

Wildlife Services

Protecting People
Protecting Agriculture
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2015

Rhode Island

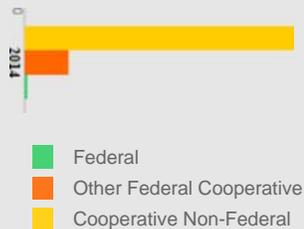


Contact Information:

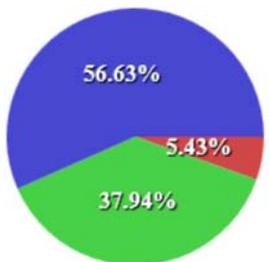
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Total Funding (\$ Million)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



- Natural Resources
- Property
- Human Health & Safety

USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Rhode Island

Every day, the Wildlife Services (WS) program in Rhode Island 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 agency. 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.

The smallest of the "southern" New England states, Rhode Island ranks 43rd in population among all states. Nevertheless, it is the second most densely populated state. Rhode Island's landscape ranges from large undulating hills to gently rolling hills, and includes a large area of lowlands pockmarked with ponds and small lakes. Primarily urban, more than half of the State is covered with dense woodlands. Agriculture typically consists of small farms that produce a few head of livestock, turf and ornamental plants, or other nursery plants.

The State contains industrial manufacturing facilities ranging from technological and electronic applications to construction of ships, submarines, and other machinery. Coastal Rhode Island has numerous tourist communities and ports, fish and seafood harvesting, and sailing.

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

In most cases, landowners and resource managers use technical information to implement habitat management and other methods to reduce damage on their properties. In Rhode Island, WS recommends the use of integrated wildlife damage management approach, in which multiple methods are used to mitigate damage. For example habitat management, exclusion, harassment, repellants, and nesting control are frequently recommended to other government agencies, organizations and individuals for managing Canada geese. WS recommends and applies this approach, which incorporates biological, economic, public, environmental and other information into decision making

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 (NWRC) conducts scientific research and assessments to refine methods and develop new science-based solutions to wildlife challenges.

WS conducts a wide range of damage management activities. The following examples highlight WS' role in protecting resources in Rhode Island.

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, and other species. In Rhode Island, WS provides agricultural assistance primarily to vegetable and turf farmers experiencing damage caused by Canada geese.

Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports Globally, wildlife strikes with aircraft have killed more than 250 people and destroyed more than 245 aircraft since 1988. 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 (FAA), Department of Defense (DOD), and other government agencies. WS provided assistance to 839 airports in 2014, including advice, training, on-site evaluations and assessments of wildlife hazards, and direct operational management to reduce wildlife strikes.

Rhode Island airports continue to expand. Unfortunately, as populations of wildlife, such as geese, coyotes, and deer, increase around these airports, the risk to air travelers grows as well.

WS-Rhode Island provides training, wildlife hazard assessments, and direct wildlife hazard management assistance at State airports through partnerships with Federal and State agencies and airport management.



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

During 2012, WS provided technical assistance to seven airport facilities that included one DOD airport and conducted operational damage management projects at each. WS also provided three wildlife hazard management workshops, and trained 20 Rhode Island airport personnel. WS NWRC conducts research on habitat management practices and dispersal techniques. WS maintains the FAA National Wildlife Strike Database to monitor trends and wildlife species that pose the greatest concern to aviation. WS-Rhode Island uses information and technology developed from field research and the strike database to enhance wildlife hazard management strategies and methods for use at State airports.

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 by reducing the impacts of predation and competition from more abundant species.

During FY 2014 WS-Rhode Island continued to assist FWS in managing predation caused by fox, raccoons, and skunks on federally protected piping plovers, roseate terns, and other shorebirds that nest on wildlife management areas of Rhode Island beaches. WS and FWS, working together, have reduced predation on shorebirds and enhanced nesting success of these rare species.

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. The program's Wildlife Disease Biologists act as WS' first responders through the National Wildlife Disease Program's Surveillance and Emergency Response System (SERS). Information obtained through disease surveillance in wildlife populations enables agencies to better prepare for and respond to outbreaks and emergencies. WS in Rhode Island continues to monitor wildlife populations for various zoonotic diseases.

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 man-made 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' wildlife disease biologists have extensive training in the Incident Command System, and can be mobilized quickly.

Looking to the Future

WS continues to provide the citizens of Rhode Island 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.

WS-Rhode Island is receiving increasing numbers of requests for assistance with problems associated with wildlife at airports, requests to manage damage caused by Canada geese, and assistance to manage wildlife predation on federally protected birds on beaches and islands.

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 Rhode Island

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives funding from cooperator 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 Rhode Island

- Assessing and reducing wildlife hazards at airports
- Protecting property and public health/safety from Canada goose damage
- Protecting local water resources and human health and safety by dispersing gulls from landfill operations
- Conserving threatened and endangered species such as shorebirds
- Reducing gull damage to property and building structures, including heating, ventilation, and air conditioning

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Rhode Island

- Quantifying and assessing the damage or hazards caused by wildlife to aircraft and airport operations
- Developing tools/methods to alleviate mammalian and avian predation of protected threatened and endangered shorebirds
- Evaluating and enhancing gull dispersal techniques from landfill operations
- Evaluating and monitoring wildlife for diseases
- Evaluating the effectiveness of wildlife damage management to reduce Canada goose damage or hazards to human health and safety

Major Cooperators:

- Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Wildlife Division
- Rhode Island Department of Public Health
- Rhode Island Department of Agriculture
- Rhode Island Airport Corporation
- Rhode Island Air National Guard