PUBLIC INFORMATION

ITEM NO. 4.

DATE OF MEETING: August 19, 2013

REQUESTED BY: Board of Commissioners

SHORT TITLE: Wildlife Specialist, Rachael Schwartz: USDA Wildlife Services: Update on Beaver Program (BMAP).

BACKGROUND: The Board annually approves a contract for the BMAP program and the County pays 100% of the contract cost. The contract was approved on July 8, 2013. Staff was instructed to have someone from Wildlife come and give an update, particularly on the funding aspect. Information from the contract is attached.

ATTACHMENT B
FINANCIAL PLAN

Personnel Costs	$ 33,006
Vehicle Usage	$ 5,295
Supplies	$ 3,913
Services	$ 6,000
Subtotal (Direct Costs)	*$ 48,214*
Program Support (15.15%)	$ 7,304
Program Support (1%)	$ 482
TOTAL	**$ 56,000**

The distribution of the budget from this Financial Plan may vary as necessary to accomplish the purpose of this agreement, but may not exceed $56,000.

Financial Point of Contact

Pender County: Mickey Duvall, County Manager	910-259-1200
APHIS-WS: Catherine Saunders, Budget Analyst	919-786-4480 x 226

NORTH CAROLINA BEAVER MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (BMAP) FY 2013 (OCTOBER 2012 – SEPTEMBER 2013) POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The North Carolina Beaver Management Assistance Pilot Program, later known as the Beaver Management Assistance Program (BMAP), was established in November 1992. Since that time the program has grown more than tenfold from four participating counties in 1992-93 to 43 in federal FY 2012. At the same time, BMAP services to the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) have grown from four counties in 1992-93 to all 100 North Carolina counties in 1998. To ensure that program administration and operation are clear, the BMAP Advisory Board has compiled and approved the following policies and procedures.

HISTORY OF BEAVER IN NORTH CAROLINA

Historically, beaver were considered a valuable natural resource and were an extremely important part of the North Carolina economy. Well into the 1800's, beaver fur was the primary item of trade, and without trapping or hunting regulations, beaver were trapped to near extinction by the late 1890's.

In 1939, in an effort to assist the public and effectively manage wildlife and natural resources in the state, the North Carolina Department of Conservation and Development (the predecessor of the North Carolina Wildlife Resource Commission) (NCWRC) obtained 29 beaver from Pennsylvania and released them in North Carolina on what is now the Sandhills Game Lands. Because of economic and aesthetic values, public demand for beaver restocking remained high and restocking programs were continued between 1951 and 1956 with an additional 54 beaver being stocked over a nine-county area. The restocking and management efforts of the NCWRC were successful, and by 1953 there were an estimated 1,000 beaver over a seven-county area in the state. Today, beaver occupy watersheds throughout nearly the entire state with estimated statewide populations as high as 500,000.

While beaver populations are thriving and expanding throughout the state, resource use practices have changed, and there is no longer as high a demand for beaver products as there once was. This has resulted, in some areas, in beaver populations expanding to levels where they are in conflict with the health, safety, and livelihood of people.

In the early 1990's, state and county agencies and the public had few places to turn for relief from beaver damage as private trappers were few and far between and generally conducted beaver damage control activities only as a hobby or part time job. In the early to mid-1990's at least three North Carolina counties attempted to use bounties to reduce beaver damage. These efforts proved to have little effect on alleviating specific beaver damage problems.

CREATION OF THE BMAP

Responding to public complaints and requests for assistance, the 1991 Session of the North Carolina Legislature created the North Carolina Beaver Damage Control Advisory Board effective July 1, 1992. The Board is composed of the administrative heads, or their designees, of

the NC Wildlife Resources Commission (Chair), NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, NC Forest Service, NC Division of Soil and Water Conservation Division, NC Cooperative Extension Service, NCDOT, NC Farm Bureau Federation, NC Forestry Association, and U.S. Dept. of Agriculture's Division of Wildlife Services. The Board was mandated to develop a program to manage beaver damage on public and private lands. This includes developing a priority system for responding to beaver damage complaints, developing a system for documenting activities, providing educational programs, providing for the hiring of personnel, evaluating the costs and benefits of the program, and advising the NCWRC on its implementation.

Utilizing the expertise of NCWRC and Wildlife Services personnel, considering the past history of beaver damage management efforts in the state, and drawing on the experiences of other states, the Advisory Board created the Beaver Management Assistance Pilot Program in November 1992. The primary focus of the program was oriented towards public health and safety and assistance to landholders experiencing beaver damage problems. The program was structured to be flexible, fair, and feasible. Because of practical and ecological considerations, the program was designed to assist the NCDOT, landholders, and others address specific beaver damage problems rather than to eradicate beaver populations over wide areas. The key to the success of the program was the active participation of the NCWRC, Wildlife Services, counties, landholders, Cooperative Extension Service and NCDOT personnel. Because of the success of the pilot program, the name was changed to the Beaver Management Assistance Program (BMAP) in 1995. In 1998 the BMAP was expanded to include all 100 North Carolina counties.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Wildlife specialists use an Integrated Wildlife Damage Management approach in which a combination of methods may be used or recommended to reduce wildlife damage. Wildlife specialists use proven beaver damage management techniques and equipment to alleviate beaver damage. Whenever feasible, the use of non-lethal techniques is recommended and/or implemented; however, lethal beaver removal techniques are the predominant methods used. Wildlife specialists encourage landholders not to remove beaver if they determine such activities would result in little or no benefit to the landholder. Due to practical and ecological considerations, the NCWRC does not permit relocation of beaver within the state.

When conducting lethal management activities, beaver are the target species. Trapping is the primary tool for removing beaver from public and private property. Shooting is also used. Beaver damage management techniques are used selectively to ensure public safety and minimize detrimental effects on other animals. Animals captured other than nutria (an undesirable species not native to North America) and muskrat (can damage habitat, cause bank erosion) are released whenever possible. Beaver are offered to the landholder, disposed of in a sanitary manner, or sold, when practical and feasible, to provide additional funding for the BMAP. Some may be kept for future research, study or educational needs, or other purposes. When necessary to alleviate flooding, beaver dams are removed by wildlife specialists using hand tools or explosives. All wildlife damage management activities that take place are undertaken according to relevant laws, regulations, policies, orders, or procedures.

The performance of beaver damage management actions by Wildlife Services comply with the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, and all other applicable environmental statutes. In October 2001 an Environmental Assessment (EA), *Aquatic Rodent Damage Management in North Carolina*, covering beaver damage management activities conducted by Wildlife Services throughout the state was finalized. In March 2007 the EA was updated and a new *Decision and Finding of no Significant Impact* was issued. In January 2012 the EA was reviewed (monitoring report) and updated.

COUNTY PARTICIPATION

County participation is required before any direct beaver damage management assistance is provided to landholders under the BMAP. Participation in the program is currently open to all North Carolina counties. Counties must renew participation annually. In April of each year, the NCWRC sends a letter to each county advising it of program eligibility. To participate, a county must respond by established deadlines as set forth by the Advisory Board or general statute. General Statute 113-291.10 requires that a county wanting to participate in the program in a given fiscal year shall provide written notification of its wish to participate and shall commit $4,000 in local funds no later than September 30 of that year. Counties not in the program the previous fiscal year who elect to participate in the program will receive BMAP services starting in October or November of the current fiscal year.

Questions concerning county participation or program operations should be directed to either the Wildlife Services office in Raleigh at (919) 786-4480 or the NC Wildlife Resources Commission Division of Wildlife Management office in Raleigh at (919) 707-0050.

BMAP ASSISTANCE IN PARTICIPATING COUNTIES

BMAP participating counties can expect to receive service based on the number of counties opting to participate in any particular fiscal year and the amount of funding the program receives. In FY 2013, 44 counties are expected to participate. The $4,000 a county contributes is a participation fee which allows private landholders the opportunity to participate in the cost share BMAP. Services provided will be on both public (DOT) and private lands in the county. Some counties may receive more service and some less depending on the demand for BMAP services in that county and the geographical area in which a wildlife specialist works.

ADDITIONAL BMAP ASSISTANCE IN PARTICIPATING COUNTIES

Participating counties occasionally request beaver management services for landholders in addition to those received under the BMAP. Generally, requests for additional assistance require hiring additional experienced personnel, which is inherently difficult, especially if such a request is for seasonal or less than full time work. If Wildlife Services is able to accommodate such requests, any additional work provided landholders in the county will follow BMAP guidelines, with only specific beaver damage problems being addressed, and the landholders paying the cost share as outlined under the section entitled "Landholder Cost Share in Participating Counties." Cost share fees paid by individual landholders will be used to support the overall BMAP. Any county requesting additional assistance pays full program costs (labor, vehicle usage, supplies

and equipment, etc.). In addition, both landholders and the DOT will receive services. To receive additional services, a county must enter into a cooperative service agreement with Wildlife Services with payment going directly to Wildlife Services, not the NCWRC.

BMAP ASSISTANCE TO LANDHOLDERS IN NON-PARTICIPATING COUNTIES

Landholders and others residing in nonparticipating counties (counties electing not to pay the $4,000 cost share) are ineligible to receive BMAP services. Wildlife Services may, however, enter into beaver damage management cooperative service agreements with these landholders separate from the BMAP. Full costs of services provided under these agreements are paid by the landholder. BMAP services are conducted for the NCDOT in all North Carolina counties regardless of a county's participation in the program.

BMAP ADMINISTRATION AND FUNDING

Administrative authority for the BMAP rests with the NCWRC, but enabling legislation allows the NCWRC to transfer program administration, upon agreement, to Wildlife Services. Presently, Wildlife Services administers the BMAP according to the plan developed by the Beaver Damage Control Advisory Board and approved by the NCWRC. Administration of the BMAP follows the federal fiscal year (October through September).

Funding for the BMAP comes from the NCWRC, the NCDOT, county governments, Wildlife Services and private sources, making the BMAP a truly cooperative effort. County funding is collected directly by Wildlife Services. The NCWRC and NCDOT enter into a cooperative service agreement with Wildlife Services to conduct the work.

STATE COST SHARE

The extent of state funding is set by state legislation and the NCDOT. During the Second Regular Session of the 2011-2012 biennium of the NC General Assembly, the NCWRC was directed to fund $599,000 of the program's costs for state FY 2012-13. The NC Board of Transportation opted to fund $450,000 towards the program for federal FY 2013. There are no additional cost share charges to the NCDOT relating to beaver damage management along state-owned highways, roads, and bridges throughout North Carolina. If beaver damage management work must be conducted on adjacent properties to resolve a problem effecting NCDOT right-of-ways, those landholders are not charged for services.

COUNTY COST SHARE

General Statute 113-291.10 sets a $4,000 cost share a county government must pay so that landholders, businesses, and others residing in that county are eligible for services. Counties paying the $4,000 cost share are considered participating counties. All county cost share fees are made payable to the US Dept. of Agriculture c/o the NC Wildlife Resources Commission, NCSU Centennial Campus, 1751 Varsity Dr., Raleigh, NC 27606 ATTN.: Beaver Management Assistance Program.

LANDHOLDER COST SHARE IN PARTICIPATING COUNTIES

For purposes of this document, landholders who request BMAP services in a participating county are those who own/lease land or operate a business in that county. This includes public- and private-owned businesses, municipalities, county governments, soil and water conservation districts and others. Landholders in participating counties requesting BMAP services are required to pay a cost share for services as set by the Beaver Damage Control Advisory Board. This cost share fee also applies to landholders receiving beaver damage management services through cooperatively funded agreements between counties and Wildlife Services where the county fully funds the beaver damage management work. (See "Additional BMAP Assistance in Participating Counties.")

Landholder cost share fees are billed and collected by Wildlife Services or the county, are paid for by the county, or are indirectly collected by the county through a local tax where a county funds the landholder cost share fees. Only counties paying for a full time employee or more in additional assistance above and beyond that received through the BMAP are given the option to collect cost share fees directly from the landholder. In those cases, Wildlife Services does not collect any additional cost share fees. All landholder cost share fees collected by Wildlife Services are made available to the BMAP through a separate trust fund agreement.

The BMAP Advisory Board set the landholder cost share at $20 for each separate site visit a wildlife specialist makes to a landholder's property or properties. There is no charge for the initial assessment which is defined as the time spent with a landholder whether in person or over the phone to discuss the BMAP and sign the paperwork. A site visit is defined as a trip to a landholder's property or properties during which time beaver damage management activities occur. A site visit may last an entire day (as might be the case when initially setting traps on a property), or as little as 15 minutes. Landholders are also charged $125 for beaver dam removal. Landholders requesting BMAP services requiring beaver damage management work on adjacent lands are required to provide for payment of those services. Additionally, written permission from adjacent landholders is required. After 15 visits to a specific landholder's property in any given fiscal year, the landholder is required to pay full costs for BMAP services.

FEDERAL COST SHARE

In FY 2013, Wildlife Services will fund $25,000 towards the BMAP. This is also the minimum federal funding requirement set forth in NC State Statute Section13.29, G.S. 113-291.10 (f).

REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE

Landholders should make requests for assistance through their local cooperative extension service office or, in some cases, their local soil and water conservation district office or other designated contact. Each year a BMAP leaflet listing telephone contacts, by county, is distributed to all interested parties.

Requests for technical assistance, educational programs, and similar activities are given high priority and are provided at no cost to cooperators and the general public. Technical assistance includes recommendations, advice, and hands-on training aimed at teaching interested landholders and others how best to alleviate problems caused by beaver. Instructional materials are available for distribution statewide. Educational programs on beaver ecology and management are presented statewide.

Requests for direct assistance (wildlife specialists doing the work) are generally addressed on a first-come, first-served basis with top priority addressing threats to public health and safety, particularly along highway right-of-ways. Requests for help on state and county property and along highway right-of-ways should be made directly to the wildlife specialist. In general, the following priority rankings are observed when responding to requests for direct assistance:

1) State highways, roads and bridges
2) County-owned property in participating counties
3) Landholders in participating counties
4) Cities/municipalities in participating counties
5) Industrial/corporate landholders and landholder associations
6) Other lands

Logistic or travel cost considerations may require that some requests be worked out of order. In special cases, priority work areas may be established as determined by the wildlife specialists. Whenever possible, all requests for assistance will receive an initial response by telephone within 72 hours. Time of site visits and field work will vary according to current workloads.

Before assistance begins, a wildlife specialist meets with all relevant landholders to determine the extent of the problem caused by beaver, if any, and makes recommendations on the best course of action for addressing the damage problem. At this time the wildlife specialist offers to teach the landholder(s) how to address the problem including hands-on training on the landholder's property. If the landholder is unable or uninterested in conducting the work and requests that the wildlife specialist conduct the work, the wildlife specialist estimates the time and cost share the landholder must pay to receive the beaver management services. The landholder(s) signs an agreement that includes the estimated costs, the type of activities to be conducted on his/her land (e.g., trapping, shooting, installation of water control devices), and the granting of permission to work on his/her land.

Wildlife specialists do not remove beaver and their dams if such activities are expected to have little benefit in protecting timber, agricultural interests, roadways, other property such as sewer systems or waste water treatment facilities, or protecting human health and safety. Sometimes a beaver damage problem affecting a landholder originates on adjacent properties not owned by the landholder. In these cases the landholder requesting the services pays for any work done on those adjacent properties. Further, wildlife specialists will work on adjacent lands only if written permission is received.

LANDHOLDER GUARANTEE

BMAP activities are guaranteed for 30 days following the completion of a project. If a problem recurs within the guarantee period, the project is reworked at no additional charge.

PERSONNEL AND REPORTS

BMAP WILDLIFE SPECIALISTS

Wildlife specialists are hired by, and work directly for, Wildlife Services. The number of wildlife specialists hired as full-time or part-time employees is determined by the BMAP budget. Wildlife specialists generally work year-round as weather and other conditions allow.

Demand for beaver damage management activities on public and private lands vary throughout the year with the least demand coming during the summer months. During such slow periods, BMAP wildlife specialists occasionally work on non-BMAP related projects that might be available. All costs (salaries, vehicle usage, supplies, equipment, etc.) associated with such work are covered by the other project, resulting in a cost savings for the BMAP. This is a definite advantage to BMAP customers as additional BMAP services can be offered during the more critical times of the year such as the winter season.

SUPERVISION AND RECORD KEEPING

Wildlife specialists are supervised out of the USDA Wildlife Services District Offices located in Greenville, Statesville and Whiteville.

Wildlife specialists and supervisors maintain records of all appropriate BMAP information with records based on the federal fiscal year. Information is reported to the NCWRC during periodic Advisory Board meetings. An annual report documenting all activities during the federal fiscal year (October through September) is provided to the Advisory Board and the NCWRC no later than December 31 following the end of the federal fiscal year. County officials are also kept informed of progress through periodic meetings and/or reports.

Landholders are kept updated about ongoing work on their property. Once a project is complete, the landholder is sent an invoice listing the beaver management activities conducted on his/her land including numbers of beaver and/or beaver dams removed, number of site visits, work start and stop dates, and cost. Landholders are given 30 days following billing to pay their cost share. Landholders not paying for services will be ineligible for any future services.

Updated September 26, 2012

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