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DYNAMICS OF WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT

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Abstract: Wildlife damage management is a dynamic profession. Our focus has shifted from dealing with primarily agricultural interests. In addition to agricultural issues, we now deal with endangered species protection, human health and safety, and wildlife damage management issues in the urban environment. The dynamics of wildlife damage management are influenced by the changing needs of society, professionalism among our ranks, and the political process. Professionalism and meeting the needs of the public continue to be the most important part of the dynamics of wildlife damage management.

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Key words: administration, animal damage control, political process, professionalism, wildlife damage management.

I want to begin by discussing some of the current issues in the animal damage control program and in the federal government and then relate that to what I have termed the "dynamics of wildlife damage management." Many federal agencies have been undergoing recision hearings during these past few months. These are hearings that Congress has held to determine how much of the 1995 budget, money already appropriated, will be taken away. This has been a major focus in Washington. I am sure you have heard a lot about it. The Department of Interior has been particularly hard hit.

I think it's fair to say that if the Animal Damage Control (ADC) program was in the Department of Interior today, that there probably would not be a Federal ADC program, simply because of budget priorities. So, first and foremost, the idea of transferring the program to the Department of Agriculture might have been one of the more progressive decisions that's been made in the interest of wildlife damage management. The National Biological Service has been on the blocks as far as the recision hearings are concerned. It is a serious issue with many of the Interior agencies and many of the other agencies in the Department of Agriculture, particularly those that are involved in natural resources management. But I am happy to say that the ADC program in the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has heard nothing about recision in the 1995 budget. There may possibly be some loss of construction funds, but that in itself is minor. That reflects a positive attitude about where the ADC program stands, at least with Congress. We have had a 6.3 million dollar reduction proposed for the FY96 budget. So far the reaction on Capital Hill has not been very sympathetic on that reduction.

Over the last 2 years, we have been involved with this administration in something known as "reinventing government." Many of you who have been involved in state government have been through this reorganization process before. Fortunately, in ADC, we have been through that process as well. The focus of that effort has been on stream-lining government, being customer focused, being entrepreneurial, and

more efficient. The ADC program had an opportunity for reinvention at the time it was transferred from Department of Interior to Department of Agriculture and we took advantage of that opportunity. It is truly a case where foresight payed big dividends. We reduced the number of regional offices from the 8 that we had in U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to 2 in APHIS.

Administratively, ADC is a lean organization at the state, regional, and national levels and this has been the focus of the reinvention efforts of this administration. We continue to evaluate our structure because it is not just simply a matter of saying "we've been there, done that sort of thing." We must continue to review our programs to make sure they are efficient and that most of our resources on the ground are providing service to people.

Another aspect of reinventing government has been the focus on customers. The ADC was ahead of this curve when we conducted a customer satisfaction survey of clients that received direct control assistance from the ADC program. The numbers I am going to relate are not from Federal Express, not from IBM, or any other major corporation in America. However, they would be the envy of any corporation in America. Certainly you would not think of numbers like this coming from the federal government or from a federal program. Of the people surveyed, 98.2% thought that ADC personnel were pleasant to work with; contrast that with the IRS, postal service, or many others. Almost 96% said ADC program people made the client feel like their problem was important and 95% indicated that ADC employees knew what to do. Ninety-seven percent said that the ADC service was useful and 94% said that their level of loss would have increased without ADC assistance. These are pretty impressive numbers and reflect highly on ADC employees. It makes us very, very proud to see these kind of results.

Another aspect of reinventing government is addressing a broader constituency; providing service to the maximum number of people possible. The ADC is now involved in public health issues from rabies in south Texas, which Dr. Clark

will talk about later this week, to rabies outbreaks in the north-eastern U.S. Animal Damage Control is involved with a number of other public health issues as well. We are involved in public safety at airports, and with the aquaculture industry, a new and emerging agriculture enterprise. Also ADC is involved in endangered species protection in many areas of the country, and in keeping out exotics such as the brown tree snake (*Boiga irregularis*). We have been working with the Department of Defense through our program in Guam to prevent movement of the brown tree snake to the island of Hawaii and elsewhere.

Our organization has been through a strategic planning process, another part of reinventing government, where we had to determine goals and strategies for achieving them. We were encouraged to be entrepreneurial and I can't think of an organization anywhere, especially in government, more entrepreneurial than ADC. We can take any State director or any manager in this program and put him or her in charge of a private business and they would know right away what the bottom line meant. They would know how to maintain a profit margin and you would see very effective management.

Two years ago, the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies at their annual meeting passed a resolution commending APHIS and ADC managers for the management of the ADC program. Very few federal agencies ever get that kind of endorsement, particularly from an organization of state government agencies.

We have been able to use the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to communicate to the public the kind of things that we do. Early on, we thought NEPA would be a real stroke of misery, but it has presented us with a tremendous opportunity because it provides a forum for communication to the public about decisions we make and alternatives for control. Through this avenue we can show the public that we have in fact analyzed alternatives and have chosen the most effective, efficient, and most environmentally sound alternative. We have done these things in the past but never used NEPA as a means of communicating this information to the public.

Our public affairs efforts have paid big dividends and credit must be given to our field people. About 5 years ago I was in Oregon meeting with ADC employees and 1 of the ADC specialists told me that we needed some public relations people working for us; public affairs people that could talk to the media. I dismissed that idea as being inconsistent with our efforts to be efficient and spend our resources on service delivery. Five years later we are heavily involved in public relations and I thank Stan Thomas for his suggestion. As Deputy Administrator for ADC, I wish I had taken it more seriously at the time. It turned out to be very prophetic in terms of his anticipation of the need that existed.

Our campaigns emphasizing living with wildlife, working with the Ag in the Classroom program and with Project Wild through the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, are paying dividends as well. Our constituent base is becoming broader, becoming more outspoken, and they are unwilling to accept a "no" answer about issues of wildlife damage management.

Animal Damage Control has an excellent research

program. We have built a new state-of-the-art animal research building and anticipate relocating the Denver Wildlife Research Center to Colorado State University in Ft. Collins. It will be known in the future as the National Wildlife Research Center. The ADC is currently negotiating with General Service's Administration and Colorado State University to complete the build out of that facility to include laboratory and office space. Barring unforeseen difficulties with Congress and downsizing in federal spending, we expect to be relocated to the National Wildlife Center by 1997.

The ADC program and wildlife damage management as a profession have done well and continue to improve. For an organization that has been pronounced dead on so many occasions, ADC is in surprisingly good health. The rumors of our demise have been greatly exaggerated. I think the rumors of our future ought to be equally exaggerated because there is great opportunity.

Throughout its history, the ADC program has been controversial. For example, literature from the Anti-Steel Trap League in 1942 does not look much different from the literature of 1992, 50 years later. Controversy is a fundamental part of wildlife damage management. Fifty years from now ADC will be looking at exactly the same situation. How well we deal with controversy will determine our future. This point brings me to the issue of dynamics of wildlife damage management.

Conservation of wildlife species in this country has been an unparalleled success. If we look at the abundance and diversity in wildlife species we are doing very well. It has never been greater. The ADC program deals with a lot more problem species that are very adaptable to a changing environment. We deal with wading birds that do not wade anymore and with coyotes (*Canis latrans*) that have adapted to life in New York City. Joe Skeem made the comment at our appropriations hearing a couple of weeks ago that when the last man on the face of this earth is dead there will be a coyote raising his leg on his tombstone. This tests our ability to outwit the species with new control technology because they have been able to outwit most control methods up to this point. We deal with biological systems that are constantly changing. Through the collective efforts of conservation and management agencies, we have created an ever increasing need for wildlife damage management. This is the first dynamic that I referred to earlier.

The dictionary definition of "dynamic" discusses the pattern of growth or change of any object or phenomenon. The first change that we see is the "needs" issue. Second is professionalism in wildlife damage management. The professional standard for wildlife damage biologists and technicians has been raised. Through training, communication and influence skills have dramatically increased. We have worked with universities to increase the teaching and research capacity in wildlife damage management. We have created an academic program at Utah State University, and the center of excellence at Lincoln University in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service. We have encouraged other universities to increase academic training in wildlife damage management. It's been a true success story in terms of bringing wildlife damage man-

agement back into the wildlife management profession. Our employees in ADC have kept their focus on customer satisfaction. They have become involved in professional societies and in conferences like these. I congratulate the professionals for their leadership in continuing to provide excellent conferences such as the Great Plains Wildlife Damage Control Workshop, the Eastern Wildlife Damage Management Conference, and the Vertebrate Pest Conference. All are important sources of continuing education for the wildlife damage management professional.

If you have an increasing need, and you have a professional cadre of people to address that need, what keeps this from being the perfect equation? This brings me to the third dynamic which is the political process. The political process is defined as the formulation and administration of public policy by interactions between social groups and political institutions. Often social groups disagree about how much wildlife damage management there should be, who should handle it, how it should be done, and what the impact is when you are finished.

The political mix we face is mind boggling. You must include every level of government from city, county, state, and the federal government and then move over to the legislative side where there is the U.S. Congress, state legislatures, county commissions and city commissions. In this mix of political organization there are career people, political appointees, and elected people. In addition, we deal with a wide range of interest groups that include environmental organizations to animal activist organizations to conservation organizations. There is potential for gridlock if we do not manage the political process - not through partisan politics but simply through the political process defined earlier. The political process is dynamic and is influenced by the fact that the nature of wildlife damage management has changed.

Wildlife damage management is no longer just an agriculture issue. It is a transportation issue, whether you are talking about beaver damage to roads or wildlife safety hazards at airports. It is a public health issue, a property owner issue whether you are dealing with the owner of a hangar, boat dock, or a wood lot. Private property is again at issue here. And finally, we have reached the ultimate pinnacle of having urban dwellers and the urban audience involved in wildlife damage management. This will influence the dynamics of wildlife damage management to an even greater extent.

People are less tolerant of wildlife damage. We need to know what the public thinks. To this end, Utah State University and Robert Schmidt have been commissioned to do a survey on public attitudes about wildlife damage management. Every time this issue comes up, someone lays claim to the mistaken notion that we know what the public thinks. We do not know what the public thinks, but we are about to find out.

You will be hearing more about the survey through the Wildlife Society's annual meeting, through the Vertebrate Pest Conference, or perhaps here at sometime in the future. We are going to know more about what the public thinks and it will help influence the political process. The public is in a far more conservative mood as indicated by last November's election. Regardless, environmental issues are still a major concern and a very, very important issue to the public. I would not interpret the conservative mood in the country as being an anti-environment mood. It would be a critical mistake in our process if we interpret it that way. This again reinforces the idea that the public is going to demand professionals to be available to carry out the wildlife damage management function, whether it be in the federal ADC program, a private practitioner, or state government. The public is going to demand a level of professionalism that they will be comfortable with.

We have "need" as the first part of the dynamic of wildlife damage management, something we have little control over. Ecological circumstances dictate the need. Professionalism, on the other hand, is entirely within our control. It determines the future of wildlife damage management and each one of us has an ethical responsibility to be professionals. It is one of the most critical parts of our job and our training. Professionalism is probably the most important of the 3 dynamics because the other 2 to some extent hinge on this. The political process is important. We need to pay attention to it, manage, use, and understand it, but we can never, never, never ignore it.

In closing, let me again relate the idea that the dynamics of wildlife damage management are related to the pattern of change or growth of any object or phenomenon. If you look at the history of ADC and of wildlife damage management as a profession either in our program or through the private practitioner, you can see the change that has occurred. No longer is this just an agricultural protection issue; we are involved in a wide range of issues. We are no longer focused exclusively on use of toxicants, we are focused on an integrated program. There is a pattern of growth in expansion of ADC activities into private industry as well. We need to focus on conferences such as this that contribute to the professionalism that exists in the wildlife damage management profession.

One of the greatest rewards that I have seen most recently occurred at the North American conference, 2 weeks ago. The Wildlife Society presented their annual Aldo Leopold award, probably one of the most coveted awards in wildlife management, to none other than Jack H. Berryman, former director of the ADC program. Part of the citation of that award was directed towards his accomplishments in the ADC program. I think that speaks volumes about the dynamics of wildlife damage management.