

Wildlife Services

Protecting People
Protecting Agriculture
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2015

Wisconsin



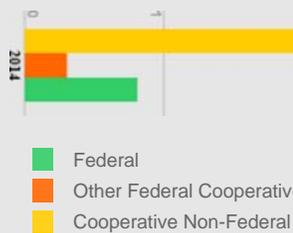
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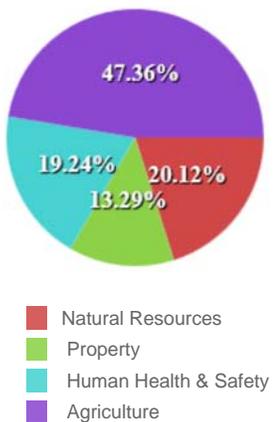
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Total Funding (\$ Million)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Wisconsin

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

In Wisconsin, WS administers a variety of wildlife damage management programs, positively impacting a large number of citizens. WS specialists provide assistance to farmers who experience wildlife damage to their crops. Specialists capture and relocate problem black bears and work to reduce conflicts with Canada geese, white-tailed deer, wolves, and beaver. WS-Wisconsin's bird damage management program assists farmers, municipalities, and businesses in dealing with problems associated with abundant bird populations. WS also protects public safety and aircraft operations from wildlife hazards at civil and military airports throughout the State.

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 applies and recommends an integrated wildlife damage management approach that incorporates biological, economic, public, environmental, and other information into decision making. WS implements a wide range of damage management activities in protecting resources in Wisconsin.

Protecting Crops and Other Agricultural Resources — High levels of crop damage result from abundant white-tailed deer, black bears, wild turkeys, and Canada geese. Under the State's Wildlife Damage Abatement and Claims Program, WS cooperates with 49 counties and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) to provide damage abatement and appraisal assistance. WS-Wisconsin investigates and verifies more than \$2 million in wildlife damage each year.

Protecting Livestock from Predation — Despite producers' best efforts to protect their livestock, thousands of domesticated farm animals are killed by predators 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 nearly \$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 works collaboratively with WDNR to manage conflicts caused by gray wolves. More than 800 wolves in about 200 packs occur throughout Wisconsin's forest regions. Under a cooperative agreement with WDNR, WS investigates approximately 200 wolf complaints annually including human safety threats and wolf depredations involving livestock, pets, and hunting dogs. WS implements an integrated program to reduce valid livestock depredations and threats. WS' ability to respond effectively to wolf depredation of livestock is essential for public support and acceptance of a healthy gray wolf population in Wisconsin.

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 provided assistance to 839 airports in 2014, including advice, training, on-site evaluations and assessments of wildlife hazards, and direct operational



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

management to reduce wildlife strikes. WS provided assistance to 24 civil airports and 3 military airfields in Wisconsin during 2012.

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. This expanding population and distribution is 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, with at least \$800 million related to direct costs to agriculture. WS-Wisconsin is continuing to assist the WDNR and State agriculture department to monitor and remove feral swine when possible.

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. This growth has positive impacts, such as increased wetland habitat, as well as negative effects 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 affect fish populations by changing the movement and temperature of stream water. Beaver cut down trees that are valued for timber production and landscaping.

Protecting multiple natural resources through beaver damage management is a major objective in Wisconsin. WS manages about 200 complaints involving flooding of timber or roadways annually. WS has cooperative agreements with counties and townships to provide damage management for road and timber resources in which beaver and dam removal are estimated to save more than \$1 million annually.

WS continues to cooperate with WDNR, U.S. Forest Service, Wisconsin Tribes, and private organizations to manage beaver damage on high-quality trout streams to protect cold water natural resources. Beaver dams cause significant negative impacts to cold water streams by warming water, blocking trout movement, and reducing trout reproduction and survival. WS' beaver and dam removal efforts, including annual maintenance, have restored approximately 1,500 miles of high-quality trout streams to free flowing conditions, enhancing the natural reproduction of native brook trout populations.

WS also manages beaver damage on several northern Wisconsin lakes to restore and enhance wild rice growth. Dams on lake outlets create fluctuating water levels that reduce or prevent wild rice germination in early summer and negatively impact the later growth stage. Beaver and dam removals have restored wild rice beds with positive impacts on wildlife habitat and wild rice harvest.

Looking to the Future

WS continues to provide the citizens of Wisconsin 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.

Requests for WS assistance on various issues continue to increase. Two emerging issues are assistance with invasive species (feral swine) and endangered species (Kirtland's warbler and piping plover). Invasive species concerns may be gaining ground in Wisconsin with feral swine currently reported in multiple counties. Complaints from landowners continue and are a concern due to disease transmission and property damage issues. WS partnered with multiple agencies to improve Kirtland's warbler nesting success by removing local brown-headed cowbirds. WS efforts in the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore to protect nesting

piping plovers from predation have dramatically increased fledging success.

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 Wisconsin

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, tribal, State, and local Government agencies. (See charts for sources of funding and resources protected.)

Top 5 Major WS Assistance Activities in Wisconsin

- Protecting and assessing crop and livestock damage caused by Canada geese, black bear, white-tailed deer, and wild turkeys
- Protecting livestock from gray wolf and black bear predation
- Protecting cold water ecosystems, bridges, roads, timber, crops, and natural resources from beaver damage
- Assessing and reducing wildlife hazards at airports
- Reducing impacts of invasive species

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Wisconsin

- Developing tools/methods to reduce gray wolf depredation to livestock
- Quantifying and assessing the damage caused by double-crested cormorants to natural fish resources and unique habitats
- Developing improved techniques to reduce wildlife hazards to aviation
- Evaluating the effectiveness of wildlife damage management to reduce black bear damage to agriculture
- Improve assessment, sampling, and economic models and methods for determining the benefits of wildlife damage management

Major Cooperators:

- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
- Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
- Wisconsin Department of Health Services
- University of Wisconsin
- Wisconsin Native American Tribes
- U.S. Forest Service
- Counties, Townships, Airports