

PORT OF SEATTLE
MEMORANDUM

COMMISSION AGENDA
ACTION ITEM

Item No. 4c
Date of Meeting August 4, 2015

DATE: July 27, 2015
TO: Ted Fick, Chief Executive Officer
FROM: Michael Ehl, Director Aviation Operations
SUBJECT: Interlocal Agreement for Waterfowl (Canada Goose) Management Program

Amount of This Request: \$8,920 **Source of Funds:** Airport Development Fund

ACTION REQUESTED

Request Commission authorization for the Chief Executive Officer to execute a multiagency 2015-2018 interlocal agreement between the Port of Seattle and United States Department of Agriculture-Wildlife Services for the Waterfowl (Canada goose) Management Program. The agreement commits the Port to contribution over four years of \$8,920.

SYNOPSIS

Seattle-Tacoma International Airport's Wildlife Hazard Management Plan (WHMP), a section of its Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) approved Airport Certification Manual (ACM) requires that the Port of Seattle manage wildlife that is hazardous to aviation safety. The expectation of the FAA and air carriers is that the airport operator will work to control wildlife issues on and near the airport out to a distance of over 8 miles in some instances. The Port of Seattle has been a member of the Seattle Metropolitan Waterfowl Committee (SMWC) for over a decade. Canada geese and other waterfowl have been documented to impact human health by contaminating the land and water with their droppings and by posing a serious risk to aviation safety (USAirways flight 1549, January 2009, *Miracle on the Hudson*). The SMWC, established in 1987, is a resource management group with a mission of maintaining manageable numbers of waterfowl, especially Canada geese within primarily King County. The United States Department of Agriculture-Wildlife Services (USDA-WS) will receive funds from each participating member to continue this long-term management program that includes spring/summer population monitoring, egg addling, and removal.

BACKGROUND

Since 1976, when the Port of Seattle hired the world's first airport wildlife biologist, the primary means of protecting aviation safety at the Airport has been and continues to be the identification and reduction of hazardous wildlife attractants. Recent examples of the Port's dedication to this strategy are the Airport-Approved Plant List, netting/lining its stormwater ponds, and in October

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2014, the closure of the Tyee Valley Golf Course to reduce the attractiveness of the airport's south end to Canada geese, ducks and gulls.

In the late 1960s, state biologists brought Canada geese to the Puget Sound area from the Columbia River basin to expand their range. Since then their numbers have increased to an estimated 25,000 in the region and 3,000 in the Seattle area. Resident Canada geese have very few natural predators. Estimates of annual population growth for resident Canada geese are over 10 percent annually even with the existing egg addling program. Today, this species nests earlier in the year and has expanded its presence to more inaccessible areas.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION AND DETAILS

The objective of the program is to keep the population of resident Canada geese at roughly current levels and to keep this resident population from increasing to levels of a decade or more ago when beaches were closed and hazards to aviation were substantial. Table 1 illustrates how safety has improved at the Airport since the SMWC took aggressive steps at reducing Canada geese numbers in the metropolitan area. No damaging strikes with geese at the Airport have occurred since November 2000. The SMWC has also been successful in eliminating the need to close public swimming beaches because of dangerously high fecal coliform levels caused by geese in those waters.

Table 1. Damaging Aircraft Strikes with Canada Geese at the Airport

Date	Aircraft	Damage
Nov 22, '00	EMB-120	Moderate
Dec 13, '95	B737-300	Moderate
Aug 22, '95	B737-200	Severe
Sept 30, '90	B737-300	Moderate

With the assistance of the USDA-WS, the SMWC members will continue to facilitate an expanded egg addling program on more public and private lands. USDA-WS will also implement a program of control subject to the terms and conditions of their permit issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the authority of the U.S Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Each year the USDA-WS provides an annual report to the members of the SMWC which summarize the number of geese observed, eggs addled, and geese removed during the previous years of the program.

Scope of Work

Using best management practices the USDA-WS will carry out a program using public education/outreach, population monitoring, egg addling, harassment reinforcement, and population reduction methods to help keep their numbers at current levels. They will make every effort to minimize damage to the surrounding environment and seek as many accessible nesting areas as possible to do egg addling. Field conditions or changing conditions may increase or decrease the number of eggs addled and geese removed from previous years' totals.

Schedule

The work would be performed between March through August in the years 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018.

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FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Port's contribution is \$2,230 each year for a total of \$8,920 for the entire 4-year term of this ILA. Twelve agencies each contribute a similar amount to this program.

Budget Status and Source of Funds

The funds to support this ILA have been part of the Airport's operating budget for the past decade. Thus, the funding source is the Airport Development Fund.

STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES

This agreement supports the Airport's Strategy 1.1 to *Operate a world class international airport by ensuring safe and secure operations*. Further, meeting safety standards is a foundational element of the Port's strategy to meet the region's air transportation needs at Sea-Tac Airport for the next 25 years.

The SMWC has a strategy of using public education/outreach, population monitoring, egg addling, hazing/harassment, harassment reinforcement through removal and population reduction methods to help keep their numbers at current levels. Utilizing all aspects of this strategy has led to a high degree of public acceptance and a program that has been successful in maintaining lower numbers of resident Canada geese in the greater Seattle metropolitan area. Involving an educational component allows the USDA-WS to provide technical assistance on how to reduce the attractiveness of an area to geese and how to mitigate damages caused by them. Hazing and harassment can be effective in reducing their presence in localized areas for short periods. Once accustomed to harassment methods, a measured use of removal is needed to re-instill the fright/flight response. Population monitoring through formal surveys and public comment indicates the issues with geese are expanding geographically and cannot be effectively managed using egg addling and harassment alone. For the program to be effective the annual population surveys and the employment of the other hazard reduction strategies should continue.

TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE

Economic Development

Impacts to the economy related to aviation safety and the use of recreational areas to the public are not impacted as a result of the Port of Seattle continuing as a participant of this ILA.

Environmental Responsibility

It is also the Port's responsibility to be a member of any regional efforts to assist with managing Canada geese in a manner that does not negatively impact the environment by having too many or too few Canada geese in the region. This is also in the best interest of aviation safety.

Community Benefits

Continuing to be a signatory of this ILA supports the Sea-Tac WHMP (FAA regulations) and Seattle/King County Board of Public Health's unanimous decision to adopt the June 2000

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resolution to curb Canada geese populations in Western Washington. The resolution states in part: *"the accumulation of goose feces . . . presents a public health concern throughout the region due to increased risk of exposure to disease organisms by humans who come into contact with the feces . . . Canada goose feces contain disease-causing organisms which include salmonella, giardia and cryptosporidium."*

ALTERNATIVES AND IMPLICATIONS CONSIDERED

Alternative 1) – No Action. This is not the recommended alternative.

Pros:

- The Port would save several thousand dollars annually.

Cons:

- Sea-Tac Airport would not be in compliance with:
 - CFR FAR 139.337 Wildlife Hazard Management
 - FAR 139 Airport Operating Certificate Requirements to comply with FAA approved Wildlife Hazard Management Plan
 - FAA Advisory Circular 150/5200-33B Hazardous Wildlife Attractants On or Near Airports.

Alternative 2) – Embark on a new effort to manage Canada geese numbers more locally with only those entities lying within 8 miles of the Airport. This is not the recommended alternative.

Pros:

- The Airport would remain in compliance FAA mandates as it is today.

Cons:

- Resident Canada geese can easily travel over 8 miles a day meaning a more regional approach to managing geese in King County would still be needed.
- A duplicative outreach program and ILA with some of the same municipalities would likely not benefit the Port.
- The regional effectiveness of the SMWC would likely be weakened by concurrent Port efforts to create another waterfowl management group.
- The goose management work would still be implemented through a USDA-WS contract, but at a higher cost than it is today.
- As in past years, the Port may experience some minor negative public reaction by those individuals not fully understanding the benefits of a long-term wildlife damage management program such as the one the SMWC has designed and has asked the Port to execute via the attached ILA.

Alternative 3) – (*Status quo*) Execute the 4-year ILA; the 1-year ILA executed annually by the Port in previous years no longer exists. **This is the recommended alternative.**

Pros:

- The Airport would remain in compliance with FAA mandates as it is today.

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- Goose management issues on the Port's Marine Division properties can also be more easily addressed via this ILA when they arise there.
- The SMWC can better maintain its effectiveness at keeping the resident, non-migratory Canada goose population at acceptable levels.
- Programs that work to control animal populations gradually over the long-term result in fewer individuals being removed in total compared to the reactive approach of responding when the population has grown exponentially for many consecutive years and after the damage has occurred.

Cons:

- As in past years, the Port may experience some minor negative public reaction by those individuals not fully understanding the benefits of a long-term wildlife damage management program such as the one the SMWC has designed and has asked the Port to execute via the ILA.

ATTACHMENTS TO THIS REQUEST

- 2015-2018 ILA for Waterfowl (Canada Goose) Management Program
- 2015 Cooperative Service Field Agreement between the Port of Seattle and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTIONS OR BRIEFINGS

- None.