

CALIFORNIA CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

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Submitted via email to bos@mendocinocounty.org

July 13, 2020

John Haschak, Chair
Mendocino County Board of Supervisors
501 Low Gap Road, Room 1010
Ukiah, California 95482

Re: Discussion and Possible Action to Adopt Resolution Approving and Authorizing the Execution of a Cooperative Agreement and a Work and Financial Plan with the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services, Wildlife Services, for Mendocino County Integrated Wildlife Damage Management Program (Agenda Item 5h)

Dear Chair Haschak and Supervisors:

The California Cattlemen's Association (CCA) appreciates the opportunity to address the Board regarding possible authorization of Cooperative Services agreement for the Integrated Wildlife Damage Management (IWDM) program operated by USDA APHIS Wildlife Services (Wildlife Services) agency in Mendocino County. CCA represents more than 1,700 cattle ranchers throughout the state of California, including approximately sixty members who ranch within Mendocino County. Wildlife Services' IWDM program has historically offered vital services to ranchers and others within Mendocino County (and elsewhere throughout California) to alleviate human/wildlife and wildlife/livestock conflicts in a professional manner using non-lethal methods whenever possible. Because of the vital services that Wildlife Services performs for ranchers, and because our members overwhelmingly trust and support Wildlife Services personnel, CCA supports Wildlife Services' IWDM program, and **urges the Board to vote in favor of the resolution** approving and authorizing execution of a Cooperative Agreement with Wildlife Services for implementation of the IWDM program.

Ranchers' ability to call upon Wildlife Services to provide trained individuals appropriately equipped to resolve conflicts where predators are killing livestock or otherwise damaging property is a critical tool in the continued success of ranching operations across California. While Wildlife Services IWDM program utilizes non-lethal options where available and prudent, it is important that Mendocino County residents have the ability to lethally remove individual animals within a local population which may be causing serious damage to resources or which may pose a human health or safety risk. Without the IWDM program, the resolution of wildlife conflicts would be left to lesser-trained or untrained individuals or residents, with possible negative consequences.

Additionally, reinstituting the IWDM program is essential for the retention of agricultural production in the County. As we wrote in our August 12, 2019 comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the IWDM program in Mendocino County,

MARK LACEY
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FEEDER COUNCIL VICECHAIR
BRAWLEY

Wildlife can have a significant impact on agriculture, and if management of wildlife is limited, the financial effects of the wildlife-caused losses can be significant enough to lead to a change in land use. Livestock losses to predators in the North Coast region were significant enough to dramatically change the agricultural landscape of the region. In 1962, Mendocino County was home to 117,900 sheep; by 1995 that figure had dropped to 16,000. Today there are only 7,200 sheep in Mendocino County.

As sheep production has declined in the county, land use has either shifted to more intensive agricultural uses or has been subdivided and sold with a loss of agricultural use.

Failure to reinstate the IWDM program could have devastating impacts on agricultural production within the County. Should agricultural production be diminished, the County could suffer any number of detrimental impacts. At a 2018 value of nearly \$321 million, agricultural production is a significant driver of Mendocino County's economy, and reduction in agricultural production could be devastating to the local economy. Additionally, agricultural production such as livestock grazing and timber production significantly reduce the availability of fire fuels that feed catastrophic wildfires like those which have plagued the County in recent years. By reinstating the IWDM program, Mendocino County can ensure that livestock production and other agricultural enterprises remain viable within the County, preserving the economic benefits and environmental stewardship associated with these enterprises.

CCA is pleased that the Board is recommending a motion authorizing execution of a Cooperative Services agreement with Wildlife Services to reinstate the IWDM program. Wildlife Services' responsible implementation of the IWDM program results in the conservation of wildlife populations, ensures the continued viability of agricultural enterprises such as cattle ranching, and both directly and indirectly bestows numerous benefits upon Mendocino County and its people. For these reasons, **CCA urges your vote in favor of the resolution** and your prompt execution of the associated Cooperative Agreement and Work and Financial Plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirk Wilbur', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Kirk Wilbur
Vice President of Government Affairs