

Wildlife Services

Protecting People
Protecting Agriculture
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2010

Louisiana



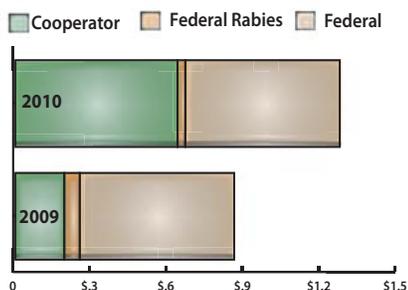
Contact Information:

Dwight LeBlanc, Louisiana
Wildlife Services State Director
P.O. Box 589
Port Allen, LA 70767
Phone: (225) 389-0229
FAX: (225) 389-0228
Toll-Free Number: 1-866-4USDAWS
(1-866-487-3297)
Dwight.LeBlanc@aphis.usda.gov
www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage

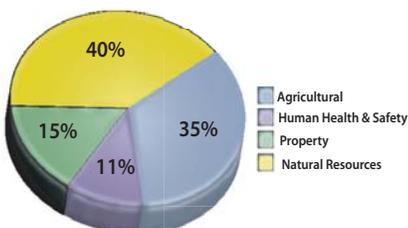
Major Cooperators

- Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry
- Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals
- Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
- Louisiana State University Agricultural Center
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Forest Service
- U.S. Coast Guard
- Louisiana Rice Growers Association
- Various Airport Authorities
- Various local governments

Total Funding (Millions)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Louisiana

Each day, Wildlife Services (WS) in Louisiana helps residents, industry, organizations and public agencies protect diverse resources threatened by wildlife damage. Birds can destroy or severely impact rice and other grains, fruit and nut crops, and aquaculture crops, such as crawfish and catfish. Beaver and feral swine frequently cause significant damage to timber, natural resources, row crops, and transportation and utility infrastructure. Coyotes and other predators can prey on livestock and pets.

WS personnel in Louisiana work to resolve many of these wildlife conflicts. They also support aviation safety by working with airport managers and regulatory agencies to develop and implement airport wildlife management plans to protect against aircraft and wildlife collisions. WS assists State and Federal wildlife agencies to protect threatened and endangered species and natural habitats. Program personnel monitor for rabies, avian influenza, pseudorabies, swine brucellosis, classical swine fever, tularemia, and other wildlife-borne diseases. Wildlife biologists respond to requests by implementing effective, selective, and humane strategies based on Integrated Wildlife Damage Management (IWDM) concepts.

The state's wide variety of ecological habitats includes large cities, small towns, and rural areas comprised of agricultural lands, prairies, upland forests, swamps, and marshes. With a human population of about 4.5 million and growing, increased contact between humans and wildlife is inevitable.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS often enables many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own by offering advice, written information, equipment and materials. This technical assistance may be provided in person, by phone or by mail. When resolution is beyond the means of individuals or is otherwise too complex, WS may provide direct assistance at the damage site. WS also conducts nationwide scientific research to find answers to complex and unique problems posed by wildlife. Research has often provided state-of-the-art, science- and technology-based methods routinely used by WS, a science-based organization of wildlife professionals using research findings as an integral part of its in decision-making activities.

Protecting Agricultural and Aquaculture Crops—Blackbirds in large winter roosts, particularly red-winged blackbirds and brown-headed cowbirds, can cause severe damage to sprouting rice with losses estimated between \$5 and \$10 million annually. Since the early 1990's, WS has worked to protect sprouting rice fields located near large winter roosts. Based on past direct responses from rice growers in southwest LA, WS programs saved an average of more than \$4,000 per rice farm, or about \$2.8 million, annually. Other surveys estimated WS activities generated annual direct savings to rice farms at more than \$5.8 million for the same period. WS assists in research projects currently investigating improved program methodologies to reduce or prevent damage to rice crops.

Louisiana is the country's largest producer of farm-raised crawfish and has other significant aquaculture crops. Aquaculture spends at least \$17 million annually to control bird damage at production facilities nationwide. WS conducts research to determine the total impact of birds that prey on aquatic resources and to develop damage control methods. This research eventually should help address the management of birds that prey on sport fish.

WS in Louisiana routinely assists aquaculture farms experiencing problems with birds that feed on crawfish, catfish and other fish including cormorants, white pelicans, and numerous herons and egret species. WS personnel were instrumental in identifying white pelicans as the source of a parasitic trematode that infects fingerling catfish and weakens their immune system, often causing economically significant losses. Researchers continue to investigate methods for controlling this parasite.



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Protecting Threatened and Endangered Species and Natural Resources—WS protects threatened and endangered (T&E) species from damage by other wildlife. WS works to protect the Louisiana pearlshell, a mussel found in the central part of the State, from damage by beaver. Since this work began in the late 1980's, the Louisiana pearlshell has experienced notable recovery, resulting in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) re-categorizing the species from endangered to threatened.

WS also protects T&E species by providing immediate responses to problems the species cause. For example, WS works with the USFWS and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to address complaints involving the Louisiana black bear, a threatened species. Well-received by the public, past work resulted in WS being recognized by both the Secretary of Agriculture and the Black Bear Conservation Committee for its role in protecting the Louisiana black bear.

Likewise, WS protected about \$9.5 million of commercial hardwood timber from beaver damage in 2010 with the intangible benefit of habitat maintenance for a myriad of wildlife, including T&E species.

WS also addresses invasive species issues involving nutria, a South American aquatic rodent. Highly destructive nutria are responsible for aggravating loss of coastal marshes, which provide native wildlife habitats and a protective barrier to surges from hurricanes and tropical storms. WS researchers have investigated new methods for managing nutria-caused damage to coastal marshes.

Protecting Property from Wildlife Damage—In 1993, Statewide losses of commercial timber to beaver exceeded \$13 million. Between FY 2005 and 2010, more than \$5.67 million of various beaver-caused resource losses were reported in Louisiana. WS conducts numerous beaver management projects on private, State, and Federal properties to protect agriculture, human health and safety, general property, and natural resources. During the same period, WS in Louisiana has protected more than \$54.5 million in valuable resources, including bottomland hardwood timber, highways and bridges, dams, drainage ditches and canals, general property and crops.

Since the early 2000's, the frequency and magnitude of damage by feral swine in Louisiana has increased. Feral swine can severely damage natural resources, including forests, coastal marshes and other wetlands, and wildlife; agricultural resources, including row crops, crawfish, and livestock; and property in rural and urban settings. They can also threaten public health and safety and often pose a hazard to aviation and land-based transportation. WS often assists citizens who report these problems.

Monitoring Zoonotic Diseases—WS monitors for several wildlife-borne diseases that can be transmitted to humans and domestic animals. Information will be used by researchers to develop plans to manage the spread of these diseases. Additionally, WS personnel work closely with Federal and State stakeholders having similar wildlife disease responsibilities. Among diseases of concern in Louisiana are rabies, tularemia, avian influenza, pseudorabies, swine brucellosis, and classical swine fever. Diseases of future interest may include raccoon roundworm and duck viral enteritis (DVE).

Emergency Oil Spill Response—Accidental discharges of petroleum products, including crude oil and fuels, occasionally occur on Louisiana rivers, lakes, and wetlands. Spilled oil

represents a potential threat to wildlife and requires an immediate response. In 2007 and 2008, WS in Louisiana provided effective emergency-response support to regulatory agencies at two major spills near New Orleans and one in central Louisiana. In 2010, Louisiana WS supported emergency response efforts for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. In addition to capturing and recovering oiled wildlife, personnel assisted in mapping the oil spill and participated in research projects studying impacts of spilled oil on wildlife populations. WS used new technologies, developed by field investigators, to increase wildlife capture efficiency and success. It also developed information on species susceptible to spilled oil. WS actively participates in oil spill planning meetings and exercises with the U.S. Coast Guard and agencies involved in emergency responses to spills.

Looking to the Future

The demand for managing wildlife damage is increasing and WS strives, within constraints of existing resources, to provide safe, effective and humane assistance to its customers. For example, various birds damage rice, other grain and fruit crops, aircraft, and other airport property, threaten air passenger safety, and prey upon crawfish and other aquatic species. Beaver, coyotes, and bears are causing increased damage. In addition, wildlife-borne diseases pose threats to State resources. Without timely, professional attention to emerging conflicts, it will become more difficult for WS to successfully resolve many wildlife conflicts and ensure equal access for all Louisiana citizens to services.

Louisiana Wildlife Services Funding

WS operates a cooperatively funded program that uses both Federally-allocated funds and funding and/or other resources provided by cooperators who are experiencing or have an interest in wildlife damage management, such as producers, Federal, State, and Local government agencies, and private individuals.

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities in 2010:

- Protecting sprouting and headed rice from blackbird damage
- Protecting timber, other natural resources, highway infrastructures, threatened and endangered species, row crops, and property from beaver and feral swine damage
- Emergency oil-spill response
- Monitoring for the presence of raccoon rabies, avian influenza, and other zoonotic diseases
- Protecting resources from damage by the Federally-threatened Louisiana black bear

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Louisiana in 2010:

- Improving available nutria damage management methods for the protection of coastal marshes
- Developing new repellents and improving existing damage control methods for the protection of sprouting and headed rice from blackbird damage
- Identifying baits that can be used to deliver oral rabies vaccines to skunks and other wildlife
- Collecting data to address issues related to beaver, fish-eating birds, and the Louisiana black bear
- Development of innovative methods for managing feral swine, including toxicants