

Wildlife Services

Protecting People
Protecting Agriculture
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2015

Alabama

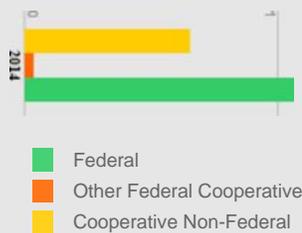


Contact Information:

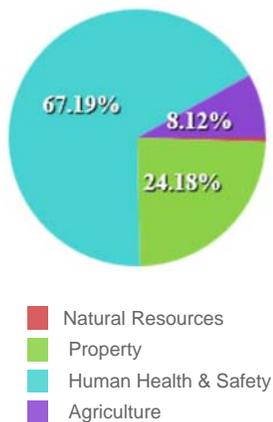
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Total Funding (\$ Million)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Alabama

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

Alabama is a diverse mix of urban and suburban settings, agricultural lands, and forests. As the human population increases in Alabama, so do conflicts with wildlife. WS-Alabama assists farmers with managing damage caused by birds and predators, assists airports reduce wildlife strike risks, monitors wildlife diseases, and protects threatened and endangered species from predators.

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 technical assistance can be provided in person, by telephone, or through the mail or internet. During 2013, 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-Alabama distributes brochures and pamphlets explaining how to exclude bats from inhabited buildings. Providing home and business owners with such advice protects human health because bats can pose a year-round threat of rabies and histoplasmosis.

WS also implements solutions on-site through direct management assistance. Direct management assistance occurs when WS' biologists and specialists are asked to resolve damage. WS applies and recommends an integrated approach that incorporates biological, economic, public, environmental, and other information into decision making. WS collaborates with State agencies to proactively manage feral swine through a combination of techniques including outreach and cost share efforts. In addition, WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) conducts scientific research and assessments to refine methods and develop new science-based solutions to wildlife challenges.

Protecting Crops and Other Agricultural Resources Agriculture is one of the most important industries in Alabama, with annual farm receipts of \$5.29 billion and jobs employing more than 21% of the State's workforce. The State ranks second nationally in catfish production and ranks high in timber, poultry, and forest products.

Agricultural losses to wildlife include livestock predation, bird depredation to crops, flooding of timberlands by beaver, and catfish losses to migratory birds. More than \$19 million is lost annually because of beaver damage to timber and almost \$4 million is lost annually from bird depredation at aquaculture facilities. WS' biologists and specialists work closely with the Alabama Department of Agriculture, the Alabama Department of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, and the Alabama Farmers Federation to address these problems.

WS-Alabama provides recommendations and direct management assistance to aquaculture producers to reduce losses from fish-eating birds, while supporting migratory bird conservation objectives. WS-Alabama disperses fish-eating bird roosts to reduce the number of birds in aquaculture areas. WS-Alabama also assists aquaculture producers in developing effective programs to reduce predation by fish-eating birds using the most current technology. WS' NWRC continues to investigate the migratory movements and feeding behavior of fish-eating birds. In addition, the NWRC is working to develop new management methods to reduce the economic losses resulting from depredation. WS-Alabama has located a wildlife biologist at the Alabama Fish Farming Center, which is devoted to addressing bird predation at aquaculture facilities where losses are estimated at several million dollars annually.

WS-Alabama also provides information and management recommendations to landowners on beaver damage management. WS-Alabama direct assistance includes water level manipulation, exclusion, beaver removal, and the safe and effective use of explosives by certified specialists to remove beaver dams that can cause extensive flooding.



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Despite producers' best efforts to protect their livestock, thousands of domesticated farm animals are killed by predators each year. 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 direct management assistance implemented by WS.

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 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 839 airports in the United States during 2014, including advice, training, on-site evaluations and assessments of wildlife hazards, and direct operational management to reduce wildlife strikes. Applying WS' expertise, WS-Alabama has provided State airports with assistance that has reduced the presence of wildlife on and around runways by up to 80 percent.

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 human health. 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. WS-Alabama works closely with State officials to monitor several avian diseases that can affect human health and safety such as West Nile virus. Feral swine are sampled and tested for classical swine fever, pseudorabies, and swine brucellosis in cooperation with other State and Federal agencies.

Rabies poses a serious threat to public and animal health. 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 human and animal health and reduce associated costs.

WS-Alabama conducts raccoon rabies surveillance to locate areas where the disease has advanced and determine if the virus has spread west of two natural barriers: the Alabama and Coosa Rivers. Based on the results, WS will continue to conduct ORV projects to stop the westward movement.

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. On emergency response teams, WS' employees use their specialized skills to capture and safely handle almost any wildlife species found in the United States. 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. Trained emergency staff with WS-Alabama participated in response and recovery during the Gulf oil spill.

Looking to the Future

WS continues to provide the citizens of Alabama with safe, effective, and responsible management assistance for a variety of wildlife damage problems. The potential for human-wildlife conflicts 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.

In Alabama, WS is receiving an increasing number of requests for assistance with problems associated with beaver, fish-eating birds at aquaculture facilities, and predators. Introduced species, such as feral swine, are a rapidly growing management problem in the State. Wildlife diseases are also posing greater threats.

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.

Wildlife Services Funding in Alabama

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS receives funding from program beneficiaries including agricultural producers, airports, individuals, 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 Alabama

- Reducing migratory bird predation to aquaculture resources
- Protecting timber resources and transportation from beaver damage
- Assessing and reducing public health threats from wildlife-borne diseases, including rabies and West Nile virus
- Protecting agricultural crops from damage caused by wildlife
- Protecting passengers and aircraft from wildlife collisions

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Alabama

- Developing improved methods to reduce feral swine damage
- Managing bird predation to aquaculture
- Controlling wildlife carriers of rabies and bovine tuberculosis
- Managing beaver damage to timber and other forest resources
- Assessing and reducing wildlife hazards at airports

Major Cooperators:

- Alabama Department of Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries
- Alabama Department of Public Health
- Alabama Department of Transportation
- Alabama Cooperative Extension Service
- Auburn University
- Alabama Farmers Federation
- Maxwell Air Force Base
- U. S. Army Missile Command Redstone Arsenal
- U. S. Army Corp of Engineers
- U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- Federal Aviation Administration
- Tennessee Valley Authority