

Wildlife Services

Protecting People
Protecting Agriculture
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2012

Mississippi



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Major Cooperators

- Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks
- Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce
- Department of Defense
- Mississippi Department of Transportation
- Mississippi State Extension Service
- Mississippi Forestry Association

USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Mississippi

Every day, the Wildlife Services (WS) program in Mississippi helps citizens, organizations, industries, and Government agencies resolve conflicts with wildlife to protect agriculture, other property, and natural resources, and to safeguard the safety of people. WS' professional wildlife biologists and specialists implement effective, selective, and responsible strategies that value wildlife, the environment, and the resources being protected. WS' biologists manage wildlife damage according to its public trust stewardship responsibilities as Federal natural resource managers. The program 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.

Applying Science and Expertise to Help the Public

WS frequently provides information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. During 2012, WS delivered technical advice and recommendations to more than 1.6 million people across the country.

In most cases, landowners and resource managers use technical information to implement habitat management and other methods to reduce damage on their properties. For example, WS-Mississippi helps educate the public about damage being caused by feral swine and provides technical assistance to address fish-eating bird problems affecting the aquaculture industry. WS-Mississippi also partners with military airbases, private citizens, and cell tower companies to minimize problems caused by roosting vultures and helps homeowner associations learn techniques to decrease Canada geese problems in their neighborhoods.

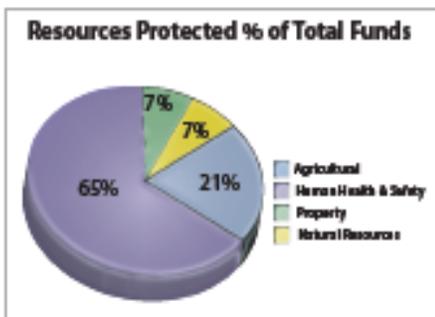
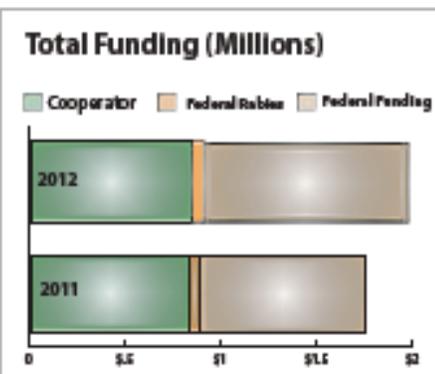
WS-Mississippi also implements solutions on-site through direct management assistance. Direct management assistance occurs when WS is asked to resolve damage for people.

WS-Mississippi applies and recommends an integrated wildlife damage management approach that incorporates biological, economic, public, environmental, and other information into decisions made. WS' National Wildlife Research Center conducts scientific research and assessments to refine methods and develop new science-based solutions to wildlife challenges.

Protecting Public Safety at Airports—Wildlife strikes cause more than 760,000 hours of aircraft down time and cost the nation's civil aviation industry approximately \$700 million annually. American military aircraft sustain losses exceeding \$10 million annually. WS has assisted airports across the Nation for decades and collaborates closely with the Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Defense, and other Government agencies. WS provided assistance to 772 airports in the United States during 2012, including advice, training, on-site evaluations and assessments of wildlife hazards, and direct operational management to reduce wildlife strikes.

Major airports in Mississippi, both coastal and inland, must manage varied potential wildlife hazards. WS-Mississippi protects military airfields with on-site staff wildlife biologists at Columbus Air Force Base and Naval Air Station Meridian. WS-Mississippi provides technical assistance to several other airports dealing with strike hazards.

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



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

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 exceeds \$300 million annually. WS coordinates cooperative oral rabies vaccination (ORV) programs in the United States with the goal of controlling and eventually eliminating certain rabies variants to protect people and animals and to reduce associated costs.

WS-Mississippi actively tests for rabies near the State's boundaries, where the disease is most likely to enter the State. In Mississippi, rabies has not been found in any land mammal since 1965, but it is found every year in bats within the State.

WS' wildlife disease program in Mississippi has also identified the presence of several diseases in feral swine around the State. WS-Mississippi partners with the Mississippi State Extension Service to educate people how to protect themselves from these diseases.

Reducing the Negative Impacts of Feral Swine—Feral swine are an invasive species that thrive in rural, suburban, and urban habitats. By 2012, populations of feral swine had expanded to at least 38 States, numbering approximately 5 million animals. This expanding population and distribution is associated with property damage and negative effects on public health, domestic animal health, crop production, and natural resources. Currently, the total aggregate cost of feral swine damage is estimated to be \$1.5 billion annually, with at least \$800 million related to direct costs to agriculture.

WS-Mississippi participates in the Mississippi Feral Swine Task Force, along with many other Government and private entities. This group discusses the problems feral swine cause across the State and addresses solutions.

Protecting Aquaculture and 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 affect production. A National Agricultural Statistics Service survey has indicated that 70% of the catfish producers from 13 catfish-producing States reported measurable losses to wildlife. WS-Mississippi provides recommendations and direct management assistance to aquaculture producers to reduce losses caused by fish-eating birds, while supporting migratory bird conservation objectives.

Fish-eating birds cost the Mississippi aquaculture industry an estimated \$5 million in losses each year. Without the efforts of WS-Mississippi to harass these birds and reduce predation, the losses could be two or three times higher. The double-crested cormorant and the American white pelican, whose numbers increased over the past decade, cause most of the damage. Staff with WS-Mississippi educates producers about ways to disperse fish-eating bird species and can even help them obtain depredation permits if needed. Working with cooperators, WS can disperse and remove cormorants in winter roost sites and nontraditional nesting areas.

Protecting Multiple Resources from Beaver Damage—Beaver historically have been a valuable economic and natural resource. Over the past 20 years, beaver populations have increased throughout the United States due to lower demand for beaver products and subsequent decreases in recreational trapping. Beaver can have positive effects, such as increasing wetland

habitat, as well as negative effects, by dam building and tree cutting. Beaver dams back up water that can flood and kill valuable timber and destroy or damage cropland, roadways, sewer and septic systems, and water treatment and electric utilities. Dams may also negatively affect fish populations by changing the movement and temperature of stream water. Beaver also cut down trees that are valued for timber production and landscaping.

With decreased trapping and subsequent increase in population, beaver now occupy nearly all watersheds in the State. A major component of the WS-Mississippi program is protecting transportation, agriculture, forestry, and property through beaver damage management. Typically, beaver damage roadways and bridges throughout the State.

Looking to the Future

WS continues to provide the citizens of Mississippi with safe, effective, and responsible management assistance for a variety of wildlife damage problems. The potential for wildlife conflicts with people likely will increase and WS' ability to respond will depend on the availability of personnel and resources, as well as legislative authorities to support these activities.

WS-Mississippi is receiving increasing numbers of requests for assistance with problems associated with feral swine, wildlife at airports, wildlife diseases, cormorants, and beaver. These wildlife conflicts can negatively affect the State's agricultural products, private property, and public resources.

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 among natural resource, agriculture, and health agencies to meet public needs.

Mississippi Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving Federally allocated funds, WS also receives funding from program beneficiaries such as agricultural producers, 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 Assistance Activities in Mississippi

- Protecting bridges and roads from beaver damage
- Reducing fish-eating bird damage to aquaculture and natural resources
- Assessing and reducing wildlife hazards at airports
- Protecting public safety from wildlife
- Assessing and reducing public health threats from wildlife diseases

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Mississippi

- Developing methods to reduce feral swine damage to agriculture
- Quantifying and assessing the damage caused by feral swine to multiple resources
- Economic analysis quantifying damage feral swine cause to agriculture in Mississippi
- Evaluating the effectiveness of wildlife damage management to reduce beaver damage to roads and bridges
- Evaluating and monitoring wildlife for diseases