

Wildlife Services

Protecting People
Protecting Agriculture
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2015

Louisiana

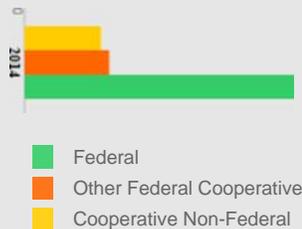


Contact Information:

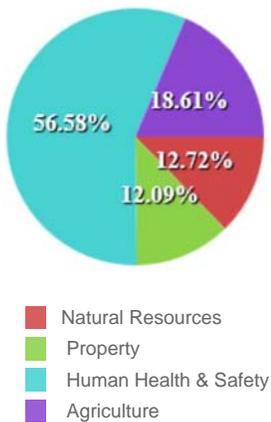
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Total Funding (\$ Million)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Louisiana

Every day, the Wildlife Services (WS) program in Louisiana 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. 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. 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 applies and recommends an integrated wildlife damage management approach that incorporates biological, economic, public, environmental, and other information into decision making.

Protecting Crops and Other Agricultural Resources — Agricultural landscapes provide abundant wildlife habitat. WS-Louisiana assists farmers and ranchers protect crops and other agricultural resources and facilities from damage caused by waterfowl, feral swine, deer, wild turkeys, gulls, black bears, and other species.

Blackbirds in large winter roosts can cause severe damage to sprouting rice, with losses estimated at \$5-10 million annually. WS-Louisiana protects sprouting rice, saving state rice farmers more than \$5.8 million in some years. WS-Louisiana also researches better methods to reduce or prevent rice crop damage.

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. WS-Louisiana assisted 15 airports with wildlife-related issues in 2012, including operational work at two military airports where vultures, waterfowl, and deer were among problem species.

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 2014, WS-Louisiana directly safeguarded populations of two T&E species, and, as a program, more than 162 species nationwide.

WS-Louisiana helps protect the Louisiana pearlshell mussel from beaver damage. Since this work began, the Louisiana pearlshell recovered well enough to be re-categorized as threatened. WS-Louisiana also protects the Louisiana black bear by partnering with State agencies to respond quickly to complaints involving this threatened species.

Protecting People and Animals from Rabies — Although human deaths from rabies are rare, the estimated public health costs associated with rabies detection, prevention, and control nationally exceed \$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-Louisiana actively looks for rabies in parishes along the Pearl River.

Protecting Louisiana from Invasive Species including Feral Swine Non-native species that cause harm are collectively known as invasive species. Invasive species 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. Executive Order 13112 establishes Federal leadership responsibilities regarding invasive species.

Feral swine are prolific breeders and thrive in rural, suburban, and urban habitats. By 2014, their populations had expanded to at least 40 States, numbering approximately six million animals, associated with property damage and negative effects on public health, domestic animal health, crop production, and natural resources. Currently, the total aggregate cost of damage is estimated to be \$1.5 billion annually.



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

The frequency and magnitude of feral swine damage in Louisiana is increasing. Feral swine can severely damage the State's forests, coastal marshes and wetlands, and wildlife. They also harm agriculture, including row crops and crawfish. To reduce this damage, WS-Louisiana removed swine from national wildlife refuges and forests, State parks, wildlife management areas, and private property. WS-Louisiana has also addressed issues involving nutria, another invasive species that is highly destructive of coastal marshes, wetlands and associated wildlife. Researchers investigated new methods for managing both feral swine and nutria-related damage.

Protecting Aquaculture and Natural Resources from Fisheating 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 impact production. WS research has confirmed that catfish producers lost \$12 million annually to double-crested cormorants in Mississippi alone. Aquaculture has spent \$17 million or more annually to control bird damage at production facilities nationwide. WS provides information and direct management to reduce losses to fish-eating birds, while supporting migratory bird conservation objectives.

Louisiana is the country's largest producer of farm-raised crawfish, with significant catfish production as well. WS-Louisiana routinely assists farmers to address problems caused by cormorants, white pelicans, herons, and egrets feeding on their fish.

Protecting Resources from Beaver Damage — Beaver historically have been a valuable economic and natural resource. During the past 20 years their populations have increased throughout the United States due to lower demand for beaver products and subsequent decreases in 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 cropland, roadways, sewer and septic systems, and water treatment and electric utilities. Dams may also negatively impact fish populations by changing the movement and temperature of stream water. Beaver cut down trees that are valued for timber production and landscaping.

From 2005 to 2010, beaver caused more than \$5.67 million worth of damage across Louisiana. WS-Louisiana helps manage beaver damage on private and Government properties, protecting more than \$54.5 million in resources, including bottomland hardwood timber, highways and bridges, dams, drainage ditches, canals, general property, and crops.

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. WS' National Wildlife Disease Program biologists have extensive training in the Incident Command System, and can be mobilized within 24 to 48 hours of a request.

Accidental petroleum products discharges, including crude oil and fuels, occasionally occur in Louisiana waters and wetlands, threatening wildlife and requiring immediate response. WS-Louisiana is recognized as credible experts in wildlife dispersal, capture, and handling. Since 2007, WS-Louisiana has supported emergency response efforts at three oil spills, including Deepwater Horizon. In addition to recovering oiled wildlife, personnel helped map the oil spill and participated in research

studying impacts of spilled oil on wildlife. This project helped WS develop and employ new technologies to increase wildlife capture efficiency and success.

Looking to the Future

WS continues to provide the citizens of Louisiana 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 supportive legislative authorities. WS-Louisiana is receiving increasing requests for assistance with problems associated with feral swine, beaver, vultures, nutria, and wildlife in proximity to urban areas.

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.

Louisiana Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving Federally allocated funds, WS also receives funding from program beneficiaries such as agricultural producers, airports, military installations 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 Louisiana

- Protecting agricultural crops from damage caused by blackbirds and waterfowl
- Protecting livestock from predation
- Protecting timber, natural resources, and other valuable resources from beaver and feral swine damage
- Monitoring wildlife-borne diseases such as rabies, brucellosis, pseudorabies, leptospirosis, and others.
- Conserving threatened and endangered species

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Louisiana

- Developing tools/methods to reduce feral swine damage to agriculture, property and natural resources
- Investigating the biology/ecology/behavior of feral swine
- Developing tools/methods to reduce blackbird damage to agriculture
- Quantifying and assessing the damage caused by feral swine to natural resources
- Developing tools/methods to reduce nutria damage to coastal marshes

Major Cooperators:

- Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
- Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry
- Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals
- Louisiana Office of State Parks
- Louisiana State University Agricultural Center (incl. Cooperative Extension Service and Experiment Station)
- University of Louisiana at Monroe
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (incl. Refuges and Ecological Services)
- U.S. Forest Service Kisatchie National Forest
- National Resource Conservation Service
- Louisiana Rice Growers Association and Parish affiliates
- Various civilian airport authorities
- Barksdale Air Force Base, Naval Air Station JRB New Orleans, LA Air National Guard
- Various Parish Police Juries (i.e., county commissions)
- LA Soil and Water Conservation District and Parish affiliates