

Wildlife Services

Protecting People
Protecting Agriculture
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2010

Michigan



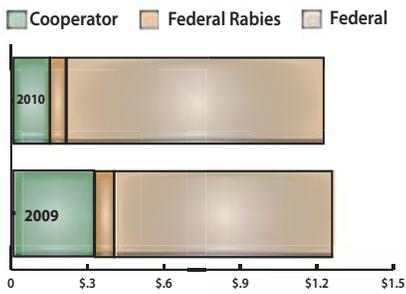
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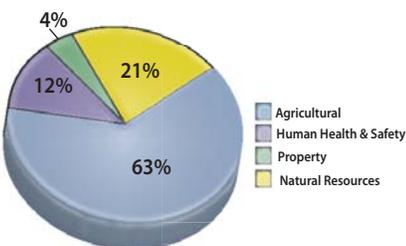
Major Cooperators

- Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources
- Michigan Department of Community Health
- USDA-APHIS-Veterinary Services
- Detroit Metro Airport
- Other regional and international airports
- Private utilities companies
- Major industrial firms

Total Funding (Millions)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Michigan

Every day, residents, industries, organizations, and agencies call on Wildlife Services (WS) in Michigan for expertise in protecting agriculture, property, natural resources, and human health and safety from damage or threats posed by wildlife. Managed by professional wildlife biologists, WS responds with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

The efforts of the WS program in Michigan reflect the diversity of wildlife in the State. WS in Michigan works to reduce wildlife hazards to aviation, prevent wolf conflicts with livestock, resolve starling damage at dairies, halt the spread of bovine tuberculosis (TB), and protect human health at industrial facilities.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this technical assistance can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or direct assistance, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts scientific research across the nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

Eradicating Bovine Tuberculosis—A disease of cattle, bison, goats, and cervids (hoofed deer and elk), bovine TB has made a serious economic impact on the State's livestock industry. Michigan lost its bovine TB-free status after the disease was detected in the State's cattle and free-ranging deer. The projected impact of the disease on the State's producers is estimated at \$121 million over 10 years.

WS assists livestock producers in preventing the infection from passing between livestock and wildlife. WS is a member of an interagency team that has developed a program of wildlife risk mitigation. Such plans reduce the risks of wildlife transmission of diseases to livestock. Livestock producers that agree to these plans receive higher consideration for implementation funding and increased access to markets. When the disease is identified in captive cervid hunting facilities, WS conducts efficient and humane depopulations. To assist field personnel, WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC), is investigating how livestock and deer interact. WS scientists are also researching ways to detect bovine TB in wildlife and improve barriers between livestock and deer.

Managing Wolf Conflicts—In the past decade, the gray wolf has been categorized and managed as endangered. During that time, wolf populations expanded across the Upper Peninsula and in 2010 were confirmed to be breeding in the Northern Lower Peninsula. Since 2007, the Michigan wolf population has increased approximately 7% each year and numbered nearly 700 in 2010. As wolf numbers increase, so will conflicts between livestock producers and wolves, whether "delisted" or "endangered." Critical to the successful coexistence of people and wolves is the prompt and effective response to incidents of wolf depredation on livestock. This effort to manage wolves is part of a cooperative program between the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and WS.

During FY 2010, the program expanded to provide two full-time WS specialists to investigate suspected incidents of predation and determine whether wolves are involved. If a link has been established, the specialist can take appropriate action. Other activities include trapping wolves so they can be radio-collared and help to establish an accurate count of wolves in the State. When appropriate and approved by Federal and State wolf program managers, WS has removed wolves for immediate human-safety reasons.

Reducing Starling Damage at Dairies—In the winter, starlings congregate at dairies and feedlots for food and shelter, sometime in very large numbers. Damage occurs as the birds consume and contaminate cattle feed, which in turn reduces the milk production.



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Also, starlings are thought to be responsible for the spread of salmonella. WS in Michigan conducts a starling damage management program, which is effective, selective, and environmentally safe. This successful starling-control program has expanded over the past 11 years as producers call on WS for assistance.

Enhancing Aviation Safety—Wildlife collisions with airplanes cost civil aviation more than \$615 million annually in the United States and pose a hazard to flight crews, passengers and aircraft. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has recognized this threat to air safety and elicited the expertise of WS. NWRC scientists conduct research from the Sandusky, OH field station to reduce hazards to aviation and risks to the public. Studies are underway at several large airports where scientists evaluate habitat management practices and wildlife dispersal techniques. WS also maintains the National Wildlife Strike Database used by the FAA and airports to monitor trends and wildlife species that pose the greatest concern to aviation.

WS provides assistance to approximately 40 civilian and military airports in Michigan primarily by providing technical assistance, information on management alternatives, and assistance in obtaining depredation permits. Since 2001, WS has conducted year-long wildlife hazard assessments at 19 Michigan airports.

Reducing damage by double-crested cormorants—Double-crested cormorants populations have increased dramatically in the Great Lakes in the last 25 years, in some cases resulting in unacceptably high levels of damage to public resources like sportfish. Since 2004, WS in Michigan has partnered with the Michigan Department of Natural Resource and several Tribes to manage cormorants at many sites.

Wildlife Diseases—WS' biologist who specialize in wildlife diseases issues conduct a variety of activities in Michigan. WS joined the national surveillance effort for highly pathogenic avian influenza in 2006. WS and its cooperating local agencies collected hundreds of samples from live and hunter-harvest birds and from the environment, part of an early detection effort for a disease that could impact both human health and the domestic poultry industry.

Looking to the Future

Demands for WS assistance on various issues continue to increase. Two significant emerging issues are fruit damaged by birds and damage caused by feral swine. Michigan is a leading producer of cherries, blueberries and apples, and birds such as robins and blackbirds pose a significant economic threat. Feral swine are now found in many counties and appear to be increasing dramatically. This invasive species represents a risk to agriculture, since they damage crops and pose a threat to livestock by carrying diseases such as pseudorabies. They also threaten natural resources by preying on wildlife, competing for limited food resources, and damaging habitat such as wetlands. Feral swine, however, are very adaptable and highly prolific; making eradication efforts extremely difficult. Also an emerging issue are mute swans, an invasive species that is known to cause significant damage to natural resources.

Michigan Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving Federally allocated funds, WS also receives funding from agricultural producers, private individuals, businesses, and other Federal, State, and local government agencies. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities in 2010:

- Assisting Federal and State agencies to eradicate bovine TB
- Reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Reducing starling damage at dairies and feedlots
- Reducing damage by cormorants to natural resources
- Managing conflicts between wolves, humans and livestock

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

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Investigating blackbird damage to feedlots
- Examining bird predation to fruit crops such as cherries and blueberries
- Developing new methods to protect livestock and wildlife from predation
- Investigating wildlife vectors of rabies and bovine TB