

Feral Hog Task Force Meeting

Minutes

June 27, 2023

1:00 p.m.

Co-Chair JP Fairhead, Feral Hog Program Coordinator, Arkansas Department of Agriculture, called the meeting to order and welcomed all members and guests.

Co-Chair Fairhead postponed approving minutes for the December 6, 2022 meeting, until the next meeting. The members present did not meet a quorum.

Co-Chair Fairhead presented the following updates:

USDA/NRCS Feral Swine Control Project

Co-Chair Fairhead stated to date there has been a total of 16,607 feral hogs removed from the four project areas. There have been approximately 5,652 feral hogs removed using Conservation District resources. The Conservation District project is scheduled to conclude September 30, 2023. The Natural Resources Division is working on a one-year extension for the project. This extension will be at no cost and will be using unused funds from landowner payments to extend the salaries of the technicians in those areas.

There have been 215 pre interviews and 141 post interviews conducted in these areas. The cut off for landowner payments is July 2023.

Sub-committee Reports and Agency Updates

Management Control Committee. Co-Chair Ryan Farney, AGFC, stated AGFC has removed just over 1,400 feral hogs since the last meeting. AGFC and USDA conducted aerial culls on some WMAs. These culls removed 160 feral hogs from the areas.

Co-Chair Farney stated AGFC increased the drone program to find feral hogs on WMAs. There are currently 20 pilots that use a total of 7 different drones across the state.

Co-chair Farney highlighted a plan for a conservation incentive program. This program would be a cost share program that would incentivize landowners to purchase traps for removal of feral hogs on private land. The goal is to have the application process and the program ready by January 2024.

Robert Byrd, USDA APHIS Wildlife Services, reported the helicopter work for this year is finished. They are seeing significant decreases in hogs, not only in helicopter areas but also in all the

project areas. There have been about 900 hogs removed by helicopters in 2023 and they have already scheduled the helicopters for next year.

Byrd reported in 2023, they have assisted 556 landowners, with approximately 500,000 acres. this year. Approximately 3,500 hogs have been removed statewide during 2023. In farm bill counties alone, \$2.8 million in damages have been reported.

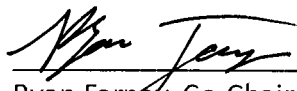
Education/Outreach/Communication Committee

Becky McPeake, U of A, Division of Agriculture, gave a presentation highlighting the process to measure the success of the farm bill project. The presentation also explained the reporting process of the program after completion in October 2023.

Next Meeting. To be determined.

Meeting adjourned.

JP Fairhead, Co-Chair
Arkansas Feral Hog Task Force



Ryan Farney, Co-Chair
Arkansas Feral Hog Task Force