



**NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT
AND NOTICE OF SCOPING MEETING FOR A
COOPERATIVE SERVICE AGREEMENT BETWEEN
YUBA COUNTY AND THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE ANIMAL AND
PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICES – WILDLIFE SERVICES**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Yuba County will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to evaluate ongoing implementation of an Integrated Wildlife Damage Management (IWDM) program in Yuba County under a Cooperative Service Agreement (CSA) between Yuba County and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services - Wildlife Services (APHIS-WS) (proposed project). The County would not be materially involved in any of the IWDM program activities other than to cost-share the financial portion of the program. We need to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project.

BACKGROUND AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION: APHIS-WS has an existing IWDM program that it implements throughout California and the rest of the United States. The Yuba County Agricultural Department has had a cost-share CSA with the USDA APHIS-WS for IWDM program services for over 30 years. The CSA provides for a USDA Wildlife Services Specialist to provide non-domestic animal damage control for County property owners, County Public Works, and other municipalities. The overall goal of the proposed project is to ensure that wildlife damage management for purposes of protecting property, infrastructure, agricultural resources, and public health and safety in the County is performed in a biologically sound, environmentally safe, and accountable manner and in accordance with applicable federal and state laws and regulations. Services include control of beavers, skunks, raccoons, birds, coyotes, mountain lions, and bears. In some cases, controlling common wildlife by lethal methods is a last resort when other methods have not been successful in mitigating damage caused by wildlife to the above-mentioned resources. Historically, the number of removals has been small. Between 2013 and 2017, the median number of beavers, skunks, and raccoons was less than 90 per year, with coyote, mountain lion, and bear substantially less (two or less). Although some birds were removed, most bird flocks were dispersed, which is partially due to the state listing of tricolored blackbird in 2014.

The current five-year CSA between the County and APHIS-WS became effective July 1, 2018, and continues through June 30, 2023. As required under the CSA, the first of five annual work and financial plans was approved by the County Board of Supervisors for the period July 1, 2018, through June 30, 2019. Neither APHIS-WS nor Yuba County are proposing any changes to the IWDM program activities in the County. While there is a current CSA that provides for implementation of the IWDM program in the County, the IWDM program analyzed in the EIR is not limited by the five-year timeframe of the CSA. Rather, the proposed project would continue the IWDM program for ongoing implementation in the County. Potential future renewal of the

IWDM program for subsequent five-year terms is considered a later activity of the proposed project, and is programmatically analyzed in the EIR. Any future discretionary actions taken by the County necessary to implement the program would need to be evaluated for consistency with the IWDM program and conformance with the analysis included in this EIR.

Under the CSA, primary functions provided by APHIS-WS in the County would continue to include: offering technical advice/assistance to resource owners on prevention and/or control techniques; informing and educating interested individuals on how to prevent and reduce wildlife damage on their own; investigating wildlife damage situations to determine the responsible species and evaluate the incident for applicability of prevention and/or control methods; and responding to incidents where wildlife species are threatening public health and safety (in coordination with CDFW and local law enforcement) including, when necessary, the use of out-of-county resources and expertise. Most of the services would likely be provided for the protection of flood protection systems and field crops on agricultural lands because those resources have historically resulted in the most requests for technical assistance in Yuba County. Technical assistance would be provided only at the request of affected resource owners or managers. Before wildlife damage management is conducted on private land in response to a request for assistance from a property or resource owner, a Work Initiation Document (WID) must be signed by APHIS-WS and the landowner or representative. APHIS-WS would not perform any activities funded by the County for the protection of natural resources, such as threatened and endangered species.

PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS: The proposed project has the potential to affect wildlife species. At this time, the analysis in the Draft EIR is anticipated to focus on biological resources impacts.

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING: A public scoping meeting on the Draft EIR will be held on Thursday, August 15, 2019 at 3:00 p.m., in the Wheatland Room at the County Government Center, 915 8th Street, Marysville, CA 95901. The purpose of the meeting is to solicit the views of interested parties requesting notice, responsible agencies, agencies with jurisdiction by law, trustee agencies, involved federal agencies, and Yuba County, as to the appropriate scope and content of the Draft EIR. County staff and its environmental consultant for the EIR will provide a brief overview of the project and the environmental review process. There will be an opportunity for public/agency input regarding the scope of the Draft EIR.

NOTICE OF PREPARATION COMMENT PERIOD: This Notice of Preparation (“NOP”) initiates the CEQA scoping process. The comment period for this NOP will be from July 29, 2019, to August 27, 2019. Comments on the scope and content of the Draft EIR may be given at the scoping meeting or sent in writing or delivered in person to the Yuba County Department of Agriculture, 915 8th Street, Suite 127, Marysville, CA 95901, by email to yubaag@co.yuba.ca.us, or faxed to (530) 749-5404.

Due to time limits mandated by state law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date but not later than **5:00 p.m. on Friday, August 27, 2019**. There will be another opportunity to submit comments when the Draft EIR is released for public review.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: If you have any questions, you may contact Stephen Scheer, Agricultural Commissioner, at (530) 749-5400 or by email at sscheer@co.yuba.ca.us. A copy of this NOP is also available on the County’s website at:

https://www.yuba.org/departments/agricultural_commissioner_and_sealer_of_weights_and_measures/index.php

Governor’s Office of Planning & Research

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