

Wildlife Services

Protecting People
Protecting Agriculture
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2015

Colorado

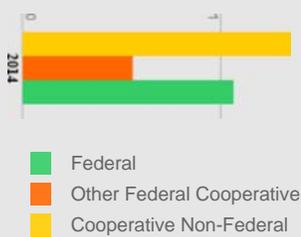


Contact Information:

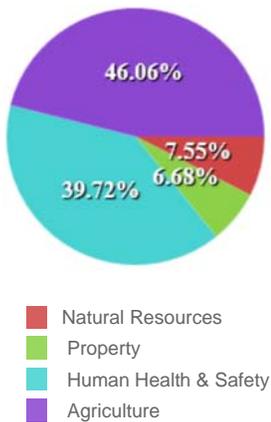
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Total Funding (\$ Million)



Resources Protected
% of Total Funds



USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Colorado

Every day, the Wildlife Services (WS) program in Colorado helps citizens, organizations, industries, and Government agencies resolve conflicts with wildlife to protect agriculture, 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-Colorado helps the livestock industry reduce losses from predators and protects aircraft and air passengers from dangerous wildlife collisions. The program assists property owners with migratory bird problems, helping obtain the permits from regulatory agencies.

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. In most cases, landowners and resource managers use technical information to implement habitat management and other methods to reduce damage.

WS-Colorado provides exhibits annually at the National Western Stock Show reaching livestock producers across the nation and educating the public regarding wildlife conflict issues.

WS also implements solutions on-site, through direct management assistance, when wildlife-related problems are 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 applies and recommends an integrated wildlife damage management approach that incorporates biological, economic, public, environmental, and other information into decision making.

Protecting Livestock from Predation — Despite producers' best efforts to protect their livestock, predators kill thousands of domesticated farm animals each year. The most recent National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) reports for cattle (2011) and sheep and goat (2010) indicate predation on nearly 450,000 head of livestock annually, resulting in combined losses of more than \$119 million. Producers often turn to WS to reduce and prevent further predation. WS' integrated approach includes research recommendations applied by producers and, in many cases, operational wildlife management implemented by WS.

Livestock production is an important industry in Colorado. In January 2012, the total value of cattle and calves was \$3.44 billion and its sheep inventory was worth approximately \$131 million. Predatory attacks by coyotes, black bear, and mountain lions can result in significant losses. NASS reported that Colorado livestock producers lost an estimated 9,000 sheep and lambs, valued at \$1.64 million, to predators during 2011 accounting for 25% of all losses. Approximately 80% of producers reported using non-lethal predator deterrents (NASS, 1997). Losses could be two to three times higher in the absence of livestock protection.

WS-Colorado works cooperatively with the State agriculture and wildlife agencies, counties, and local livestock associations to reduce predation damage for livestock producers.

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 collaborates closely with the Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Defense, and other Government agencies to minimize wildlife hazards to aircraft.

Applying scientific expertise, WS-Colorado provided assistance at 18 airports in FY 2012. Currently, airports fund six full-time wildlife biologists and three full-time wildlife specialist positions in WS-Colorado that provide training, advice, and on-site resolution to wildlife conflicts.

Protecting Threatened and Endangered Species and Other Natural Resources WS contributes to the conservation of species listed as threatened and endangered through partnerships with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), State wildlife agencies, organizations, and landowners. During FY2011 and



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

FY2012, WS-Colorado assisted Colorado Parks and Wildlife with a research project to protect Gunnison sage grouse from predation during the nesting season, removing predators from an area that had almost no chick survival in recent years.

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. Information obtained through disease surveillance in wildlife populations enables agencies to better prepare for and respond to outbreaks and emergencies.

WS-Colorado participates in the Colorado Rabies Task Force to address increasing cases of skunk rabies, which has expanded across eastern Colorado and is approaching the Denver metro area. WS-Colorado collects specimens from suspect rabid animals.

Reducing the Negative Impacts of Feral Swine — Non-native species that cause harm are collectively known as invasive species; they may prey upon, displace, or otherwise harm native species. Some also alter ecosystems, transport disease, interfere with crop production, or cause illnesses in animals and humans.

Invasive feral swine are prolific breeders and thrive in rural, suburban, and urban habitats. By 2012, their populations had expanded to at least 38 states, numbering approximately five million animals. This expanding population and distribution is associated with property damage and negative impacts to public and domestic animal health, crop production, and natural resources, estimated at \$1.5 billion annually, about half in direct agricultural costs.

Previously, the Colorado Department of Agriculture and Division of Wildlife requested WS-Colorado to assist with feral swine control, primarily in southeast Colorado. Although the current known Colorado population is small, the potential exists for an increased population.

Protecting Multiple Resources from Beaver Damage — Beaver historically have been a valuable economic and natural resource. During the past 20 years populations increased throughout the United States due to lower demand for beaver products and subsequent decreased recreational trapping. This growth has positive effects, such as increased wetland habitat, as well as negative impacts from dam building and tree cutting. Beaver dams back up water that floods and kills valuable timber and destroys or damages croplands, roadways, sewer and septic systems, and water treatment and electric utilities. Dams may also negatively impact fish populations by changing stream water movement and temperature. Beaver cut down trees valued for timber production and landscaping.

Beaver now occupy nearly all State watersheds, so protecting transportation, agriculture, and natural resources through beaver damage management is a major consideration for WS-Colorado. Typical requests involve damage to roadways and bridges, agriculture and forest resources, and flooding of municipal sewer and water treatment facilities.

WS-Colorado routinely uses explosives to remove beaver dams that are flooding property. WS personnel are trained and certified in the safe and effective use of explosives.

Looking to the Future

WS continues to provide Colorado citizens 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 personnel and resource availability, as well as supporting legislative authorities.

WS-Colorado is receiving increasing requests for assistance with problems associated with urban/suburban coyotes, wildlife diseases, blackbirds and starlings, and Canada geese. By capturing coyotes for the project, WS-Colorado is cooperating with the National Wildlife Research Center in a study of Denver metro-area coyote behavior as a result of increased aggressive behavior reports.

WS strives to meet the assistance requests 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 Colorado

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 Colorado

- Protecting livestock from predation by coyotes, black bear, and mountain lions
- Protecting civil and military aviation from wildlife strikes
- Managing damage caused by migratory birds
- Monitoring for plague, avian influenza, rabies, and other wildlife diseases
- Protecting property from beaver damage

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Colorado

- Improving predator damage management methods for agriculture and urban environments
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Managing prairie dog damage to agriculture
- Evaluating methods to control damage by resident Canada geese
- Managing wildlife diseases (rabies, West Nile virus, plague)

Major Cooperators:

- Colorado Department of Agriculture
- Colorado Division of Wildlife
- Colorado Department of Transportation
- Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
- Southern Ute Tribe
- Denver International Airport
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- County Governments
- Livestock Associations