

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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FINAL EIS RELEASED ON FEDERAL PROGRAM TO CONTROL PREDATOR DAMAGE TO WESTERN LIVESTOCK

Nine possible alternatives for controlling coyote and other wild animal damages to Western livestock are detailed in a final environmental impact statement released today by Interior Secretary Cecil D. Andrus. Public comment will be accepted on the statement through August 11, 1979.

"The statement examines the environmental, social, economic, and other impacts of the present Federal program and nine possible alternatives to it," Andrus said.

"The alternatives range from having no Federal program at all to transferring it from Interior to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, operating it strictly on a contract basis with the States, or compensating livestock owners for losses caused by wild predators," the Secretary said, adding "other alternatives include conducting the program at varying levels such as emphasizing nonlethal control methods, taking only depredating coyotes, limiting methods to certain techniques, increasing all current control methods, and reducing coyote populations generally throughout the affected areas."

Andrus said he would make a decision on the Department's future role in predator damage control later this summer. "This final EIS, along with a separate study report on the subject, will be used as a part of my decision-making process. I intend to study the record of the hearings and the final report very carefully and I want to thank all who took time to participate," Andrus stated. "Anyone who still wishes to comment can do so through August 11. I welcome and invite further comments," he added.

The final environmental document concludes an 18-month review by Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of the Federal role in controlling predatory wild animals. The review began in January 1978 with a separate comprehensive study of the problem, its economic impact on the sheep, cattle,

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and poultry industries in 16 Western States, and the environmental concerns associated with animal damage control. A select committee with membership from the livestock industry, conservation organizations, universities, and State and Federal officials was appointed the following month to help review the study and validate the use and interpretation of data. That group, the Animal Damage Control Advisory Committee, held meetings, open to the public, in February, May, and June of 1978.

Four additional public hearings were held on a draft of the study report, Predator Damage in the West: A Study of Coyote Management Alternatives, which was widely distributed for public comment. The draft study report was revised and published in final form on January 4, 1979.

During this period, the Service developed the environmental impact statement on its animal damage control program. The draft statement, published on November 27, 1978, also was widely circulated and was the subject of public hearings in Salt Lake City, Utah, and Washington, D.C. In addition to oral testimony on the draft statement, the Service received 1,600 written comments. Revisions were made in the final document as a result of this public comment, including addition of a new alternative of focusing control efforts on individual predators.

Notice of the document's availability was published in the June 29, 1979, Federal Register. Copies of the final EIS are available from the Fish and Wildlife Service offices listed below. Comments should be addressed to the Director (ADC), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. 20240.

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