bear work by utilizing educational techniques and demonstration areas. This program was designed to fill an existing need

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within the agricultural community. In Wisconsin, APHIS/ADC entered into agreement with the Department of Natural Resources to carry out necessary deer and migratory bird work involving problems associated with agriculture. This was in essence a shift of the State program to ADC. As a consequence, coordination and communication between ADC and cooperators is an ongoing and continuing process.

Cooperative Agreements - As occurred under FWS, APHIS/ADC programs are conducted under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and/or a Cooperative Agreement (CA).

MOU's are non-funding documents ("hand shake" agreements) in which signatory agencies agree to cooperate to control animal damage problems of mutual interest and common concern. MOU's identify areas of need and responsibility in general terms and vary from state to state. APHIS/ADC is presently updating existing MOU's which were in force under FWS. These (MOU's) are "master agreements" with State Department(s) of Fish and Game, Agriculture, Health and the Extension Service.

CA's are legal funding documents between two or more cooperators and identify specific task(s) to be accomplished. APHIS/ADC has the legal authority to enter into CA's with other Federal, State, county or local government entities as well as with private groups of individuals. CA's are the "meat and potatoes" of the ADC program. These agreements have three parts; the basic provisions agreed upon (the "agreement"), an annual work plan narrative, and a financial plan (SF-424). The "agreement" states what the cooperating parties mutually agree upon. The work plan narrative identifies the specific task(s) to be accomplished, and what guidelines and directions the program will follow. The work plan also briefly documents the required resources. Work plans are flexible, can be amended at any time, and are reevaluated at least annually. Work plans are completed through discussion and negotiation between cooperators and are coordinated with major State agencies. The financial plan identifies funding sources and levels as well as specific resources required including labor and equipment.

Funding and Priorities - Cooperative agreement funding is generally similar to other Federal assistance programs. There is no funding ratio dictated by law, but APHIS/ADC has established a target ratio of 50/50; USDA/COOPERATOR cost-sharing. The basis behind this decision is a feeling that, if a need or problem is significant, the cooperator should pay a "fair share" of the program cost. The 50/50 ratio usually involves State, and/or other government agencies, and private groups as cooperators. On occasion, however, this ratio may vary. For example, we have some agreements by which private industry pay 100 percent of program costs. APHIS/ADC also stipulates the programs must be conducted under our supervision and within Federal, State, and local laws. Although supervised by ADC, program direction and solutions are followed as mutually agreed upon by cooperators and ADC.

Agricultural problems and human health and safety matters are currently handled as a priority by the program.