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OPENING REMARKS - SIXTEENTH VERTEBRATE PEST CONFERENCE

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On behalf of the Vertebrate Pest Council it is my pleasure to welcome you to Santa Clara and the Sixteenth Vertebrate Pest Conference.

The primary purpose of the conference has remained unchanged throughout the years, and this is to provide an educational forum where individuals interested and involved in vertebrate pest management can receive and exchange information. I would like to take a moment to thank the program co-chairs Robert Schmidt and Rex Baker who in conjunction with the Council members have worked diligently to bring you a program which reflects the most current issues and technology not only from around this country, but around the world.

In response to comments from past conference attendees, we have provided a commercial exhibit display at this year's conference. While the conference has always had an educational focus, the Council recognizes the value of educating its membership as to what tools and products are available to assist in wildlife damage management. The Council would appreciate your comments as to the value and success of this display so that we can best meet the interests of our conference membership.

Recognizing the need to encourage students and young professionals in the field of wildlife damage management and vertebrate pest control, the Council has

actively encouraged student participation through the establishment of student registration fees and the student poster session. Substantial cash prizes are being offered to winning posters. The Council is also working towards the preparation of a textbook in the field of vertebrate pest management. I personally hope that each and every one of you will take the time to encourage and support these young people, because these are the individuals who will set the policies and carry out your work in the future.

In addition to enjoying the conference program, field trip and other conference features, I would also encourage you to take the time and make the effort to meet your fellow conference participants. If you are a recognized expert, share your wisdom and knowledge with those less experienced than yourself. If you are a newcomer to this field, seek out others who may be assets to your professional network. And, if you fall somewhere in between, make the effort to meet some new folks ... you never know who might hold the answer to some future problem. The Council is holding a no-host social hour this evening from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. to facilitate professional networking. I hope you will join us.

I would encourage you to communicate your ideas and thoughts about the conference to the Council members. On behalf of the Council, we hope you enjoy the Conference.