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Future Extension Programs On Wildlife Damage Management

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Overview

Extension educational programs, in cooperation with other federal and state organizations, significantly contribute to the present status of wildlife damage management as understood by natural resources professionals and the interested public. Although Extension Service, USDA provides national leadership and coordination of programs, most of the effective programs originate at the state and local level Cooperative Extension Service, regardless of the subject matter. This is particularly true in the area of wildlife damage management. For example, a recent compilation of Extension publications and videotapes on wildlife damage management identifies well over 100 titles available throughout the CES System (Ruff, Craven and Nosek, 1993).

Within the Cooperative Extension System, there are Extension wildlife programs in 39 states; only about six of these have specialists with principal responsibilities in wildlife damage management. In these six states, most of the specialists have either research and/or teaching or some other subject matter responsibilities. However, in almost all Extension wildlife specialist position descriptions in other states, wildlife damage management is usually identified as one of the principal responsibilities, and most of these specialists have split appointments.

For the seventh time since 1972, Extension wildlife and fisheries specialists will conduct a national workshop for professional development, April 29-May 2, 1993. Wildlife damage management has been a principal topic at each of these national workshops. At the last workshop held in Monterey, California in September 1990, the group participated in an evaluation of 17 issues and strategies chosen by the program committee as important to future Extension educational programs. Five of these 17 topics relate directly or indirectly to wildlife damage management. The following discussion is an identification of concerns expressed by Extension wildlife and fisheries specialists about future Extension educational program needs related to wildlife damage management.

Discussion

These future issues and potential solutions identified for Extension wildlife damage management programs are taken from the *Proceedings of the National Extension Wildlife and Fisheries Workshop* (Fitzhugh and Miller 1991). These issues and solutions reflect conclusions reached in workshop sessions attended predominantly by Extension wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture specialists from across the nation. The work groups identified the following issues.

Issue 1:

The expanding human population (predominantly urban), will create an accompanying increase in wildlife damage situations and a need for management solutions. There is a need for additional wildlife specialists and resources focused toward wildlife damage management.

Solutions:

Encourage development of appropriate state or regional specialists' positions:

- Increase the number of specialists who deal specifically with wildlife damage; create more interdisciplinary linkages with other agencies; and, revise position descriptions to reflect Extension contributions in wildlife damage management and related research.

Pursue additional funding resources:

- Initiate a competitive grants program that would focus on wildlife damage management applied research and demonstrations; re-examine existing sources of funding (e.g., RREA) for suitability and reallocation to wildlife damage management; and, encourage establishment of specified funds for innovative technologies in wildlife damage management.

Issue 2:

There is broad public concern about wildlife damage issues, but diverse attitudes and values have led to polarization, misinformation, and stalemate in problem resolution. For example:

Protectionists' versus resource management philosophy.

- Individual animal versus 1 management values.
Description of wildlife: animal s/nuisance animals
- Interactions between enhancement and wildlife management

- Disagreement about appropriate management/control strategies acceptable alternatives.
Animal welfare and sensitive concerns in wildlife damage management programs.

Solutions:

Integrate aggressive environmental education into ongoing wildlife damage management programs to target

- Other natural resource professionals through continuing education program
- County Extension agents and private landowners through training demonstrations.
- Urban community leaders and decision makers through a variety of coordination meetings and media programs.
- Use of the revised handbook proceedings from the three major wildlife damage management conference inform and involve professional social and the related natural resources community.

- Promote interdisciplinary Extension education programs to address policy education and other related environmental issues.

Issue 3:

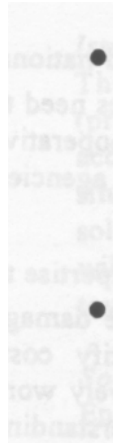
Need for increased cooperation, coordination and linkages between USDA Extension Service and APHIS-ADC programs at federal and state levels.

Solutions:

Demonstration/Research

- Develop a USDA competitive grants program for applied research and demonstration projects in wildlife damage management.
- Cooperatively examine the need for a liaison position to focus on identifying interagency program gaps and opportunities.
- Increase focus on facilitation and promotion of interdisciplinary research to address wildlife damage management needs within and between agencies.
- Cooperate in conducting training/continuing education in policy education on wildlife damage management and related environmental issues. Examine opportunities to cooperatively develop appropriate and timely educational means such as publications, videotapes, training conferences and continuing education workshops.

- At the local, state, regional and national levels, personnel of the agencies need to explore and implement cooperative efforts that benefit both agencies' programs.
- Coordinate multidisciplinary expertise to better address complex wildlife damage management needs and identify cost-effective solutions. Cooperatively work to improve the image and understanding of wildlife damage management among the public and among peers in agriculture and natural resources professions.
- Cooperate in efforts to increase understanding and appreciation for the benefits of wildlife damage management within each of the agencies.
- Work cooperatively to increase both the educational and public relations efforts in support of wildlife damage management programs.
- Proactively address the "animal rights/animal welfare" issues in a coordinated approach.
- Encourage and promote interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary programming to better address the complexity of wildlife damage management issues and incorporate new expertise in problem solving.
- Carefully examine our approach to wildlife damage management problems. The terminologies must be sensitive to media perception. Need for increased education and training in wildlife damage management.



- Cooperate in development and promotion of continuing education/professional development programs; include alternative methods such as use of immuno-contraception in wildlife population management.
- Work together to encourage and participate in the development of university level courses in wildlife damage management that include:
 - Principles and philosophies of wildlife damage management;
 - Methods and techniques for wildlife damage management;
 - Interpersonal communication and public relations;
 - Understanding of sound wildlife damage management as an integral part of wildlife management and the wildlife profession.

Issue 4: Urban Wildlife Management Needs In Relation To Wildlife Damage Management.

Solutions: Public attitudes, values and educational needs.



- Direct factual information on wildlife damage management toward urban audiences to help them understand that:
 - pets may serve as predators or prey for wildlife species in urban settings; without consideration for wildlife damage problems, attracting wildlife to urban areas may create human health concerns, economic and social problems.



- Help urban audiences understand that wildlife in urban areas may become a liability, e.g., health hazard or legal problem.

Refocus programs toward new help address urban wildlife opportunities well as problems.



- Improve networking wild resource agencies, co organizations and citizens' reach diverse urban audience
- Focus education and training; wildlife damage management nontraditional audiences, e planners, community mane estate developers, tan homeowners' associations, c lawn care operators and city n

Issue S: Aquaculture Wildlife Damage Me Concerns.



- Need better consensus regulatory agencies and aquaculture interest groups about the s migratory and depredation pro both marine and fresh water aquaculture facilities.
- Lack of economically feasi efficacious methods of n techniques to reduce damage migratory birds and a hesitance part of aquaculture producers these non-lethal techniques. Recognize that increasing aquaculture production contributes creation habitats and food supplies f, depredating migratory birds.
- Need improved coordinatic understanding of legislation regulations at the state and feder

Solutions

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Increase support for research and education to determine economic impacts and sociologic perceptions about the scope of losses and acceptable damage management techniques.

Promote interdisciplinary research, demonstration methods and management technologies for implementation at aquaculture facilities.

Provide useful assessment techniques for planning and site selection of new aquaculture facilities.

Devise policy education to resolve local conflicts about migratory bird damage.

Issue 6:

Animal Rights/Animal Welfare and Implications to Wildlife Damage Management Programs

Recognize that different groups have different missions, values and philosophies regarding the management and use of animals.

Recognize that the majority of the animal rights groups oppose all lethal methods of wildlife damage management whereas the majority of animal welfare groups focus more on the "humaneness" of animal care, research or damage management on domestic, feral or wild populations.

Solutions:

Offer education and training programs that use non-confrontational approaches to train our own personnel and to enable

them to educate the majority of Americans who are not animal rights advocates; and, use existing policy positions developed by professional societies, e.g., *The Wildlife Society Conservation Policies 1992*, "Responsible Human Use of Wildlife" and "Wildlife Damage Control Policy Statements," to strengthen and reinforce our training and policy education programs.

Summary

The growing interest in wildlife damage management applications or principles is evident in the diverse groups *who* support, berate, or recognize its importance to wildlife and ecosystem management. Those of us with some ties to the land recognize that wildlife damage management is integral to effective resource management. One of our greatest and growing challenges is to provide conservation education to the majority of the people. In *A Sand County Almanac (1949)*, Aldo Leopold described this challenge well. "The problem then, is how to bring about a striving for harmony *with land among a* people, many of whom have forgotten there is any such thing as land, among *whom* education and culture have become almost synonymous with landlessness. This is the problem of conservation education."

As we think about the issues discussed in this paper and other issues in recent years, e.g., Acord (1991), Miller (1991), Hodgdon (1992), and Miller (1992) related to the future of wildlife damage management, we must recognize that one of our greatest challenges is the one so eloquently identified by Leopold about the problem of conservation education over 40 years ago. With predictions that 80% of the U.S.

population during the 1990's will be living in urban areas, we must recognize that the majority of this population is two or more generations removed from the land. As noted by Berryman 1992, "...if wildlife damage is to be pursued successfully, it must have public understanding and acceptance. The public will not change and be supportive until there is broad and overt support from the cooperating agencies."

I am confident that human-wildlife interactions will continue to increase and that they will *continue to* stimulate controversy. I think those of us involved in wildlife damage management must be proactive, responsible, professional in our actions, and sensitive to our changing audiences' values and needs. We must be honest, compile and use legitimate evaluation data, and improve our capabilities to educate the public and involve them in decision-making. We must improve our capabilities to communicate effectively with other professional disciplines and stakeholders interested in wildlife. These are challenges that will drive Extension programs in wildlife damage management in the future. We look forward to working cooperatively to address these challenges.

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