

# Wildlife Services

Protecting People  
Protecting Agriculture  
Protecting Wildlife

## State Report

FY 2010

# South Carolina



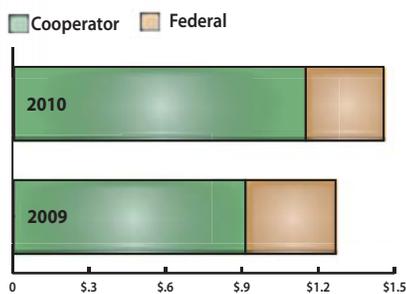
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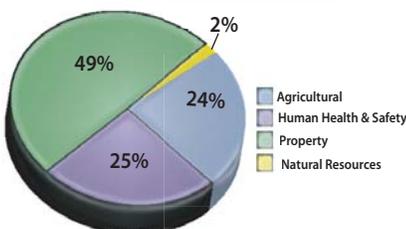
### Major Cooperators

- Clemson University
- Clemson University Livestock and Poultry Health
- Congaree National Park
- Horry County Stormwater Department
- Joint Base Charleston
- Kershaw County
- Marlboro/Darlington County
- Marine Corps Air Station-Beaufort
- McEntire Joint National Guard Base
- Myrtle Beach International Airport
- South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
- South Carolina Department of Transportation
- U.S. Army Garrison and Fort Jackson

### Total Funding (Millions)



### Resources Protected % of Total Funds



### USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in South Carolina

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

WS biologists address serious beaver damage to South Carolina's transportation infrastructure, crops, timber, and natural resources. In addition, WS protects pilots, passengers, and aircraft from wildlife collisions with airplanes at civilian airports and military installations; and manages damage caused by vultures, pigeons, Canada geese, feral swine, white-tailed deer, and other wildlife.

### 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 independently. To support this effort, WS conducts scientific research to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure availability of the latest science and technology.

Although WS conducts a wide range of operational and research activities, the following in-depth examples highlight WS' role in protecting air travel, preventing beaver damage, protecting natural resources and providing assistance with management for damage from urban white-tailed deer, Canada geese, vultures and other wildlife.

**Protecting Transportation, Timber, Crops, and Natural Resources**—WS provides direct assistance in several South Carolina counties to remove beavers that cause flooding in timber lands, crop lands, and on roadways. By managing beaver damage, WS saves several million dollars in South Carolina resources annually. These "savings" are measured in terms of losses avoided as a result of managing the damage. Over the last 2 years, the WS cooperative beaver damage management program prevented \$2.8 million in damage. The program primarily provides assistance to the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT). Comparing resources saved to program cost, the benefit-cost ratio is approximately 2:1, (\$2 saved for every \$1 expended).

WS provides public training for integrated beaver management at workshops and to individuals around the State. Additionally, it is assisting in an investigation of beaver productivity and reproductive success in the Southeast.

WS personnel are trained and certified in the safe and effective use of explosives prior to conducting any explosive work to remove beaver dams that are flooding property.

**Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports**—WS is recognized nationally and internationally for its scientific expertise in reducing wildlife hazards to aviation. WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) conducts studies to understand the nature of airport-wildlife hazards, develop management tools to reduce hazards, and provide airport personnel with information on controls.

WS provides direct and technical assistance to several Department of Defense facilities and civilian airports throughout the state. Technical assistance to airports includes initial consultations, the development of wildlife hazard assessments and/or management plans, and the training of airport personnel. Direct assistance projects involve the management of animals hazardous to aircraft operations at the site. These efforts serve to reduce the potential costs and dangers associated with wildlife strikes.



United States Department of Agriculture  
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

In South Carolina, black vultures and turkey vultures cause problems year-round. A segment of the turkey vulture population is migratory, making long-distance seasonal movements between winter areas and northern breeding grounds. An F-18 reported a turkey vulture strike about 1.5 miles from the MCAS, causing approximately \$300,000 in engine damages. The Air Station funded a telemetry study that analyzed the hazard posed by vultures to base aircraft. The study showed greatly reduced numbers of vultures and higher flight altitudes on the MCAS compared to surrounding areas. These are likely in response to bird harassment activities on the base. Continuation of aggressive harassment coupled with flexible training schedules to avoid times and altitudes of high vulture activity have decreased aviation hazards posed by these birds.

**Wildlife Disease Issues**—WS continues to assist the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SC-DNR) and Clemson University Livestock and Poultry Health in monitoring for diseases in wildlife populations that potentially could impact agriculture or human health, such as avian influenza, feral swine diseases, and chronic wasting disease.

**Protecting Natural Resources**— Forest vegetation is the Congaree National Park's primary natural resource. Direct impacts to park vegetation from feral swine include trampling, uprooting of plants, eating roots and tubers, increases in tree root exposure, damage to tree roots, and changes in plant community composition and structure. Physical impacts to park landscapes include soil/litter disturbance, changes in local geomorphology and hydrology, soil erosion, and soil compaction. WS works cooperatively with the NPS to protect one of the largest and most significant tracts of old-growth bottomland hardwood forest in the United States from these non-native mammals.

**Addressing Property Damage Caused by Roosting Vultures**—Black and turkey vultures congregate in large roosts, which frequently occur in residential areas, and it may consist of hundreds of birds. Vulture problems are one of the most frequent wildlife complaints received by the South Carolina WS program. The accumulation of droppings represents a health concern to residents and potential property damage. Vulture behavior damages shingles, boat covers, and awnings on homes, vehicles and businesses. WS assists towns and the communication industry by dispersing roosts and helping local officials obtain required permits to remove vultures in an effort to reinforce harassment programs. WS also provides bird-scaring equipment and technical assistance.

**Urban Canada Goose Management**—Resident Canada goose problems continue to increase. Concerns include the accumulation of droppings, water quality, and aggressive geese nesting around buildings. In addition, golf courses, parks, and other recreational areas experience extensive damage by grazing birds. WS biologists help through direct assistance and advice. When WS removes birds, they are donated to local food banks.

**Urban White-tailed Deer Management**—Conflicts with white-tailed deer have increased dramatically. Urban sprawl combined with deer adaptability, have created conflicts and significant challenges. Urban forests and parks provide sanctuary to deer, which then move into surrounding neighborhoods. The destruction of residential landscaping accompanies an increased

risk of deer/vehicle collisions and tick-borne diseases transmitted to pets and people. WS works with communities experiencing overabundant deer to provide information on urban deer management and tailors recommendations to community concerns.

### Looking to the Future

WS provides South Carolina citizens with safe, effective, and humane assistance for a diverse range of wildlife conflicts, but the need for support is on-going.

The demand for beaver management continues to increase.

The southeastern United States vulture population has risen dramatically in recent years, coinciding with a sharp rise in requests for assistance. Airport assistance requests have increased. New concerns have surfaced over potential disease implications of feral swine and their damage to agricultural and natural resources.

### South Carolina Wildlife Services Funding

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

### Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting transportation infrastructure, timber, crops, and natural resources from beaver damage
- Protecting public safety, aircraft, and military operations from wildlife hazards at airports
- Monitoring for diseases in wildlife populations
- Managing damage caused by migratory birds (i.e., Canada geese, vultures, and other migratory birds)
- Managing damage caused by feral swine to natural resources

### Top 4 WS Research Projects of Interest to South Carolina:

- Evaluating productivity and reproductive success of beavers in the Southeastern United States
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Evaluating the effectiveness of contraceptives in controlling gray squirrel populations in urban/suburban settings
- Evaluating and monitoring wildlife diseases such as pseudorabies, swine brucellosis, and classic swine fever in feral swine