



ANIMAL ADVISORY COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION 2015-10-12-4-d

Date: 10-16-2015

Subject: Wildlife recommendations

Motioned By: Chair Lundstedt

Seconded By: Vice Chair Shaw

Recommendations;

1. The City Of Austin should develop a comprehensive humane wildlife management policy based on national best practices.
2. The City of Austin should create a new position, **Wildlife Management Specialist** to implement this new policy. This position would be partially funded by the \$10,000 currently allocated annually for the Wildlife Services contract and report directly to the Chief Animal Services Officer. An additional \$57,000 could be made available by Travis County.
3. The City of Austin should opt out of the contract with the Texas Agrilife Extension Service – Wildlife Services and negotiate with Travis County to do the same and create a county-wide program.
4. The City of Austin should initiate an audit of the contract between Texas Wildlife Services and the City of Austin as it pertains to the trapping of wildlife.

Description of Recommendation to Council;

1. In the past several years the animal advisory commission has been tasked by council to address issues with deer/human and coyote/human conflicts. Two separate policies have evolved from these efforts. We have also heard from the public about issues related to peacocks, guineas, alligators, swans, etc. Due to this we recommend a comprehensive wildlife policy as the next appropriate step.
2. Past Animal Services Office leaders have not shown an interest in taking on wildlife management. We now have a Chief Animal Services Officer that is not only experienced in the field but enthusiastic to take on this role. The AAC has received complaints from the public that the items laid out in the deer policy are not being implemented in a timely manner. A city Wildlife Management Specialist could see to it that this is addressed. The commission also feels that the taxpayers would be better served by bringing wildlife management in house.
3. When this contract was first entered into in 2005 there was no expertise within the COA to effectively deal with public education or lethal coyote removal. This is no longer the case and the commission feels that the city and county are in a good position to take over all aspects of wildlife management. Please see *Attachment A, Contract No. 13-WS-01*.

Under services to be provided by Wildlife Services, items 1-4 and 6 are already being effectively performed by PARD, Water Utility and Animal Services. Only number 5, *extermination of dangerous animals* is solely performed by Wildlife Services. The City of Austin and Travis County are basically paying \$67,000 per year for a limited number of coyotes to be trapped and killed by Wildlife Services. This is not a good use of taxpayer dollars.

4. The commission feels that there is a disconnect between the recently enacted Coyote Management Policy and the actions of Wildlife Services. An audit of this program is necessary to ensure that the policy, along with **Article 3-2-4, Hunting and Trapping Wild Animals** of the city charter is being adhered to. The commission has received contradictory information from PARD, Water Utility and Wildlife Services regarding how wildlife issues are handled within city limits.

Rationale:

The Austin Animal Advisory Commission and Animal Services Office issue this joint position statement;

The City of Austin should be modeling national best practices regarding wildlife management to include volunteer programs, education and outreach, community engagement, partnering with wildlife and animal welfare organizations on humane exclusion and deterrents. Lethal means of control should be permitted, documented, used as a last resort only with approval from the Chief of Animal Services.

Vote

For: Kaviani, Mier, Kjellberg, Nazor, Tucker, Hogue, Shaw, Mitchell, Lundstedt, Means

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Absent: Neuhaus

Attest: [Staff or board member can sign]



**ATTACHMENT A
CONTRACT NO. 13-WS-01
WORK PLAN
DATED: SEPTEMBER 1, 2012**

Introduction

Texas Wildlife Services (TWS) program personnel report that conflicts between people and coyotes and other damage causing wildlife are increasing in urban areas across the State of Texas. While the program implemented under this Agreement will emphasize activities related to the coyote population, services and activities related to other damage causing wildlife will also be provided as feasible. References to services related to coyotes under this Agreement also include like services related to other damage causing wildlife. In recent years, TWS biologists assigned to Austin and central Texas have responded to a growing number of complaints related to coyote threats to human health and safety and coyote attacks on pets. In the past, WS biologists in Austin and Travis County have responded to most of these complaints by providing technical assistance or educational materials. Today, the problem has reached a point where technical assistance no longer meets the needs of the public. The TWS Program recognizes a need to conduct a comprehensive Coyote/ Damage Causing Damage Management (CDM) program in Travis County and the City of Austin and recommends the course of action outlined in this work plan.

Several counties which adjoin Travis County currently have coyote management programs in place. Blanco, Burnet, Hays, and Williamson counties currently fund coyote management programs. Historically these programs have been directed at livestock depredation problems. However in recent years, the Texas Wildlife Services Program has reported an increase in coyote complaints from residential areas in the aforementioned counties and a significant part of the service provided by the Texas Wildlife Services Program has been directed at managing problems in urban and suburban areas of the counties. The proposed program for Travis County and the City of Austin differs somewhat from the current programs in surrounding counties in that highest priority will be given to addressing coyote problems in residential and urban areas of the county. Secondary emphasis will be given to coyote management in outlying areas of the City of Austin and Travis County.

Area of Jurisdiction

This Agreement shall be performed only within the unincorporated areas of Travis County and the City of Austin. Participation in this Agreement by other incorporated municipalities within Travis County will be handled by amendment to this Agreement pursuant to Section 10.12.

Purpose of Objectives

The Texas AgriLife Extension Service - Wildlife Services Unit in conjunction with USDA-APHIS-WS Program (WS) will continue an operational and technical assistance based CDM program in the City of Austin and Travis County, Texas. The overall objective of this Agreement is to fund and conduct a fullservice integrated CDM program. The primary goal of the operational program will be to reduce human health and safety threats and concerns and reduce injuries to and loss of pets caused by coyotes and other damage causing wildlife in Travis County and the City of Austin. The secondary goal will be to reduce damage to property and other resources caused by coyotes and other damage causing wildlife. An annual work plan and financial plan are included herein.

Objectives

A. To continue and conduct an operational CDM program to minimize conflicts between people and coyotes and other damage causing wildlife.

B. To cooperate with Travis County, the City of Austin and Extension for the purpose of developing a public education program designed to minimize conflicts between people and coyotes and other damage causing wildlife. The educational effort will include development Interlocal Cooperation Agreement - FY 2013

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and dissemination of information related to modification of environmental conditions and/or cultural practices which influence coyote activity and activity of other damage causing wildlife.

C. To monitor coyote activity and activity of other damage causing wildlife while evaluating the effectiveness of CDM program efforts.

Goals

To minimize the following coyote/damage causing wildlife related problems in Travis County and the City of Austin: coyote threats to human health and safety, coyote attacks on pets, and other conflicts that may arise between people and coyotes and other damage causing wildlife.

Plan of Action

WS has assigned a full-time wildlife biologist to Travis County, for the purpose of continuing and conducting a CDM program. WS will also maintain an existing wildlife biologist position in Travis County to augment the CDM program. The existing position will support direct control and educational programs in cooperation with Travis County and the City of Austin. WS personnel assigned to Travis County will remain under the supervision of WS. CDM activities will be confined to the unincorporated areas of Travis County and the City of Austin. WS provides managerial, technical, and administrative program support. WS adheres to all local and state laws and regulations as well as USDA/APHIS/WS policies and guidelines when conducting WDM operations. Safety will be a priority.

CDM methods for controlling coyotes and other damage causing wildlife will include all legal methods such as, but not limited to, leghold traps, snares, shooting, calling, chemical control and hand removal. Only WS or other designated personnel will remove captured animals. WS will be responsible for application and maintenance of CDM equipment.

WS will inform City, County and Extension personnel of WDM activities by attending meetings and providing mutually agreed upon reports. The WS District Office in College Station, Texas (979/845-6201) will monitor the program.

Services and activities to be provided by Performing Agency will include the following:

1. Provide educational services for areas registering complaints or making requests for such services through Receiving Agency.
2. Evaluate and make recommendations for modification of citizen activities related to complaints and requests.
3. Cooperate with City and County in developing and distributing educational and other informational materials designed to decrease the occurrence of problems related to damage-causing wildlife.
4. Provide services as allowed by law related to all damage-causing wildlife, with the initial emphasis on problems related to the coyote population.
5. Where necessary and in instances where other options do not result in a resolution of the wildlife problem, provide for the extermination of animals determined to be a danger to the community.
6. Respond in a timely and effective manner to all complaints related to damage-causing wildlife within the jurisdiction of the Performing Agency utilizing methods which include public education, wildlife behavior modification, and, where necessary, elimination of damage-causing wildlife.

City/County Cooperative Effort

Performing Agency acknowledges and agrees that this Agreement is based upon the cooperative effort to be entered into between Receiving Agency and the City of Austin (City), pursuant to the terms of a separate agreement between Receiving Agency and City (City/County Agreement). Continued performance of the Interlocal Cooperation Agreement - FY 2013

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Agreement by Receiving Agency is conditioned upon the performance by City of certain obligations pursuant to the City/County Agreement. Section 5.03 notwithstanding, Receiving Agency may terminate this Agreement with 30 days notice upon the failure of City to perform according to the terms of the City/County Agreement, including payment by City to County of funds set forth under that City/County

Agreement.

Functions related to this Agreement to be provided by City include the following:

1. Payment by City to Receiving Agency of \$10,000

2. Provision of the following in-kind services.

- Coyote and other damage causing wildlife related calls will be handled through the Town Lake Animal Center (TLAC) Animal Control Office and 311 Call Center. The requests for service will be forwarded to the Wildlife Biologist for handling when necessary.
 - City Animal Services will continue to provide education and information to citizens in those cases where additional services are not warranted and will assist the Wildlife Biologist with education efforts in the neighborhoods including direct customer service, neighborhood meetings and material distribution.
 - City Animal Services will continue to maintain the database of complaints by geographic area to track problem neighborhoods and provide information to the Wildlife Biologist for proactive efforts of coyote population management and the management of other damage causing wildlife populations.
 - City Animal Control will handle transport of bodies for any euthanized animals as well as handle disposal of the bodies.
 - City Animal Control will provide the rabies quarantine/testing and reporting support required for any suspect animals.
 - City Animal Control will provide any coordination support requested by the Wildlife Biologist while conducting activities, including serving as a central point of contact for the Wildlife Biologist to notify the City of the location of traps, harvesting sweeps, etc.
 - Provide the necessary City authorization to access City-owned property to implement the wildlife management program described in this Agreement.
 - Transport trapped coyote(s) requiring euthanasia when requested by TWS.
 - Euthanize coyote(s) when instructed by TWS to do so.
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