

Wildlife Services

Protecting People
Protecting Agriculture
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2015

Vermont

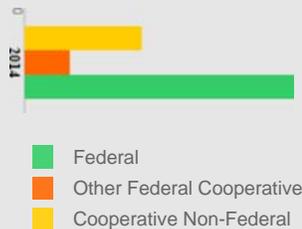


Contact Information:

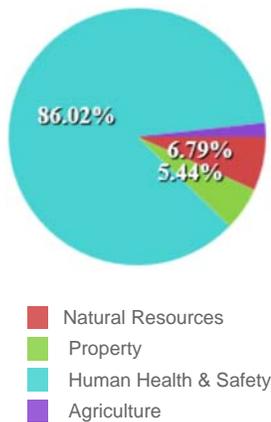
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Total Funding (\$ Million)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Vermont

Every day, the Wildlife Services (WS) program in Vermont 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.

WS in Vermont reflects the State's diverse wildlife and includes the protection of people, pets, livestock and wildlife itself from wildlife-borne diseases; guarding natural resources from colonial waterbird damage; reducing agricultural losses to game animals; and educating the public about wildlife and wildlife damage management. The program also protects property and agriculture and reduces human health and safety risks at airports, public buildings, and State and private lands.

Applying Science and Expertise to Help the Public

WS frequently provides information, advice, and materials that enable people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this technical assistance (TA) can be provided in person, by telephone or through the mail or internet. From 1992 - 2014, WS delivered technical advice and recommendations to more than 52,000 callers in Vermont and 1.6 million nationally.

WS also implements solutions on-site, through direct management assistance, when the wildlife-related problem is complex and cannot be safely or effectively resolved by others. WS' National Wildlife Research Center conducts scientific research and assessments to refine methods and develop new science-based solutions to wildlife challenges.

WS implements a wide range of damage management activities. The following examples highlight WS' role in protecting resources in Vermont.

WS assists dairy producers with problems associated with large concentrations of European starlings and pigeons, both invasive species. Damage occurs as birds consume and contaminate feed, which degrades feed quality, reduces milk production, and may transmit diseases, such as salmonella. Cooperating with the Vermont Division of Pesticide Control, the program offers recommendations for exclusion, husbandry modifications, and population management.

An estimated 23,000 resident Canada geese live in Vermont. Conflicts often develop as feces accumulate, overgrazing damages landscaping, and aggressive geese attack people. Each year, WS assists residents and businesses with technical advice, and local population reduction.

Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports — 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 nationwide to 839 airports in 2014, including advice, training, on-site evaluations and assessments of wildlife hazards, and direct operational management to reduce wildlife strikes.

WS-Vermont provides a year-long wildlife hazard assessment, as well as, operational and T&A to Vermont airports seeking assistance. Near one Vermont airport, a landfill creates a loafing and feeding area for gulls less than 2,500 feet from the airport. Through WS' integrated dispersal and monitoring program gull presence at this airport has been reduced by more than 80%.

WS continues to provide consultations, direct assistance, assessments and training for the 10 State-managed airports and one international airport in Vermont. WS assists airports in acquiring Federal and State permits that allow designated personnel to immediately address bird and mammal hazards.

Protecting Threatened and Endangered Species and Other Natural Resources WS contributes to the conservation of species listed as threatened and endangered (T&E) through partnerships with the U.S.



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), State wildlife agencies, organizations, and landowners. During 2014, WS assisted populations of 165 T&E species nationwide.

In 2014, to enhance recovery of the State-threatened Eastern spiny softshell turtle, WS installed exclusion devices, predator (raccoon, skunk and fox) trapping activities at recovery sites adjacent to Lake Champlain. The Program removed nest predators, which led to a marked increase in nesting success for this rare species.

Monitoring and Controlling Wildlife Diseases — WS works with Federal and State wildlife, health, and agriculture agencies to monitor and conduct surveillance for diseases in wildlife that could impact agriculture or human health. The program's Wildlife Disease Biologists act as WS first responders through the National Wildlife Disease Program's Surveillance and Emergency Response System (SERS). Information obtained through disease surveillance in wildlife populations enables agencies to better prepare for and respond to outbreaks and emergencies.

WS conducted disease monitoring in Vermont as part of a nationwide surveillance effort. Plague, tularemia, canine parvovirus, baylisascaris, lymphoproliferative disease virus (LPDV), avian pox, and leptospirosis have been identified as the primary diseases of concern to human, wildlife, and domestic animal populations within the State. WS focused collection efforts on raccoon, skunk, foxes, coyote, woodchuck, Virginia opossum, snowshoe hare, and beaver.

Protecting People and Animals from Rabies — Rabies poses a serious threat to public and animal health. Although human deaths from rabies are rare, the estimated public health costs associated with rabies detection, prevention, and control nationally exceed \$300 million annually. This management program is one of the largest coordinated efforts to control a disease in wildlife populations ever undertaken in North America. Since 1992, ORV operations have distributed more than 155 million vaccine baits by air and ground across 19 States preventing the further spread of rabies variants.

To prevent the northward spread of raccoon rabies, WS cooperated in the distribution of 449,814 ORV baits in more than 2,600 square miles of northern Vermont. In its 19th year, the program has distributed approximately 6 million vaccine-laden baits. In 2014, WS collected more than 1,250 biological samples from raccoons and skunks in the ORV zone to determine bait uptake, program effectiveness, and monitor rabies cases.

In 2012, WS-Vermont began field trials with ONRAB, a promising new vaccine. Since 1992, WS-Vermont has operated a State and Federally funded toll-free rabies information and referral service (hotline).

Protecting Natural Resources from Fish-eating Birds — The U.S. aquaculture industry is valued at more than \$613 million per year in processed product sales. Wildlife depredation, especially by fish-eating birds, can significantly impact production. WS provides recommendations and direct management assistance to aquaculture producers to reduce losses to fish-eating birds, while supporting migratory bird conservation objectives.

WS cooperates with the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department in double-crested cormorant management to reduce nesting impacts to other colonial waterbirds, restore colonial waterbird diversity and promote habitat recovery on Lake Champlain. WS' biologists met the program goal of eliminating double-crested cormorant reproduction on all Vermont islands including Young Island, the state's main nesting island. Habitat recovery efforts for Young Island have included soil preparation, tree planting, and ring-billed gull management activities. Management efforts resulted in increased diversity of nesting waterbirds, including common terns, gadwall, song sparrows, red-winged blackbirds, common grackles, and black-crowned night herons.

Looking to the Future

WS continues to provide the citizens of Vermont with safe, effective, and responsible management assistance for a variety of wildlife damage problems.

WS-Vermont is receiving increasing numbers of requests for assistance with problems associated with wildlife diseases, blackbirds and starlings, cormorants, and beavers. WS works with dairy farmers to develop and implement effective integrated strategies to reduce animal feed consumption, contamination, and health issues caused by birds. Wildlife diseases including rabies, avian influenza, and chronic wasting disease represent emerging challenges that must be addressed locally and nationally. In addition, increasing populations of wildlife species pose problems for property owners, airports, and natural resource managers.

WS strives to meet the demands for assistance within the constraints of its existing resources and capabilities so that all citizens have access to program services. Collaborative, partner-based approaches will be increasingly important.

Wildlife Services Funding in Vermont

In addition to receiving Federally allocated funds, WS also receives funding from program beneficiaries such as agricultural producers, airports, individual citizens, businesses, organizations, U.S. Department of Defense and other Federal, State, and local government agencies. See charts for sources of funding and resources protected.

Top 5 Major WS Assistance Activities in Vermont

- Reducing double-crested cormorant damage to property and natural resources
- Assessing and reducing wildlife hazards at airports
- Conserving threatened and endangered species
- Protecting public safety from wildlife
- Protecting the public, domestic pets, and livestock from rabies and other wildlife diseases

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Vermont

- Developing tools/methods to reduce turkey, deer, bear, goose, starling and pigeon damage to agriculture
- Quantifying and assessing the damage caused by raptors to aviation
- Evaluating the effectiveness of wildlife damage management to reduce damage to aviation
- Evaluating and monitoring wildlife for diseases (rabies, avian influenza, chronic wasting disease and others)
- Investigating the biology/ecology/behavior of double-crested cormorants

Major Cooperators:

- Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department
- Vermont Agencies of Agriculture, Food and Markets
- Vermont Agency of Transportation
- Vermont Department of Health
- University of Vermont and private universities
- New England Waste Services
- Burlington International Airport
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Federal Aviation Administration
- Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources
- Province of Quebec
- National Rabies Management Program
- U.S. Dept. of Defense