

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

Witness appearing before the
Senate Environment and Public Works Committee
Subcommittee on Water and Wildlife

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Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Sessions and Members of the Subcommittee. I am James Anderson, the Director of the Division of Program Coordination, Planning, and Strategic Initiatives (“the Division”) in the Office of the Director at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. I am pleased to appear before you today to testify about NIH’s efforts to implement recent recommendations offered in a December 2011 report¹ by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and accepted by NIH regarding the use of chimpanzees in NIH-supported research. As the Subcommittee begins consideration of S. 810, the Great Ape Protection and Cost Savings Act, I look forward to discussing the recommendations of the IOM and NIH’s efforts to implement them as we continue to focus on our mission of improving human health and saving lives.

About the Division

First, I would like to tell you about the Division and its role in NIH-supported chimpanzee research and in implementing the IOM report recommendations. Among its activities, the Division plans and implements trans-NIH, transformative initiatives and coordinates research across NIH related to AIDS, behavioral and social sciences, women's health, disease prevention, and – more recently and relevant to this hearing – research infrastructure. Included in the mission of the research infrastructure office is NIH’s Chimpanzee Management Program, a program that supports long-term, cost-effective housing and maintenance at facilities for chimpanzees. The Chimpanzee Management Program provides programmatic oversight of the facilities and ensures they comply with the Animal Welfare Act, and policies concerning laboratory animal care and use. These activities were previously supported by the National Center for Research Resources (NCRR). As a result of a recent organizational change within the NIH, independent of the IOM report, the Division gained this and other research infrastructure activities from NCRR..

¹ <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK82797/pdf/nap13257.pdf>

The Division is advised by the NIH's Council of Councils, a Federal Advisory body composed of approximately 27 members selected from the NIH Institutes and Centers' Advisory Councils and broad lay representation, including a member of the NIH Council of Public Representatives. The Council advises the NIH Director and me on matters related to the policies and activities of the Division. A working group of this Council is currently developing recommendations on how NIH should implement the IOM recommendations.

Background

The use of animals in research has enabled scientists to identify new ways to treat illness, extend life, and improve health and well-being. Chimpanzees are our closest relatives in the animal kingdom, providing exceptional insights into human biology and the need for special consideration and respect. NIH is deeply committed to the care and welfare of chimpanzees.

While used very selectively and in limited numbers

However, new methods and technologies developed by the biomedical community have provided

- x Developing a review process for considering whether potential future use of the chimpanzee in NIH-supported research is scientifically necessary and consistent with the IOM principles.

Ongoing research involving NIH-owned or -supported chimpanzees is currently being reviewed on a project-by-project basis by the NIH Working Group to assess whether it meets the IOM principles and criteria. Projects that are found not to meet those standards will be phased out, but in a fashion that preserves the value of research already conducted, and minimizes the impact on the animals involved. Therefore, until the NIH Working Group has made their recommendations, currently funded projects will continue.

NIH welcomes public input into the Working Group's deliberations. In fact, the NIH has already begun seeking public input to further inform the Working Group's deliberations through a Federal Register Notice that was published in February. Our public website² provides information about the members of the Working Group, their charge, and upcoming Council of Councils meetings. With regard to timing, the Working Group will update the Council of Councils during the open session of the June 5, 2012 meeting, and again in September 2012. The NIH anticipates that the Working Group will present its final report during an open session of the Council of Councils in early 2013. After the Council considers the Working Group's report and recommendations, the NIH will open a 60-day public comment period on the implementation of the report and recommendations.

NIH's Commitment to Care and Welfare

Throughout this process, NIH remains committed to conducting and supporting high-quality science in the interest of advancing public health, and to the humane care and use of animals used in NIH research. It cannot be emphasized enough that all animals used in Federally-funded research are protected by laws,

While we pursue this mission, NIH seeks to minimize the use of animals wherever possible to find appropriate alternatives. As we continue to manage an important population of animals -- our Federally supported chimpanzees -- we look forward to hearin