

## Feral Hog Task Force Meeting

### Minutes

May 9, 2024

10:00 a.m.

Co-Chair JP Fairhead called the meeting to order and welcomed all members and guests. This meeting was held via Zoom only.

Co-Chair Fairhead stated at the last meeting there was discussion for the Feral Hog Eradication Task Force to draft a document to present to the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) to be considered at their next AGFC meeting scheduled for May 15 and 16, 2024.

Co-Chair Ryan Farney stated there is a proposal by the AGFC to expand the timeframe that the public can take feral hogs on management areas across the state.

Farney stated the Feral Hog Eradication Task Force is tasked with applying the best available science to apply management on the ground for feral hog eradication. The document is shown as **Attachment 1**.

Following discussion, a few changes were made, as shown highlighted in **Attachment 1**, deleted language stricken, and amended language underlined.

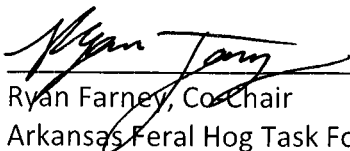
**Moved by Fairhead, seconded by Farney to recommend this document be presented to the AGFC with the caveat that once there is a final draft, the document be presented to the Education and Outreach Committee for a final review.**

**By a poll vote, motion carried. One no vote by Jeromy Sullivant.**

**Meeting adjourned.**

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JP Fairhead, Co-Chair  
Arkansas Feral Hog Task Force



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Ryan Farney, Co-Chair  
Arkansas Feral Hog Task Force

## Attachment 1

The Arkansas Feral Hog Eradication Task Force has reviewed the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission's (AGFC) proposed regulation change to expand the incidental take of feral hogs on many Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) during open deer, elk, and bear season(s). The Task Force was formed in 2017 and continues to operate under a Memorandum of Understanding among parties, to help guide management, legislation, and educational efforts relative to feral hogs. The Task Force develops, reviews, implements, and recommends the best available practices pertaining to feral hogs for state, regional, and national issues.

Overwhelmingly, research projects identify trapping as the most efficient way to control feral hog populations. Although an integrated approach using a myriad of removal techniques are required to achieve elimination, however recreational hunting and opportunistic take have little to no effect to reduce or control the population (VerCauteren et al. 2020, Massei et al. 2014, Parkes et al. 2009, Keiter et al. 2017). Increasing opportunities to take feral hogs on AGFC WMAs can promote a "hunting culture" which generally works contrary to control/eradication efforts. We believe targeted shooting of feral hogs can play a role in a management program; however, this methodology should be implemented to complement ongoing management efforts which focus on trapping programs. Studies show hunters don't have the ability or time to remove enough hogs from a given area to induce any type of population decline (Massei et al. 2014).

Missouri and Kansas have implemented regulations that completely restrict the take of feral hogs on public land. While initially unpopular to some, these changes have drastically helped the Missouri Feral Hog Elimination Partnership gain better control of Missouri's public lands. Additionally, the AGFC regulations to restrict the take of feral hogs on WMAs was also an effort to actively dis-incentivize the occurrence of feral hogs on the landscape. Expanding incidental take of feral hogs could have an adverse effect which could increase the perceptions of feral hogs as a resource, rather than invasive pests.

Additionally, ~~ongoing preliminary~~ genetic research conducted by USDA APHIS Wildlife Services, suggests that ~~approximately over 6150%~~ of ~~feral hogs sampled from public land feral swine populations (that have been sampled)~~ show evidence of translocation. Expansion of incidental take opportunities spatially and temporally could likely increase the potential for further feral hog translocations to previously unoccupied areas for additional hunting opportunity.

After further review and discussion of this regulation change among the Task Force members, we believe to better control feral hogs on lands owned, controlled, or cooperatively managed by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission there should be less incidental take on WMAs not more. The Missouri Feral Hog Elimination Partnership states *"When hunters shoot feral hogs, it complicates efforts to remove these pests. Shooting into a group of hogs and killing one or two hogs does not reduce the population. Shooting scatters the sounder, making trapping efforts designed at catching the entire group more difficult"*.

We argue this regulation change would negate the work accomplished since 2016 when the current regulations were put into place. It is understood that in many cases incidental take thwarts the trapping efforts of AGFC personnel by decreasing trapping efficiency. Ultimately it is our belief this change will lead to more feral hogs on AGFC WMAs, increased disturbances to native wildlife during critical nesting/fawning seasons, and an increase in positive values associated with feral hogs that may hamper future management actions. We believe that an increase in opportunistic take would have little to no effect on the feral hog populations. It is the official recommendation of the Arkansas Feral Hog Eradication Task Force that the AGFC postpone official action of this regulation until further discussion and information can be presented to the Commission. Furthermore, the Task Force recognizes that the regulation could be modified in a manner that would allow some expansion of incidental take that would not necessarily jeopardize current management activities.