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PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE IN ANIMAL DAMAGE CONTROL

Donald Hawthorne, Associate Deputy Administrator
USDA-APHIS-ADC

I am pleased to be here to address a subject that is very special to many of us, one to which I have devoted my entire career. Animal damage control is a controversial component of wildlife management. In the late 1960's and early 70's, many wildlife practitioners tried to divorce themselves from animal damage control activities. In recent years, however, management of wildlife damage is viewed by many as a vital and integral part of wildlife management, whether to protect human interests and safety or to save an endangered species.

About 18 months ago, the Animal Damage Control (ADC) program of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) began a process that became known as a "futuring exercise". Oliver Wendell Holmes once said, "The great thing in this world is not so much where we stand as in what direction we are going". That quote could have served as a banner for that process. The purpose of the futuring exercise was to anticipate the future and to develop strategies that would successfully take us into the next century.

When agencies such as APHIS, Forest Service or the State Fish and Game Departments plan strategically for the future what factors determine program direction? We hear a lot about "public policy". Who is the "public" that makes this "policy"? Many groups claim to represent the "public". But is there really a single group that depicts the will of the people and that has the best interest of the country and its resources at heart?

Before we consider the "direction that we are going," let us pause for a moment "where we stand," and gaze back down the road from where we came. Humans have always concerned themselves with wildlife because they have shared the same habitat, feared for their safety, and competed for the same food. Early man probably sat around the campfire and planned how to protect their interests. The Bible records David as a shepherd protecting his father's sheep against predators. In colonial days the pilgrims paid bounties on wolves and other wildlife to protect livestock and agriculture.

The Federal Government became involved more that a century ago, when C. Hart Merriam convinced Congress to give him $5,000 to analyze data collected on birds and their distribution. He used the justification that the information would help farmers. In the early 1900's, livestock producers of the West began to express concern about predation on public lands. In 1914, Congress appropriated $125,000 to study the problem. This led to the passage of the Animal Damage Control Act of 1931 and the beginning of the Federal ADC program.

Wildlife damage management philosophy and methods have changed greatly during the last 28 years which spans my career. In 1965, there was the "Leopold Report," in 1971, the "Cain Report," and beginning in

1972, the three Executive Orders. All affected Federal and State programs but what caused this decade of activity? Was it the result of broad changes in "public policy," or was it orchestrated by special interest groups who had enough influence to get the attention of the people in power?

During the first few weeks of the Clinton Administration, public reaction to the Zoe E. Baud nomination for Attorney General and homosexuals in the military issue caused the telephone circuits to jam and fax and mailboxes to overflow. As the media began to analyze this reaction, the question arose as to whether this was a true indication of the will of the people or a demonstration of how effective special interest groups can be in generating public reaction. Vladamir Pozner and Phil Donahue on their CNBC television program concluded that it was the latter.

On the 500th anniversary of the discovery of America, several mock trials judged the actions of Columbus long ago using today's standards. ADC activities of early times are likewise being judged by today's standards. If Columbus' expeditions were today, he would have been compelled to adhere to contemporary moral and ethical standards. The current ADC program, as well, is compelled by today's public attitudes toward the management of wildlife damage.

So what caused this shift in public attitude toward wildlife damage control and hunting? I believe it occurred with the movement of a rural society to one that is urbanized. In my generation, a person either lived on a farm or ranch or had grandparents, aunts, or uncles who did. This change is reflected in the orientation of many biologists who influence policy and bring personal values into the field of wildlife management.

So how do wildlife managers sort out this "public policy" to anticipate future social values on which to develop strategies and program direction that are in tune with a changing society? The ADC Management Team believed program personnel should participate in the planning process to examine current programs and to forecast actions needed to meet public expectations in the 21 st Century. Consequently, a process was designed to obtain input from all levels of the program and consider the perspectives of various stakeholders and interest groups. This process, as stated earlier, was given the name "futuring exercise". It consisted of a committee of individuals who represented all organizational levels of the program. Persons outside the program were selected to add a further dimension and maintain a sense of objectivity. The committee was divided into three groups–methodology, management, and professionalism. At the initial meeting, the committee heard the perspectives of individuals representing the livestock industry, professional wildlife organizations, and animal welfare organizations as well as from the APHIS leadership.

The committee developed philosophies and recommendations that would prepare and position the program for the 21 st Century. Over an 18-month period, they looked at many facets of the program including lethal and non-lethal issues, the management of data and personnel which included professional standards and employee training. At the end of the process the recommendations totaled 57. They covered all aspects of the program, from its name, ethics, and management needs, to program directions and courses of actions on control methods.

Some of the members found it hard to look past many current needs to envision the program of the future. This is similar to a hungry man holding a few kernels of corn in his hand, deciding whether to plant them and look forward to a crop in the fall or to eat them and satisfy his immediate hunger. The same is true of an organization. The hunger pains of today must be dealt with before the mind can be stretched to project into the future to anticipate the bountiful harvest of new opportunities, emerging ideas, and complex challenges.

As the Management Team considered the basic philosophy in the recommendations of the futuring committee, they compared the mission statements in the 1990 Strategic Plan and the Draft Environmental Impact Statement to the committee's new suggested mission statement. A slight change could be detected. The focus on protecting American agriculture now incorporated a recognition of all public interests in wildlife and the need to consider them when planning and conducting wildlife damage management activities. In this context, we use the term Wildlife Services to refer to this new orientation of our activities and developed the following mission statement:

> The mission of ADC's Wildlife Services is to provide Federal leadership in managing problems caused by wildlife. Wildlife Services recognizes that wildlife is a significant public resource, greatly valued by American people. By its very nature, however, wildlife is a highly dynamic and mobile resource which can cause damage to agricultural and industrial resources, pose risks to human health and safety, and impact other natural resources. Wildlife Services fulfills a Federal responsibility for helping to solve problems which occur when human activity and wildlife are in conflict with to one another.

The statement of mission is a pronouncement of current program goals and objectives, where "we stand" today, if you will. What about the "direction we are going"? The ADC Management Team decided the strategic plan should contain a statement of vision that would suggest the direction in which we are moving. Many discussions followed, because to be truly a vision of the program, it must be shared by all employees. Some in the program feared that slightly cracking the door to consider other public interests in wildlife would totally shove us into a non-lethal comer, forsaking the founding purpose of the program–protecting American's agricultural resources and public health.

When discussing the past, present, or future, the recipe for a successful program must contain the same ingredient; it must be effective. This is true whether the methods are lethal, non-lethal, chemical or mechanical. However, coupled with effectiveness, the methods for controlling damage must also be measured against the yardsticks of social acceptability, and environmental and biological soundness.

In 1990, an auditor from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) came to the regional office for a briefing on the Western ADC programs. During the visit, she asked the question, "How much money would the program need to be totally non-lethal"? There was a missing element in her question. She should have added, "and remain effective". The $15 million from the cooperators supporting the program would not be available if damage management methods were not effective. The states and other cooperators that help finance the program could legally take their dollars and

do the control work themselves. They would not be bound by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and many other laws and Federal regulations that hold the Federal program accountable to the citizens of the US, Therefore, if the animal welfare organizations are, indeed, interested in wildlife, they must develop a partnership with the wildlife damage manager to assure the ADC program not only considers the welfare of wildlife but effectively addresses the problems caused by this publicly owned wildlife resource.

The ADC Management Team used these tenets on which to forge a mission and vision for the program. ADC's vision for Wildlife Services is:

> Wildlife Services' vision recognizes the entire field of wildlife management is in a period of great change. Wildlife damage management must increasingly take into account a wide range of legitimate public interests which may conflict with one another. These interests include wildlife conservation, biological diversity, and the welfare of animals as well as the use of wildlife for purposes of enjoyment, recreation and livelihood.
>
> Wildlife Services strives to develop and use wildlife damage management strategies that are environmentally, socially, and biologically sound. In its vision, Wildlife Services' strategies will be designed to prevent any loss to human health, safety, or the resource base while minimizing any loss to wildlife. This vision represents the future toward which our Wildlife Services are moving. In charting this course, Wildlife Service must continuously improve upon and modify damage management strategies which, constrained by current technologies, knowledge or resources, do not reach this high standard.

Research is obviously a principal component and the vitality of this vision. Research has duel functions. It must keep current tools available for the operational program while seeking new and innovative solutions to solve wildlife problems that will be publicly acceptable and effective.

Several years ago I heard futurist Daniel Burrus speak at the National Convention of the American Sheep Industry in Phoenix, Arizona. In his talk entitled "Futureview," Burrus told the audience that to have the competitive edge in the 1990's and beyond, they must use 20 new tools of technology. These tools are: genetic engineering, advanced biochemistry, bioelectricity, advanced computers, multi-sensory robotics, artificial intelligence, parallel processing, digital electronics, lasers, fiberoptics, optical data storage, microwaves, advanced satellites, photovoltaic, micromechanics, molecular designing, new polymers, high tech ceramics, fiber-reinforced composites, and superconductors to shape their future. Some of these have more application to wildlife damage management than others, but the point is research must explore new

areas of technology to find and develop new and innovative control methods.

The Denver Wildlife Research Center (DWRC) is working with some of these new technologies. They are testing electrorepellents to keep waterfowl and beaver out of specific areas. Electrodes are placed on one side of a stream bank or pond to keep beavers from sections being protected while allowing them to use the remaining area. DWRC is also working with immunocontraception that uses the immune system of an animal to prevent pregnancy and control populations that are causing damage.

We need not only expanded research but also involvement of universities and other institutions. The recent dedication of the Jack H. Berryman Institute for Wildlife Damage Management at Utah State University is an example of current progress. ADC is proud of the formation of an academic program that is committed to investigating and addressing wildlife problems. In our FY 1995 budget request, We will propose the establishment of Wildlife Damage Research Cooperative Units at selected universities. This still represents, however, a small fraction of the resources needed for research to equip the manager with methods to control wildlife damage problems for the next century.

A couple of years ago at a meeting in Idaho, I expressed my views on the future. I mentioned that someday we may have a trap closure device that would enable a specialist to check traps without actually seeing them. At the break, a field specialist told me he had traps set for a mountain lion in two separate canyons that took four hours to check by horseback. To save time he equipped a radio transmitter from a dog collar to each trap that would send a signal when the trap was closed. This enabled him to use a radio receiver to check the trap daily without leaving his truck. I applaud his initiative. This is not an isolated example of field personnel finding new ways to solve old problems, and we need to encourage and reward more of it. By the end of this year, if we can work out the radio frequency problems, ADC will have a device that can detect trap disturbance and send a signal to a receiver some distance away.

Taking this idea a step further, in the future there could be a restraining device equipped with sensors, linked by satellite to a computer, that could capture an animal, and by ultraviolet light detect the species caught. It could then release the non-targets or administer a euthanizing drug or tranquilizer to target animals. The field person using a computer could continuously monitor the device. Today's discussion is about checking traps every 24 hours; tomorrow, we could have 24 hour monitoring of all capture devices. The technology is available, we need only the resources to develop and use it.

In the future, if the public continues to demand wildlife to be managed for diversity and abundance, problems between human interests and wildlife will continue to increase. The public demanding these management objectives for wildlife has an equal responsibility to support effective management of the animals that cause damage to private and public property.

If the Wildlife Services of ADC is to remain viable in the year 2000 and beyond, we must (1) be attentive to changing social values and

responsive to all public interests; (2) remain effective in the management of wildlife problems; (3) have a state-of-the-art research program developing new and innovative methods, and (4) have an effective process for technology exchange between the scientist and the practitioner.

Controlling damage caused by wildlife began long before there was a Government or an Act of '31 and will continue well into the future as long as humans and wildlife share the same space. Under the stewardship of APHIS-ADC, the Wildlife Services program will continue to be the interface between the interests of humans and value they place on wildlife.

Presented to the 11th Great Plains Wildlife Damage Control Workshop, Kansas City, Missouri, April 26, 1993. By Donald W. Hawthorne, Associate Deputy Administrator, USDA, APHIS, ADC, P.O. Box 96464, Washington, D.C. 20090-6464