

ADOPTION AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY BIRD DAMAGE MANAGEMENT IN MISSISSIPPI

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Mississippi Wildlife Services (WS) program, in cooperation with the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), conducts programs to resolve or prevent damage to agricultural resources, natural resources, and property, including threats to human safety, associated with birds in the State of Mississippi.

WS prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate the cumulative effects of WS' actions conducted to manage damage and threats of damage associated with the grebes (*Podiceps nigricollis*), American white pelicans (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*), great blue herons (*Ardea herodias*), great egrets (*Ardea alba*), snowy egrets (*Egretta thula*), little blue herons (*Egretta caerulea*), cattle egrets (*Bubulcus ibis*), green herons (*Butorides virescens*), black vultures (*Coragyps atratus*), turkey vultures (*Cathartes aura*), snow geese (*Chen caerulescens*), wood ducks (*Aix sponsa*), gadwalls (*Anas strepera*), mallards (domestic/wild) (*Anas platyrhynchos*), blue-winged teal (*Anas discors*), feral ducks, feral geese, ospreys (*Pandion haliaetus*), northern harriers (*Circus cyaneus*), sharp-shinned hawks (*Accipiter striatus*), Cooper's hawks (*Accipiter cooperii*), red-shouldered hawks (*Buteo lineatus*), red-tailed hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*), American kestrels (*Falco sparverius*), wild turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo*), American coots (*Fulica americana*), killdeer (*Charadrius vociferous*), lesser yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*), least sandpipers (*Calidris minutilla*), spotted sandpipers (*Actitis macularia*), upland sandpipers (*Bartramia longicauda*), common snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*), laughing gulls (*Leucophaeus atricilla*), ring-billed gulls (*Larus delawarensis*), herring gulls (*Larus argentatus*), rock pigeons (*Columba livia*), Eurasian collared-doves (*Streptopelia decaocto*), mourning doves (*Zenaida macroura*), barred owls (*Strix varia*), chimney swifts (*Chaetura pelagica*), Eastern kingbirds (*Tyrannus tyrannus*), American crows (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), horned larks (*Eremophila alpestris*), purple martins (*Progne subis*), tree swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*), Northern rough-winged swallows (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*), bank swallows (*Riparia riparia*), cliff swallows (*Hirundo pyrrhonota*), barn swallows (*Hirundo rustica*), Eastern bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*), American robins (*Turdus migratorius*), European starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*), cedar waxwings (*Bombicilla cedrorum*), field sparrows (*Spizella pusilla*), savannah sparrows (*Passerculus sandwichensis*), red-winged blackbirds (*Agelaius phoeniceus*), Eastern meadowlarks (*Sturnella magna*), Brewer's blackbirds (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*), common grackles (*Quiscalus quiscula*), brown-headed cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*), house finches (*Carpodacus mexicanus*), and house sparrows (*Passer domesticus*).

In addition to those species, WS could also receive requests for assistance to manage damage and threats of damage associated with several other bird species, but requests for assistance associated with those species would occur infrequently and/or requests would involve a small number of individual birds of a species.

The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) also continues to experience damage and threats of damage associated with birds at facilities or properties we own or manage in Mississippi. Therefore, TVA could request the assistance of WS to manage damage or threats of damage at those facilities and properties. The goal of WS and TVA would be to conduct a coordinated program to alleviate bird damage on properties TVA owns or manages in accordance with plans and objectives developed by both agencies. The plans and objectives would outline the actions of each agency.

The EA was prepared by WS, in coordination with TVA, to determine if the alternatives could have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment. Specifically, the EA was prepared to facilitate planning and interagency coordination, streamline program management, evaluate the potential environmental consequences of the alternatives related to the issues of managing damage caused by birds, and clearly communicate to the public the analysis of individual and cumulative impacts.

The new EA will assist in determining if the proposed management of damage associated with birds could have a significant impact on the environment for both people and other organisms. WS and TVA defined the issues associated with meeting the need for action and identified preliminary alternatives through consultation with the Mississippi Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR) and United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The new EA analyzes three alternatives in detail to meet the need for action and to address the issues analyzed in detail.

Alternatives

The current WS EA evaluated the potential environmental consequences under three alternatives. Alternative 1 would continue implementation of an adaptive methods approach utilizing non-lethal and lethal techniques, when requested, as deemed appropriate using the WS Decision Model, to reduce damage and threats caused by birds in Mississippi. Alternative 2 would limit WS's involvement to providing recommendations on methods that people could use to manage damage without any direct involvement by WS. Under Alternative 3, the WS program in Mississippi would not provide any assistance with managing damage associated with birds in the State.

Impacts Assessment

WS and TVA developed six issues related to managing damage associated with birds in Mississippi. Each of the issues is discussed in the EA, as those issues relate to the possible implementation and environmental consequences of the three alternatives.

- Issue 1 - Effects of damage management activities on target bird populations;
- Issue 2 - Effects on non-target wildlife species populations, including threatened and endangered species;
- Issue 3 - Effects of damage management methods on human health and safety;
- Issue 4 - Effects on the aesthetic values of birds;
- Issue 5 - Humaneness and animal welfare concerns of methods;
- Issue 6 - Effects of bird damage management activities on the regulated harvest of birds;
- Issue 7 - Effectiveness of bird damage management methods.

Cumulative Impacts of the Proposed Action

No significant cumulative environmental impacts are expected from any of the three alternatives, including TVA and WS's preferred alternative (Alternative 1). The analysis in the EA adequately addressed the identified issues, which reasonably confirmed that an integrated methods approach would not result in significant cumulative adverse effects on the quality of the human environment.

The preferred alternative contemplates that, for any request for assistance, WS will apply the Decision Model which assesses the problem, evaluates management methods available, and then formulates a management strategy and continues to monitor that strategy. Any decision made using the Decision Model would be in accordance with WS' directives and standard operating procedures as well as relevant laws and regulations. The WS EA states, "The monitoring of activities by WS would ensure the EA remained appropriate to the scope of activities conducted by WS in Mississippi and damage management activities that WS could conduct on property owned or managed by the TVA under the selected alternative."

Public Involvement

The EA was made available to the public for review and comment by a legal notice published in the *Clarion Register* from May 22, 2012 through May 24, 2012. WS and TVA made the draft EA available to the public for review and comment on the APHIS website on May 8, 2012. WS and TVA also sent a notice of availability directly to agencies, organizations, and individuals with probable interest in managing of availability directly to agencies, organizations, and individuals with probable interest in managing bird damage in the State. The public involvement process ended on June 22, 2012. During the public comment period, WS and TVA received one comment related to the draft EA supporting the proposed action alternative.

Conclusion and Findings

Due to TVA’s involvement with WS concerning bird damage control and management in Mississippi, TVA has independently reviewed the WS EA, provided comments on the document, and found it to be adequate. Based on the analyses in the EA and the findings documented above, TVA concludes that contracting with WS for aquatic rodent damage management services on TVA facilities and properties in Alabama as described under Alternative 1 above would not be a major federal action significantly affecting the environment. Accordingly, an environmental impact statement is not required. If needed, TVA may request the assistance of WS to manage damage or threats of damage at those facilities and properties as assessed under the 2012 Managing Damage Caused by Birds in the State of Mississippi Environmental Assessment.



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10/02/2019

Date Signed