

# Wildlife Services

Protecting People  
Protecting Agriculture  
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2015

# Pennsylvania

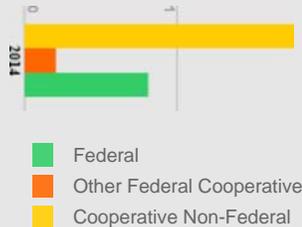


## Contact Information:

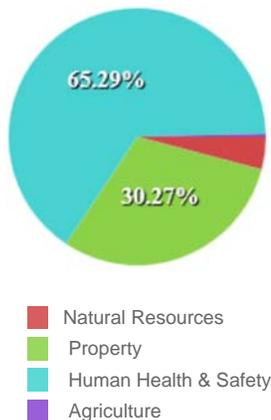
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## Total Funding (\$ Million)



## Resources Protected % of Total Funds



## USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Pennsylvania

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

WS protects Pennsylvanians from human health and safety issues associated with wildlife by protecting people, pets, and livestock from wildlife-borne diseases; guarding natural resources; protecting property; and educating the public about wildlife damage management. WS helps farmers reduce crop losses and damage from birds and mammals, and partners with other natural resource management agencies to protect threatened and endangered species and habitat. WS monitors for disease threats such as West Nile virus, rabies, and avian influenza.

## 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. WS applies and recommends an integrated wildlife damage management approach. During 2014, WS delivered technical advice and recommendations to more than 1.6 million people.

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** — Agricultural landscapes provide abundant wildlife habitat. WS assists farmers and ranchers throughout the United States to protect crops, and other agricultural resources and facilities from damage caused by waterfowl, deer, wild turkeys, gulls, black bears, and other species. 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, in many cases, operational wildlife management 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 the Nation's airports for decades and collaborates closely with the Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Defense, and other Government agencies.

WS-Pennsylvania partners with other Government agencies to monitor and reduce hazards at the Philadelphia International Airport through habitat management, behavior modification, and other methods. WS also cooperates with nearly 30 other civilian and military airports to assess wildlife hazards, develop site-specific management, and provide operational support to implement those plans.

**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 safeguarded populations of 162 T&E species nationwide.

WS protects State-threatened species, including great egrets and black-crowned night herons, through surveying nesting habitat, harassing birds away from sensitive urban areas, and managing overabundant competing species during nesting periods.

**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.



United States Department of Agriculture  
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

WS-Pennsylvania participates in disease surveillance work, monitoring for avian influenza, Newcastle disease, tularemia, and other diseases of national importance. WS works with State and Federal cooperators to address disease concerns, assist in emergency situations, and aid research on Canada geese, coyotes, and tick-borne diseases. WS participates on various disease task forces and regularly delivers presentations at professional, industry, and public meetings and at universities.

**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 155 million vaccine baits by air and ground across 19 States preventing the further spread of rabies. Since 2001, WS-Pennsylvania has cooperated with Federal, State, and local agencies to create a vaccination immune barrier along Lake Erie and Ohio. ORV baits are distributed throughout the targeted area to vaccinate raccoons against rabies and prevent its spread. This will not only reduce rabies in the area, but could help eliminate raccoon rabies in Pennsylvania and the eastern United States in the future.

**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.

Since 2006, WS has assisted with feral swine management and disease surveillance in Pennsylvania. WS helps the Pennsylvania Game Commission and Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture manage both free-ranging and captive feral swine.

**Protecting Aquaculture and Natural Resources from Fish-eating 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 provides recommendations and direct management assistance to aquaculture producers to reduce losses to fish-eating birds, while supporting migratory bird conservation objectives. WS educates producers on ways to reduce the impacts of fish-eating birds, while ensuring they are methods that protect their industry with the least impact on wildlife.

**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 the necessary clearances and extensive training in the Incident Command System, and can be quickly mobilized.

WS-Pennsylvania plays an active role in assisting with emergency response situations, and assisted with wildlife capture and harassment during the Athos 1 oil spill on the Delaware River. WS participates on emergency response and disease taskforces, including participation in simulated response activities.

#### **Looking to the Future**

WS continues to provide the citizens of Pennsylvania 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 Pennsylvania, WS is receiving increasing numbers of requests for assistance with problems associated with feral swine, wildlife at airports, urban/suburban coyotes, escaped captive wolves, wildlife diseases, blackbirds and starlings, cormorants, beavers, waterfowl, and invasive species.

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.

WS assists Pennsylvanians with a diverse and growing range of wildlife conflicts, but challenges remain. Increasing populations of urban deer, resident Canada geese, and other wildlife create an increased risk to aviation safety. Public health concerns, such as rabies and West Nile virus, are also issues that need to be addressed.

#### **Wildlife Services Funding in Pennsylvania**

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 Pennsylvania**

- Reducing fish-eating bird damage to aquaculture and natural resources
- Assessing and reducing wildlife hazards at airports
- Protecting the public, domestic pets, and livestock from rabies
- Protecting public safety from over abundant deer populations
- Reducing impacts of invasive species

#### **Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Pennsylvania**

- Evaluating the effectiveness of wildlife damage management to reduce wildlife hazards to aviation
- Evaluating and monitoring wildlife for diseases impacting human and livestock health
- Developing tools/methods to reduce wildlife damage to resources
- Quantifying and assessing the damage caused by wildlife to resources
- Increasing knowledge of wildlife diseases

#### **Major Cooperators:**

- Federal Aviation Administration
- Pennsylvania Air National Guard Bureau
- Penn State University
- Pennsylvania Game Commission
- Cities of Philadelphia and of Allentown
- Pennsylvania Departments of Agriculture and of Health
- National Park Service
- Allegheny County Health Department
- Pennsylvania Farm Bureau
- Center for Dairy Excellence
- Pennsylvania Century Commercial Lamb Producers and Feeders