

Wildlife Services

Protecting People
Protecting Agriculture
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2015

Washington

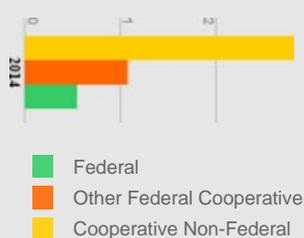


Contact Information:

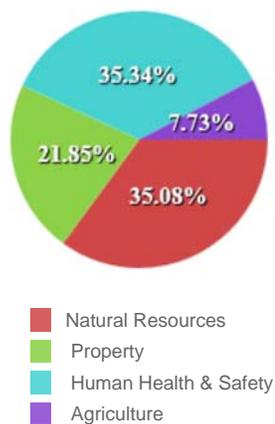
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Total Funding (\$ Million)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Washington

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

Washington is a mix of cities and suburbs, agricultural lands, forests, coastline, and desert environments. This diversity results in remarkably varied wildlife. With nearly six million residents and higher than average population growth, human-wildlife conflicts are expected to increase.

WS biologists and field technicians help Washington's fruit and livestock producers reduce losses from birds and predators. WS protects aviation from dangerous wildlife collisions, and addresses serious bird and mammal damage to transportation, municipal properties, and buildings. WS also helps protect public health and safety, crops, and natural resources.

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. 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. WS implements a wide range of damage management activities. The following examples highlight WS' role in protecting resources in Washington.

Protecting Crops and Other Agricultural Resources — WS-WA assists feedlots and dairies reduce disease threats, feed consumption and other damage caused by millions of wintering starlings. In summer, WS-Washington assists fruit growers prevent damage to ripening fruit caused by starlings, blackbirds, finches, and cowbirds.

Protecting Livestock from Predation — Despite producers' best efforts to protect their livestock, thousands of domesticated farm animals are killed by predators in the United States each year. The most recent reports by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) for cattle (2011) and sheep and goat (2010) indicate predation on more than 647 thousand head of livestock annually, resulting in combined losses of more than \$138 million. 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.

WS-Washington assists livestock producers in reducing coyote predation on sheep, calves, and other livestock. A developing issue in Washington is the increasing population of grey wolves, confirmed at a total of 16 packs with 68 known wolves. WS-Washington works closely with livestock producers, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to investigate reports of wolf predation on livestock and assist with management actions.

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 \$38 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.

In Washington, WS typically assists 23 civilian and military airports annually. WS airport biologists are stationed full-time at SeaTac International and three other airports and part-time at Spokane International Airport. WS-Washington provides on-site wildlife evaluations and prepares comprehensive wildlife hazard assessments and wildlife hazard management plans. WS biologists provide training in deterrence



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

techniques so airport employees Statewide are knowledgeable and capable of deterring wildlife from airfields.

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 FWS, States wildlife agencies, organizations, and landowners. During 2014, WS safeguarded populations of 162 T&E species nationwide.

Washington is home to six runs of Federally listed T&E salmon and steelhead on the Columbia and Snake Rivers. WS-WA assists in protecting these significant species by reducing predation, both by fish-eating birds and the predatory northern pikeminnow. WS provides assistance at 13 dams on the rivers, which helps the dams remain operational by meeting mandated fish passage requirements.

Unchecked, predators feed heavily on the salmon and steelhead smolt immediately around the dams where migrating 4-6 inch smolt are concentrated and most vulnerable. WS developed, installed, and maintains a wire grid exclusion system at every dam that provides fish passage. WS also employs active harassment to deter fish-eating birds that evade the grids. Pikeminnow are controlled at three dams using hook and line fishing, most immediately below dams in areas closed to public access where the large predatory minnows congregate.

Monitoring and Controlling Wildlife Diseases — WS works with Federal and States wildlife, health, and agriculture agencies to monitor and conduct surveillance for diseases in wildlife that could impact agriculture or human health.

WS-Washington conducts surveillance for plague, tularemia, bornavirus, and Newcastle disease. WS took a lead role in monitoring for avian influenza when there was concern that the highly pathogenic variety could enter the country via migrating waterfowl.

Protecting Washington from Invasive Species — Nonnative species that cause harm are collectively known as invasive species. They may prey upon, displace, or otherwise harm native species. Executive Order 13112 establishes Federal leadership responsibilities regarding invasive species. WS-Washington partners with other agencies and individuals to protect people and property from invasive pigeons, European starlings, and nutria. WS also responds to feral hog sightings as part of a multi-agency surveillance effort. WS coordinates with other agencies and the Invasive Species Council and provides technical assistance to requesting individuals.

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 products and subsequent decreases in recreational trapping. Beaver presence increases wetland habitats, but in some areas that is problematic. WS assists Washington DOT, cities, counties, airports, irrigation and drainage districts, railroads, agriculture, and others in reducing or eliminating varied damage caused by beaver.

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 expertise has been instrumental in recovering wild and domestic animals, hazing wildlife away from contaminated areas, and conducting wildlife disease surveillance and emergency control.

Washington's ports and shipping industry are economically essential. The potential of hazardous materials spills exists in both coastal and inland shipping environments. WS-Washington partners with the USFWS, WDFW, and other agencies to develop and implement emergency response procedures for hazardous spills.

Looking to the Future

WS continues to provide Washingtonians with safe, effective, and responsible management assistance for a variety of wildlife damage problems. In Washington, WS is receiving increasing requests for assistance with problems associated with wildlife at airports, predators impacting natural resources, coyotes in urban/suburban areas, 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.

Wildlife Services Funding in Washington

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 Washington

- Assessing and reducing wildlife hazards at airports
- Reducing damage by predatory birds and fish to T&E listed salmon and steelhead
- Protecting Washington's transportation infrastructure from damage by birds and other wildlife
- Managing coyotes and wolves to protect livestock and wildlife
- Monitoring and responding to wildlife disease and invasive species issues

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Washington

- Developing tools/methods to reduce wildlife hazards to aviation
- Quantifying and assessing damage caused by starlings to fruit crops and livestock
- Evaluating the effectiveness of wildlife damage management to reduce wolf damage to livestock and wild ungulates
- Evaluating and monitoring cormorants and gulls for Newcastle disease
- Investigating the biology/ecology/behavior of urban gull populations

Major Cooperators:

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Grant and Chelan County Public Utility Districts
- Washington State Department of Transportation
- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Naval Base Kitsap
- SeaTac International Airport
- Paine Field
- Whidbey and Everett Naval Air Stations
- Joint Base Lewis McChord
- Washington Cattlemen's Association
- Washington State Sheep Producers Association
- Whatcom Farm Friends
- Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation
- Seattle Waterfowl Management Committee
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

