

PARC Committee Comments on NDOWs FY2017 Predator Management Plan

General Overall:

1. Overall these projects are lacking clearly defined goals, i.e. brood size / fawn to doe ratio. I would also like to see accounting from NDOW to verify where the predator funds are being spent.
2. Because of the nature of predator management and how employees, equipment, and Aircraft need to be planned for, I recommend NDOW. Complete the 80% lethal removal budget as close to July 1st as possible. That gives WS and contractors the time necessary to plan to do this correctly. Specifics of who, when, where and how much should be included.
3. I recommend NDOW develop specific goals for the predator management projects.
4. I recommend NDOW provide more specific information on the budget including past balances, carry over amounts, and how much NDOW spends on staff.
5. I approve of the 80% spending on program implementation.
6. Overall the plan is focused on the proper priorities.
7. Using phrases such as "abiotic" factors such as dry climate and loss of quality habitat" and blaming persistent drought are most certainly true, but one must start verbalizing other intrinsic justifications for implementing predator programs. For example, the common raven is very cunning and with some time, the bird will follow the hen to her nest even with good to excellent habitat.

Specific Project Comments:

1. Project 21: no clear goal, but I support this project.
2. Project 21-02: lethal/nonlethal, with no details as to percentage of funds spent on lethal. I can't support as written.
3. Project 22-01: again, no clear goal. I support this project.
4. Project 22-16: I don't feel this plan meets the requirements set forth in AB 78 Sec. 4. 1. c). I can't support this plan. (c) Conducting research necessary to determine successful techniques for managing and controlling predatory wildlife.
5. Project 22-074: what is the goal? I support, but would like to know the long term goal.
6. Project 32: I don't feel this plan meets the requirements set forth in AB 78 Sec. 4. 1. (c). This study continues to change, also methods continue to change, this study appears to be a failure. I can't support this project.
7. Project 37: I like the project idea, but feel it doesn't meet the requirements in Commission Policy Number 23 on pages 4 and 5 PREDATION MANAGEMENT PLAN
8. Project 38: I like the project idea, but feel it doesn't meet the requirements in Commission Policy Number 23 on pages 4 and 5 PREDATION MANAGEMENT PLAN
9. Project 40: good, I support this plan.
10. Project 41: I support this plan.

11. Project 21 Greater Sage-Grouse Protection

Mid-winter populations of ravens are heavily concentrated along rural roads especially when there is solid snow cover throughout the landscape. The attraction can be viewed as a subsidy, but adjacent power lines and rabbit road kill can and should be considered an opportunity. Literally, hundreds of ravens can be seen any early morning on the Independence highway near Tuscarora. Your plan refers to experimental management, and thus should include new approaches. Since much of northern Elko County is considered Focal areas for Sage Grouse, targeting these clustered birds with lethal actions, carte blanche, is most certainly justified. Attempting to deal with the same birds, when scattered in the spring and summer months, is much more difficult.

12. Subproject 22-01 Mountain Lion Removal to Protect California Bighorn Sheep:

The plan implies that the offending lions will be captured and dealt with in a non-lethal manner. Given the large territory of any lion, the animal should be destroyed.

13. Subproject 22-16: Coyote Den Density Effects on Mule Deer Fawns and other Wildlife Species. I fully support this project.

14. Subproject 22-074 Mountain Lion Removal for the Protection of Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep. "This removal will be implemented in association with populations that are being affected negatively by mountain lion predation as determined by the best available biological evidence." This approach will lead to drastic delays in aiding the Sheep population.

Staff Recommendations:

1. Staff agrees the budget should include more information. In past predator plans the budget included past balances, carry over amounts, and new money. Also included was how much was spent by NDOW, WS, and contractors.
2. Staff agrees NDOW should develop specific goals and objectives for projects. The goal could be to increase fawn/doe ratios for mule deer or antelope. Or the goal could be an increase in population level. For sage-grouse (since nest success data is very difficult to get) we could have a goal of reducing raven densities around sage-grouse leks during the nesting season. Since translocating bighorn sheep is very expensive and some populations are very low the goal for bighorn sheep projects could be zero depredations.
3. Staff recommends NDOW include more information on the resource being protected whether that be mule deer, antelope, bighorn sheep, sage-grouse or any other natural resource. **NDOW should convey to the public why these resources are important and valuable and why we are protecting them from excessive predation.**
4. Staff recommends NDOW establish peer reviewed research protocols. Staff is also concerned some current research projects do not meet the spirit of AB 78. (Conducting research necessary to determine successful techniques for managing and controlling predatory wildlife)