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TRAINING TOMORROW'S SPECIALISTS IN WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT

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Abstract: In 1990, Utah State University (tJSLT) established a U. S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Servi Animal Damage Control (ADC)-funded center dedicated to research, education, and extension in wildlife damage management. USU's Progr in Wildlife Damage Management is designed to increase appreciation for wildlife damage management among wildlife professionals, prov superior training for future practitioners of wildlife damage management through education and innovative research, and create better pub understanding of the role of wildlife damage management in today's society.

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INTRODUCTION

Following the transfer of the ADC program from the U. S. Department of the Interior to the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in 1986, a succession of ADC Deputy Administrators recognized the importance of developing closer contacts with academic institutions to provide a well-trained pool of ADC professionals and to develop new centers for research and education focusing on wildlife damage management. The College of Natural Resources at Utah State University (USU) established such a center in 1990. With initial funding by USDA and USU for a 5-year period, the USU Program in Wildlife Damage Management was incorporated into the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife as a model wildlife damage management program for research, education, and extension. Although the program will have direct benefits to residents of Utah, the program mission is meant to have a national focus. This includes: (1) developing increased appreciation for the scope and role of wildlife damage management throughout the wildlife profession; (2) providing personnel trained in the principles and practices of wildlife damage management for employment by the ADC program and by state and local agencies and organizations; and (3) creating better public understanding of the role of -wildlife damage management in meeting the needs and promoting the values of the American people. To fulfill tfiese objectives, USU designed a program that focuses on creating new information through research and synthesis, and disseminating wildlife damage management information through academic and public information programs.

The assistance, support, and contributions of ADC Deputy Administrators J. Lee, J. Packam, and B. Acord in developing this program are greatly appreciated. J. Chapman, Dean of the College of Natural Resources at USU, demonstrated a contagious enthusiasm for the idea and actively promoted the program. We thank each, and their staffs, for their continuing assistance and support.

RESEARCH

Before 1990, faculty in the Department of Fisheries and Wild at USU were periodically involved in wildlife damage managem research efforts. The faculty and graduate students associated with Denver Wildlife Research Center's Logan facility focused on coy ecology and management. The new Program in Wildlife Dam Management enhanced the interests of the existing faculty, augmen the faculty with 2 faculty members specializing in wildlife dam management research and extension, and was accompanied by recruitment of a new Cooperative Extension wildlife special Graduate students pursuing M.S. and Ph.D. degrees have be recruited to assist with the program.

Research projects are expected to be both traditional a innovative, with emphasis on new methods and strategies for solv wildlife damage management problems. Research projects will focus ecology and behavior of wildlife, damage prevention and manageme wildlife damage policy, and human dimensions such as economics a social values.

EDUCATION

One primary outcome of the USU program is a specific opti for undergraduate students to major in wildlife damage manageme This will be unique among the other universities offering one or m undergraduate classes in the subject.

Before 1990, the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife offe several courses applicable to a wildlife damage management ma including wildlife techniques, management of wildlife habi management of wildlife populations, management aspects of wild behavior, and predator ecology and management. The new Program Wildlife Damage Management will add at least 4 additional cour including principles of wildlife damage management, wildlife dam management policy, wildlife damage management techniqu management

of urban wildlife, and periodic seminars on selected topics such as the ecology and management of exotic species. Combined with other classes offered at USU, these courses cover most of the topics recommended by Timm (1982) as necessary for training in wildlife damage management.

Central to this program, however, is the intent to incorporate wildlife damage management as an integral component in all appropriate courses in the department's curricula. Departmental faculty in both fisheries and wildlife have agreed to modify current courses to incorporate principles, examples, and techniques related to wildlife damage management in their classes. This will ensure that all students graduating with a wildlife major from USU will have multiple exposures to this expanding discipline. Graduate students will have similar opportunities.

In addition to conventional academic course work, we anticipate developing intensive summer training camps for continuing education of wildlife professionals, including ADC specialists and staff in various land-management agencies. These offerings may also develop into correspondence courses, utilizing mailed information or satellite broadcasts such as AGSAT.

EXTENSION

The mission of USU's College of Natural Resources is "to achieve and maintain the productive, sustainable use of Utah's natural resources for the benefit of citizens and future generations" (College of Natural Resources 1991:2). A Cooperative Extension wildlife specialist will focus on wildlife damage management within Utah, in addition to duties related to riparian and wetland ecosystems and youth programs. Like other states, Utah is becoming more urbanized while farmers and ranchers are refining and improving food and fiber production systems. An increase in wildlife conflicts is anticipated in the future. The wildlife specialistwill likely become involved in identifying all affected stakeholders, and asked to develop management programs that enhance and protect all resources for sustainable uses.

In addition to extension programs focusing on issues within Utah, the Program in Wildlife Damage Management will develop an extension program on a national scale, especially with "ignored" clientele. These will include professional wildlife biologists, managers, and administrators; wildlife damage management professionals; Cooperative Extension wildlife specialists; and national stakeholders interested in wildlife damage management, including but not limited to The Wildlife Management Institute, The American Sheep Industry, The Humane Society of the United States, The National Animal Damage Control Association, The National Audubon Society, and other industry and environmental groups. Toward this end, the USU program will sponsor **and host conferences and** symposia, organize specialized workshops, produce general and technical publications and conference proceedings, and evaluate changes in clientele behavior.

This extension effort will be directed toward overall program objectives to develop an increased appreciation of the scope and role of the discipline of wildlife damage management throughout the wildlife profession and the creation of better public understanding of the way that wildlife damage management meets the needs and promotes the values of the American people.

CONCLUSION

Utah State University intends to become an academic center for wildlife damage management. Its success will depend on an interactive faculty, retention of skilled personnel, a continuing positive relationship with the ADC program, and credibility with professional wildlife biologists, managers, administrators, and a variety of local, state, and national stakeholders. We intend that the USU Program in Wildlife Damage Management be a valuable resource available to all wildlife professionals, as well as other public and private groups and individuals interested in wildlife damage management.

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