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Wildlife Damage Management, Internet Center for

April 1987

Welcome from the Great Plains Agricultural Council

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Storch, Robert L., "Welcome from the Great Plains Agricultural Council" (1987). *Great Plains Wildlife Damage Control Workshop Proceedings*. 101.

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Welcome from the Great Plains Agricultural Council¹

Robert L. Storch²

On behalf of the Great Plains Agricultural Council and other sponsoring agencies, I want to welcome you to the 8th Great Plains Wildlife Damage Control Workshop. From the very first session that was held in 1973 at Manhattan, Kansas, this workshop has consistently enjoyed a high level of success, and we believe this year's effort will be no exception. Being approximately a year and a half since the last workshop in San Antonio, we were initially concerned about the amount of interest that would be shown in this year's workshop. However, in looking at the number and quality of the papers that are identified in the program's agenda and considering the number of people who are here today, it is obvious our concerns were unfounded and interest in the Great Plains workshop remains high.

At this time, I would like to recognize those who have contributed significantly to the planning and organization of this year's workshop. First I want to acknowledge Ardell Bjugstad, project leader for the Forest Service research unit here in Rapid City, for being instrumental in bringing the workshop to South Dakota. Ardell has also arranged for much of the financial assistance that is so necessary for a meeting of this size. Dan Uresk, who is a member of Ardell's staff, and the rest of the program committee have spent a considerable amount of time planning and organizing this year's workshop. If you will look at the inside cover of the program agenda, you will see the list of all individuals and agencies responsible for this workshop, and I want to thank each of those individuals and their employing agencies for their participation and support.

I believe it's appropriate to say a few words about the Great Plains Agricultural Council. The Council is made up of selected agencies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Cooperative Extension Services of the Land Grant Universities in the 10 Great Plains states. Its present organization dates back to 1946, however, its roots go back to the 1930's. The purpose of the Council is to provide an organization for effective cooperation

and coordination in responding to current and emerging issues of importance to Great Plains agriculture. In fulfilling its mission, the Council provides a forum for technology transfer and cooperation on activities that effect the natural resources of the Great Plains. Six committees perform much of the Council's work, and relative to this workshop, the Wildlife Committee is the sponsoring entity.

The agenda for the next two days is full. There are topics ranging from crop depredation to control and management of rodent and predator damage. However, in addition to the subject areas that have been traditionally covered at previous workshops, we have also included topics dealing with predator management and control as they relate to waterfowl production. Waterfowl managers across the Northern Plains continue to be active in this area and the program committee felt that the technicians and researchers involved in this form of wildlife management should be given the opportunity to share their knowledge with us. We're confident that this will add a new dimension to our program. We hope that you agree.

If I may, I would like to take a few minutes to philosophize with you. During the last several years I have been responsible for the administration of several units of the National Forest System here in South Dakota and Nebraska. From my observations, I can say the Northern Great Plains, like many other regions, is in a state of change. In agriculture, we see change. On many economic fronts, change is the norm rather than the exception. This is also true in the area of natural resource management. In my line of work, in the management of the National Forest System, more and more of the public are expressing their needs and concerns and requesting involvement in the decision making process. We, in the Forest Service, find ourselves in a position of closely scrutinizing every management decision that has the potential of affecting the public. We also are being required to review decisions made in the past to determine if those decisions remain in the best interest of the public today. I believe this increase in public involvement in natural resource management is the sign of the times, as well as, a sign of the future, especially when public funds and/or lands are involved. Now, how does all this relate to wildlife damage management and control? Again, I speak first hand. The amount of public inquiries on items such as predator and rodent

¹Presented at the Eighth Great Plains Wildlife Damage Control Workshop, Rapid City, South Dakota, April 28-30, 1987.

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management on National Forest System lands has grown substantially. As a result, the decisions I make today are made following more deliberation than those I made when I first arrived on the job. Accordingly, I would recommend that agencies and personnel involved in wildlife damage management and control closely monitor their programs to ensure these programs are adequately responding to the needs and concerns of the public.

The monitoring and evaluation of the wildlife damage programs on the National Forest System is vitally important. To assist us with this task, we use the Wildlife Society's recent Position Statement on wildlife damage control. It is used as a guide and an evaluation tool. I believe this position statement provides an excellent basis for evaluating ongoing ADC programs. I also strongly believe this approach is supported by the majority of the American public. I will not take time to review the individual points identified in this Position Statement, however, I encourage those of you

involved in wildlife damage programs to familiarize yourselves with it.

In closing, I call your attention to the excellent papers that open the workshop this morning. I want to highlight a couple of them that are specific to the State of South Dakota. The presentation by Chuck Post will describe the diversity of this state in terms of the land, the wildlife, and its people. From this you will acquire the appreciation of the complexity of the issues dealing with wildlife damage management and control that are occurring. In Al Miller's overview of the ADC program in South Dakota, you will see a very complete program. A program that not only consists of a successful statewide network, but one that has multi-agency involvement and is strongly committed to research.

Again, I welcome you to this workshop and hope it will provide a valuable learning experience to you. I know it will be for me. Thank you.