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CHARTING A FUTURE: PROCESS AND PROMISE

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ABSTRACT: The Animal Damage Control program has been heavily involved in strategic planning since its transfer from USDI to USDA. The first effort was undertaken in 1989 by the program's management team. It was an introspective, critical look at what changes were needed to improve the program's strategic position in the natural resources community. That plan failed to achieve the desired objective due principally to the lack of involvement by ADC employees and others outside the program. In 1991, a more comprehensive effort was begun known as "Futuring." In this process, a representative from each organizational level of the program and representatives from wildlife management organizations formed a Futuring Committee. The analysis and recommendations of this group were the basis of the new ADC strategic plan. The involvement of employees and other interests made this effort far more successful in giving the program strategic alignment with the natural resources community.

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INTRODUCTION

"Look not mournfully into the past. It comes not back again. Wisely improve the present. It is thine. {Then} Go forth to meet the shadowy future, without fear, and with a manly heart."

These famous words by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow summarize for me why it is indeed my pleasure to discuss the future promise of the recently completed Animal Damage Control (ADC) program's "Futuring Process." During the last several years, I have been challenging the program, including myself, to be prepared for the next century and to respond to a changing American society. Some may ask why this is so important, and I would like to respond with a quote from Charles Franklin Kettering:

"We should all be concerned about the future because we will have to spend the rest of our lives there."

This statement of simple truth, perhaps says it best. I look to the future as a great opportunity for ADC and our profession. But to know where we may be going, we need to know from whence we came. Are there lessons we may learn from our history? I believe so, and this undertaking requires an introspective look at our past to learn from it and to understand the foundations of the ADC paradigm.

But "Look not mournfully into the past. It comes not back again."

OUR HISTORICAL PARADIGM

As I have stated before, we are controlled by our own paradigms, which are influenced by the sum total of our experiences that govern how we see things or interpret what our senses record. The Animal Damage Control Act of March 2, 1931, provided USDA with the authority to conduct wildlife damage control activities and remains the primary statutory authority for the current ADC

program. We need only to refer to excerpts from the language of the authorizing legislation (i.e., 7 U.S.C. 426) to see how some things have changed over the years.

"The Secretary of Agriculture is authorized and directed to conduct such investigations, experiments, and tests as he may deem necessary in order to determine, demonstrate, and promulgate the best methods of eradication, suppression, or bringing under control on national forests and other areas of the public domain as well as on state, territory, on privately owned lands of mountain lions, wolves, coyotes, bobcats, prairie dogs, gophers, ground squirrels, jack rabbits, and other animals injurious to agriculture, horticulture, forestry, animal husbandry, wild game animals, fur-bearing animals, and birds, and for the protection of stock and other domestic animals through the suppression of rabies and tularemia in predatory or other wild animals; and to conduct campaigns for the destruction or control of such animals ..."

The important service provided by ADC is still as important today as it was then; however, its reference to the means we could employ such as "best method for eradication" is reflective of societal attitudes then towards wildlife species perceived to be pests of agriculture or natural resources and a general antipathy towards predators ... **BUT TIMES CHANGE!**

Who in the 1930's, 40's, and 50's would have gazed into their crystal ball and forecast the significantly changing societal attitudes that have led to environmental awareness and wildlife protectionism. Yet these attitudes have evolved in part from the recent urbanization and industrialization of America, which is far removed from our former rural economy and lifestyle. Such changes have inevitably led to more scrutiny of the program. External oversight has generated the following documents

that have become part of our history: the Leopold Report in 1964, Cain Report in 1972, President Nixon's Executive Order 11643 in 1972, and the issuance of a policy statement by Secretary of the Interior Cecil Andrus in 1979. All were not critical of the role of the ADC program but were critical of some of the means it had employed and ends it had achieved ... BUT TIMES CHANGE!

In 1986, the ADC program was transferred from the U.S. Department of the Interior to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). This occurred not because of criticism from traditional critics of the program but resulted from action by those who receive service from the ADC program. This was a very significant event in the history of ADC because it represented the first response by users of ADC's services to years of pressure from activist groups to limit the ADC program's activities. This transfer permitted a dramatic change in the philosophical and managerial underpinnings of the ADC program. It has led to a more proactive and futuristic orientation of ADC activities--a move now applauded by most wildlife management professionals.

Therefore, as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow stated: "Wisely improve the present. It is thine."

CHANGE AND PARADIGMS

There are too many places on earth where you could be and not be aware of the times of change at work. Almost daily we hear of changes involving technology, information, economics, the environment, and society ... never is the hackneyed phrase so true, "the only constant is change" (Mackinnon 1984). Managing the impact of the future is now a required competency for program administrators. Future possibilities often seem limitless and overwhelming, while future probabilities often are taken too much for granted.

Within the ADC program, defense mechanisms had become so strong that opportunities for the future were not recognized, much less acted upon. It was obvious to the ADC Management Team (MT) that, as we face the challenges and opportunities of the next century, we needed to become aware of and react to the world around us and develop an ADC program that is tradition based and not tradition bound!

So, shortly after the transfer to USDA, ADC became involved in an intensive effort to develop a strategic long-range plan for the program. The MT identified and assessed apparent program strengths and weaknesses, external influences and relationships, and conditions that would ensure continued program viability and vitality. Based on these factors, the MT developed an ADC Strategic Plan that was issued in December 1989. It included goals for ADC and the development of an implementation plan for their achievement over a three year period. However, it was fatally flawed because it was too introspective and failed to include input from ADC employees. According to Steven Covey's work, "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People," "without involvement there is no commitment." That was very evident with our first effort at strategic planning.

To remedy this failure, Phase II of the ADC's strategic planning efforts was undertaken by a "Futuring Committee" (FC). In contrast to the earlier 1989

Strategic Plan, a broader perspective was sought. The process involved all levels of employee representation--a vertical slice through the program from top to bottom. In addition, representatives from the wildlife management profession outside of ADC were also included. Finally, viewpoints were solicited from a wide range of interested parties: commodity groups, animal welfare groups, and the wildlife management community.

WHAT IS FUTURING? OR WHAT IS IT NOT?

Futuring should not uncritically extend present trends into the future or be a "defense of the past!" Futuring does not produce a long-range plan that provides only for doing additional and new things without provisions for maintaining the present and/or evolving from the past! Futuring involves analytical and strategic thinking with a commitment of immediate resources to action. It deals with the futurity of present decisions. Thus, the basic question in futuring is what do we have to do today to be ready for and prepare for tomorrow?

Bobby Knight said it best, "The will to win is not nearly as important as the will to prepare to win." We in ADC have now come to view strategic planning as "preparing to win." "Futuring" is a type of strategic long-range planning that continually processes present decisions systematically and, with the greatest knowledge of their futurity, organizes the resources to carry them out. It also measures the results of these decisions against the expectations through organized, systematic feedback.

The best plan is only good intentions until management commits resources and key individuals to work on specific tasks highlighting its substance. This work implies not only the assignment of key staff but accountability, deadlines, monitoring and measurement of results, and feedback.

THE ADC FUTURING PROCESS

The Animal Damage Control (ADC) program's "futuring process" grew out of several months discussion about the future of ADC and how the troubled waters should be charted. Feedback from animal interest organizations, officials of other Federal and State agencies, service recipients, policy officials of USDA, and employees of ADC helped shape the debate. After the MT reached a consensus on the approach, personnel representing a vertical slice of the organization were chosen to participate in this process. Representatives from outside ADC were also included. The Wildlife Management Institute, a State agency, and academia were part of the 25 member group. They were given the task to define the future role of ADC and develop recommendations to submit to the MT. The 25 member Committee was divided into three working groups--each established to address three broad areas of emphasis relative to how we conduct our program--management, professionalism, and methods.

The first meeting was held in Denver, Colorado, August 1991. The facilitated sessions provided a forum for discussing ADC's future. Day One was devoted to presentations by other interested parties to present their perspectives on ADC activities to the futuring group. Groups represented included the Humane Society of the United States, the Animal Welfare Institute, the American

Sheep Industry, The International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the American Farm Bureau Federation, and the Wildlife Management Institute. The perspectives presented an interesting dichotomy of interests, technical wildlife management concerns, and challenges. The next two days were spent in separate group functions which produced draft management, professionalism, and methods recommendations. Slowly the group developed the "futuring skills" necessary for a successful futuring process. These skills included: projecting trends, visualizing possible and probable futures, and drawing implications. The development of these skills required time--the time to think creatively about conditions five to ten years in the future. The shift in focus from the fighting of daily fires by each member of the three working groups to thinking about the long-term viability of the organization was not easy. The slow emergence of these futuring skills gave them renewed interest in the process and the initiative to become "change agents" in our professional lives.

This initial meeting was followed by another facilitated meeting in September 1991 to finalize each subcommittee's recommendations. The intervening weeks allowed for peer discussions, second thoughts, and rethinking before the September meeting produced "draft" recommendations. The ADC MT reviewed the recommendations and decided the group should take another look at the recommendations and be more visionary in their approach. In January 1992, the group was brought to a final meeting with the charge to consolidate the three groups' draft recommendations into a final draft report. The major objective was to synthesize the extensive input from the three independent committees into a manageable, usable form without losing the richness of the individual group's input. The facilitator tried to fine tune the Committee's futuring skills through the use of analogies, discussions, and an understanding of basic theories of management. The resulting document, with an explicit vision statement and an attachment with each group's separate recommendations, was approved by consensus. The achievement of an overall consensus among the 25 participants was not easy. In fact, discussions often revolved around the program's past and the present. But slow progress was made by the Futuring Committee as we learned the meaning of Sir Winston Churchill's quote:

"If we open a quarrel between the past and the present, we shall find that we have lost the future."

In March 1992, the scribes and facilitator consolidated the recommendations from 132 to 57 and generated a futuristic management philosophy based upon the Futuring Committee's previous discussions. This document, with further input from the MT, became the foundation for the 1993 draft Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan was the visionary element of the futuring process. It provides a philosophical "guide on" to keep our thinking geared toward the future. The plan was presented for review and comment to the Eastern and Western Regions' State Directors and to staff of the Denver Wildlife Research Center. Slight modifications produced the final 1993 Strategic Plan.

CHARTING THE FUTURE OF ADC: THE PROMISE - THE 1993 STRATEGIC PLAN

The Strategic Plan is composed of six subsections: 1) background, 2) mission, 3) vision, 4) trends, 5) comparative advantages, and 6) strategic areas. The content of each section is highlighted here for purposes of emphasis.

Background

The 1993 Strategic Plan presents a strategic vision for ADC as part of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), an Agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). This plan builds upon the earlier ADC Strategic Plan (1989), incorporates concepts of the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (1993), reflects changes in society during the last few years, and draws upon and brings to a conclusion the futuring process.

Mission

Our mission is to provide Federal leadership in managing and solving problems which occur when human activity and wildlife are in close proximity to one another.

Vision

ADC's new vision seeks to reduce wildlife mortality to the lowest possible levels while also reducing damage caused by wildlife to the lowest possible levels. Our vision is based on the legitimate consideration of public interests in wildlife, including conservation, biological diversity, animal welfare, and the use of wildlife for enjoyment, recreation, and livelihood. ADC will use the theme "Living with Wildlife" to promote the public's understanding of problem wildlife and consideration for the varied interests involved in its care.

Trends

We believe five major trends will continue to impact ADC in the coming years: 1) increasing suburban development will intrude on wildlife habitat, 2) expanding populations of adaptable wildlife species will pose risks to humans and their interests, 3) shifting public attitudes will continue to support animal welfare and protection, 4) increasing media coverage of human and wildlife interactions will continue to interest the public, and 5) advancing science and technology will impact alternative methods development.

Comparative Advantages

The ADC program holds two comparative advantages on which we will build our future: 1) our employees, skilled in wildlife damage management in all of the Nation's ecological zones, and 2) the world's only research center devoted entirely to the development of methods for wildlife damage management, the National Wildlife Research Center soon to be located on the Colorado State University's campus in Ft. Collins, Colorado.

Strategic Areas

We are committed to working towards our vision for the future wildlife damage management needs of the

Nation by building upon three strategic areas: personnel, methods, and communications (PMC). The primary means for attaining our vision will be: 1) building employee skills and professionalism, and 2) development and utilization of new and effective methods for controlling problem wildlife species. An essential organizational element that needs significant emphasis in order to achieve our vision is communication, in order to inform our employees, cooperators, other agencies, and the public on the purposes and methods of wildlife damage management.

A comparison of the results of our efforts to emphasize the importance of strategic planning for ADC is in order. The 1989 Strategic Plan was designed by the program's Management Team and had a national focus with emphasis on cooperation and cooperators. The 1993 Futuring Document was prepared by a vertical sample of all levels of ADC and focused on placing ADC within a framework of contemporary societal values. The 1989 Strategic Plan derived six goals, and the 1993 Futuring Document produced 57 recommendations, focused on issues critical to improving the present and future ADC program. The 1989 plan focused on "process" and was narrower in its vision; whereas, the FC sought "results" in broader areas of concern with emphasis on the futurity of its recommendations.

So, what is the Futuring Committee's recommendations and the strategic plan's promise for the future as related to personnel, methods, and communication?

Personnel: Employees will reflect a diverse, professional staff, oriented in ethics and the policies, procedures, and mission of the program, using a modern interpretation of the 1931 Act to support our new vision.

Employees will function within clear job descriptions and performance standards with known career advancement opportunities and standardized selection criteria.

Employees will have service-long, flexible training and cooperative education opportunities to maximally support their individual responsibilities in such areas as science, administration, technology, and the law, as well as their personal career goals.

Employees will have the opportunity to wear a new uniform, sporting a new logo, and will be provided support by responsive, service-oriented personnel and public affairs staffs.

Methods: DWRC will increase its recognized leadership in wildlife damage management by: conducting broad-based symposia to generate new ideas in methods research and measurement techniques for analyzing program results (i.e., cost and effectiveness), developing socially acceptable methods, supporting data

needs to meet new methods registration or licensing requirements and becoming a central repository for published information on wildlife damage management.

DWRC will seek additional funding sources through cooperative arrangements with universities, State and Federal agencies, registrants, and wildlife organizations.

DWRC will provide a responsive research service that develops and transfers technology to operations and the public through cooperative training and identification and implementation of known technological improvements as soon as possible. It will monitor its progress and results through periodic program evaluations.

Communications: Program success will ultimately depend not just on motivated and well-trained employees supported by the latest research in methods but on communications with those who are interested in and receive the services we provide.

Communications will be improved with the general public by increasing public affairs training of ADC employees and outreach activities such as media releases, videos, annual accomplishment reports, educational involvement opportunities, and encouraging employee community involvement.

Communications will be improved among field-level employees, the States, regions, and Washington, DC, by developing and implementing a consistent program planning, monitoring, and evaluation process using a nationwide management information system, information feedback, and an employee newsletter.

CONCLUSION

The ADC Futuring Committee came to realize that they, as individuals and as a group, could plan for and work to achieve a future we desire. If you ask if the process is complete, the answer is No! In fact, to borrow a quote from Sir Winston Churchill:

"Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

This process has taught the importance of strategic planning and thinking and the value of proactive rather than reactive management!

So, in summary, taking some literary license with Longfellow's quote:

"Look not mournfully into the past. It comes not back again. But having wisely improved the present, we go forth to meet a shadowy future, without fear, but filled with promise and confidence."

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