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Does the Wildlife Damage Management Profession Need A Code of Ethics?

Robert H. Schmidt, Editor The PROBE

There is discussion within the wildlife damage management profession about the necessity and usefulness of a "code of ethics" specific to this profession. I, for one, think the concept is timely and useful. By developing and supporting such a code of ethics, the profession is not labeling itself as unethical. Instead, it is distancing (and protecting) itself from activities, managers, and operations that the profession itself defines as involving unethical behaviors.

The development of a code of ethics defines the minimum ethical standard for a profession. It is important to recognize that this is a self-imposed standard. The profession itself defines what is acceptable and what is not, and individuals make the decision to sign or not sign or abide by the code. Thus, activities and behaviors not meeting the minimum standards defined in the code of ethics are, by professional definition, professionally unethical behaviors.

The Wildlife Society's (TWS) certification program for professional wildlife biologists includes a section on ethical requirements. All applicants for certification must "...pledge to uphold and conduct their activities in accordance with the Code of Ethics and the Standards for Professional Conduct as prescribed by The Wildlife Society." This code of ethics is professionally binding to the certified wildlife biologist, although it is surreptitiously meant to apply to all members of TWS. Each certified wildlife biologist, in striving to meet the objectives of TWS, pledges to:

1. *Subscribe to the highest standards of integrity and conduct;*
2. *Recognize research and scientific management of wildlife and their environments as primary goals;*
3. *Disseminate information to promote understanding of, and appreciation for, values of wildlife and their habitats;*

4. *Strive to increase knowledge and skills to advance the practice of wildlife management;*
5. *Promote competence in the field of wildlife management by supporting high standards of education, employment, and performance;*
6. *Encourage the use of sound biological information in management decisions; and*
7. *Support fair and uniform standards of employment and treatment of those professionally engaged in the practice of wildlife management.*

What follows below is a draft profession-wide code of ethics for wildlife damage managers. This is an attempt to begin a dialogue. It is important to note that this would be a voluntary code of ethics. Becoming a signatory to this code of ethics would demonstrate that you define the following set of actions as the minimum requirement for professionalism in the wildlife damage management arena. Failing to sign it does not identify you as unethical. It means you don't guarantee the following behaviors to the public, your clients, and your peers.

Remember, this is a draft, and an attempt to begin a dialogue. It may be the consensus that a code of ethics is not necessary, or that this draft should be revised substantially.

As a wildlife damage management professional, I

1. *affirm my strict adherence to the laws, regulations, and policies pertaining to wildlife damage management;*
2. *ascribe to a code of conduct which embodies the traits of honesty, integrity, sincerity, and dedication;*

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Wildlife Damage Management Code of Ethics

3. will show exceptionally high levels of respect for people, property, and wildlife;
4. will promote the conservation of natural resources;
5. will respect varying viewpoints on wildlife damage management;
6. will provide expertise on managing wildlife damage to all people upon request;
7. will present an image worthy of the profession;
8. will strive to work in a safe manner;
9. will recognize and promote cultural diversity in the work place;
10. will strive to broaden my knowledge, skills, and abilities;
11. will require good-faith efforts of clients and myself in resolving wildlife damage conflicts with non-lethal alternatives when practical; and
12. will choose the most humane, selective, and effective control techniques.

A similar draft appeared in the October-November 1993 issue of ADC magazine, and in the Spring 1994 issue of the *National Urban Wildlife Management News*, and I have

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Your contributions to *The Probe* are welcome. Please send news clippings, new techniques, publications, and meeting notices to *The Probe*, c/o Hopland Research & Extension Center, 4070 University Road, Hopland, CA 95449. If you prefer to FAX material, our FAX number is (707) 744-1040. The deadline for submitting material is the 15th of each month. Opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of NADCA.

received a number of well-reasoned comments covering many of these issues. For example, the statement that I "...will promote the conservation of natural resources" depends on what exactly "conservation" means. Without this definition, perhaps this element should be left out. The statement that I "...will provide expertise on managing wildlife damage to all people upon request" shouldn't mean that private wildlife damage managers can't charge a fee for their expertise. Perhaps "cultural diversity" issues are inherent in the other elements of the code.

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CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

August 2-4, 1994: Bird Strike Committee—USA, Ramada Hotel O'Hare, 6600 N. Mannheim Road, Rosemont, Illinois. Contact: James E. Forbes, USDA/APHIS/ADC, P.O. Box 97, Albany, New York, NY 12201-0097, (518) 472-6492, FAX (518) 472-4364.

September 11-17, 1994: Fur Takers of America Trappers College Short Course, Limber Lost Camp, LaGrange, Indiana. Contact: Charles Park, 410 S. Poplar Street, LaGrange, Indiana 46761, (219) 463-2072.

September 22, 1994: NADCA Membership Meeting, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Held in conjunction with the First Annual Conference of The Wildlife Society (see below). Contact Fred Knowlton, P.O. Box 36, Cornish, UT 84308 (801) 797-2508 or FAX (801) 797-1871.

September 21-25, 1994: First Annual Conference, The Wildlife Society, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Theme: "Excellence in Wildlife Stewardship through Science and Education." Includes half-day special symposium "Wildlife Damage Management: Future Policies and Practices." Contact: (301) 897-9770.

February 10-12, 1995: NADCA Membership Meeting, Itasca, Illinois. Held in conjunction with the Wildlife Control Technology, Wildlife Damage Management Instructional Conference (see below). Contact: Scott R. Craven, 226 Russell Labs, Univ. of Wis., Madison, WI 53706, (608) 263-6325.

February 10-12, 1995: The Wildlife Damage Management Instructional Conference. Presented by Wildlife Control Technology magazine. To be held at the Nordic Hills Resort and Conference Center, Itasca, Illinois. Contact: Peggy, (708) 858-4928.

April 10-13, 1995: 12th Great Plains Wildlife Damage Control Workshop, Doubletree Hotel, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Contact Ron Masters, (405) 744-6432 or Grant Huggins, (405) 221-7277.

NADCA Committees Need You!

The NADCA Board of Directors, unanimously approved the creation of seven (7) new and reorganized committees at the April 25th Directors conference. These new committees will guide the course of NADCA during the upcoming years.

If NADCA is to assume the leadership role in the Wildlife Damage Control Field that it is capable of, it will need the help of volunteers to serve on these committees.

1. Please look over the following descriptions of the committees.
2. Select the committee that you are most interested in or would like to serve on.
3. Contact and provide your name, address, telephone number and choice of committee to: James E. Forbes, NADCA, RD 4, Box 33, Averill Park, New York 12018.

1. Membership Committee

A. Old Member Subcommittee

Charge: To contact expired members and ask them to renew their membership. The names of those who do not renew would then be turned over to the Regional Director, who would send the ex-member a second letter.

B. New Member Subcommittee

Charge: To play the leadership role in attracting new members, to devise new and innovative ways of attracting new members, to work closely with the Regional Director.

2. Awards Committee

Charge: To identify deserving members/associations and also students presenting papers at conference and submit candidates' names to the Board of Directors. Develop wording for certificates and obtain award (plaque) and engraving.

3. Spokesperson Committee

Charge: Develop a set of position papers on subjects of concern to NADCA, such as: (1) Hunting; (2) Trapping; (3) Predator Control; (4) Public Land Use; (5) Exotic Wildlife Species; (6) Wildlife Reintroduction Programs; (6) Urban Wildlife; and (7) Relocating Wildlife. Identify other topics for position papers. Distribute position papers to politicians, Congress, local government, and the public, as appropriate. Provide all members with a set of position papers.

4. Ways and Means Committee

Charge: To provide the Board of Directors with new and innovative ways for NADCA to raise additional funding. This, I believe, is similar to the former Finance Committee.

5. Inservice Training Committee

Charge: To develop a series of Continuing Education Courses, Workshops, and Regional Training Opportunities for NADCA members and nonmembers.

6. Employment Committee

Charge: To act as a clearinghouse to put NADCA Members seeking employment in contact with prospective employers. This committee will keep a set of résumés of wildlife biologists, technicians, trappers, and volunteers on file and provide copies of these to prospective employers, when requested.

7. Information/Techniques Committee

Charge: Act as a clearinghouse to provide NADCA Members with information on a variety of Animal Damage Management techniques and new methods of solving wildlife conflicts. This is accomplished by providing copies of existing published material or by putting the Member in touch with a knowledgeable expert.

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Code of Ethics

Finally, without a doubt, the last two concepts in the code involving the terms "non-lethal" and "humane" will be the most controversial. There will have to be some incorporation of "when practical" in both of them. The issue of requiring a "good-faith effort" may also need modification, although I believe the phrase captures the essence of flexibility that all professionals need.

The intent of this article is to begin the dialogue. Your comments are needed and encouraged. I am trying to collect as many comments as possible and to revise the draft code according to the majority's desires. Send your comments to Robert H. Schmidt, Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, Utah State University, Logan UT 84322-5210.

This article expresses the views of the author, and not necessarily the NADCA.

The editors of The PROBE thank contributors to this issue: James E. Forbes and Wes Jones. We also wish to thank those who sent material that we were unable to use because of space limitations. Send your contributions to The PROBE, 4070 University Road, Hopland, CA 95449.

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Membership Application

NATIONAL ANIMAL DAMAGE CONTROL ASSOCIATION

Mail to: Wes Jones, Treasurer, Route 1 Box 37, Shell Lake, WI 54871, Phone: (715) 468-2038

Name: _____ Phone: (____) _____ - _____ Home

Address: _____ Phone: (____) _____ - _____ Office

Additional Address Info: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP _____

Dues: \$ _____ Donation: \$ _____ Total: \$ _____ Date: _____

Membership Class: Student \$10.00 Active \$20.00 Sponsor \$40.00 Patron \$100 (Circle one)

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