



**United States Department of  
Agriculture**



**Animal and Plant Health  
Inspection Service**

**Wildlife Services**

**Strategic Plan (2013 – 2017)**

**February 2013**

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## MESSAGE FROM THE DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR



*I am proud to represent the talented and dedicated professionals who make up the Wildlife Services researchers, wildlife biologists, program delivery specialists, and administrative support staff. Every day we collaborate and search for effective and economical methods to ensure that the damage caused by wildlife to agriculture and property in the United States is minimized.*

*In the United States, wildlife is a public resource held in trust and managed by State and Federal agencies. Government agencies, including Wildlife Services, are required by law and regulation to conserve and manage wildlife resources while being responsive to the public's needs and perspectives. In doing so, agency responses to requests for assistance to resolve and mitigate damage caused by wildlife must be professionally responsible, reliable, and conducted in a timely fashion.*

*Wildlife can cause significant damage to agricultural crops and livestock, forests, pastures, threatened and endangered species, and property and infrastructure in urban and rural areas. Wildlife can also threaten human health and safety by interfering with aircraft and through the spread of animal-borne diseases. Prevention and management of wildlife conflicts is an essential and responsible part of wildlife damage management. However, prior to undertaking wildlife damage programs, we conduct careful assessments to determine the extent of the problem and to ensure all viable options for resolving or mitigating the damage are considered. Our actions to mitigate damage caused by wildlife are scientifically based, biologically sound, environmentally safe, and socially responsible.*

*Our plan puts forward four strategic goals that will guide our workforce as we work to ensure that we deliver services with respect to wildlife that is injurious to agriculture, livestock and livelihoods. The primary objectives of the Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2013-2017 are to provide information and guidance to Wildlife Services employees and describe our mission, vision, and core values. The guiding principles contained herein ensure we remain focused on activities and goals that are critical to the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) – our parent agency within the U.S. Department of Agriculture. We are fully committed to the APHIS mission of protecting the health and value of U.S. agricultural, natural, and other resources.*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William H. Clay". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**William H. Clay**  
**Deputy Administrator**

# WS STRATEGIC PLAN

## 2013-2017

### I. Introduction

#### **PURPOSE:**

This plan was developed to inform and provide guidance to Wildlife Services (WS) employees on the Program's strategic goals for 2013-2017. It describes the WS vision, mission, and guiding principles and will help WS remain focused on activities and goals that are critical to the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) mission to protect the health and value of U.S. agriculture, natural, and other resources.

#### **WS MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY:**

In the United States, wildlife is a public resource held in trust and managed by State and Federal agencies. Government agencies, including WS, are required by law and regulation to conserve and manage wildlife resources while being responsive to the public desires, views, and attitudes. In so doing, agencies must respond to requests for resolution of damage and other problems caused by wildlife.

Wildlife may cause significant damage to agricultural crops and livestock, forests, pastures, property and infrastructure in urban and rural areas, and threatened and endangered species and their habitats. Wildlife also can threaten human health and safety through animal-borne diseases and hazards to aircraft. Prevention and management of wildlife conflicts is an essential and responsible part of wildlife management. Before wildlife damage management programs are undertaken, careful assessments will be made of the problem and all options for resolving or mitigating the problem will be considered. Actions considered and employed will be scientifically based, biologically sound, environmentally safe, and socially responsible.

#### **WS VISION:**

**To improve the coexistence of people and wildlife.**

WS recognizes that the field of wildlife damage management is in a period of change, and those working in this field must consider a wide range of public interests that can conflict with one another. These interests include wildlife conservation, biological diversity, the welfare of animals, and the use of wildlife for enjoyment, recreation, consumption, and to make a living.

WS develops wildlife damage management strategies that are scientifically based, biologically sound, environmentally safe, and socially responsible. WS also strives to

reduce damage caused by wildlife to the lowest possible levels while at the same time reducing wildlife mortality.

## **WS MISSION:**

**To provide Federal leadership in managing conflicts with wildlife.**

WS recognizes that wildlife is an important public resource greatly valued by the American people. By its very nature, however, wildlife is a highly dynamic and mobile resource that can cause damage to agriculture and property, pose risks to human health and safety, and negatively affect industrial and natural resources. WS conducts research and provides technical assistance and operational assistance programs to resolve problems that occur when human activity and wildlife conflict with one another.

## **VALUES:**

The following list represents six values WS promotes among employees and exemplifies in its actions.

- Integrity: WS employees base their action on sound scientific and biological principles and strive to achieve the highest ethical and professional standards. In conducting their work they seek to minimize risks to humans, non-target wildlife species, and the environment.
- Balance: WS values the needs of wildlife and the public and strives to balance those needs in formulating environmentally safe prevention and control plans to minimize impacts.
- Dedication to Public Service: WS employees provide assistance on a regular basis and are dedicated to resolving wildlife damage conflict while taking into consideration the needs of resource owners, cooperators, and stakeholders, as well as the welfare of the animals involved.
- Performance-based Mission Focus: Because wildlife can pose significant threats to the public, their property, and the nation's natural resources, WS employees must be responsive and highly effective in developing and implementing solutions to wildlife damage. The solutions also need to promote tolerance toward wildlife and assure that management actions are conducted in a responsible and professional manner.
- Safety: By nature of the work, WS employees operate in a dangerous environment. WS is strongly committed to the safety of its employees and provides extensive policies, procedures, and training to ensure their safety.
- Collaboration/Accountability: Because wildlife is a public resource, WS recognizes the need for collaboration with other Federal and State agencies,

public and private institutions, and private individuals to successfully resolve issues when wildlife comes into conflict with human interests.

- Innovative: WS seeks to further develop practical and effective, science-based strategies and techniques by encouraging creativity and ingenuity from all employees.

## **KEY CHALLENGES:**

The following are some of the significant challenges facing the WS program today.

### 1. Limited Resources for Wildlife Damage Management and Research:

WS works on a cost-share basis with cooperators to protect resources. In many cases, cooperators pay 100% of the costs associated with wildlife damage management. Small farms and ranches depend on WS' expertise in reducing losses to predators and agricultural damage. The majority of WS activities are with small farms, ranches, and other private entities and funded through Cooperative Service Agreements (CSA's). Increases in the number of activities that are not funded through Congressional appropriations require small agricultural producers to fund greater portions of the operational costs of wildlife damage management and this is becoming increasingly more difficult to accomplish.

The scientific process is a multi-year endeavor. Because the Federal funding process is annually based and often unpredictable, maintaining stable, long-term funding to support research remains a challenge. Changing Agency priorities, mandates, and evolving security requirements often compete with limited available resources.

### 2. Increasing Suburban Growth and Detachment from Agriculture and Wildlife:

The number of farms in the United States has declined over the last 30 years, and the general population is increasingly removed from rural communities and agrarian practices. In fact, data from the *Census of Agriculture* shows that between 1974 and 2002 the total number of acres of farmland had dropped by approximately 78 million. From 2002 to 2007 the number of acres dropped by another 6 million acres. This means that some portion of the acres that had previously provided habitat for wildlife was developed into urban or suburban neighborhoods or communities. As a result, fewer individuals have an understanding of the interface between wildlife and agriculture, much less the potential damage that wildlife can cause to farmers or other sectors of rural economies. This makes it increasingly difficult for the public to understand and appreciate the need for reducing wildlife damage related to agriculture production in rural environments.

### 3. Strengthening Communications with Stakeholders:

WS' stakeholders are diverse and range from the Program's direct consumers (e.g., livestock producers, airports administrators, State agencies) to animal advocacy groups that oppose lethal control in addition to various other methods. Between these two perspectives lies the majority of the American public who often have little, if any, knowledge of WS, but whose understanding and support are needed to accomplish the

Program's mission. This central group is the target of critics of the WS program and therefore is susceptible to misinformation. WS will continue to emphasize increased communication with these stakeholders.

4. Increasing Wildlife Populations:

Populations of Canada geese, white-tailed deer, double-crested cormorants, coyotes, bears, mountain lions, wolves, beaver, and other wildlife species have increased significantly in many parts of the United States. The increases have been the result of land use changes, relocations by State wildlife agencies, and decreased hunting and trapping by the public, in addition to a variety of other reasons. These overabundant wildlife populations at levels beyond social carrying capacity occurring in close proximity to humans often result in increased wildlife damage to property and increased human health and safety concerns.

5. WS Role in Emergency Response Impacts Traditional Service Delivery:

APHIS has significantly increased its involvement in a variety of national emergencies. For example, its increased role in the national emergency response structure as the lead Federal agency for Emergency Support Function (ESF) 11 has enabled all APHIS programs to provide valuable expertise to agricultural emergencies. However, under the ESF-11, APHIS now plays a lead role in responding to a broader array of emergencies, including natural disasters, which the agency historically has not been involved in. WS will continue to be challenged in responding to regional and national emergencies while striving to respond to traditional requests for assistance managing wildlife conflicts.

6. Keeping Pace with Evolving Information Technology:

Technological advances have had a positive impact on the field of wildlife damage management, but the WS program faces challenges in identifying and implementing new technologies because of time and distance. However, the slow, deliberate (and often cumbersome) procurement process that Federal managers must use makes it difficult to keep up with technology. In many cases, the core work being performed by WS employees is in remote locations where connectivity issues make it difficult for the program to take advantage of some of these technologies, even if they were available and affordable to managers.

7. Workforce Diversity in the Wildlife Management Field:

The wildlife management profession and the WS' workforce have traditionally been dominated by white males. WS must continue to identify creative and practical ways to find, recruit, and retain highly skilled individuals including women, minorities, and people with non-traditional wildlife biology backgrounds. WS must continue working hard to attract a diverse workforce that can provide technical help to customers, professionally communicate science-based wildlife damage management information, and provide creative and thoughtful solutions to a growing variety of wildlife damage management issues.

#### 8. Need for Greater Standardization of WS Business Practices:

For more than a century, WS has been managed to serve the wildlife damage management needs of citizens, with program services delivered from State-based offices that focus on local/State needs and circumstances. Some program activities and processes have not been standardized across the national program, resulting in notable variation in services among States and between regions. Recent budget constraints and increasing interest among agency leadership to formalize and standardize processes across the program are requiring WS to develop a national Business Model to address issues and guide future program development. WS must meet the challenge of more clearly defining, prioritizing, and communicating resource management assignments to chart a more effective and sustainable program for the future. Guidance for the delivery of more consistent business approaches in wildlife damage management assistance will be derived from national strategic intent that will incorporate an evaluation of multiple factors, including: 1) prioritization of core and other valuable program functions, 2) species, 3) land class and use (e.g., Federally managed lands, airports, privately owned lands), 4) cost share, 5) business expectations, and 6) Agency and Departmental goals. The degree to which priority core functions (e.g., the suppression of rabies and predator control to protect livestock) and other program activities of high value should be dependent on Federal versus external cooperative sources of funds is an integral consideration for strategic planning. Guidelines for determining an appropriate level of cost sharing ranging from none to 100% funded should be considered relative to specific core functions (as currently defined), sovereign activities, and Congressional intent inputs. Achieving more consistent financial management across programs is an output from effective strategic planning that is in line with Agency and Departmental priorities. The WS Business Model will consolidate and evaluate these diverse variables and inputs to provide managers with consistent guidance regarding future program direction.

#### 9. Balancing Public and Private Sector Roles in Wildlife Damage Management

As a Federal cooperative wildlife damage management agency, WS provides services in rural, suburban, and urban areas to those who request our assistance. WS' legislative authority allows WS to broadly conduct cooperative wildlife damage activities, except for urban rodent control, and to enter into agreements with beneficiaries of services to collect funds offset the costs incurred (Rural Development, Agriculture, and Related Agencies Appropriations, Act of 1988 [Public Law 100-202, 7USC426c]). This framework enables WS to recover the cost of the work, but not the full market value of these services. In providing assistance to the public to resolve wildlife conflicts, WS adheres to the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation and the Public Trust Doctrine principle that wildlife resources are held in trust by government for the benefit of present and future generations. The Public Trust Doctrine is the foundation of State and Federal wildlife management programs in North America. Government agencies conduct wildlife management, including resolution of wildlife conflicts, according to this principle, not to generate revenue and profit for the Government. In many instances, appropriated funding does not fully support WS' field work conducted under specific types of cooperative service agreements. WS can only charge the requestor actual costs, which cannot include a profit margin. In recognition of concerns raised by private sector businesses that provide wildlife damage management services, WS has entered into a routine dialog with

industry representatives to ensure that steps will be taken to minimize concerns. For example, WS policy indicates that WS will not offer direct assistance services at the same time and same location or tract of land where a private business or individuals are independently conducting related activities with similar methods as described in the WS Directive 3.101 (Interfacing with Business and Establishing Cooperative Programs). In the 2008 Memorandum of Understanding with the National Pest Management Association (NPMA), WS agreed that unless the customer specifically requests WS to conduct the service, WS would not conduct direct control assistance targeting European starlings, house sparrows, and pigeons in areas where private sector companies have an established ability to meet consumer demand. Finally, our interest remains focused on the goal on ensuring that the public receives timely, professional service whether the request comes from residential area where private sector infrastructure is often available to meet specific types of demand to rural areas where such business are less common. The type and kind of assistance provided will depend on the type of resources available in both the private and public sector.

## **II. Key Partners**

WS is specifically authorized to enter into cooperative programs with Government agencies, public and private institutions, organizations, and associations, and private citizens to manage conflicts with wildlife. Memoranda of Understanding or other agreements between WS and other Federal agencies and appropriate State regulatory agencies define and clarify the respective roles and responsibilities of each agency for resolving wildlife conflicts.

Collaborators, partners and stakeholders include the following:

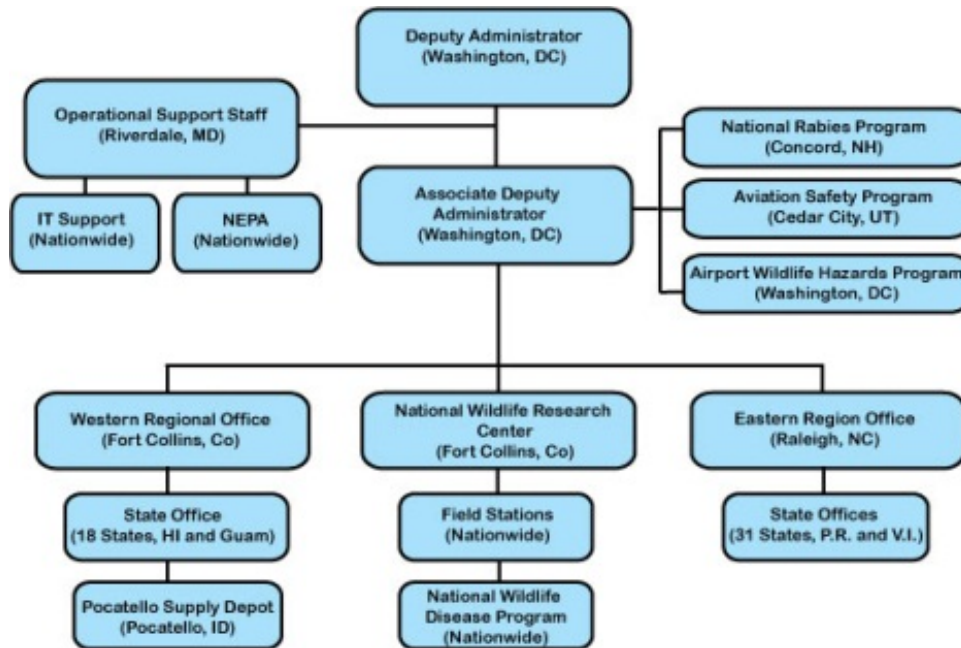
- Other APHIS programs
- Federal agencies
- State agencies
- Tribal nations
- Local and foreign governments
- International and domestic non-government organizations
- Agricultural commodity organizations
- Industry
- Colleges and universities
- Individual and groups of research scientists
- Scientific and professional societies
- Environmental/conservation organizations
- U.S. animal and public health laboratories
- Homeowners and neighborhood associations
- General public
- Animal interest groups



### III. Organizational Chart



## WILDLIFE SERVICES



WS employs over 1,800 biologists, scientists, technicians, IT professionals, and administrative personnel. The Office of the Deputy Administrator provides overall Program leadership and oversight. The Operational Support Staff provides technical and administrative support for the Deputy’s office and WS field programs. Field programs are directed from the Eastern Regional and Western Regional offices. The National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) is the research arm for WS and provides scientific information on conflicts between humans and wildlife as well as develops methods to mitigate or prevent damage.

### IV. Linkage to the USDA Secretary’s Priorities and the APHIS Strategic Plan

The Secretary of Agriculture has put forth four priority goals for USDA and an overarching priority that emphasizes the multitude of ways that USDA programs impact people across the Nation in their daily lives. WS has an important role to play in supporting each of the Secretary’s priorities.

The Secretary's Overarching Goal: USDA's constituents understand and appreciate what the Agency can do for them *every day in every way*, because USDA employees are engaged, valued, and productively serving the people of America and the world.

WS employees have direct contact with the public every day and build partnerships with a variety of stakeholders to carry out the Agency's important work. WS routinely seeks to create positive work environments where employees feel valued and have the proper tools and developmental opportunities to perform their jobs effectively.

USDA Priority Goal 1: Rural communities create wealth so they are self-sustaining, repopulating, and economically thriving.

WS supports the viability of rural communities every day by protecting the health and value of American agricultural, natural, and other resources. For example, WS actions include mitigating pests and diseases to stimulate economic growth and protect and enhance agricultural and natural resources in many rural areas; and reducing economic losses to agricultural resources caused by wildlife.

USDA Priority Goal 2: National forest and private working lands enhance our water resources and are conserved, restored, and made more resilient to climate change.

WS protects national forest and private working lands by detecting and combating invasive species on a daily basis. Together with other agencies, producers, and industry, WS conducts programs to prevent, control, and eliminate threats including reducing damage to timber resources caused by deer and black bears; and removing beaver dams that block waterways and flood standing timber.

USDA Priority Goal 3: USDA helps promote sustainable agricultural production and biotech exports as America works to increase food security.

WS' role through promoting research which supports economic and environmentally viable agriculture systems includes information transfer to private industry, and operational activities to protect genetically engineered crops from foraging wildlife.

USDA Priority Goal 4: America's children have access to safe, nutritious, and balanced meals.

WS helps keep safe, nutritious food accessible and affordable by preventing the entry and establishment of agricultural pests and diseases and minimizing production losses. WS' efforts also help create consumer confidence in the health of agricultural products.

In addition, APHIS has the following six Strategic goals. Four of these target specific program work and two are organizational priorities.

1. Safeguarding the health of animals, plants, and ecosystems domestically and in other countries;

2. Strengthening emergency response preparedness
3. Facilitating safe trade through international standard setting and effective management of sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) issues
4. Enhancing the well-being of animals covered by the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) and the Horse Protection Act (HPA).
5. Valuing and Investing in APHIS Employees
6. Accomplishing the mission through effective and efficient program management

WS has important linkages to goals 1, 2, 5 and 6.

#### Links to Goal 1: Safeguarding Animal and Plant Health

While WS has historically protected a variety of agricultural, natural resources, and property, the past 5-7 years has seen a significant integration of WS activities with other APHIS programs. These programs are now recognizing the strong connection between wildlife health and the potential threats to agricultural trade, disease transmission to domestic herds and flocks, human health and safety, and the protection of habitats and native species. After an outbreak of High Path Avian Influenza, many APHIS programs became aware that diseases affecting domestic poultry also have the potential to affect wildlife. The WS National Wildlife Disease Program spearheaded nationwide AI surveillance and continues to expand wildlife disease sampling and monitoring efforts. Managing the spread of disease with the goal of elimination requires considering the interface between wildlife and livestock. For example, the WS National Rabies Management Program (NRMP) is working to manage the spread and eventually eliminate terrestrial rabies in the United States. This program supports the “One Health Initiative,” a worldwide strategy recognizing that human and animal health are inextricably linked, and therefore promotes expanding interdisciplinary collaborations and communications. The NRMP has wildlife disease control implications for the protection of human and animal health nationally, continentally, and globally.

#### Links to Goal 2: Emergency Response Preparedness

WS’ National Wildlife Disease Surveillance and Emergency Response System (SERS) within the National Wildlife Research Center aligns with APHIS’ goal to respond to a variety of emergency situations in a timely and effective manner. The emergency response portion of SERS is designed to implement disease management interventions or all hazards relief in a rapid response mode in reaction to a foreign disease incursion, epizootic of an endemic disease, or a natural disaster. Such a system requires dedicated personnel and equipment, training, and interagency communication and cooperation. WS’ first responders possess a unique core of emergency response skills such as the use of firearms in urban areas (as needed in the 2004 Exotic Newcastle Disease outbreak), the use of specialized equipment such as airboats (as needed in our response during Hurricane Katrina), and the ability to implement an integrated urban wildlife damage management program in specialized environments like a high security crime scene (as occurred after 9/11 at the Fresh Kills Landfill in New York). WS 2010 Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill response efforts throughout the Gulf tested existing response systems, identified additional training /certification opportunities (HAZWOPER) and resulted in the establishment of a WS Contaminants Response Working Group.

### Links to Goal 5: Valuing and Investing in Employees

WS relies on the dedication of its employees and commitment to public service to provide an increasingly broad array of wildlife damage management services. WS managers provide their employees' training and development, and encourage collaboration between operations and research. WS leadership has also developed a Programmatic Succession Plan and each Management Team member has agreed to oversee an area to ensure implementation of the plan.

In addition, WS prioritizes the safety of its employees. The 2008 Programmatic Safety Review of WS looked at nine key areas of work that were subject to safety concerns. In all of the areas, outside review panels found that WS had, and still maintains a strong commitment to the safety of its employees. WS leadership is currently implementing all recommendations made by these review groups to further strengthen the safety practices of WS employees.

### Links to Goal 6: Effective and Efficient Program Management

WS works with cooperators to resolve wildlife conflicts in an effective and efficient manner. Operationally, WS received more than \$101 million in cooperative funding in Fiscal Year 2011. These cooperative funds provide clear evidence of the public's needs and requests for WS' professional approach to dealing with conflicts between wildlife and humans and the damage to various resources that sometimes occurs. WS also conducts Research Needs Assessments (RNA) to identify and prioritize national human-wildlife conflict issues requiring research attention. The RNA provides recommendations for the planning of new projects and focuses human and financial resources on the important priorities of the program and its customers. Furthermore, WS' financial and administrative support functions assure that managers have the information necessary to assess productivity, control costs, and guard against waste, fraud, and mismanagement.

## **V. Strategic Priorities:**

WS has four strategic priorities that are the cornerstone of our management philosophy and program delivery to the public:

- Deliver High Quality Service to Customers and Stakeholders
- Develop Effective Methods for Preventing or Reducing Wildlife Damage
- Value and Invest in WS Employees, and
- Inform and Communicate Regularly and Transparently with Customers, Stakeholders, and the General Public;

## **VI. Core Mission and Core Functions:**

The primary statutory authority for the WS program is the Animal Damage Control Act of March 2, 1931, as amended (7 U.S.C 426-426c; Stat. 1468). It provides authority for

the Secretary to conduct investigations, experiments; and tests as he may deem necessary in order to control wildlife injurious to agriculture, horticulture, forestry, animal husbandry, wild game animals, fur-bearing animals, and birds, and for the protection of stock or other domestic animals through the suppression of rabies and tularemia in predatory or other wild animals on national forests and other areas of public domain as well as on State, territory, or privately-owned lands.

Additional statutory authority is provided by the Rural development, Agriculture, and related agencies Appropriations Act of 1988 (Public Law 100-102, Dec. 22, 1987, Stat. 1329-1331 [7 U.S.C. 426]) which authorizes the Secretary, except for urban rodent control, to conduct activities and enter into agreements with States, local jurisdictions, individuals, and public and private agencies, organizations, and institutions in the control of nuisance mammals and birds, and those mammal and bird species that are reservoirs for zoonotic diseases.

In FY 2011, Congress eliminated all earmarks, Congressional directives, and associated funding. To address this significant impact to the program and provide program managers guidance to facilitate long-term strategic planning and in preparation for potential additional reductions in FY 2013, the WS Management Team identified a list of core program functions.

They include:

**High Priority Core Functions:**

- Predation Management for the Protection of Livestock
- Suppression of rabies and other wildlife diseases affecting agricultural resources
- Protection of natural resources (including endangered species) from other injurious wildlife
- Conducting wildlife damage research
- Vertebrate invasive species
- Protection of agricultural resources and property from migratory bird damage and mammals
- Feral swine damage management

**Lower Priority Core Functions:**

- Protection of aquaculture and natural resources from fish-eating birds
- Emergency Response functions

**Other Core Functions - 100% Cooperatively Funded**

- Airport Wildlife Hazard management
- International activities
- Wildlife disease monitoring and surveillance activities involving non-zoonotic diseases.

## National Priorities

National priorities include both High Priority Core Functions and Lower Priority Core Functions. State or local priorities are important in the delivery of efficient and effective service at the local level and will be addressed within the context of National Priorities. When evaluating how appropriated resources are to be allocated, WS decision makers will defer to local priorities in the absence of identified national priorities.

The WS Strategic Plan for 2013-2017 builds upon concepts and directions set forth in earlier strategic plans and reflects changes in both the organization of the WS program and in public attitudes and values related to natural resources.

### What Will Not Change:

WS strives for the highest possible standards in providing service to the public. The public can continue to expect the following:

- accurate information and expert help to resolve or minimize wildlife conflicts;
- respect for people, property, and wildlife;
- respect for varying viewpoints on wildlife damage management;
- use of the most humane, selective, and effective control techniques possible;
- work to be conducted in a safe, effective, and environmentally sound manner;
- management decision based on sound science; and
- support of rural agricultural communities.

<b>Goal 1:</b>
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<b><u>Providing Wildlife Services: Assess Our Ability to Deliver High Quality Service to New and Existing Customers and Stakeholders</u></b>
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Historically, outside WS, the view and relationship of wildlife to APHIS' primary role of protecting American agriculture has been limited. However, there has recently been a greater recognition of wildlife and the potential threats they create within APHIS' strategic planning.

WS will continue to provide high quality wildlife damage management and research services for all customers resulting in the protection of agriculture, wildlife and other natural resources, property, and human health and safety.

### **Where We Can Refocus:**

- Expand feral swine damage management for agricultural, ecological, and human health and safety purposes. WS will provide leadership in the areas of operational control, disease surveillance and monitoring, research to develop and improve methods and public education and outreach.
- Improve management and provide leadership to industry and natural resource agencies for an effective, ecologically sound predation management program responsive to changes in the livestock industry, natural resource agencies, and societal values.
- Increase WS disease surveillance capacity for a broader range of emerging animal diseases.
- Expand efforts to enhance public safety by providing timely and appropriate science-based assistance to the aviation community in preventing, investigating, monitoring, and reducing/eliminating wildlife hazards to meet the demand for safe air operations of the air transportation industry, Department of Defense, and the traveling public.
- Expand efforts to implement components of the cooperatively produced strategic planning documents, including the U.S. National Plan for Wildlife Rabies Management and the North American Rabies Management plan, which integrate U.S. rabies control plans with those in Canada and Mexico. These plans provide a framework to enhance coordination and collaboration to prevent further spread of key terrestrial rabies variants and work towards continental elimination of rabies in carnivores.
- Improve WS' ability to respond to emergency work, including non-traditional agricultural or non-agricultural emergencies such as those described under ESF-11, without subverting resources from important traditional areas.
- Promote equal access for all U.S. citizens including under-served farmers and ranchers, women, minorities, small and limited resource, and socially-disadvantaged customers to WS program expertise and technical assistance.
- Continue to assess WS operational activities in relation to private enterprise and seek greater collaboration with the private sector where practical to increase efficiencies and maximize use of existing resources to enhance service delivery.

### **What Will Not Change:**

- Our constituents, including farmers, ranchers, and other property owners and managers, will receive timely, professional assistance in resolving wildlife damage management problems.
- Program delivery and customer service are prioritized so that wildlife damage management programs are developed and delivered with excellence.

<b>Goal 2:</b>
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<b><u>Methods Development: Develop Effective and Economical Methods for Managing Wildlife Damage for Some of our Most Pressing Wildlife Issues</u></b>
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Over the next five years, WS will strive to strengthen its research capacity through the following activities:

- Continue to encourage and increase flexibility among research programs to form teams and address new issues.
- Expand applied research on feral swine and feral swine damage management to agricultural, ecological and human health and safety.
- Enhancing and strengthening expertise in wildlife disease and invasive species research.
- Develop and implement new science based and socially responsible methods for eliminating and managing wildlife damage to crops, livestock, property, human health and safety, and natural resources.
- Exploring new opportunities to secure multi-year funding for long-term research efforts.

**What Will Not Change:**

- A strong history of developing innovative and practical solutions to resolve human-wildlife conflicts. As a leader in wildlife damage research, we will continue to look ahead to identify and address new wildlife damage management issues.
- The use of a formal wildlife research needs assessment process to identify and prioritize research needs.

<b>Goal 3:</b>
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<b><u>Valuing and Investing in People: To Adequately Retain, Recruit and Develop Personnel at all Levels to Meet the Programs Demands</u></b>
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WS is actively engaged in succession planning to better position and prepare for the challenges associated with retirements, other staff changes, and evolving workloads and focus areas. WS will continue to value and invest in its employees through the following activities and efforts:

- Continue to enhance and increase participation in the WS mentoring program;
- Share information and decision-making and evaluation experiences appropriately with employees to create and foster leadership aspirations;
- Create opportunities for increased awareness of career pathways and the importance of communication, networking, and planned positioning;



- Enhance the quality of outreach at targeted universities, increasing faculty contacts, recruit at smaller colleges and universities, and develop a database of schools to utilize during recruitment and pre-announce vacancies; and
- Provide leadership training and developmental experiences at all levels of the organization in support of succession planning objectives and management priorities.

**What Will Not Change:**

- WS success is largely dependent on the technical expertise of our personnel and this emphasis will continue.
- WS will recruit, develop, and retain highly skilled personnel who can respond with flexibility to the changing demands placed upon the program.
- Recognize employees for exemplary achievements and contributions.

<b>Goal 4:</b>
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<b>Information and Communication: Improve Communication and Transparency with Employees, Customers, Stakeholders, and the General Public.</b>
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WS will strive to focus on improvements in communication, both internally and externally, to accomplish our mission and to build an understanding of the Federal role in wildlife damage management.

**Where We Can Improve:**

- Seek positive relationships within all segments of the public by defining common interests and goals.
- Increase focus of communication towards the American public who do not have an opinion of the program and may be targets of our critics' misinformation.
- Increase and optimize the use of electronic media and social networking to improve the public's access and understanding of program information.
- Seek and establish feedback mechanisms at the national, regional and local level for improved and streamlined communications with program personnel.

**What Will Not Change:**

- Building Partnerships: being active in developing and sharing information with other Government agencies as well as public and private institutions, organizations and associations, and private citizens.
- Open Communication: being truthful and credible, professional, sharing appropriate information, attending public meetings, and being responsive to questions.
- The emphasis on internal information exchange and interactions between research and operational personnel.

## **Conclusion**

The nature and complexity of wildlife-human conflicts is changing rapidly, as is the knowledge and attitudes of the American public towards these conflicts. This document provides a clearly articulated strategy for the WS program to continue to be leaders in the development and use of methods to protect agricultural and natural resources, human health and safety, and property from damage caused by wildlife.