

Wildlife Services

Protecting People
Protecting Agriculture
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2010

Virginia



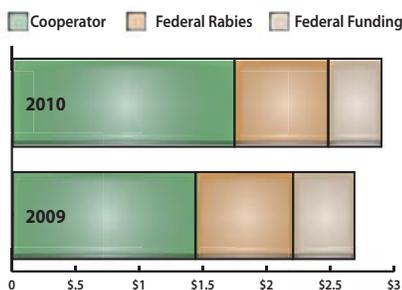
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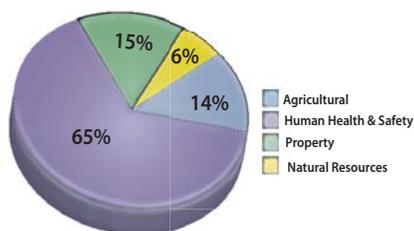
Major Cooperators

- College of William and Mary
- Metropolitan Washington Airport Authority
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration
- Norfolk Airport Authority
- The Nature Conservancy
- United States Department of Defense
- Virginia Farm Bureau Federation
- Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
- Virginia Department of Aviation
- Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
- Virginia Department of Health
- Virginia Department of Transportation

Total Funding (Millions)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Virginia

The Wildlife Services (WS) program in Virginia helps residents, industries, organizations and governments resolve conflicts with wildlife that affect agriculture, human health and safety, other natural resources, public infrastructure, and private property. Our professional wildlife biologists and specialists are located throughout Virginia and are trained to manage wildlife conflicts with effective, selective, and humane strategies that value the integrity of the wildlife resource and the resources protected.

In many cases, people are able to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own with technical assistance from WS biologists. WS provides this assistance over the telephone and distributes materials on the subject or conducts site visits to evaluate the specific conflict. WS also provides on-site expertise, or direct assistance, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely and effectively resolved by others. In these cases, biologists choose the most appropriate methods and tools for resolving the conflict and apply a myriad of techniques in an integrated approach.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS biologists incorporate the newest knowledge on wildlife ecology and management when applying effective management strategies to resolve conflicts. In many cases, an adaptive management approach is used during ongoing projects to monitor the effectiveness of specific management actions and continually improve the efficiency of the program.

Agriculture

Protecting Livestock from Predation—Coyote predation to sheep, goats, and calves has escalated since the 1980's. Vultures will also kill livestock, especially lambs and calves, when they are very young. Vultures can also injure adult livestock during the birthing process. Prior to the WS cooperative predation management program, the average sheep producer lost 17 lambs to coyotes each year. Today, losses average two sheep per farm per year. WS assisted more than 150 livestock producers each year in 2009 and 2010 and assisted producers statewide who obtained permits to remove depredate vultures.

Assisting with Migratory Bird Permits—Canada geese, vultures, and other migratory birds damage forage crops, row crops, and livestock each year in Virginia. WS works with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to document damage to support the FWS in issuing migratory bird depredation permits to farmers experiencing agricultural damage. Since 2009, WS has worked with Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to issue Agricultural Depredation Permits to farmers experiencing damage from resident Canada geese.

Health and Safety

Protecting Human Safety at Airports—WS works with the Federal Aviation Administration, U.S. Air Force, U.S. Navy, Virginia Department of Aviation, and most certificated airports to reduce wildlife threats to aviation in Virginia. WS conducts wildlife hazard assessments, writes management plans, and reduces wildlife threats by altering habitat, harassment, exclusion, and removal of wildlife that threaten public safety.

Protecting Human Health from Wildlife Disease—Raccoon rabies occurs in all but four southwestern Virginia counties. WS participates in a multi-state effort to prevent the westward spread of raccoon rabies, implementing a 35-mile wide barrier of vaccinated raccoons along the Appalachian Ridge through Virginia. In addition, WS partnered with the Virginia Department of Health and other agencies to train animal control officers in the safe handling of wildlife and rabid animals.



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Natural Resources

Protecting Birds and Mussels from Predation—Some of Virginia's most sensitive bird populations are found on the State's barrier islands. Many have declined dramatically in the last 20 years due to predation by raccoons, red fox, and gulls. Some, such as piping plovers and gull-billed terns, are now threatened species. In a public-private effort, WS implemented predator removal from eight barrier islands and two Chesapeake Bay islands to enhance nesting success of these species.

Unfortunately, some mussel species in the Clinch and Powell River drainages have yet to recover from historic over-harvest and water quality problems. WS assists the recovery of this Virginia resource by removing raccoons that eat rare mussels and beavers that bury them with silt.

Property

Addressing Property Damage Caused by Vultures—Black and turkey vulture populations have increased dramatically in Virginia in the last 20 years. Vultures damage property by ripping roofing materials from homes and buildings and destroy rubber seals around vents. On vehicles, they scratch paint and destroy rubber windshield seals and wipers. Congregating in roosts of 50 to 400 birds, vultures leave quantities of feces that may cause human health risks. WS helps communities set up harassment programs to disperse vultures and, when necessary, to obtain Federal permits to shoot birds, which reinforces harassment.

Increasing Safety on Highways—Beaver damage Virginia highways by flooding, saturating road beds, and felling trees, which increases maintenance costs and threatens highway safety. WS assists the State Department of Transportation by making site and wetland evaluations and removing problem beavers, which saved more than \$2.5 million in 2010, a cost benefit ratio of 1:10.5.

Looking to the Future

Agriculture is the state's largest employer and makes the largest economic impact of any industry. However, low profit margins make staying in business difficult for many family farms. WS will examine more ways to help Virginia agriculture by finding cost-effective and practical ways to reduce conflicts with increasing wildlife populations.

Property damage and predation from vultures is common and widespread in Virginia. WS is seeking an effective, statewide program for providing relief to Virginians who experience vulture damage.

WS will work with Federal, State, and local governments to resolve human-wildlife conflicts that affect government operations. As the Federal authority on wildlife conflicts, WS will reach out to land management and service agencies in a coordinated response to help improve the efficiency of government in this area.

Feral swine are a significant threat to agriculture and natural resources throughout the United States. WS will work with the Virginia Departments of Agriculture and Game and Inland Fisheries to assess the spread of feral swine in Virginia and develop strategies for preventing damage caused by these destructive animals.

Virginia Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving Federally allocated funds, WS collects fees from cooperators including livestock producers, private individuals, businesses and other Federal, State, and local government agencies.

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Beaver management to protect property and highway infrastructure
- Wildlife management to enhance aviation safety
- Rabies management to protect people, pets, and livestock
- Canada goose management to reduce disease risks and protect property
- Predation management to protect livestock, pets, and endangered species

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Virginia:

- Developing effective vulture management strategies
- Developing methods to reduce wildlife hazards to aviation
- Improving knowledge about urban coyotes and reducing predation on livestock
- Developing new bird dispersal tools