

Wildlife Services

Protecting People
Protecting Agriculture
Protecting Wildlife

State Report
FY 2012

West Virginia



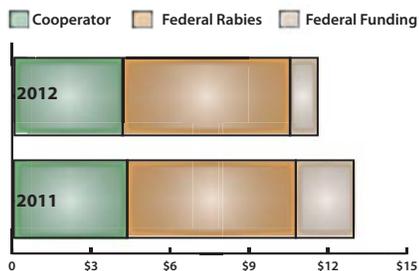
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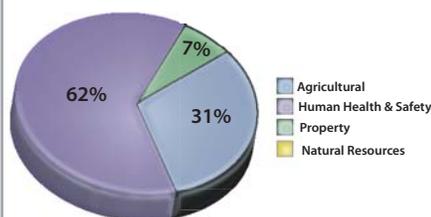
Major Cooperators

- West Virginia Department of Agriculture
- West Virginia Department Health & Human Resources
- West Virginia Division of Natural Resources
- West Virginia University
- West Virginia University Extension Service
- U. S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Total Funding (Millions)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in West Virginia

Every day, Wildlife Services (WS) in West Virginia 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.

West Virginia is a diverse mix of urban and suburban settings, agricultural lands, and extensive forests, with the Appalachian Mountains dominating the State's eastern portion. Ecological and geographic diversity creates habitat for a remarkably wide variety of wildlife. WS works to protect property and reduce health and safety risks at airports, schools, and commercial facilities. It also protects people, pets, and livestock from wildlife-borne diseases, guards agricultural resources from depredation, and educates the public about wildlife and damage management. Specific projects include protecting livestock from predation, conducting sampling and monitoring for rabies, and managing damage caused by white-tailed deer, resident Canada geese, pigeons, starlings, vultures, and other wildlife.

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. Often, this assistance can be provided in person, by telephone or through the mail or internet. During 2012, WS delivered technical advice and recommendations to more than 1.6 million people.

WS-West Virginia assists livestock producers through hundreds of personal consultations, teaches university wildlife and agriculture classes, presents seminars through the State extension service, and partners with State agencies to disseminate technical information.

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.

The following highlights WS' role in protecting resources through damage management in West Virginia.

Protecting Livestock from Predation—Despite producers' best efforts to protect their livestock, thousands of domesticated farm animals are killed by predators each year. The most recent reports by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) for cattle (2011) and sheep and goat (2010) indicate predation more than 647 thousand head of livestock annually, resulting in combined losses of nearly \$138 million. Producers often turn to WS for assistance in reducing and preventing further predation. The integrated approach implemented by WS includes recommendations that are applied by the producers and, in many cases, operational wildlife management implemented by WS.

WS provides technical and operational assistance to livestock producers to reduce predation losses statewide through a cooperative service agreement with the State's Department of Agriculture. Since 1996, WS has helped reduce sheep predation from an average of 28 lambs per farm to an all-time low of 1.1 lambs per farm in 2009. WS continues to prevent significant predation losses on participating farms.



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Protecting Human Health and 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 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 772 airports in 2012, including advice, training, on-site evaluations and assessments of wildlife hazards, and direct operational management to reduce wildlife strikes.

Applying scientific expertise, WS provides direct assistance to West Virginia airports, including removing animals from areas surrounding runways. WS also provides technical assistance by conducting initial consultations, conducting year-long wildlife hazard assessments, developing management plans, and training airport personnel to reduce the risk of wildlife-aircraft collisions.

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. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), State wildlife agencies, organizations, and landowners. During 2012, WS safeguarded populations of 168 T&E species nationwide by reducing the impacts of predation and competition, consulting with the FWS, and developing and sharing information that contributed to conservation. WS-West Virginia has cooperated with Federal and State resource managers to protect the endangered James spiny mussel from predation.

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). WS-West Virginia cooperates with the national disease program and the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) to conduct surveillance for chronic wasting disease, leptospirosis, Newcastle disease, tularemia, and several other wildlife diseases.

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. Since 1992 ORV operations have distributed more than 138 million vaccine baits by air and ground across 19 States preventing the further spread of rabies variants.

In cooperation with selected eastern States and Canada, WS-West Virginia annually distributes approximately 1,000,000 ORV baits to immunize raccoons against rabies and stop the westward movement of the raccoon strain. In 2011, West Virginia was selected as the test site to evaluate a new and potentially better oral vaccine (ONRAB). These research efforts have resulted in data collection needed for the registration of ONRAB. The ONRAB vaccine research results have shown promise and WS continues to participate in the required research needed to evaluate its safety and efficacy.

Reducing the Negative Impacts of Feral Swine—Feral swine, an invasive species, are prolific breeders and thrive in rural, suburban, and urban habitats. By 2012, their populations had expanded to at least 38 States, numbering approximately 5 million animals. Currently, the total aggregate cost of damage is estimated to be \$1.5 billion annually, with at least \$800 million related to direct costs to agriculture.

WS has partnered with the WVDNR, the State Department of Agriculture, and the State Cooperative Extension Service to establish a program to respond to feral swine in the State. The goal is to quickly address local feral swine populations before they can establish breeding populations.

Responding to Emergencies—WS has a long history of responding to emergency requests for assistance from farmers, ranchers, and others. Increasingly, WS is asked to assist in responding to natural and manmade disasters such as hurricanes, floods, and oil spills. WS expertise has been instrumental in recovering wild and domestic animals, hazing wildlife away from contaminated areas, and conducting wildlife disease surveillance and emergency control. WS' National Wildlife Disease Program biologists have extensive training in the Incident Command System, and can be mobilized within 24-48 hours of a request.

Certified staff of WS-West Virginia participated in the Gulf of Mexico oil spill cleanup and is prepared for mobilization upon request.

Looking to the Future

WS continues to provide the citizens of West Virginia with safe, effective, and responsible management assistance. Requests for assistance with problems associated with feral swine, urban/suburban coyotes, wildlife diseases such as rabies, blackbirds and starlings, beaver, and Canada geese continue to increase. The potential establishment of feral swine populations is a developing problem and WS-West Virginia is collaborating with State agencies to control or eliminate feral swine before populations become firmly established.

WS strives to meet the requests 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.

Wildlife Services Funding in West Virginia

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 WS Assistance Activities in West Virginia

- Protecting livestock from coyote and vulture depredation
- Assessing and reducing wildlife hazards at airports
- Protecting public safety from high densities of urban waterfowl
- Assessing and reducing public health threats from large flocks of roosting blackbirds in urban and suburban environments and at industrial locations
- Protecting the public, domestic pets, and livestock from rabies

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to West Virginia

- Developing tools/methods to reduce coyote damage to livestock
- Quantifying and assessing damage caused by expanding black vulture populations to livestock
- Evaluating and monitoring raccoons and other wildlife for rabies
- Investigating the biology/ecology/behavior of coyotes
- Conducting research in support of ONRAB rabies vaccine registration