

MINUTES of  
WILDLIFE HAZARDS WORKING GROUP (WHMG)  
March 19, 2011  
Alaska Room, 12:45 p.m.

I. **CALL TO ORDER:** WHMG Chair Steve Zimmerman called the meeting to order at 12:45 p.m.

II. **ROLL CALL:**

Board Members Present:

Steve Zimmerman

WHWG Members Present:

Steve Zimmerman

Richard Carstensen

Bob Armstrong

Laurie Craig

Staff/CBJ Present:

Jeannie Johnson, Airport Manager

Marc Cheatham, Special Proj. Officer

Jerry Mahle, Airport M&O Sup't

Public:

Scott Frickey, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Svcs.

III. **RECENT WILDLIFE MONITORING AND HAZING ACTIVITIES ON THE AIRPORT:**

Nick Borchert stated the totals are for December, January and February. He said he has a person who has worked part-time at the airport for three years and has started working on Saturdays and Sundays on the first of February. His number one priority is the stand of trees south of the float pond, but he will do wildlife sweeps. He found that hazing seven days a week makes a huge difference.

Eagle activity in December was 12; the December harassment total for all wildlife was 484. It was icy, cold and there was nothing around. January brought in more birds. On January 3, there were 200 ducks in the float pond, most of them on the ice. The sedge weed was frozen into the ice and when the top layer of ice melted, the birds were picking little bits off of that. In January, there were 2,200 ducks dispersed, all but a handful of those were mallards and mostly in the float pond. Two birds (gulls) were killed in this three-month period. No goose dispersals occurred in December, with 400+ in January and February. The gull activity is minimal, but the two that came around would not leave the runway and had to be removed. Mr. Borchert said that he believed the birds have become conditioned to the construction and are staying in the area. He noted that Fish and Game has requested installation of a bat monitoring station at the Airport.

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IV. **EAGLE NEST REMOVAL**: Mr. Borchert introduced Scott Frickey with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services. Mr. Frickey said that they were catching eagles (2) and putting the satellite backpacks on the birds in Sitka last week. They will begin catching the eagles this coming week in Juneau. It is planned to catch two sets – a control pair and the disturbed pair. The plan is to trap outside of the Airport property.

V. **FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION ON SAFETY CONCERNS RELATED TO WATERFOWL MOVEMENTS DURING HUNTING SEASON**: Chair Zimmerman said that a lot of things were left hanging from the last meeting. It was thought that the study should probably be done, but the question is how it would be funded. Mr. Borchert spoke to Mr. Washburn in Sandusky, Ohio with the National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC). He said the NWRC does not have anything for goose related studies in Juneau. Chair Zimmerman said that at the last meeting, it was agreed that a study needed to be done but that Mr. Borchert could not do it by himself, that another person would have to be hired. Mr. Borchert said that although the geese and ducks crossing the runway do create a hazard, time-wise, it is less of a hazard than the birds that are on-site that you cannot predict when they are taking off, dispersing and/or chasing them off of the runway. He first recommended increasing boots on the ground and increase the hours of dispersal. He would like to see dispersal during all daylight hours. It is not a lot of hours during the winter, but a significant number of hours in the summer. Nationwide a majority of the bird strikes occur 500 feet or below. It was noted that the ideal study would be to radio tag some of the geese and document the elevations they are flying back and forth. From that information, it would provide an assessment of the hazard.

Chair Zimmerman said a hazard has been identified. He wanted to know if the group agreed that this is a hazard, it could be taken to the Airport Board. The Airport Board could then write a letter to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service saying this is a special problem and could they assign someone to it. At which time, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service would note the cost associated and it is unknown what could be done. Mr. Borchert said, again, he thought having boots on the ground covering as much of 24-hours a day, seven days a week as possible was more important. If there is additional funding, they would provide someone to do a wildlife hazard assessment. He thought the first step was having everyone walk the EVAR and count the number of birds and put it to a grid location. The other part of it is, can any movement patterns be identified at this time of the year? Mr. Borchert said USDA Wildlife Services (WS) started conducting goose counts south of the EVAR in February and March and that we were putting our counts in the same grid we use for our wildlife dispersals. Bob Armstrong felt that the counts wouldn't give an indication of where the geese were going. He felt that GPS backpacks needed to be placed on a few of the geese to monitor movements.

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It was asked what bird presents the most hazards at Juneau International Airport. Airport Maintenance & Operations Superintendent Jerry Mahle replied that it would be seagulls because they are stupid. Mr. Borchert agreed with the hazard part, not the stupid part and said that when a seagull is focused on food, there is little that can be done to disperse the birds. Mr. Borchert noted that short-eared owls have been added to Wildlife Services' Fish & Game permit for trap/relocate. Fish and Game has been reluctant to add the trap/relocate to the JNU public safety permit because they are nervous about just letting anybody capture raptors. They want to ensure that WS is the only ones doing the live trapping. He has been listed as a subpermittee for a nationwide bird banding permit.

Mr. Borchert said he is working with David Yee on installation of anti-perching devices on all approach lights. He said there was one documented bird strike in 2010. Eight to ten swallows were found dead, perhaps from jet wash. In 2009, it was noted that average bird strikes per year were 8.3 during the last three years, with three strikes in 2009. He thought his efforts are leading to an overall reduction of wildlife present at the airport, which has in turn reduced the hazard to aircraft. Only having one strike last calendar year is a great indicator.

Richard Carstensen said that telemetry is expensive, but just having a couple of telemetry birds is going to give information about the movement of a lot of birds. When studies are done on anything, he looks at a lot of scales. He thought he and Mr. Armstrong were thinking about whole Mendenhall Refuge patterns. It would be cool to know what the geese are doing 24 hours a day. Chair Zimmerman wondered if someone could draft a letter (Bob Armstrong and Nick Borchert), taking it to the Board, and then have the Board sign off on it and send it to Fish & Wildlife Services (if, in fact, the City Manager allows this kind of thing). He said this is one way to move this problem down the road. Mr. Frickey said he does not know what they would do with geese. He said the eagles were a different thing. He said he could bring it up with Debbie Groves and Steve Brockman. Mr. Borchert asked if Mr. Carstensen was talking about GPS backpacks and Mr. Carstensen said he was. It was noted that these backpacks cost \$20,000 a bird.

Chair Zimmerman asked Bob Armstrong to formulate a letter stating his concerns and the fact that he thinks it is a hazard that somehow needs to study and then a solution needs to be found, if necessary. He asked that Mr. Armstrong run the letter by Mr. Borchert to see if he concurs. If Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Borchert concur, Chair Zimmerman will take it before the Board to say that this is an issue that should result in a letter to Fish & Wildlife Service indicating this is a concern we feel that Fish & Wildlife Service as a federal agency should be responsible for those geese that might knock a plane out of the air and might want to do a little further work on. Mr. Borchert suggested the best bet would be to look at ways to acquire funding for sponsoring a grad program through Fish & Wildlife Service. Laurie Ferguson Craig agreed with Mr. Borchert. Ms. Craig said she would like the group to get on record about stating this is important and they think it should be

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studied. Mr. Borchert said that the trees should be cleaned up to provide less area for bears and deer.

- VI. **PROPOSED TOPICS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**: Height of trees regarding glide slope area.
- VII. **ADJOURN**: The meeting adjourned at 2:50 p.m.