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Development of a Double-Crested Cormorant Damage Management Plan for the Southeastern United States

Keith J. Andrews

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Wildlife Services

Pete Poulos

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Wildlife Services

Charles (Bo) Sloan

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Wildlife Services

Jerrold L. Belant

U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, Denali National Park and Preserve, Denali, AK

Paige G. Ross

Exmore, VA

See next page for additional authors

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Authors

Keith J. Andrews, Pete Poulos, Charles (Bo) Sloan, Jerrold L. Belant, Paige G. Ross, and Paul DeBow

DEVELOPMENT OF A DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT DAMAGE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE SOUTHEASTERN UNITED STATES

KEITH J. ANDREWS, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Wildlife Services, P.O. Box 316, Stoneville, MS 38776

PETE POULOS, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Wildlife Services, 4700 River Road, Unit 87, Riverdale, MD 20737

CHARLES (BO) SLOAN, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Wildlife Services, P.O. Box 316, Stoneville, MS 38776

JERROLD L. BELANT, U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, Denali National Park and Preserve, Denali, AK 99755

PAIGE G. ROSS, P.O. Box 247 Exmore, VA 23350

PAUL DEBOW, Route 1, Box 3286, Plymouth, NH 03264

Abstract: In response to needs within the aquaculture industry to alleviate increasing depredation by double-crested cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus*), the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services, in conjunction with Federal, State, and Canadian wildlife and fisheries agencies, the aquaculture industry, and other wildlife professionals, is developing the framework for a comprehensive cormorant damage management program that uses an integrated wildlife damage management approach. This cooperative effort will produce a meaningful, mutually beneficial program that will reduce the effects of cormorants on aquaculture and sport and commercial fisheries, improve understanding of cormorant biology, and avert existing, but often fragmented, attempts to control cormorant populations. Explicit techniques or control measures to be implemented may include resource (facility or fish stocks) management, exclusion methods, and cormorant population reduction methods (non-lethal and lethal) at aquaculture facilities, winter-roost sites, and/or breeding colonies. Given the dramatic increase in cormorant populations over the past 15 years, cormorant-human conflicts will not subside in the foreseeable future. Thus, the focus of management efforts should be on development of strategies to minimize, rather than eliminate, resource losses.

Key Words: aquaculture, catfish, depredation, double-crested cormorant, *Phalacrocorax auritus*, roost

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