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USDA FOREST SERVICE ROLE IN WILDLIFE DAMAGE CONTROL
by Hugh C. Black*

Wildlife damage control is an important objective of resource management on the 191 million acres of National Forest System (NFS) lands administered by the USDA Forest Service. Policy on wildlife damage control is based on the USDA Policy on Fish and Wildlife (Secretary's Memorandum 9500-3, July 1983). The objective of wildlife damage control is to reduce damage and loss by wildlife on all NFS lands to levels consistent with management objectives. Control measures are only undertaken when and where necessary to realize wildlife management objectives and to prevent serious damage to public or private property and natural resources. Because of its economic and environmental advantages, the Forest Service (FS) supports and promotes the concept of integrated pest management in all attempts to reduce economic losses caused by vertebrate animals.

On NFS lands, wildlife damage control efforts are planned and conducted under the terms of an agreement between the FS and the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), U.S. Department of the Interior (USDI) (FSM 1531 - Interagency Agreement on Coordinated Approach to Fish and Wildlife Management, revised February 1983). The FS recognizes the FWS as the lead agency in wildlife damage control in terms of technical expertise, "wildlife damage control projects on NFS lands shall be carried out in accordance with methods recommended by the FWS," and as a source of "extension-type technical assistance." The FS conducts routine wildlife damage control activities, directly or via contract, but by agreement "only the FWS or approved State agencies are authorized to conduct predator control programs (on NFS lands)."

Wildlife damage control is needed on NFS lands, because animals cause serious damage to forest and range resources and may constitute a hazard to public health. Damage to forest plantations and young stands in the West is the most important problem. Based on a 1984 survey, four western regions conducted wildlife damage control on about 100,000 acres of plantations and young stands each year. Direct control costs for this work exceeded \$5.5 million per year. An additional 8-10,000 acres per year required replanting, principally because of animal damage, at an additional cost of \$3.5 million per year.

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