

Wildlife Services

Protecting People
Protecting Agriculture
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2015

Alaska

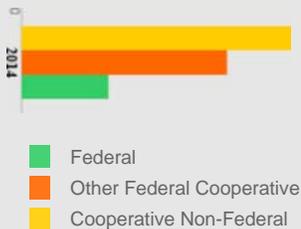


Contact Information:

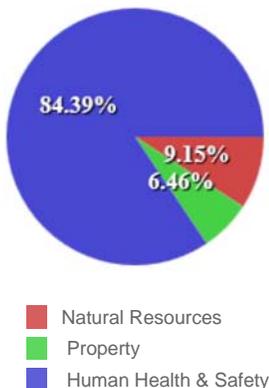
Terry Smith, Alaska
Wildlife Services State Director
(acting)
720 O'Leary Street, NW.
Olympia, WA 98502

Phone: (360) 753-9884
FAX: (360) 753-9466
Toll-Free Number: 1-866-4USDAWS
terry.l.smith@aphis.usda.gov
www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife-damage/

Total Funding (\$ Million)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Alaska

Every day, the Wildlife Services (WS) program in Alaska helps citizens, organizations, industries, and Government agencies resolve conflicts with wildlife to protect agriculture, other property, and natural resources, and to safeguard human health and safety. WS' professional wildlife biologists and specialists implement effective, selective, and responsible strategies that value wildlife, the environment, and the resources being protected. WS manages wildlife damage according to its public trust stewardship responsibilities as a Federal natural resource management program. WS supports the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, based on the principle that wildlife resources are owned collectively and held in trust by Government for the benefit of present and future generations.

Alaska has a diverse mix of vast wilderness areas, urban and suburban settings, agricultural lands, forests, coastline, islands, and tundra. The size of Alaska and its ecological and geographic diversity give the State a remarkable variety of wildlife species. Alaska is home to millions of migratory birds in the summer and unparalleled populations of native mammals and fish. Because air travel is the primary means of transportation in the State, Alaska boasts more aircraft and airports per capita than anywhere else in the United States.

WS-Alaska protects the lives of air passengers, pilots, and crew, as well as their aircraft, from dangerous collisions with wildlife. WS-Alaska biologists assist in protecting numerous species of seabirds and waterfowl from predation by arctic fox on the Aleutian Islands and North Slope. WS-Alaska addresses serious bird damage to municipal properties and public and private buildings, and responds to concerns about public health and safety. In addition, WS-Alaska offers assistance to Alaska's farmers in reducing agricultural losses from birds and mammals.

Applying Science & Expertise to Help the Public

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this technical assistance can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or direct assistance, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts scientific research across the United States to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports Globally, wildlife strikes with aircraft have killed more than 250 people and destroyed more than 245 aircraft since 1988. Wildlife strikes cause more than 590,000 hours of aircraft down time and cost the nation's civil aviation industry approximately \$937 million annually. American military aircraft sustain losses exceeding \$10 million annually. WS has assisted the Nation's airports for decades and collaborates closely with the Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Defense, and other Government agencies. WS provided assistance to 839 airports in 2014, including advice, training, on-site evaluations and assessments of wildlife hazards, and direct operation management to reduce wildlife strikes.

Alaskans are especially attuned to aircraft strike concerns. In 1995, a military jet taking off from Alaska's Elmendorf Air Force Base (now Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson) crashed after striking a flock of Canada geese. All 24 crew members were killed and the aircraft was destroyed.

The State of Alaska owns and operates more than 250 airfields; in addition, 24 municipal airports and an estimated 3,000 private airstrips serve the State. Alaska has a tremendous seasonal influx of migratory birds and most of Alaska's airports are located in prime wildlife habitat. This means the vast majority of Alaskan airfields experience some degree of risk of wildlife strikes.

WS is internationally recognized for scientific expertise in reducing wildlife hazards to the aviation industry. WS conducts research to reduce wildlife hazards to aviation and risks to the public. Studies are underway at several large U.S. airports where scientists evaluate habitat management practices and wildlife dispersal techniques. The National Wildlife Strike Database, maintained by WS, is used by the Federal Aviation Administration and airports to monitor trends and wildlife populations that pose the greatest threat to aviation.

Applying this scientific expertise, WS-Alaska provides technical and/or direct control assistance to civilian and military airports across the State. WS-Alaska conducts on-site evaluations and comprehensive wildlife hazard assessments to help airport managers and other aviation officials reduce wildlife hazards. In addition, WS-Alaska biologists train airport employees Statewide about wildlife deterrence and dispersal.



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Protecting Threatened and Endangered Species and Other Natural Resources

— WS protects rare and threatened and endangered species from wildlife predation. Alaska's Aleutian Islands are home to the Aleutian Cackling goose and some of the world's largest and most ecologically important colonies of nesting seabirds. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Russian fur traders and American fur farmers introduced the arctic fox onto numerous islands in the Aleutian chain. This action nearly caused the extinction of the Aleutian Cackling goose and had severe impacts on nesting colonies of seabirds. WS-Alaska cooperates with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to remove arctic foxes from the islands where they negatively impact nesting bird populations and the removal of non-native marmots and rabbits from Refuge islands.

As a result of the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill, pigeon guillemot populations in Prince William Sound, Alaska decreased by 10-15 percent. Mink predation has hindered subsequent recovery of certain pigeon guillemot populations. WS-Alaska cooperates with the USFWS to suppress local populations of American mink on specific islands in Prince William Sound to protect pigeon guillemot and other indigenous nesting birds.

WS also enhances nesting opportunities for threatened Steller's eiders near Barrow, Alaska through the suppression of arctic fox predation. This project, in cooperation with USFWS, has helped increase Steller's eider nest survival probability.

Monitoring and Controlling Wildlife Diseases — WS-Alaska conducted surveillance for highly pathogenic avian influenza from 2006-2010. WS-Alaska employees also traveled to Greenland in 2008 and collected 307 avian influenza samples from greater snow geese and Canada geese. WS-Alaska assists the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in conducting disease surveillance for rabies, toxoplasmosis, plague, tularemia, hepatitis E, canine parvovirus, leptospirosis, echinostoma, bornavirus, and Newcastle disease.

Looking to the Future

In Alaska, the safety of air transportation is a serious and growing concern. Increased air travel throughout Alaska, coupled with substantial populations of migratory birds and other wildlife, has created an urgent need for State and Federal management of wildlife threats. In addition, Alaskan farmers and ranchers will continue to request WS' assistance to help minimize damage to agricultural resources from birds and mammals. Although aviation and agricultural leaders turn to WS for help, limited resources affect WS' ability to respond to all requests for assistance with wildlife conflicts. The immense size of Alaska creates additional challenges. More personnel are needed to adequately cover the State, and transportation is required to reach isolated areas that are not accessible by car or truck. These restrictions, in combination with WS' infrastructure needs, limit the program's ability to respond to wildlife problems in some areas of the State.

Alaska Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives funding from program beneficiaries such as airports, individual citizens, businesses, organizations, and other Federal, State, and local Government Agencies. (See charts for sources of funding and resources protected.)

Top 5 Major WS Assistance Activities in Alaska

- Assessing and reducing wildlife hazards at airports
- Protecting migratory seabirds from predation
- Conserving threatened and endangered species
- Protecting crops and property from damage by birds
- Protecting public health and safety from threats posed by wildlife

Top 4 WS Research Projects of Interest to Alaska

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Evaluating waterfowl as disease, parasite, and noxious weed reservoirs
- Managing predators through new methods to protect wildlife
- Improving assessment, sampling, and economic methods for wildlife damage management
- Evaluating tools and methods for reducing urban gull damage

Major Cooperators:

- Alaska Department of Fish and Game
- Alaska Department of Transportation
- Anchorage International Airport
- Eielson Air Force Base
- Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson
- Juneau International Airport
- Municipality of Anchorage
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Waste Management of Alaska