

Wildlife Services

Protecting People
Protecting Agriculture
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2015

Massachusetts

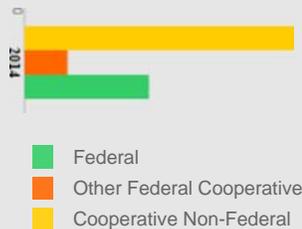


Contact Information:

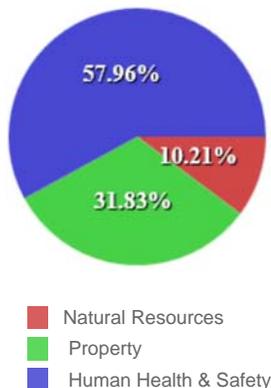
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Total Funding (\$ Million)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Massachusetts

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

The state features areas of dense forests, beaches, maritime ports, and popular tourist destinations. One of the smallest and most densely populated states, most of Massachusetts' people live in the east and central parts of the state. Yet diversely; agriculture and livestock production includes, among other things, sheep, cattle, goats, dairy products and cheese, poultry, eggs, seafood and aquaculture.

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, mail, or the internet. During 2014, WS delivered technical advice and recommendations to more than 1.6 million people.

In most cases, landowners and resource managers themselves use technical information to implement methods that may reduce damage. Additionally, WS recommends, or may apply, an integrated wildlife damage management approach that incorporates biological, economic, public, environmental, and other information into decision making. For example, WS recommendations may include habitat management, harassment, repellants and control of nesting sites to manage issues caused by Canada goose populations.

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.

Protecting Crops and Other Agricultural Resources — WS-Massachusetts collaborates with dairy cow owners to manage European starling contamination of feed and water at dairy farms, which may cause bacterial salmonella. Subsequently, infected cows may abort calving, slow or stop feeding, lose weight, and reduce milk production. Dairy and feed lot farmers who participate in WS' starling control projects report cost savings and quality improvements in their cattle and milk production.

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 provided assistance to 839 airports in 2014 across the nation, including advice, training, on-site evaluations and assessments of wildlife hazards, and direct operational management to reduce wildlife strikes.

WS-Massachusetts partners with State and Federal agencies to provide training, wildlife hazard assessments, and direct wildlife hazard management assistance at Massachusetts airports. In 2014, WS-Massachusetts provided both technical and operational support at nine airports and two military airports. WS-Massachusetts uses NWRC research and strike-database information to help develop management strategies and methods for local airports.

Protecting Threatened and Endangered Species and Other Natural Resources WS contributes to the conservation of threatened and endangered (T&E) listed species through partnerships with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), State wildlife agencies, organizations, and landowners. During 2014, WS safeguarded populations of 162 T&E species nationwide by reducing the impacts of predation and competition from more abundant species, consulting with the FWS, and developing and sharing information that contributed to conservation of listed species.

WS-Massachusetts works with State and Federal agencies to manage predation caused by fox, raccoons, and skunks on piping plovers, roseate terns, and other shorebirds that nest on Massachusetts beaches. These actions lead to better nesting success, which is important to the protected species.



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

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. 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. This management program is one of the largest coordinated efforts to control a disease in wildlife populations ever undertaken in North America. Since 1992, ORV operations have distributed more than 155 million vaccine baits by air and ground across 19 States preventing the further spread of rabies variants.

Since 2004, WS-Massachusetts continues to provide federal leadership efforts in the Cape Cod ORV program to help extinguish raccoon rabies from Cape Cod, a heavily populated tourist destination. Working with partners, WS-Massachusetts implements ORV baiting regimes, conducts surveillance activities, tests animals, and has achieved positive results.

Protecting Multiple 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 and subsequent decreases in recreational trapping. This growth has positive effects, such as increased wetland habitat, but 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.

WS-Massachusetts addresses beaver damage that impacts private property septic systems, basements, and public roads. WS works with various State and local townships to obtain all necessary permits and to ensure that species of concern and critical habitats are not adversely impacted by management activities.

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.

Looking to the Future

WS continues to provide the citizens of Massachusetts 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 legislative authorities to support these activities.

WS-Massachusetts is receiving increasing assistance requests for problems associated with wildlife at airports, Canada geese, beaver, flocking birds at landfills, blackbirds and starlings. 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 Massachusetts

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives funding from cooperative 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 Massachusetts

- Assessing and reducing wildlife hazards at airports
- Protecting bridges, roads, timber, crops, and natural resources from beaver damage
- Conserving threatened and endangered species
- Protecting the public, domestic pets, and livestock from rabies
- Assessing and reducing public health threats from wildlife diseases

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Massachusetts

- Evaluating the methods and effectiveness of efforts to reduce avian damage at airports
- Continuing the enhancement of tools/methods to reduce European starling conflicts at landfills and airports
- Enhancement of tools/methods to reduce predator damage to protected and endangered shorebirds
- Evaluating the effectiveness of efforts to reduce Canada goose conflicts to human health and safety
- Evaluating and monitoring wildlife for rabies

Major Cooperators:

- Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health
- Massachusetts Division of Agricultural Resources
- University of Massachusetts - Extension System
- Massachusetts Department of Transportation, Aeronautics Division
- Massport Airport Operations
- Department of Defense (DOD) Airport Facilities
- Barnstable County Department of Health and Environment
- Tufts Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine
- Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Senior Environmental Corps/Elder Services and other support resources for rabies management
- Corporate or Private Landfills and Transfer Stations
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service