YUBA COUNTY
USDA APHIS-WS IWDM PROGRAM
COOPERATIVE SERVICE AGREEMENT
FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

State Clearinghouse No. 2019071039

Prepared for:

YUBA COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
915 8TH STREET
MARYSVILLE, CA 95901

Prepared by:

Michael Baker INTERNATIONAL

2729 PROSPECT PARK DRIVE, SUITE 220
RANCHO CORDOVA, CA 95670

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1.1 PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This Final Environmental Impact Report (Final EIR) has been prepared for the ongoing implementation of an Integrated Wildlife Damage Management (IWDM) program in Yuba County under a Cooperative Service Agreement (CSA) between Yuba County and the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service - Wildlife Services (APHIS-WS) for wildlife damage management assistance in the County (proposed project). Yuba County (County) is the lead agency for the proposed project, which is summarized below and presented in greater detail in Section 3.0, Project Description, of the Draft EIR.

This Final EIR has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA; Public Resources Code Sections 21000–21177). The Final EIR for this project comprises this document, together with the Draft EIR (incorporated by reference in accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15150), and will be considered for certification by the County.

As required by State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15088 and 15132, the lead agency (in this case, Yuba County) must evaluate comments on environmental issues received from persons who have reviewed the Draft EIR and then prepare written responses to those comments. The County did not receive any comments on the Draft EIR from agencies, organizations, or individuals during the public review period.

This Final EIR contains minor corrections and revisions made to the Draft EIR (see Section 2.0, Revisions to the Draft EIR) initiated by County staff and/or its consultant based on their ongoing review.

1.2 PROJECT UNDER REVIEW

The proposed project is the ongoing implementation of the IWDM program in Yuba County, as provided by the CSA and in accordance with annual work and financial plans required by the CSA. The overall goal of the proposed project is to ensure that wildlife damage management in Yuba County for purposes of protecting infrastructure, agricultural resources, public health and safety, and property is performed in a biologically sound, environmentally safe, and accountable manner and in accordance with applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

Under the proposed project, the IWDM services would be provided solely by APHIS-WS personnel and only at the request of the resource owner or manager. Yuba County would not decide whether a resource owner or manager should receive assistance, nor would the County be materially involved in conducting any of the IWDM technical assistance efforts or measures to control wildlife damage other than to cost share the financial portion of the program. Neither APHIS-WS nor Yuba County is proposing any changes to the APHIS-WS IWDM program as it currently operates in the County.

The IWDM program (as operated by APHIS-WS and approved by signature of the CSA and work plans) includes the following:

- Assignment of an APHIS-WS wildlife specialist trained in wildlife control methods and state and federal regulations, and certified in the safe handling and use of firearms and other control equipment.

- APHIS-WS procurement and maintenance of vehicles, tools, supplies, and other specialized equipment as deemed necessary to accomplish direct control activities.

- APHIS-WS supervision of safe and professional use of approved wildlife damage management tools/equipment, including the use of firearms, deterrent methods/devices (including pyrotechnics), traps, snares, trained dogs, all-terrain vehicles, Environmental Protection Agency and Drug Enforcement Administration approved chemicals (including immobilizing and euthanasia drugs), night vision equipment, and electronic calling devices.

- Data reporting for inclusion in the APHIS-WS Management Information System, which would consist of the number and types of request for assistance, control methods, types of species, whether species causing damage or loss were removed or released, estimated value of loss, and other information used to document and monitor program activities.

Under the CSA, APHIS-WS would continue to provide the following services in Yuba County:

- Offer technical advice/assistance to resource owners on prevention and/or control techniques.

- Inform and educate the public on how to prevent and reduce wildlife damage on their own, including through the use of APHIS-WS staff-prepared pamphlets and documentation.

- Provide expertise from wildlife specialists trained in wildlife control methods, state and federal regulations, and certified in the safe handling and use of firearms and other control equipment.

- Investigate wildlife damage situations to determine the responsible species and evaluate the site for applicability of prevention and control methods.

- Develop and implement wildlife damage management actions for the protection of agricultural resources, public health and safety, and property.

- Respond to incidents where wildlife species are threatening public health and safety (in coordination with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife [CDFW] and local law enforcement) including through the use of out-of-County resources and expertise.

- Collect samples for wildlife diseases that may affect agriculture and public safety.

- Provide access to APHIS-WS support staff, including at the National Wildlife Research Center, which conducts research on and develops wildlife damage management methods.

Technical assistance would be provided only at the request of affected resource owners or managers. The majority of services would likely be provided primarily for flood protection facilities operated and maintained by various entities and agricultural resources on private land because that has historically resulted in the most requests for technical assistance. However, technical assistance would also be available for protection of public health and safety (human-animal conflicts) and property. Before wildlife damage management is conducted, a Work Initiation Document (WID) must be signed by APHIS-WS and the landowner or manager. The County would not be involved in this action because it would be an agreement between APHIS-WS and the landowner or manager.

1.3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND REVIEW PROCESS

The County published the Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Draft EIR on July 29, 2019, for a 30-day comment period ending August 27, 2019. A public scoping meeting was held on August 15, 2019, at the Yuba County Administration Center in Marysville. Two people attended the scoping meeting. There were no oral comments made at the scoping meeting. The NOP and written comments submitted to the County during the NOP review period are included in Appendix A in the Draft EIR.

The Draft EIR was circulated for public and agency review and comment for 45 days. The review period was August 25, 2020, through October 8, 2020. The County provided the Draft EIR to the Office of Planning and Research, State Clearinghouse (SCH), which distributed the Draft EIR to the following state agencies: California Air Resources Board; California Department of Conservation; California Department of Fish and Wildlife, North Central Region 2; California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection; California Department of Parks and Recreation; California Department of Pesticide Regulation; California Department of Transportation, District 3; California Department of Transportation, Division of Aeronautics; California Department of Water Resources; California Energy Commission; California Governor's Office of Emergency Services; California Highway Patrol; California Native American Heritage Commission; California Natural Resources Agency; California Public Utilities Commission; California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Sacramento Region 5; California State Lands Commission; Central Valley Flood Protection Board; Department of Food and Agriculture; Department of Toxic Substances Control; Office of Historic Preservation; State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Water Quality; and State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Water Rights. The SCH posted electronic copies of the Draft EIR and its appendices on its CEQANet website, which is available to the general public.

In addition, the County provided a notice of availability of the Draft EIR to its mailing list and made the document and its appendices available at the Yuba County Department of Agriculture office and on the department's website.

The County did not receive any comments from any agencies, organizations, or individuals during the Draft EIR public review period.

1.4 ORGANIZATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

The Final EIR is organized as follows:

SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

This section includes a summary of the project description, environmental review process, and requirements for a Final EIR.

SECTION 2 – REVISIONS TO THE DRAFT EIR

This section contains minor corrections and revisions made to the Draft EIR initiated by County staff and/or its consultant based on their ongoing review.

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2.1 INTRODUCTION

This section presents minor corrections and revisions made to the Draft EIR initiated by County staff and/or its consultant based on their ongoing review. Revisions herein do not result in new significant environmental impacts, do not constitute significant new information, and do not alter the conclusions of the environmental analysis. New text is indicated in underline, and text to be deleted is reflected by a strikethrough unless otherwise noted in the introduction preceding the text change. Text changes are presented in the page order in which they appear in the Draft EIR.

2.2 REVISIONS TO THE DRAFT EIR

SECTION 2.0 (PROJECT BACKGROUND)

Page 2.0-6

The last paragraph under "Environmental Review of APHIS-WS Activities in California" is revised as follows to indicate the status of the joint environmental impact report/environmental impact statement (EIR/EIS) as of December 2020:

> In 2018, APHIS-WS entered into an MOU with the CDFA to prepare a joint environmental impact statement/environmental impact report pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and CEQA that will address APHIS-WS IWDM activities at the statewide level. The CEQA Notice of Preparation (NOP) prepared by CDFA and the NEPA Notice of Intent (NOI) prepared by APHIS-WS were released for public review on September 10, 2020, for a 60-day period ending November 10, 2020 (CDFA 2020; USDA 2020). As of ~~August~~ December 2020, the joint environmental impact report/environmental impact statement (EIR/EIS) ~~document~~ has not been completed.

SECTION 4.1 (BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES)

Page 4.1-31

The fifth sentence of the last paragraph is revised as follows to correct information about state listing of tricolored blackbird. The species was designated by the California Fish and Game Commission in 2018 as a threatened species under the California Endangered Species Act.

> No mixed flocks that have the potential to contain tricolored blackbird have been removed or dispersed statewide since ~~2014~~ 2015 when tricolored blackbird was first considered for potential listing by the California Fish and Game Commission as a protected species in the state ~~listed~~, and APHIS-WS activities in Yuba County have not resulted in take of tricolored blackbird, specifically.

Page 4.1-48

The first full paragraph is revised as follows to correct information about state listing of tricolored blackbird:

> To avoid any take of tricolored blackbirds, APHIS-WS does not use any potentially lethal actions in mixed flocks. No mixed flocks that have the potential to contain tricolored blackbird have been removed or dispersed statewide since ~~2014~~ 2015 when tricolored

blackbird was first considered for potential listing by the California Fish and Game Commission as a protected species in the state ~~listed~~.

Page 4.1-57

The first part of the second full paragraph regarding the joint environmental impact report/environmental impact statement (EIR/EIS) is revised as follows:

To date, no statewide CEQA analysis has been prepared for wildlife damage management carried out by various government partners throughout the state. In 2018, APHIS-WS entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to prepare a joint environmental impact statement/environmental impact report pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and CEQA that will address APHIS-WS, CDFA, and County activities at the statewide level. The CEQA Notice of Preparation (NOP) prepared by CDFA and the NEPA Notice of Intent (NOI) prepared by APHIS-WS were released for public review on September 10, 2020, for a 60-day period ending November 10, 2020 (CDFA 2020; USDA 2020). As of ~~August~~ December 2020, the joint EIR/EIS ~~document~~ has not been completed.

Page 4.1-61

The second sentence under the "Tricolored Blackbird" subheading is revised as follows:

No mixed flocks that have the potential to contain tricolored blackbird have been removed or dispersed statewide since ~~2014~~ 2015 when tricolored blackbird was first considered by the California Fish and Game Commission for potential listing as a protected species in the state ~~listed~~.

SECTION 7.0 (REFERENCES)

The following bibliographic citations for the NOP/NOI for the joint EIS/EIR are added to the References:

CDFA (California Department of Food and Agriculture). 2020. Notice of Preparation of the California Wildlife Damage Management Environmental Impact Report and Environmental Impact Statement. September 10, 2020.

USDA (US Department of Agriculture). 2020. Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. Notice of Intent to Prepare a Joint Environmental Impact Report and Environmental Impact Statement for Wildlife Damage Management in California. *Federal Register Vol. 85, No. 176*. September 10, 2020. Docket No. APHIS-2020-0081.

APPENDIX C

Table C-8 (Mountain Lion Population and Take Data)

Note #6 under the "APHIS-WS Annual Take" table on page C-8-1 is revised to correct a typographical error in the reference.

Notes:
1. 1999-2006 data from: USDA (2019c)
2. 2007-2018 data from: USDA (2019b)
3. Calculated from CDFW BIOS dataset CWHR M165 [ds2616] (CDFW 2016) (see Table C-1)
4. Beausoleil (2013). See Draft EIR Section 4.1, Biological Resources, for additional information.
5. Approximate. See Draft EIR Section 4.1, Biological Resources for additional information.
6. ~~Dellinger (2019~~) Dellinger and Torres (2020). See Draft EIR Section 4.1, Biological Resources, for additional information.

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