



# United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

P.O. Box 37127

Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

October 21, 1994

IN REPLY REFER TO:  
A5623 (490)

## Special Directive 94-5

To: Directorate, Field Directorate, Superintendents, and WASO  
Division Chiefs

From: *AS* Director *John Reynolds*

Subject: AERIAL CAPTURE, ERADICATION, AND TAGGING OF ANIMALS  
(ACETA)

**Purpose:** This special directive establishes the National Park Service's policy and provides operational guidelines for National Park Service Aerial Capture, Eradication, and Tagging of Animals (ACETA). Adherence to this policy and guideline is mandatory and may be waived only by the Director of the National Park Service. Where this special directive conflicts with either NPS-44, NPS-77, or NPS-60, this document will take preference until revisions are made to NPS-77, NPS-44, and NPS-60.

The purpose of this special directive is to delineate programs and/or activities for which mandatory training and certification is required for NPS personnel. All cooperators (Federal, State, university, and others) shall comply with these requirements and operational guidelines. Demonstration of equivalent training and certification by other Federal, State, academic, or private organizations may be substituted as determined by the Park Superintendent-Manager.

ACETA programs/activities include: Animal Capture (net gunning or darting with an anesthetic agent, contraceptive agent, antibiotics, vaccines, etc); Eradication (direct reduction-killing of wildlife with a firearm); Tagging/marking (use of a paint gun or similar device); use of "cracker shell" weapons and weapons firing rubber bullets where a helicopter or fixed wing aircraft is used as a shooting platform; the herding of wildlife for linear or drive net captures; and the herding of wildlife into corral traps.

**APPROVALS:** Only aircraft, pilots, and aviation contractors that are approved by the Department of the Interior's Office of Aircraft Services will be utilized for ACETA operations or activities on lands administered by the National Park Service. Specific guidelines for the use of cooperator, military, and other Government agency aircraft are contained in Departmental Manual 351, Chapter 4.

This approval does not apply to State agencies conducting ACETA operations on lands administered by the National Park Service, providing that the National Park Service does not have operation control of the aircraft or operation, and no National Park Service employees fly, load, service, attach, unhook or prepare sling loads, or calculate weight loads for the aircraft.

All ACETA programs or activities and operations shall be documented and approved in writing by the Park Superintendent-Manager. Copies will be forwarded to the National Park Service National Headquarters Level (Associate Director, Natural Resources and the Associate Director, Operations, Washington).

A formal written Operations Plan will be prepared for all ACETA operations or activities and approved by the appropriate Park Superintendent or Manager prior to any ACETA operations or activities (contact Wildlife and Vegetation Division, WASO for a sample Operations Plan). This plan may be all encompassing with specific operational supplements for individual operations or it may be project specific. Any OAS exception authority will be obtained as required and included in the Operations Plan. Assistance in planning will be provided by the WASO Natural Resources or Fire and Aviation Management staff if requested.

A "Risk Analysis" shall be completed prior to all ACETA flight operations and shall be a part of the Operations Plan. Alternatives, if any, should be discussed and if rejected a rationale provided. The discussion of alternatives need not be lengthy or complex but is critical when determining why the identified risks will be acceptable to management staff. The Interagency Helicopter Operations Guide provides guidance in preparing the "risk analysis" and may be used as the "standard".

**REQUEST:** Requests for ACETA Air Safety Training and qualification shall be forwarded to the Director, OAS with copies to the National Park Service Regional and Washington Offices (Regional Aviation Manager, WASO Aviation Safety Manager, and Associate Director, Natural Resources).

**TRAINING GENERAL:** ACETA aviation safety training, operational training, and certification shall be conducted by OAS Training Specialists and/or NPS designated ACETA Instructors.

The National Park Service (Associate Director, Natural Resources and Associate Director Operations) based on recommendations from Park Superintendents/Managers will designate qualified Service ACETA Instructors. The list of qualified instructors will be furnished to the Office of Aircraft Services, WASO Aviation Safety Manager, and the Chief of the Wildlife and Vegetation Division. This list of qualified instructors will be updated yearly.

**National Park Service Designated ACETA Instructor:**

Qualifications and Criteria for designating NPS ACETA Instructors: Park Superintendents/Managers, Regional Directors, Service Center Managers, and WASO Managers will recommend individuals to the Associate Director, Operations and the Associate Director, Natural Resources for designation as NPS ACETA Instructors. The Associate Directors shall jointly approve all designated NPS ACETA Instructors.

Qualifications: Completion of the 40 hour NPS Wildlife Capture and Chemical Immobilization Course; and  
 Successfully completed formal net-gun training and instruction; and  
 Completion of the required OAS training courses, Basic Helicopter/Aircraft Safety, ACETA Training, and Power On Landing training; and  
 Currently qualified with appropriate weapons/firearms used in ACETA operations; and  
 Completion of the 40 hour OAS Train-the-Trainer Course, M5; and  
 Completion of the 32 hour Interagency Helicopter Management, S-217.

Experience: Served as Project Manager or Gunner on 5 aerial wildlife capture operations within the past 18 months or 10 aerial wildlife capture operations in the past 5 years.

National Park Service designated ACETA Instructors will train, qualify, and provide certification in the operational aspects of ACETA operations or activities. NPS employees involved in ACETA operations or activities will be issued a qualification card (helicopter interagency skills blue card) jointly by OAS and NPS designated ACETA Instructors for each specific type of ACETA operation or activity, i.e., net gun, dart rifle, shotgun, rifle, paint rifle, or pistol.

All training will be specific to each type of ACETA operation or activity, i.e., net gunning, dart rifle, shotgun, rifle, animal handling, etc.

Flight personnel participating in ACETA activities must meet all training requirements for special use flight activities as stated in 352 DM 2.B.

Personnel participating in ACETA operations or activities utilizing a helicopter may require training and qualification in power-on landing and exiting procedures per DOI, OAS, OPM 93-5.

**PERSONNEL COMPATIBILITY:** The following personnel compatibility traits are listed in Office of Aircraft Services Handbook, Animal Damage Control (ADC) Airplane and Helicopter, 350DM 3 for pilots and should be considered for gunners, animal handler team leaders, team members, and all other flight and operational personnel.

**Safe Flying Habits:** Positive flying safety attitudes and habits;

**Hunting Capability:** Positive attitude regarding requirements and procedures for animal capture, eradication, and tagging operations;

**Emotional Stability:** Emotional stability under the stress of low level aircraft operations required for aerial operations.

**Positive Personality:** Positive personality characteristics required to work and communicate effectively with field personnel and cooperating agencies;

**Willingness to Learn:** Knowledge of and/or willingness to learn wildlife habits, capture techniques, animal handling. Ability to effectively, efficiently, and safely conduct ACETA operations;

**Ability to Remain in Contact:** Ability to identify and safely maintain effective airborne contact with target animals;

**Willingness to Work:** Willingness to work unusual hours and lodge at remote locations.

**SPECIFIC ACETA TRAINING REQUIREMENTS:** The following specific training requirements are mandated for **specified** personnel involved in ACETA operations as noted.

Helicopter Safety (4-6 hours), OAS B1 or Combination Helicopter and Airplane Safety (6 hours), OAS B3. These courses meet the DOI requirement of 353 DM 2.5B(1). Recurrency every 3 years. All flight and operational personnel.

Helicopter Power-On Landing (4-6 hours), Meets the OAS requirement of OPM 93-5. Must be requested from OAS. Recurrency once per year. Gunners, all animal handlers, and other flight personnel.

ACETA Safety and Operational Classroom Training (6-8 hours), Recurrency every 3 years. Must be requested from OAS. All flight and operational personnel.

Wildlife Capture and Handling-Non Chemical Immobilization Capture (16 hours). Instruction shall be provided by ACETA Project Manager, Wildlife Capture Specialist, or NPS ACETA instructor. Recurrency every 3 years. All Gunners and animal handlers. Animal Handler Team Leaders are required to have 40 hours instruction plus a minimum of two on the job aerial wildlife captures.

ACETA Operations Utilizing Chemical Anesthesia drugs, NPS 40 hour Wildlife Capture and Chemical Anesthesia and Firearms Course or equivalent. Gunners and all animal handlers.

Gunners-Operational airborne instruction and check ride qualification shall be conducted by NPS designated ACETA instructor. Recurrency every 3 years.

Animal handler team leaders are required to have a minimum of two on the job aerial wildlife captures using anesthesia drugs.

ACETA Operations Utilizing Dart Rifle for chemical anesthesia drugs or contraceptives, NPS approved firearms qualification course. Firearms qualification recurrency every 6 months.

Gunners-Operational airborne instruction and check ride qualification shall be conducted by NPS designated ACETA instructor. Recurrency every 3 years.

Gunners-A current firearms qualification is required. In lieu of a Park specific firearms qualification standard, the NPS-9, NPS-44, or NPS-77 course shall be used. Qualification will be documented by an NPS approved Firearms Instructor.

Gunners-ACETA Operations Utilizing Net Gun, operational airborne training, instruction, and check ride shall be conducted by NPS designated ACETA instructor. Recurrency every 3 years.

Gunners-ACETA Eradication Operations, NPS approved firearms qualification course with specific firearms. Firearms qualification recurrency every 6 months.

Gunners-Operational airborne instruction and check ride qualification shall be conducted by NPS designated ACETA instructor. Recurrency every 3 years.

Eradication Operations-disposition and method of transportation of killed wildlife will be documented in the Operations Plan. Specimen and data collection personnel will meet the same requirements and training as animal handlers.

Current basic first aid and CPR training and certification shall be required. All flight personnel.

When required for the mission, night vision goggles, screens, and forward looking infrared (FLIR) operations: OAS approval, special training requirements and certification are required. Contact OAS for training requirements. Approval must be obtained from the OAS.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is mandated for all special use flights (351 DM 1) including ACETA operations or programs. It is recommended that all ACETA flight operational personnel wear high visibility PPE flight suits (International Orange or similar color) or high visibility vests over their flight suits. Park Aviation Management Plans may be more stringent on the use of PPE. There are special ACETA operations which may occasionally require Department of the Interior PPE deviations (operations conducted in arctic or winter conditions, operations in wet conditions, etc.) These will be addressed on a case-by-case basis and documented in the Operations Plan.

351 DM 1..7 E(4) provides discretionary authorization for approving PPE exceptions. Exceptions or deviation requires senior management approval at the bureau national level or written redelegation to a lower level. Redelegation via this special directive to the Park Superintendent/Manager level is granted. The Park Superintendent/Manager will approve all deviations for PPE in writing, with copies furnished to the OAS.

Program managers, project managers, and/or incident commanders will need to judge the merits and use of PPE and the protection it provides in aircraft crashes and/or fires against special project requirements and make a conscious decision to deviate. Personnel who deviate from the PPE requirements shall be advised of the potential dangers by the appropriate manager.

#### **DEFINITIONS:**

**ACETA:** The use of aircraft to perform capture, eradication, tagging of animals.



**Aircraft:** Light, Medium, and Heavy helicopters or single and multi-engine airplanes.

**Certification:** Receiving documentation stating that one has completed minimum requirements and/or training to practice a field of work or to perform certain job functions and duties.

**Firearms:** Any pistol, rifle, shotgun, or other weapon that is designed to, or may be readily converted to, expel a projectile by the ignition of a propellant, compressed gas, or spring-powered pistol or rifle, bow and arrow, or crossbow, including capture and immobilization weapons and net-guns used in the restraint, capture, and treatment of wildlife including paint guns.

**Gunner:** The person(s) responsible for the shooting or discharging of firearms/weapons or paint pistols/rifles while performing ACETA operations or activities.

**Animal handlers:** The person(s) responsible for physical restraining, data collecting, radio collaring, marking, and packaging(preparation) of wildlife for translocation during ACETA operations or activities.

**Animal handlers-Team Leader:** Is the leader of one or more animal handlers. Training requirements exceed those required for an animal handler team member.

**Animal handlers-Team Member:** Individual or individuals who are part of an animal handling crew.

**Operational Personnel:** Those persons assigned to the ACETA program or activity whose duties do not include flying, i.e. dispatchers, communications personnel, heliport/helisport managers, traffic control personnel, etc.