

MINUTES of  
WILDLIFE HAZARDS WORKING GROUP (WHMG)  
September 22, 2010  
Aurora Room, 6:00 p.m.

I. **CALL TO ORDER:** WHMG Chair Steve Zimmerman called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. **ROLL CALL:**

Board Members Present:

Laurie Berg	Jerry Godkin	Steve Zimmerman
Tamara Cook	Scott Watts	

WHWG Members Present:

Steve Zimmerman	Jack Hodges	Laurie Craig
Richard Carstensen	Eric Eriksen	

Staff/CBJ Present:

Jeannie Johnson, Airport Manager	Lamar Riddle, Airfield M&O Supervisor
Jerry Mahle, Airport M&O Sup't	Tom Carson, Carson Dorn

Public Present:

Scott Frickey, U.S. Fish & Wildlife	Terry Smith, USDA APHIS Wildlife Svcs.
Steve Brockmann, U.S. Fish & Wildlife	Brad Buescher, USDA APHIS Wildlife Svcs.
Nick Borchert, USDA APHIS Wildlife Svcs.	

III. **BUSINESS:** Group Chair Steve Zimmerman said this was the sixth meeting of the group, with the first five meetings directed to a specific purpose. On May 12, 2010, the Airport Board passed a resolution describing the Wildlife Hazards Working Group, its responsibilities and makeup. One of the things it stated was “[t]he Wildlife Hazards Working Group shall meet at least quarterly.” Therefore, the group will meet each quarter.

A. **Recent Wildlife Monitoring and Hazing Activities at the Airport:** Nick Borchert reported on activities that occurred May through mid-September 2010. The average number of eagles hazed per incident was 1.6. The idea of the report was to try to find some monthly trends. The huge concentration of gulls in the float pond was due to small fish. Mr. Borchert speculated the lower activity in July was due to nesting. The gull activity has dropped significantly since August 23. The construction work around the airport and the duck hunters have helped to push the ducks out during good weather. The addition of the road on the south of the pond has been a huge advantage for access to the area. Because of the accessibility of the area, not only to the Wildlife Biologist but also to the wildlife, the wildlife hazing efforts have been increased. The waterfowl numbers are significantly less – 5,000 in 2009 and 1,800 in 2010. It has also brought in persistent wildlife – like a red-throated loon. Some attractants have been removed, such as addition

## WILDLIFE HAZARDS WORKING GROUP

September 22, 2010

Page 2

of anti-perching devices on the new ACS cell tower and removal of chum salmon carcasses from the river that came through the culvert and ended up floating in the float pond.

One of Mr. Borchert's duties has been to monitor the eagle nest and insuring development of the chick was not impacted by the daily construction work. No negative behavior was observed. The chick was first observed on June 2, with the hatching occurring sometime between May 26 and 27. The last day the eaglet was observed was on August 23.

The runway approach lights are the main area of concern. The two closest to the airport have anti-perching devices and nothing perches on them. The rest beyond the river do not have anti-perching devices and Mr. Borchert has observed 737s landing a number of times over the top of perched eagles. No one ever knows when the birds will take off. Cracker shells are ineffective in this area and it is off Airport property. From the day he began at the airport, he has witnessed four near misses (a pass within 50 feet or causing the bird or plane to deviate its flight) of eagles with different aircraft. He will also be researching creative devices to keep eagles from perching in trees on the airport. Ultimately, he would like to see more than eight hours by USDA APHIS Wildlife Services during Control Tower operating times.

B. Eagle Nest Removal: Chair Zimmerman said that at the May 10, 2010, meeting, the Group's general consensus was that if a permit is issued to remove the eagle nest, there should be a research program going on to see if it appears that the activity of the eagles changes and if it does, does it look like a positive or negative change regarding hazards. He wanted to determine if there is a way to do a research program and, if so, how it might be tacked onto the permit. Airport Manager Jeannie Johnson said the permit was sent in by Nick Borchert. It is at U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services. A meeting will be held with them on September 28 to discuss the permit.

Steve Brockmann, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, said that the main feedback being received from Anchorage is regarding mitigation. At the last meeting, one of the items discussed was that there is a lot of flexibility in what is done for mitigation. There are some conditions for different scenarios in which compensatory mitigation will be necessary. It does give flexibility in case of safety concerns, which is how they want to treat airports in general. They do not want mitigation to stand in the way of doing the right thing in making the airport safe.

They thought everyone agreed that doing a study to evaluate what happens to a pair when you move a nest and what happens to eagles in the airspace and the nesting area population was important. These important questions can help in the permitting process and help the airport with adaptive management of the air space. Fish & Wildlife Services is on board with cooperating with a study. The draft study plan has three elements: a thorough evaluation of what is the area nesting population (aerial surveys in the spring and late

## WILDLIFE HAZARDS WORKING GROUP

September 22, 2010

Page 3

summer), tagging with satellite transmitter tags for the pair in the nest that is removed (either leaving the nest there next year or remove it in the winter and watch birds carrying sticks trying to establish the nest), a similar number of birds tagged in the vicinity that are not on the airport property to keep track of their movements and success as a control, and then, possibly, tag (visually mark) other birds in the area. The plan for this study is for Juneau, Sitka, Elmendorf, Kodiak and other airports. U.S. Fish & Wildlife is hoping for a functional partnership with DOT, FAA, and the airports, with shared responsibilities and shared funding. Alternative funding will be pursued through national federal sources of all kinds, which require non-federal matching money. Some in-kind services by non-federal employees can also count toward the matching money. One of the things needed before issuing the permit is an evaluation of the mitigation. Instead of mitigation, they are proposing the study noted earlier. Mr. Brockmann encouraged anyone that has creative ideas for funding to get in touch with him.

C. Update and Discussion on Proposed Revegetation in Proximity to the Runway Safety Areas and the Floatplane Pond: Airport Manager Jeannie Johnson said that this item was decided through the contract. Tom Carson, Carson Dorn, distributed a Field Order (Attachment #1), which is a summary of what will be used on the project. A lot of material is being provided from the pond. The runway safety areas will not be vegetated. The other areas will mainly be filled with two types of seeds. Laurie Craig noted there may be some introduced invasive reed canary grass in the Duck Creek corridor. She noted that rye grass is tough, but she didn't think it was as successful as hoped. She also noted brush that could be placed in Duck Creek that would keep out blue herons. Airport M&O Superintendent Jerry Mahle said that Airfield Maintenance is currently testing different heights of grass to see what birds are attracted to each height. Another part of the decision is the threat level to aircraft by the type of bird that is attracted. Richard Carstensen agreed that reed canary grass needs to be addressed as once established, it will choke streams. Ms. Craig noted that the grass is located where the new bridge is going in, in the corner and between the parking area.

Chair Steve Zimmerman asked Nick Borchert to make observations about the area the Airport decided not to plant trees in and he wondered how much of a fly-away zone the area is, especially from the wetlands to the float plane pond. He wondered if this area would be an area of egress from the wetlands to the float pond. Mr. Borchert replied that it would be no more so than anywhere else as the ground terrain has no impact whatsoever on the flight.

Mr. Mahle noted that Mr. Borchert has two Chesapeake Bay Retrievers that wear orange vests when working. They are being used for bird control. Mr. Brochert said the dogs are an additional tool.

WILDLIFE HAZARDS WORKING GROUP

September 22, 2010

Page 4

D. Proposed Topics for Future Meetings: Chair Zimmerman will contact members via e-mail for their suggestions for the next meeting. He suggested the next meeting will be held after Thanksgiving and before December 17, 2010.

IV. ADJOURN: The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.