Final

Nevada Department of Wildlife
Predator Management Plan
Fiscal Year 2018

1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018

STATE OF NEVADA

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Introduction

The goal of the Nevada Department of Wildlife's (NDOW's) Predator Management Program is to conduct projects consistent with the terrestrial portion of NDOW's Mission "to preserve, protect, manage, and restore wildlife and its habitat for the aesthetic, scientific, educational, recreational, and economic benefits to citizens of Nevada and the United States." Provisions outlined in NRS 502.253 authorize the collection of a $3 fee for each big game tag application, deposition of the revenue from such a fee collection into the Wildlife Fund Account, and use by NDOW to 1) develop and implement an annual program for the management and control of predatory wildlife, 2) conduct wildlife management activities relating to the protection of nonpredatory game animals and sensitive wildlife species, and 3) conduct research necessary to determine successful techniques for managing and controlling predatory wildlife. This statute also allows for: the expenditure of a portion of the money collected to enable the State Department of Agriculture and other contractors and grantees to develop and carry out programs designed as described above; developing and conducting predator management activities under the guidance of the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners; and provide that unspent monies remain in the Wildlife Fund Account and do not revert to State General Funds at the end of any fiscal year.

NDOW maintains a philosophy that predator management is a tool to be applied deliberately and strategically. Predator management may include lethal removal of predators or corvids, nonlethal management of predator or corvid populations, habitat management to promote more robust prey populations which are better able to sustain predation, monitoring and modeling select predator populations, managing for healthy predator populations, and public education, although not all of these aspects are currently eligible for funding through predator fee dollars. NDOW intends to use predator management on a case-by-case basis, with clear goals, and based on an objective scientific analysis of available data. To be effective, predator management should be applied with proper intensity and at a focused scale. Equally important, when possible projects should be monitored to determine whether desired results are achieved. This approach is supported by the scientific literature on predation management. NDOW is committed to using all available tools and the most up-to-date science, including strategic use of predator management, to preserve our wildlife heritage for the long term. NDOW works with area biologists and monitors harvest data to ensure localized removal of predators does not result in negative biological consequences on a region or statewide level.

NDOW is a state agency that must balance the biological needs of wildlife, statutory mandates, and social desires of the public. In the 2015 legislative session, Assembly Bill 78 was adopted which in part amended NRS 502.253 (4) (b) to read: [The Department] "Shall not adopt any program for the management and control of predatory wildlife developed pursuant to this section that provides for the expenditure of less than 80 percent of the amount of money collected pursuant to subsection 1 in the most recent fiscal year for which the Department has complete information for the purposes of lethal management and control of predatory wildlife." NDOW intends to comply with statute and apply the tools of scientific predation management in biologically sound, socially responsible means.

Budget Summary

Fiscal year 2017 predator fee revenues will be available February 1, 2017. The Department expects to need to allocate about $470,000 on lethal removal to meet the requirements set forth by Assembly Bill 78. Proposed predator projects for fiscal year 2018 include $819,000 for lethal work, these funds include fiscal year 2017 revenues and previous fiscal years surpluses. Over $500,000 in predator fee revenues are left over from previous fiscal years; it is the Department's goal to reduce this surplus.

Map Note

Maps for each project may be found in the last page of this document.

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Table of Contents

TYPES OF PROJECTS **6**

LEVELS OF MONITORING **7**

Project 21: Greater Sage-Grouse Protection (Common Raven Removal) 8

Project 21-02: Common Raven Removal to Enhance Greater Sage-Grouse Nest Success 11

Project 22-01: Mountain Lion Removal to Protect California Bighorn Sheep 13

Project 22-074: Monitor Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep for Mountain Lion Predation 17

Project 32: Mountain Lion, Black Bear, and Mule Deer Interactions 19

Project 37: Big Game Protection-Mountain Lions 21

Project 38: Big Game Protection-Coyotes 24

Project 40: Coyote Removal to Complement Multi-faceted Management in Eureka County . 26

Project 41: Increasing Understanding of Common Raven Densities and Space Use in Nevada 28

Project 42: Assessing Mountain Lion Harvest in Nevada 31

Project 43: Mesopredator removal to protect waterfowl, turkeys, and pheasants on Wildlife Management Areas 33

Literature Cited 36

Appendix 37

TYPES OF PROJECTS

Below are the three categories of projects in the predator management plan. Some projects have aspects of multiple types within a single activity or action. The project types are listed throughout this document.

1. **Implementation**: The primary objective is to implement management of predators through lethal or non-lethal means. NDOW will collaborate with USDA Wildlife Services and private contractors to conduct lethal and non-lethal management of predators. Identifying and monitoring a response variable is not a primary objective for implementation.
2. **Experimental Management**: The primary objectives are management of predators through lethal or non-lethal means and to learn the effects of a novel management technique. NDOW will collaborate with USDA Wildlife Services, private contractors, and other wildlife professionals to conduct lethal or non-lethal management of predators and will put forethought into project design. Response variables will be identified and data will be collected to determine project effectiveness. Expected outcomes will include project effectiveness, agency reports, and possible peer-reviewed publications.
3. **Experimentation**: The primary objective is for increasing knowledge of predators in Nevada. NDOW may collaborate with other wildlife professionals to study and learn about predators of Nevada. Expected outcomes will include agency reports, peer-reviewed publications, and information on how to better manage Nevada's predators.

LEVELS OF MONITORING

Below are the three levels of monitoring outlined in the predator management plan. The level of monitoring for each project is identified within the project description.

1. **Standard Monitoring**: The primary objective of standard monitoring is to use existing survey protocols to evaluate the response of game species or sensitive wildlife to lethal or non-lethal management of predators. NDOW conducts annual and biannual surveys to evaluate trend and composition of game species or sensitive wildlife and to inform the season and quota-setting process. Composition surveys will yield response variables such as recruitment of juveniles into the adult population and will be compared to published benchmarks of productivity in the management area of interest, to neighboring areas not receiving predator management, or in the same area before treatment began. Standard monitoring represents no change to existing monitoring efforts. Expected outcomes include an indication of project effectiveness and agency reports.
2. **Intermediate Monitoring**: The primary objective of intermediate monitoring is to apply a specific monitoring plan designed to evaluate the response of game species or sensitive wildlife to lethal or non-lethal management of predators. NDOW may collaborate with other wildlife professionals to identify reference and treatment areas or evaluate productivity of game species or sensitive wildlife before, during, and after implementation to determine effectiveness of predator management. Composition surveys may be modified to thoroughly evaluate productivity in the reference and treatment areas and to better accommodate annual variation in survey conditions. Expected outcomes will include an indication of project effectiveness, agency reports, and possible peer-reviewed publications.
3. **Rigorous Monitoring**: The primary objective of rigorous monitoring is to evaluate several response variables known to affect productivity of game species or sensitive wildlife and to determine the relative influence of those variables when measuring the response to lethal or non-lethal management of predators. NDOW may collaborate with other wildlife professionals to identify the requirements of rigorous monitoring and to further evaluate factors influencing productivity of game species or sensitive wildlife such as survival of juveniles, body condition of adults, or habitat productivity. Rigorous monitoring efforts will help to disentangle biotic and abiotic conditions that may influence productivity of game species or sensitive wildlife from the effects of lethal or non-lethal management of predators. Expected outcomes will include agency reports, peer-reviewed publications, and information on how to better manage Nevada's wildlife.

FY 2018 PROJECTS RECOMMENDED FOR CONTINUATION

Project 21: Greater Sage-Grouse Protection (Common Raven Removal)

Justification	This project proposes to lethally remove common ravens from known Greater Sage-grouse habitat, common raven predation on Greater Sage-grouse nests and broods can limit population growth. Common ravens will be removed around known Greater Sage-grouse leks because most nest sites are located within 4 km of a lek. Common ravens will be removed in areas of known greater abundance to benefit sensitive populations of Greater Sage-grouse.
Project Manager	Pat Jackson, Nevada Department of Wildlife
Project Type	Implementation
Monitoring Level	Standard to intermediate
Potentially Affected Species	Common raven, Greater Sage-grouse
Span More Than One Fiscal Year	Yes
Project Area	Elko, Eureka, Humboldt, Lander, Lincoln, Lyon, Washoe, and White Pine counties.
Limiting Factor Statement	Though predation is a naturally occurring phenomenon for Greater Sage-grouse, their populations can be suppressed by abiotic factors such as dry climate and loss of quality habitat. Increases in predator numbers can also cause decreases in Greater Sage-grouse populations; common raven abundance has increased throughout their native ranges, with increases as much as 1,500% in some areas (Boarman 1993, Coates et al. 2007, 2014, Sauer et al. 2011). Under these circumstances, common raven predation can have a negative influence of Greater Sage-grouse nesting success, recruitment, and population trend (Coates and Delehanty 2010).
Response Variable	Common raven point counts may be conducted before, during, and after removal to detect changes in common raven densities.

Project Goals	1. Reduce common raven populations in high abundance areas that overlap sensitive Greater Sage-grouse populations identified by NDOW and USDA Wildlife Services wildlife biologists. 2. Increase populations of Greater Sage-grouse in specific areas where deemed feasible.
Habitat Conditions	Areas of common raven removal will be within or in close proximity to Greater Sage-grouse leks, nesting habitat, and brood-rearing habitat. Persistent drought throughout Nevada has reduced herbaceous cover, along with nesting and brood rearing habitat; these effects are exacerbated by wildfire and the invasion of cheatgrass. Transmission lines, substations, and nearby agriculture production often attract common ravens which may threaten nearby Greater Sage-grouse populations.
Comments from FY 2016 Predator Report	None
Methods	*Lethal Removal* Chicken eggs treated with corvicide (DRC-1339) will be deployed to remove common ravens (Coates et al. 2007). To reduce non-target species exposure, no eggs will be left in the environment for over 96 hours. No leftover eggs will be used on subsequent treatments. All remaining eggs and any dead common ravens found will be collected and disposed of properly as per DRC-1339 protocol. Common raven take will be estimated at 1 common raven per 11 eggs gone (Coates et al. 2007). DRC-1339 is effective only on corvids and most mammals and other birds are not susceptible to the specific effects from this agent. *Monitoring* Point counts for common ravens will be conducted from March through July of each year, which corresponds with Greater Sage-grouse nesting and brood-rearing season. Surveys will be similar to Ralph et al. (1995): lasting 10 minutes; conducted between sunrise and 1400 hrs; conducted under favorable weather conditions; and stratified randomly across study areas (Luginbuhl et al. 2001, Coates et al. 2014).
Anticipated Result	The removal of common ravens is intended to result in long-term protection for Greater Sage-grouse populations through increases in nest success, brood survival, and recruitment. This project will continue until evidence demonstrating Greater sage-grouse nest success and recruitment are not limiting population growth due to common raven predation or common raven populations are in decline from non-lethal measures.
Project Direction	Fund Project 21. Evaluate efficacy of Project 21 annually.

Budget

$3 Predator Fee	**Pittman-Robertson**	**Total**
$100,000	N/A	$100,000

Project 21-02: Common Raven Removal to Enhance Greater Sage-Grouse Nest Success

Justification	Common ravens are a leading nest and brood predator for Greater Sage-grouse and reducing common raven abundance can influence Greater Sage-grouse nest success and brood survival (Coates and Delehanty 2010). This project will lethally remove common ravens in habitats surrounding known Greater Sage-grouse leks and nesting habitats to enhance nesting success and brood survival.
Project Manager	Pat Jackson, Nevada Department of Wildlife
Project Type	Implementation and Experimental Management
Monitoring Level	Intermediate
Potentially Affected Species	Common raven, Greater Sage-grouse
Span More Than One Fiscal Year	Yes, depending on outcomes associated with Greater Sage-grouse response. The scope and location of this project may be modified in future years.
Project Area	Unit 02
Limiting Factor Statement	Though predation is a naturally occurring phenomenon for Greater Sage-grouse, their populations can be suppressed by abiotic factors such as dry climate and loss of quality habitat. Increases in predator numbers can also cause decreases in Greater Sage-grouse populations; common raven abundance has increased throughout their native ranges, with increases as much as 1,500% in some areas (Boarman 1993, Coates et al. 2007, 2014, Sauer et al. 2011). Under these circumstances, common raven predation can have a negative influence of Greater Sage-grouse nesting success, recruitment, and population trend (Coates and Delehanty 2010).
Response Variable	The response variables will be nest success and brood survival of Greater Sage-grouse within treated areas before and after treatment. This monitoring will not be paid for with $3 predator fees.
Project Goal	1. Increase populations of Greater Sage-grouse through improved nest success and brood survival in treated areas. 2. Determine common raven removal effort needed to reduce raven densities to a level they are not detrimental to Greater Sage-grouse nest success.

Habitat Conditions	Areas of common raven removal will be within or in close proximity to Greater Sage-grouse leks, nesting habitat, and brood-rearing habitat. Persistent drought throughout Nevada has reduced herbaceous cover, along with nesting and brood rearing habitat; these effects are exacerbated by wildfire and the invasion of cheatgrass. Transmission lines, substations, and nearby agriculture production often attract common ravens which may threaten nearby Greater Sage-grouse populations.
Comments from FY 2016 Predator Report	None
Methods	*Lethal Removal* Chicken eggs treated with avicide (DRC-1339) will be deployed to remove common ravens (Coates et al. 2007). To reduce non-target species exposure, no eggs will be left in the environment for over 96 hours. No leftover eggs will be used on subsequent treatments. All remaining eggs and any dead common ravens found will be collected and disposed of properly as per avicide protocol. Common raven take will be estimated at 1 common raven per 11 eggs gone (Coates et al. 2007). DRC-1339 is effective only on corvids and most mammals and other birds are not susceptible to the specific effects from this agent.
Anticipated Result	The removal of common ravens is intended to result in long-term protection for Greater Sage-grouse populations through increases in nest success, brood survival, and recruitment.
Project Direction	Fund project 21-02 through FY 2019.

Budget

$3 Predator Fee	**Pittman-Robertson**	**Total**
$25,000	N/A	$25,000

Project 22-01: Mountain Lion Removal to Protect California Bighorn Sheep

Justification	California bighorn sheep populations have been reintroduced in northwestern Nevada; mountain lion predation can be a significant source of mortality that may threaten this population's viability. Area 01 is in close proximity to the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge, California, and Oregon; all three may act as a source for mountain lions. Mountain lions will be removed proactively by USDA Wildlife Services and private contractors until the local bighorn sheep population reaches the population objective.
Project Manager	Chris Hampson, Nevada Department of Wildlife
Project Type	Implementation
Monitoring Level	Standard to intermediate
Potentially Affected Species	California bighorn sheep, mountain lion, mule deer
Span More Than One Fiscal Year	Yes
Project Area	Units 011 and 013
Limiting Factor Statement	Mountain lions are known predators of bighorn sheep (Rominger et al. 2004). Though predation is a naturally occurring phenomenon for bighorn sheep and other big game, their populations can be lowed or suppressed by abiotic factors such as dry climate and loss of quality habitat. Mitigating abiotic factors by removing predators is imperative for some bighorn sheep populations to stabilize (Rominger 2007).
Response Variable	The response variable will be the number of radio marked bighorn sheep killed by mountain lions.
Project Goal	Remove mountain lions to proactively protect reintroduced California bighorn sheep.
Habitat Conditions	Persistent drought combined with fires and human disturbances throughout Nevada have reduced herbaceous cover, lambing, and browsing habitat. These effects may also be suppressing bighorn populations below carrying capacity or preventing them from reaching self-sustaining levels. Currently, several collaborations between the Bureau of Land Management and NDOW to remove pinyon-juniper are scheduled. These removals are intended to improve bighorn

	sheep habitat, improve access to water sources, and to remove habitat that is ideal for mountain lions to focus on bighorn sheep.
Comments from FY 2016 Predator Report	Unit 011 – Massacre Rim and Coleman Rim Herds One of the 2 remaining radiocollared ewes from the bighorn sheep releases on the Massacre Rim died during the winter of 2015-2016. The ewe was part of a small group (5 to 6 animals) of sheep that had moved west across the flat to the Southwestern corner of the Vya Rim during December of 2014. The sheep were believed to have been pushed to the west due to excessive mountain lion pressure on the Massacre Rim. The sheep moved west to the southeast corner of the Vya Rim during the same period of time when 5 collared bighorn were killed by mountain lions. The radiocollared ewe is believed to have died during the winter of 2015-2016 that produced up to 5 feet of snow along the Vya Rim. The small group of sheep had lived in this area since December 2014. Biologists were forced to use snowshoes to access the mid-elevation rocky escarpment where the bighorn ewe died. The telemetry collar was removed from the carcass and several samples (lung, liver, and head) were also taken for lab analysis and examination by the NDOW Veterinarian. The ewe carcass was found in an exposed area just outside and a few feet away from a large juniper tree. The other sheep in the immediate area appeared to be healthy and bolted quickly away from biologists when approached. The remaining collared ewe from the Massacre Rim remains alive on the southern end of the Massacre Rim near Big Point. This group of sheep has consistently remained on the southern end of the Rim, but on occasion (once every couple of months) the sheep have moved as much as 6 miles to the north along the top of the Massacre Rim. Most telemetry data shows that the sheep spend a majority of their time near the release site at Big Point on the southern portion of the Rim. A recent observation from late July 2016, observed 20 bighorn sheep near the big game guzzler on the south end of the Coleman Rim. All sheep looked healthy and appeared to be in good condition. One ewe had a colored ear tag from a recent release in the area. Unit 013 – Hays Canyon Range One of the five collared sheep from the Hays Canyon bighorn population died during the winter of 2015-2016. Biologists investigated the kill site with Wildlife Services personnel and determined that the young ram was chased down and killed by what appeared to be a pack of 3 to 4 coyotes. The ram was killed at the release site in Hays Canyon. The area of the kill site had 2 to 3 inches of snow which helped biologists understand what occurred and how the animal was killed. Skeletal remains were all that was left of the scavenged carcass even though biologists were on the scene within 1-2 days following the kill. Biologists brought the head of the ram to the NDOW veterinarian for sampling and examination.

	Numerous reports and sightings of bighorn sheep within Hays Canyon have been reported and observed by NDOW biologists and BLM personnel over the past year. All indications are that the small herd is healthy and doing well. Field investigations located an old lamb carcass to the north of Hays Canyon but no cause of death could be determined due to the length of time since the lamb had died. One mountain lion track was observed in the canyon but was believed to be more recent than the lamb kill. One 3 year-old collared bighorn sheep ram was killed during the winter of 2015-2016. The ram was killed by a pack of coyotes on the north side of Hays Canyon. Tracks in the fresh snow provided good information to the biologist investigating the kill. The three other collared bighorn sheep are alive and well within the Hays Canyon Range. In 2016-2017, Nevada Department of Wildlife biologists and staff are planning on increasing the number of bighorn that are collared within hunt Units 011 and 013. A capture is planned for the fall-winter of 2016-2017 to attach 10 more telemetry collars to bighorn sheep that live within the 22-01 project area. This will enable biologists and staff to increase the amount of monitoring data collected for this project and will allow Wildlife Services to be better able to respond to any lion predation issues. NDOW continues to monitor the sheep populations along the Massacre Rim and in Hays Canyon from both the air and the ground. The increased number of telemetry collars planned for this coming year will help NDOW to monitor the health and well-being of the sheep populations within project 22-01over the next few years. NDOW continues to monitor the bighorn sheep populations along the Massacre Rim and in Hays Canyon. The most recent aerial survey located 34 bighorn sheep within the control areas of the Hays Canyon Range, Massacre Rim and Coleman Rim. Additional bighorn sheep have been observed from the ground. NDOW currently has 6 satellite telemetry collars functioning within the project area. Two are from the recent release on Massacre Rim and 4 are on bighorn sheep within the Hays Canyon Range. The telemetry collars help monitor the health and well-being of the bighorn sheep populations within subproject 22-01.
Methods	NDOW biologists, USDA Wildlife Services, and private contractors will collaborate to identify current and future California bighorn sheep locations and determine the best methods to reduce California bighorn sheep mortality. Traps, snares, baits, call boxes, and hounds will be used to proactively capture mountain lions as they immigrate into the defined sensitive areas.
Population Estimate	The population estimate for California Bighorn sheep is 40-50 individuals for area 011 and 40-50 individuals in area 013
Anticipated	Decrease or prevent predation from mountain lions for all age classes of reintroduced California bighorn sheep, resulting in an established, viable

Result	population.
Project Direction	Fund project 22-01. Monitor population. Cease proactive removal efforts after the local bighorn sheep population reaches 60 in each area (011 and 013; table 1).

Table 1. Population numbers to be used to redirect focus of project.

Action	Bighorn Sheep Population
Monitor bighorn population, conduct removal on case by case basis	> 80
Remove mountain lions that consume bighorn sheep*	60 - 80
Remove all mountain lions in area	< 60

*Indicates need for monitoring local mountain lion population.

Budget

$3 Predator Fee	Pittman-Robertson	Total
$90,000	N/A	$90,000

Project 22-074: Monitor Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep for Mountain Lion Predation

Justification	Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep populations have been established in portions of Nevada, but mountain lion predation can be a significant source for mortality that may threaten the population's viability. One collared bighorn sheep has been killed by mountain lions in the past year, it is the area biologists belief mountain lion predation is not a current threat to the local bighorn sheep population.
Project Manager	Kari Huebner and Scott Roberts, Nevada Department of Wildlife
Project Type	Implementation
Monitoring Level	Standard to intermediate
Potentially Affected Species	Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, mountain lion
Span More Than One Fiscal Year	Yes
Project Area	Unit 074
Limiting Factor Statement	Mountain lions are known predators of bighorn sheep (Rominger et al. 2004). Though predation is a naturally occurring phenomenon for bighorn sheep and other big game, their populations can be lowed or suppressed by abiotic factors such as dry climate and loss of quality habitat. Mitigating abiotic factors by removing predators is imperative for some bighorn sheep populations to stabilize (Rominger 2007).
Response Variable	The response variable will be the number of radio marked bighorn sheep killed by mountain lions.
Project Goal	Bighorn sheep populations will be monitored on a continual basis and predator control will be implemented as deemed necessary at the discretion of the Area Biologist.
Habitat Conditions	Persistent drought combined with fires and human disturbances throughout Nevada have reduced herbaceous cover, lambing, and browsing habitat. These effects may also be suppressing bighorn populations below carrying capacity or preventing them from reaching self-sustaining levels. Currently, several collaborations between the Bureau of Land Management and NDOW to remove pinyon-juniper are scheduled. These removals are intended to improve bighorn sheep habitat, improve access to water sources, and to remove habitat that is ideal for mountain lions to focus on bighorn sheep.

Comments from FY 2016 Predator Report	The population is estimated to be less than 15 animals. Herd surveys will be conducted in October 2016. One ram and 4 ewes are currently radiocollared and still alive. In addition to the 5 radiocollared bighorn sheep, there are 4 unmarked ewes and 5 unmarked rams. As of August 2016, there was only 1 observed lamb. Recruitment still remains an issue. A minimum of 2 lambs were born in spring 2016, but did not survive past weaning.
Methods	NDOW biologists will identify current and future Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep locations and determine the best methods to monitor this population. Additional GPS collars will be purchased and deployed to monitor the bighorn sheep population. If mountain lion predation is identified as an issue, then traps, snares, baits, call boxes, and hounds will be used to lethally remove mountain lions from the area.
Population Estimate	The population estimate for Rocky Mountain Bighorn sheep is approximately 15 individuals in area 074.
Anticipated Results	1. Monitor the population of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep. 2. If mountain lion predation is identified as an issue, conduct lethal removal.
Project Direction	Fund project 22-074. Monitor population. Begin mountain lion removal efforts if mountain lion predation is detected (table 2). Evaluate efficacy of project 22-074 annually.

Table 2. Population numbers to be used to redirect focus of project.

Action	Bighorn Sheep Population
Monitor bighorn population, conduct removal on case by case basis	> 15
Remove mountain lions that consume bighorn sheep*	10 - 15
Remove all mountain lions in area	< 10

*Indicates need for monitoring local mountain lion population.

Budget

$3 Predator Fee	Pittman-Robertson	Total
$90,000	N/A	$90,000

Project 32: Mountain Lion, Black Bear, and Mule Deer Interactions

Justification	Black bears are expanding numerically and geographically, and in so doing they are recolonizing historic ranges in Nevada. It is imperative to understand to what extent this increasing distribution is affected by their interactions with mountain lions. Black bear interactions with mountain lions at kill sites could potentially have effects on mule deer populations, and possible implications on livestock husbandry practices.
Project Manager	Jon Beckmann, Wildlife Conservation Society
Project Type	Experimentation
Monitoring Level	Rigorous
Potentially Affected Species	Mule deer, mountain lion, black bear
Span More Than One Fiscal Year	Yes
Project Area	Units 014, 015, 021, 192, 194, 195, 196, 201, 202, 203, 204, 291
Limiting Factor Statement	Black bears have recently expanded their distribution in western Nevada to include historical bear habitat in desert mountain ranges east of the Sierra Nevada and Carson Front (Beckmann and Berger 2003, Lackey et al. 2013). Additionally, recent findings have shown 50% of mountain lion killed deer are scavenged by black bears during summer months (Andreasen 2014, unpublished data). The current recolonization of historical bear habitat provides a unique opportunity to determine if these interactions between black bears and mountain lions are subsidizing the bear population increase.
Response Variable	No response variable will be collected, this is an experimentation project.
Project Goals	1. Increase understanding of apex predator resource partitioning, competition, and commensalism in desert ranges where black bears have established territories recently that overlap those of mountain lions. 2. Determine if mountain lion predation rates on mule deer increase in areas occupied by black bears. 3. Determine if mountain lion conflicts with humans increase where black bears are present (i.e., prey switching to less energetically expensive prey such as domestic livestock).

Habitat Conditions	The study area consists of mountain ranges and associated basins that are characterized by steep topography with high granite peaks and deep canyons. Mountain ranges are separated by desert basins that range from 15–64 km across (Grayson 1993). These basins are often large expanses of unsuitable habitat (e.g., large areas of sagebrush) that bears and mountain lions do not use as primary habitat.
Comments from FY 2016 Predator Report	None
Methods	A minimum of 18 black bears and 18 mountain lions, will be captured and fitted with Vectronic brand GPS PLUS collars with proximity sensors to assess behavioral responses of each species upon close interaction. We will attempt to maintain sample sizes of six bears and six mountain lions collared in each of our three study areas for five years. To further maximize probability of recording predator-predator interactions, we will monitor kill sites of collared mountain lions with real-time trail cameras and target black bears scavenging from mountain lion kills for collaring with GPS proximity collars. Sixty mule deer will be fitted with Vectronic brand GPS PLUS Vertex Survey collars to monitor daily survival of individuals and to estimate annual adult doe survival in each study area, this will be funded from a source other than predator fee funds.
Anticipated Results	1. Improved understanding of mountain lion and bear dietary preference, dietary overlap and prey switching capabilities will provide insight for better big game population management. 2. Targeted predator population management could improve attendant big game population management which has implications for big game tag allocation. 3. Mountain lion subsidies may increase black bear recolonization eastward into Nevada, which could have direct implications on future management decisions. 4. Use field-based, scientific data to understand, predict, and potentially mitigate, changes in human-mountain lion conflict where bears are re-establishing historic ranges.
Project Direction	Fund Project 32 through FY 2020.

Budget

$3 Predator Fee	**Pittman-Robertson**	**Total**
$40,000	$120,000	$160,000

Project 37: Big Game Protection-Mountain Lions

Justification	Predation issues frequently arise in a very short timeframe. These issues often occur within a fiscal year. By the time a project can be drafted, approved, and implemented, it may be too late to prevent or mitigate the predation issue. Removing mountain lions that prey on sensitive game populations quickly is a required tool to manage big game populations statewide.
Project Manager	Pat Jackson, Nevada Department of Wildlife
Project Type	Implementation
Monitoring Level	Standard to intermediate
Potentially Affected Species	Mountain lion, mule deer, bighorn sheep, antelope
Span More Than One Fiscal Year	Yes
Project Area	Statewide
Limiting Factor Statement	Mountain lions are known predators of bighorn sheep and other big game species (Rominger et al. 2004). Though predation is a naturally occurring phenomenon for bighorn sheep and other big game, their populations can be lowered or suppressed by abiotic factors such as dry climate and loss of quality habitat. Mitigating abiotic factors by removing predators is imperative for some bighorn sheep populations to stabilize (Rominger 2007).
Response Variable	Response variables may include reduction of prey taken by mountain lions, removal of a mountain lion that was documented consuming the concerned big game species, or a reduction in mountain lion sign. Because of the quick nature of the project, there may be times when no response variable will be measured.
Project Goal	Remove specific, problematic mountain lions to benefit game species.
Habitat Conditions	Persistent drought combined with fires and human disturbances throughout Nevada have reduced herbaceous cover, lambing, and browsing habitat. These effects may have reduced mule deer and other big game populations below carrying capacity. These effects may also be suppressing mule deer or big game populations below carrying capacity (Ballard et al. 2001).
Comments from FY 2016 Predator Report	A combination of fall and winter surveys in 2015 documented 38 California bighorn sheep occupying the Snowstorms; yielding ratios of 48 rams:100 ewes:4 lambs. Ten yearling California bighorn sheep were observed in May 2015. A combination of marked animals well distributed throughout occupied range, weeklong spring and summer ground surveys and a December-January trap-and-radiocollaring resulted in a reliable estimate of the current population at 40 adults. Habitat range conditions remain fair in the peripheral low elevations surrounding

	the Snowstorms. Due to the resiliency of the mid to upper elevations of the Snowstorm Range, much of the year-round California bighorn habitat remains in good to excellent condition. As part of a greater effort to understand the dynamics of post die-off survivors in bighorn populations and how pathogens within surviving populations affect lamb recruitment, Washington State University, Idaho Fish and Game and South Dakota State University embarked on a study entitled "Investigating the Role of Super-Shedders in Respiratory Disease Persistence and Transmission in Bighorn Sheep." Due to the lack of recruitment between 2011 and 2014 this herd has continued to decline since the initial die-off in 2011. This herd declined from 160 in early 2011 to approximately 65 by 2012. It has further declined to approximately 40 animals in 2016. Although the reduced population size is predominately due to disease, mountain lion predation at this time has a greater likelihood for have population-level effects. Biologists have not documented mortalities of adult bighorn sheep since the removal of 2 mountain lions this spring. Tracks of a single lion were observed in Kelly Creek in late May, which has not been taken. NDOW estimates a minimum of 1 mountain lion remains on the Snowstorm Range. Continued lethal removal of mountain lions through contract and hunter harvest will greatly reduce or eliminate lion predation of bighorn sheep in the Snowstorm Mountains for the duration of the "super shedder" study.
Methods	NDOW will specify locations of mountain lions that may be influencing local declines of sensitive game populations. Locations will be determined with GPS collar points, trail cameras, and discovered mountain lion kill sites. Removal efforts will be implemented when indices levels are reached, these include low annual adult survival rates, poor fall young:female ratios, spring young:female ratios, and low adult female annual survival rates (table 3). Depending on the indices identified, standard to intermediate levels of monitoring will be implemented to determine the need for or effect of predator removal. These additional monitoring efforts may be conducted by NDOW employees, USDA Wildlife Services, or private contractors. Staff and biologists will identify species of interest, species to be removed, measures and metrics, and metric thresholds. This information will be recorded on the Local Predator Removal Progress Form (see appendix), and included in the annual predator report.
Anticipated Results	1. Lethal removal of individual, problematic mountain lions will provide a precise tool, protecting reintroduced and sensitive big game populations. 2. Implementation will occur in association with game populations that are sensitive (e.g., small in size, limited in distribution, in decline) and may benefit from rapid intervention from specific predation scenarios.
Project	Fund Project 37.

Direction	

Table 3. Indices used to initiate predator removal.

Species	Annual Adult Survival Rates	Fall Young: Female Ratios	Spring Young: Female Ratios	Adult Female Annual Survival Rates
California Bighorn Sheep	< 90%	< 40:100	--	--
Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep	< 90%	< 40:100	--	--
Desert Bighorn Sheep	< 90%	< 30:100	--	--
Mule Deer	--	--	< 35:100	< 80%
Pronghorn	< 90%	< 40:100	--	--

Budget

$3 Predator Fee	Pittman-Robertson	Total
$175,000	N/A	$175,000

Project 38: Big Game Protection-Coyotes

Justification	Predation issues frequently arise in a very short timeframe. These occurrences often occur within a fiscal year, therefore by the time a project can be drafted, approved, and implemented, to prevent or mitigate the predation issue, it may be too late. Removing problematic coyotes quickly is a required tool to manage big game populations statewide.
Project Manager	Pat Jackson, Nevada Department of Wildlife
Project Type	Implementation
Monitoring Level	Standard to intermediate
Potentially Affected Species	Coyote, mule deer, antelope, Greater Sage-grouse
Span More Than One Fiscal Year	Yes
Project Area	Statewide
Limiting Factor Statement	Though predation is a naturally occurring phenomenon for mule deer and other big game, their populations can be lowered or suppressed by abiotic factors such as dry climate and loss of quality habitat Predation from coyotes may further suppress these populations (Ballard et al. 2001).
Response Variable	Response variables may include reduction of prey taken by coyotes, removal of a coyote that was documented consuming the concerned big game species, or a reduction in coyote sign. Because of the quick nature of the project, there may be times when no response variable will be measured.
Project Goal	Conduct focused coyote removal to protect game species.
Habitat Conditions	Persistent drought combined with fires and human disturbances throughout Nevada have reduced herbaceous cover, lambing, and browsing habitat. These effects may have reduced mule deer and other big game populations below carrying capacity. These effects may also be suppressing mule deer or big game populations below carrying capacity (Ballard et al. 2001).
Comments from FY 2016 Predator Report	None
Methods	USDA Wildlife Services and private contractors, working under direction of NDOW, will use foothold traps, snares, fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters for

	aerial gunning, calling and gunning from the ground to remove coyotes in sensitive areas during certain times of the year. Work will be implemented when indices levels are reached, these include low annual adult survival rates, poor fall young:female ratios, poor spring young:female ratios, and low adult female annual survival rates (table 3). Depending on the indices identified, standard to intermediate levels of monitoring will be implemented to determine the need for or effect of predator removal. These additional monitoring efforts may be conducted by NDOW employees, USDA Wildlife Services, or private contractors.
Anticipated Results	1. Removal of coyotes in winter range and fawning and lambing areas in certain situations will provide a valuable tool for managers. 2. Implementation will occur during times and locations where sensitive game species are adversely affected (e.g., local decline, reduced recruitment) based on the best available biological information.
Project Direction	Fund Project 38.

Table 3. Indices used to initiate predator removal.

Species	Annual Adult Survival Rates	Fall Young: Female Ratios	Spring Young: Female Ratios	Adult Female Annual Survival Rates
California Bighorn Sheep	< 90%	< 40:100	--	--
Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep	< 90%	< 40:100	--	--
Desert Bighorn Sheep	< 90%	< 30:100	--	--
Mule Deer	--	--	< 35:100	< 80%
Pronghorn	< 90%	< 40:100	--	--

Budget

$3 Predator Fee	Pittman-Robertson	Total
$175,000	N/A	$175,000

Project 40: Coyote Removal to Complement Multi-faceted Management in Eureka County

Justification	Continuing predator removal will complement previous coyote removal, feral horse removal, and habitat restoration to benefit mule deer populations.
Project Manager	Clint Garrett, Nevada Department of Wildlife
Project Type	Implementation
Monitoring Level	Standard
Potentially Affected Species	Coyote, Greater Sage-grouse, mule deer
Span More Than One Fiscal Year	Yes
Project Area	Units 141-144
Limiting Factor Statement	Though predation is a naturally occurring phenomenon for mule deer and other big game, their populations can be reduced or suppressed by abiotic factors such as dry climate and loss of quality habitat, these populations can be suppressed by predation from coyotes (Ballard et al. 2001).
Response Variable	The response variable will be the fawn to doe ratios in the Diamond Mountains. This ratio will be observed throughout the life of the project. The project will be altered or discontinued after three consecutive years of observed spring fawn:adult ratios averaging 50:100 or higher. Historical adult:fawn ratios have declined since 1976 (figure 1).
Project Goal	To increase mule deer and Greater Sage-grouse populations by removing coyotes.
Habitat Conditions	Persistent drought combined with fires and human disturbances throughout Nevada have reduced herbaceous cover, fawning, and browsing habitat. These effects may have reduced mule deer below carrying capacity. These effects may also be suppressing mule deer below carrying capacity (Ballard et al. 2001).
Comments from FY 2016 Predator Report	The spring fawn to adult doe ratio, recruitment, was very low in the springs of 2005, 2008 and 2009 and range from 18, 19, and 21 fawns per 100 adults, respectively. These are the 3 lowest recruitment rates since helicopter surveys began in 1977 and indicate a declining population. Drought conditions existed during this time but the population did not rebound as exhibited by adjacent populations in the years following drought. The spring fawn ratios improved from 2010 to 2012 with a slight decline in 2013. Recruitment rates increased again in 2014 to 38 fawns:100 adults and 44 fawns:100 adults in 2015 both indicating growth in the population. The 2016 ratio of 37 fawns:100 adults followed a severe winter and was above all surrounding deer populations. Based on spring recruitment rates, the Unit 144 deer population has been improving since 2009.

Information from Eureka County	Pinyon juniper removal occurred in 2013, 2014, and 2015 with more to be completed in 2016 within the Diamond Mountains.
Methods	USDA Wildlife Services and private contractors working under direction of NDOW and Eureka County, will use foothold traps, snares, fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters for aerial gunning, and calling and gunning from the ground to remove coyotes in sensitive areas during certain times of the year.
Anticipated Result	Coyote removal will complement feral horse removal already conducted by the BLM, habitat improvement conducted by Eureka County, private coyote removal funded by Eureka County, and Wildlife Service coyote removal funded through Wildlife Heritage funds in 2011 and 2012.
Project Direction	Fund Project 40. Evaluate efficacy of Project 40 annually.

Budget

$3 Predator Fee	**Pittman-Robertson**	**Total**
$100,000	N/A	$100,000

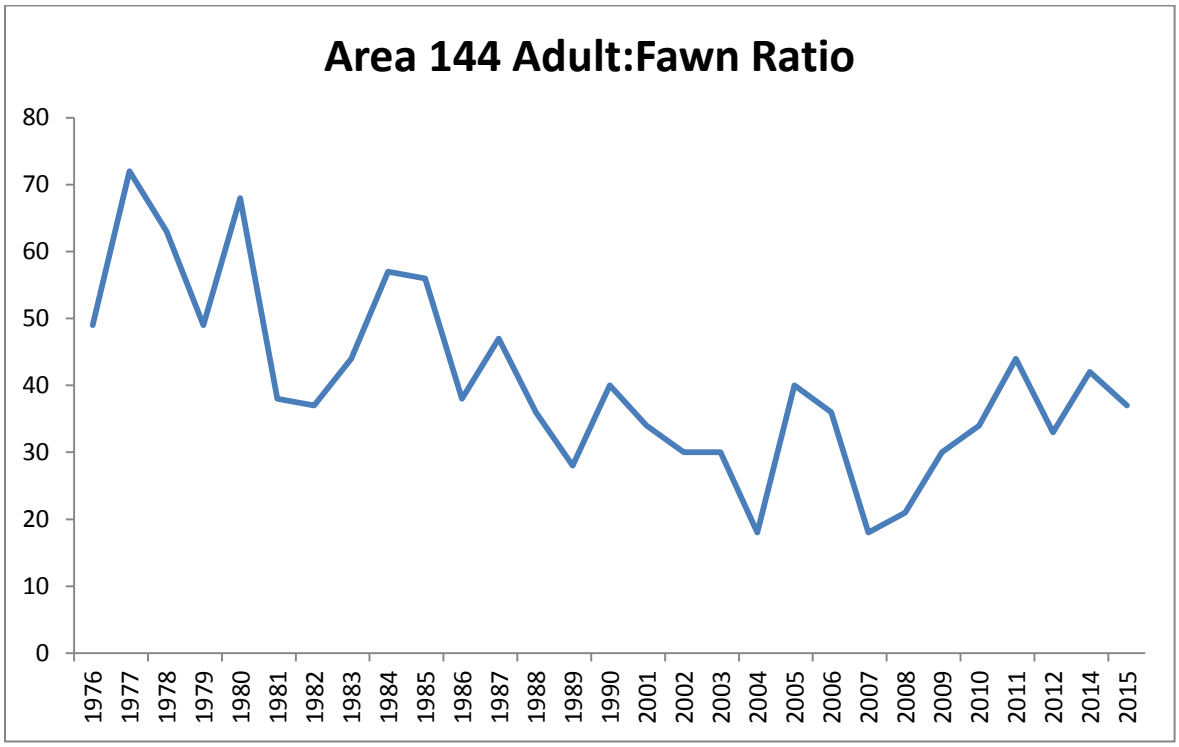

Figure 1. Adult to fawn ratios gathered on spring helicopter surveys for area 144 since 1976.

Project 41: Increasing Understanding of Common Raven Densities and Space Use in Nevada

Justification	Common ravens are the primary predator of Greater Sage-grouse nests and chicks (Coates and Delehanty 2010). Their populations have increased dramatically in Nevada, primarily due to human subsidies (Boarman 1993, Sauer et al. 2011). Understanding common raven density, distribution, and subsidy use will allow for intelligent management decisions to be made to reduce or alter common raven densities in Nevada. These efforts are intended to benefit Greater Sage-grouse, though desert tortoise may also benefit from this project.
Project Manager	Pat Jackson, Nevada Department of Wildlife
Project Type	Experimentation
Monitoring Level	Rigorous
Potentially Affected Species	Greater Sage-grouse, common raven, desert tortoise
Span More Than One Fiscal Year	Yes
Project Area	Statewide
Limiting Factor Statement	Though predation is a naturally occurring phenomenon for Greater Sage-grouse, their populations can be suppressed by abiotic factors such as dry climate and loss of quality habitat. Increases in predator numbers can also cause decreases in Greater Sage-grouse populations; common raven abundance has increased throughout their native ranges, with increases as much as 1,500% in some areas (Boarman 1993, Coates et al. 2007, Sauer et al. 2011). Under these circumstances, common raven predation can have a negative influence of Greater Sage-grouse nesting success, recruitment, and population trend (Coates and Delehanty 2010). Common raven predation has also been documented to negatively impact desert tortoise populations (Boarman 1993, Kristan and Boarman 2003)
Response Variable	No response variable will be collected, this is an experimentation project.
Project Goals	1. Increase understanding of common raven density, distribution, and subsidy use to maximize common raven management effectiveness. 2. Develop a protocol to estimate common raven populations in Greater Sage-grouse habitat, and monitor these populations. 3. Increase the understanding of how human subsidies affect common raven movements and space use, particularly near Greater Sage-grouse leks and nesting areas. 4. Develop a resource selection function model to identify landscape features that influence common raven abundance and that may be used in conjunction with Greater Sage-grouse priority habitat maps to locate sites where lethal treatments of

	common ravens may be applied with the greatest efficacy and efficiency.
Habitat Conditions	Persistent drought throughout Nevada has reduced herbaceous cover, along with nesting and brood rearing habitat; these impacts are exacerbated through wildfire and the invasion of cheatgrass. Transmission lines, substations, and nearby agriculture production also threaten Greater Sage-grouse habitat.
Comments from FY 2016 Predator Report	None
Methods	*Population monitoring and space use* Point counts for common ravens will be conducted from March through July of each year, which corresponds with Greater Sage-grouse nesting and brood-rearing season. Surveys will be similar to Ralph et al. (1995): lasting 10 minutes; conducted between sunrise and 1400; conducted under favorable weather conditions; and stratified randomly across study areas (Luginbuhl et al. 2001, Coates et al. 2014). ARGOS backpack transmitters will be deployed to monitor common raven space use and space use. *Development of Resource Selection Function (RSF)* An RSF will be developed using data on landscape features collected in habitats with varying observed abundance indices for common ravens. The abundance indices collected will include common raven point count and Greater Sage-grouse point counts. The landscape features that will be entered into the model will include 1 meter resolution digital elevation models and fire regime. The RSF for common ravens will be overlaid on polygons that feature Greater Sage-grouse priority habitats. Identifying habitats likely to support high numbers of common ravens where Greater Sage-grouse conservation is of highest priority will provide future locations where common raven removal may be warranted, land use activities may be modified, or more intensive Greater Sage-grouse monitoring may be focused. *Utility line surveys* Various utility lines will be identified in and near Greater Sage-grouse habitat from February until June of each year, which corresponds with common raven nesting and brood rearing. Surveys will be conducted from OHV vehicles, variables including utility pole type, cross arm type, utility pole height, insulator position, perch deterrent effectiveness, and proximity to Greater Sage-grouse habitat will be recorded.
Anticipated Results	1. Develop a protocol to estimate common raven populations in Greater Sage-grouse habitat, and monitor these populations.

	2. Increase the understanding of common raven density and distribution in the state of Nevada, and how human subsidies increase common raven density and distribution. 3. Determine what common raven removal location will provide the greatest benefit to Greater Sage-grouse. Determine what time of the year is the optimal time to conduct common raven removal to optimize benefit to Greater Sage-grouse.
Project Direction	Fund Project 41. Evaluate efficacy of Project 41 annually.

Budget

$3 Predator Fee	**Pittman-Robertson**	**Total**
$100,000	$300,000	$400,000

Project 42: Assessing Mountain Lion Harvest in Nevada

Justification	Nevada Department of Wildlife has a yearlong mountain lion hunting season limited by harvest quotas, although mountain lion are also lethally removal for livestock depredation and to limit predation on specific wildlife populations. Statewide annual adult female harvest is ≤35%, which indicates that statewide harvests are unlikely to be reducing statewide mountain lion population abundance (Anderson and Lindzey 2005). Nevertheless, regional area harvests may be greater and can be more difficult to assess the effects due to small sample sizes. Conversely, current NDOW mountain lion removal projects may not be sufficiently intensive to reduce local mountain lion populations to attain reduced predation on prey populations. Improved understanding of mountain lion population dynamics in Nevada would allow for better informed management.
Project Manager	Pat Jackson, Nevada Department of Wildlife
Project Type	Experimentation
Monitoring Level	Rigorous
Potentially Affected Species	Mountain lion, mule deer, bighorn sheep, elk
Span More Than One Fiscal Year	Yes
Project Area	Statewide
Limiting Factor Statement	Habitat and prey availability likely limit mountain lion populations in the state of Nevada.
Response Variable	No response variable will be collected, this is an experimentation project.
Project Goals	1. Develop a population model that incorporates NDOW mountain lion harvest data to predict the number of mountain lions that must be removed to reach desired goals in mountain lion removal projects. 2. Identify limitations and gaps in the existing demographic data for mountain lions that precludes a more complete understanding of mountain lion population dynamics and limits NDOW's management ability with the greatest efficacy and efficiency.
Habitat Conditions	This work would not be conducted in the field, but would rely on statewide harvest data collected over time to include periods of normal and less-than-normal precipitation. Due to the span of the state data collection, habitat during the period of inference would also span a wide variety of conditions and vegetative communities.

Comments from FY 2016 Predator Report	None
Methods	A private contractor will use existing mountain lion harvest data collected by NDOW biologists to develop a harvest model. The modeling approach will involve Integrated Population Modeling (IPM) which brings together different sources of data to model wildlife population dynamics (Abadi et al. 2010, Fieberg et al. 2010). With IPM, generally a joint analysis is conducted in which population abundance is estimated from survey or other count data, and demographic parameters are estimated from data from marked individuals (Chandler and Clark 2014). Age-at-harvest data can be used in combination with other data, such as telemetry, mark-recapture, food availability, and home range size to allow for improved modeling of abundance and population dynamics relative to using harvest data alone (Fieberg et al. 2010). Depending on available data, the contractor will build a count-based or structured demographic model (Morris and Doak 2002) for mountain lions in Nevada. The model (s) will provide estimates of population growth, age and sex structure, and population abundance relative to different levels of harvest.
Anticipated Results	1. Estimate statewide population dynamics, age structure, and sex structure of mountain lions in the state of Nevada with existing NDOW data. 2. Recommend additional data that could be collected to improve the model and reduce uncertainty in model results in the future.
Project Direction	Fund Project 42 through FY 2019.

$3 Predator Fee	**Pittman-Robertson**	**Total**
$2,500	$7,500	$10,000

Project 43: Mesopredator removal to protect waterfowl, turkeys, and pheasants on Wildlife Management Areas

Justification	Mesopredators including coyotes, striped skunks, and raccoons often consume waterfowl, pheasant, and turkey eggs. Consuming these eggs may limit fowl species population growth, and could be causing a declines on Overton and Mason Valley Wildlife Management Areas.
Project Manager	Isaac Metcalf and Bennie Vann, Nevada Department of Wildlife
Project Type	Implementation
Monitoring Level	Standard
Potentially Affected Species	Assorted waterfowl, turkey, pheasant, coyote, striped skunk, raccoon
Span More Than One Fiscal Year	Yes
Project Area	Overton and Mason Valley Wildlife Management Areas
Limiting Factor Statement	Though predation is a naturally occurring phenomenon for waterfowl, turkeys, and pheasants, their populations can be lowed or suppressed by abiotic factors such as dry climate and loss of quality habitat.
Response Variable	The response variable for waterfowl, turkeys, and pheasants will be the number of females with clutches, and the number of young per clutch.
Project Goals	To increase clutch size and survival of waterfowl, turkeys, and pheasants on Overton and Mason Valley WMAs.
Habitat Conditions	Persistent drought throughout Nevada has reduced herbaceous cover, nesting, and browsing habitat.
Comments from FY 2016 Predator Report	None
Methods	USDA Wildlife Services and private contractors working under direction of NDOW, will use foothold traps, snares, calling and gunning from the ground to remove coyotes, striped skunks, and raccoons during waterfowl, turkey, and pheasant nesting seasons.
Anticipated Results	1. Increase the number of female turkeys, waterfowl, and pheasants that successful raise clutches. 2. Increase the number female turkeys, waterfowl, and pheasants that have

	clutches. This project will be cancelled or altered once there are two consecutive three year averages where: The average hen turkey successfully raises 3 polts. Area biologists believe waterfowl no longer need predator removal. Area biologists believe pheasants no longer need predator removal.
Project Direction	Fund Project 43 through FY 2019.

Budget

$3 Predator Fee	**Pittman-Robertson**	**Total**
$50,000	N/A	$50,000

Overall FY 2018 Budget

Project	Predator Fee	PR Funds	Total
Department of Agriculture Administrative Support Transfer[a]	$14,000	N/A	$14,000
Project 21: Greater Sage-Grouse Protection (Common Raven Removal)	$100,000	N/A	$100,000
Project 21-02: Common Raven Removal to Enhance Greater Sage-Grouse Nest	$25,000	N/A	$25,000
Project 22-01: Mountain Lion Monitoring and Removal to Protect California Bighorn Sheep	$90,000	N/A	$90,000
Project 22-074: Mountain Lion Removal for the Protection of Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep	$90,000	N/A	$90,000
Project 32: Mountain Lion, Black Bear, and Mule Deer Interactions	$40,000	$120,000	$160,000
Project 37: Big Game Protection-Mountain Lions	$175,000	N/A	$175,000
Project 38: Big Game Protection-Coyotes	$175,000	N/A	$175,000
Project 40: Coyote Removal to Complement Multi-faceted Management in Eureka County	$100,000	N/A	$100,000
Project 41: Increasing Understanding of Common Raven Densities and Space Use in Nevada	$100,000	$300,000	$400,000
Project 42: Assessing Mountain Lion Harvest in Nevada	$2,500	$7,500	$10,000
Project 43: Mesopredator Removal to Protect Waterfowl, Turkeys, and Pheasants on Wildlife Management Areas	$50,000	N/A	$50,000
Total[b]	**$961,500**	**$427,500**	**$1,389,000**

[a] This transfer of $3 predator fees for administrative support to the Department of Agriculture partially funds state personnel that conduct work for the benefit of wildlife at the direction of USDA Wildlife Services (e.g., mountain lion removal to benefit wildlife).
[b] The projects that contain lethal removal as a primary aspect, making them ineligible for Federal Aid funding.

Expected Revenues and Beginning Balance of Predator Fee

	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Actual	FY 2017 Estimated	FY 2018 Projected
Beginning balance	$380,038	$544,631	$591,382	$346,989
Revenues	$574,312	$595,107	$595,107	$595,107
Plan Budget	$338,000	$556,000	$839,500	$961,500
Expenditures	$409,719	$548,356	$839,500	$961,500
Ending balance	$544,631	$591,382	$346,989	$0

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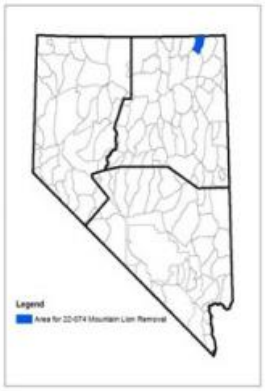
Appendix

http://www.ndow.org/Public_Meetings/Commission/Agenda/

Project 21 Map

Project 21-02 Map

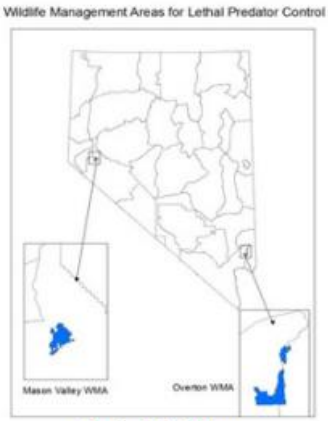
Project 21-01 Map



Project 22-074 Map

Project 32 Map

Project 40 Map



Project 43 Map