

MAFWA Ad Hoc Feral Swine Committee 2015 Annual Report

Meeting Time and Place: February 8th, 2015; 10:00 am to 3:30 pm, 75th Midwest Fish & Wildlife Conference, Hyatt Regency Indianapolis, Indiana.

Attendance: Steve Backs, IN; Gary Langell, IN; Mitch Marcus, IN; Chad Soard, KY; Shannon Hanna, MI; Alan Leary, MO; Gary Roloff, Michigan State University (MSU); Karmen Hollis-Etter, MSU; Alex Dutcher, MSU; Wendy Anderson, USDA APHIS WS; Phil Seng, DJ Case & Associates, Gary Potts, IL.

Executive Summary: Much of the background information regarding wild pig control efforts and regulations were compiled in the inaugural 2014 MAFWA Ad Hoc Feral Swine Committee 2015 Annual Report. The establishment of a recognized feral swine working group has greatly facilitated inter-agency communications, networking, and information transfer among states. Chad Soard, the committee's recently departed chair, deserves much of the credit for the initial organization and development of the committee. His passion and leadership will be missed. In 2015, the committee resubmitted a National Conservation Needs proposal for the evaluation of efficacious management strategies related to public education and attitudes toward wild pigs to the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. The committee continues to see the increasing interest in recreational sport hunting of wild pigs and public's ambivalence toward or lack of understanding of the anthropogenic spread of wild pigs as a barrier to the future control or eradication of wild pigs. Most states are in a transitional period of integrating pig population control efforts with the newly implemented USDA-Wildlife Services' wild pig elimination efforts under the 2014 Farm Bill. While the Federal recognition of the "emerging wild pig population" problem in the Midwest is welcomed and supported, there have been some growing pains with the initial implementation in some states. (Annual meeting minutes and respective state representative listing in Appendices).

Director Action Items: Begin development of a broad Midwest feral swine management plan based on sound scientific and proven methods (Charge 1); the committee chose to table this development at this time due to the dynamic and increasing efforts of USDA APHIS in the National Feral Swine Damage Management Program. In 2-3 months the APHIS feral swine EIS is expected to be finalized including a national management plan that will provide a more solid foundation to relate to state efforts and effectively develop Midwest regional recommendations.

Director Information Items: The committee will provide various state task force and/or primary state agency contact information for wild pigs to Phil Seng, DJ Case & Associates to help facilitate the development of a national communication strategy and develop effective public education materials regarding the negative impacts to native flora and fauna. The committee sees a higher level communication needed to address the hunting industry's marketing of wild pigs as a desirable, new opportunity for recreational sport hunting. The committee noted that meeting in conjunction with the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference likely reduces member attendance due to various agency travel limits or restrictions and needs to explore ways to overcome this challenge. At the 2014 International Wild Pig Conference a consensus statement was put forth by the conference organizers suggesting that "wild pigs" be used as a more inclusive nomenclature rather than other references such as feral swine. The committee would like the MAFWA Directors to consider this change in the committee's name.

Time and Place of Next Meeting: Tentatively planned for Sunday January 24, 2016 in conjunction with the 76th Midwest Fish & Wildlife Conference (January 24 – 27) at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The committee may also choose to meet at the International Wild Pig Conference scheduled for some time in 2016, once those conference details become available.

Appendices:

MAFWA Ad Hoc Feral Swine Committee – State Representatives (5.28.2015)

IL Doug Dufford doug.dufford@illinois.gov 815-369-2414

IN Steve Backs sbacks@dnr.IN.gov 812.849.4586 ext 222 (Chair as of 5/18/2015)

IA Bill Bunger william.bunger@dnr.iowa.gov (515) 975-8318

KS Shane Hesting shane.hesting@ksoutdoors.com 620-342-0658

KY Vacant (*acting:* Steven.dobey@ky.gov 800-858-1549 Ext 4533.)

MI Dwayne R. Etter, ETTERD@michigan.gov 517-641-4903, ext 256

MN Lou Cornicelli Lou.Cornicelli@state.mn.us (651) 259-5202

MO Alan Leary alan.leary@mdc.mo.gov (573) 522-4115 ext. 3693

ND not participating

NE Sam Wilson sam.wilson@nebraska.gov 402 471-5174

OH Clint McCoy john.mccoy@dnr.state.oh.us 740.362.2410 Ext. 130

SD not participating

WI Brad Koele Bradley.Koele@wisconsin.gov 715-356-5211 ext 234

ON not participating

MB not participating

SK keep informed – John Pogorzelec john.pogorzelec@gov.sk.ca 306-778-8522

Minutes of 2015 Committee meeting.

10:00 am – 12:30 pm

- State Reports
 - Chad Soard, KY discussed that KY has had no legislative or regulatory changes in the last year relating to wild pigs. Also acknowledged that KY continues to attribute successful population control plans to discontinuing generally distributed outreach on pigs and only providing targeted education to those in impacted areas.
 - Alan Leary, MO discussed some of MO's continuing control efforts including trapping and aerial shooting. Stated that MO has engaged in some of the Boar Buster trap trials and is pleased, but notes cell reception is a limitation of the systems. Noted that MO's former Governor's Hog Task Force is now inactive, but they plan to reinvigorate the Task Force. MO's five-year hog plan is still being implemented, however, it's due for review and updating. Mentioned only southern MO impacted by pigs and that a Southeast Missouri Hog Hunters Association exists.
 - Shannon Hanna, MI stated lawsuits related to the Russian boar ban continue. Noted that consolidated cases in the Upper Peninsula were won, but in one instance overturned and now in appeal; appellate courts seem to be more impartial. There is also a tribal case with a claimed right to take pigs on their land, and has included contracting an anthropologist at significant expense to establish that pigs were not present prior to the signing of their treaty. 76 of 83 counties have documented pigs. Task Force exists since 2006. Discussed chromosomal differences between Eurasian wild boar and domestic swine. Noted complications of effective outreach. Stated concern of a Hog Hunters Association existing in MI.
 - Greg Roloff, MSU provided update on MI pig research. Stated a goal to radio collar 18 pigs to study spatial ecology and see how pigs react to control efforts including aerial gunning and Judas pig strategies. Noted that pigs in MI move greater distances regularly and don't stay on bait sites as in other areas of the USA. Snares are proving more efficient than corral traps in their area. Concurrent disease work is being addressed by Karmen Hollis-Etter. Noted that social dynamics of pigs in MI appear very fluid relative to "normal" sounder dynamics seen in southern states; a similar ecology to Eurasian boar.
 - Steve Backs, IN discussed present regulatory efforts to modify IN's exotic mammal law to better address pig possession and release including criminalizing those who aid and abet, also to prohibit the take or chasing of pigs with dogs. Noted a two year trapping effort on a Hoosier Energy property is estimated to be down to 2-3 pigs. Stated USDA WS has two people now working pig control efforts in IN. Commented that IN hunting leases appear to have greater value when properties have a pig presence even though selling pig hunting is illegal; loophole is just selling the lease of hunting rights and their happens to be pigs present. Discussed January USDA fixed wing flight surveys for pigs across IN; 4 days of flights provided 19 lat/long locations of pigs or pig damage with some question raised of accurate pig damage identification, and 3 sightings were in known pig areas.

12:30 – 1:30 pm: Break for lunch

1:30 pm

- Wendy Anderson, USDA APHIS WS - Update on the National Feral Swine Damage Management Program
 - Wendy updated the committee on program goals, status, the DEIS, state efforts and funding priorities, task force needs, challenges faced in Midwest states, etc. She provided a copy of the presentation to the committee by email for additional review.

2:30 pm

- Phil Seng, DJ Case & Associates – Update on communication strategy for USDA APHIS National Feral Swine Damage Management Program
 - Phil attended on behalf of USDA APHIS and Sensis to update the committee on the USDA APHIS's desire to improve a national communication strategy for the swine program. Discussed the initial situation analysis to gain an understanding of the background and scope. Noted the communications strategy remains dynamic until the EIS for the swine program is finalized. Confirmed the wide continuum of thoughts, solutions, values, etc, people relate to feral pigs. Expressed this will require a comprehensive and complex communication strategy that's targeted at a state or even sub-state level in some cases. Discussed coalition building for strengthened communications. Noted the dynamic nature of this and redefining target audiences annually through ongoing communications. Also mentioned an effort to define a brand under USDA APHIS for this campaign.

3:30 pm – 5:00 pm

- Begin development of a broad Midwest feral swine management plan per Charge 1) Develop management plans for feral swine based on sound scientific and proven methods.
 - The committee chose to table this development at this time due to the dynamic and increasing efforts of USDA APHIS in the National Feral Swine Damage Management Program. In 2-3 months the APHIS feral swine EIS is expected to be finalized including a national management plan that will provide a more solid foundation to relate to state efforts and effectively develop Midwest regional recommendations.
- Provided state task force or coalition primary contacts to Phil Seng, DJ Case & Associates.
- Gary Potts, IL discussed editing The Wildlife Societies' national position statement at the section, or state chapter levels to reiterate this on more local scales. Stated he would distribute the document in a format that provides for such editing.

Adjourned 5:00 pm.