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ADC PROGRAM COMPLIANCE WITH THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

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The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) conducts a national, cooperative Animal Damage Control (ADC) program for the protection of American agriculture and other resources from wildlife damage. Like all Federal governmental activities, APHIS-ADC must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended. This law directs Federal agencies to analyze the environmental impacts of major Federal actions, incorporate environmental considerations into decision making, and generally to mitigate adverse environmental impacts due to governmental activities. NEPA also established the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) to promulgate regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA. The CEQ regulations appear in the Code of Federal Regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508). APHIS has supplemented the CEQ regulations with additional rules for NEPA compliance (44 FR 50381, 8/28/79)¹.

As indicated by Acord (1989) at the last Great Plains Wildlife Damage Control Workshop, APHIS is planning for a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to cover ADC activities nationwide began with transfer of the ADC program from the U.S. Department of the Interior (USDI) to USDA in December 1985

(Public Law 99-190, 465). In preparing to assume management of ADC, APHIS adopted USDI's Final EIS on this program (51 FR 6290, 2/21/86). That analysis (USDI 1979) did not cover all ADC program activities, so APHIS soon began work on a new programmatic EIS. The formal Notice of Intent to prepare a new EIS on the Federal/Cooperative ADC program was published by APHIS in November 1987 (52 FR 43778, 11/16/87). Public comments on the scope and content of this EIS were solicited and evaluated during December 1987 and January 1988.

Following solicitation and evaluation of proposals from prospective contractors, APHIS awarded a contract to prepare the Animal Damage Control program EIS to Dames & Moore, Bethesda, MD, in September 1988. The ADC program appointed an EIS Technical Review Group consisting of experienced wildlife biologists representing all facets of the program to work with the contractor on scientific and technical aspects of the EIS. The author of this paper is a member of the Technical Review Group.

The Animal Damage Control Program Draft EIS (USDA 1990) was released for public review and comment in July 1990. This document evaluated 11 alternatives and identified the current program as the

preferred alternative. Public comments were received through October 1, 1990 (55 FR 24597, 6/18/90 & 55 FR 35700, 8/31/90).

Approximately 1,500 comment letters were received on the Draft EIS. The contractor, ADC Technical Review Group, and other APHIS staff are evaluating these comments and preparing appropriate revisions for incorporation into the Final EIS, which is expected to be completed in 1992.

Copies of the Draft EIS are available from the Director, Operational Support Staff, APHIS/Animal Damage Control, Room 820--Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville MD 20782; telephone (301) 436-8281.

LITERATURE CITED

- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). 1990. Animal damage control program draft Environmental Impact Statement. APHIS DEIS 90-001. USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Serv., Washington, DC 20090-6464.
- U.S. Department of the Interior (USDI). 1979. Final Environmental Impact Statement. Mammalian predator damage management for livestock protection in the western United States. U.S. Fish and Wildl. Serv., Washington, DC. 789p.

¹Citations in this format refer to federal Register notices.