

Wildlife Services

Protecting People
Protecting Agriculture
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2010

Florida



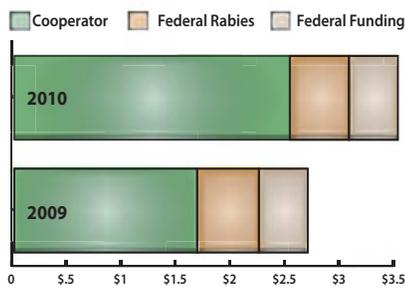
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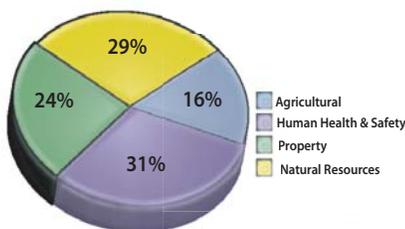
Major Cooperators

- U.S. Air Force
- U.S. Navy
- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- St. John's River Water Management District
- Northwest Florida Water Management District
- South Florida Water Management District
- Southwest Florida Water Management District
- Columbia County
- Palm Beach County
- The Nature Conservancy
- Sea Turtle Conservancy

Total Funding (Millions)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Florida

Every day, residents, industries, organizations and agencies call on Wildlife Services (WS) in Florida for help in protecting agriculture, human health and safety, natural resources, and property from damage or threats posed by wildlife. WS' professional wildlife biologists and technicians respond to these requests with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

WS works to protect property and reduce human health and safety risks at airports and military air bases, schools, and roadways. The program protects people, pets, and livestock from wildlife-borne diseases, guards many natural resources, such as fisheries and timber, from wildlife depredation, protects humans and agriculture from invasive vertebrate species, and educates the public about wildlife and wildlife damage management. Specific projects conducted by Florida WS include protecting endangered piping plovers and sea turtles from predation, conducting sampling and monitoring for avian influenza, classical swine fever, pseudorabies, swine brucellosis and rabies, leading the effort to eliminate invasive vertebrate species, and managing damage caused by feral swine, beavers, vultures, 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 by others.

Aquaculture Assistance—Florida, home to the largest tropical fish industry in the world, has a relatively large foodfish (i.e. catfish, tilapia and shrimp) and baitfish industry. Two WS biologists in Florida provide direct or technical assistance to fish farmers, to help them in protecting fish from bird and mammalian predators.

Protecting Agricultural Crops—WS assists farmers to protect their crops from wildlife through technical assistance and recommendations for permits to remove birds and predating mammals.

Protecting Livestock—Ranchers are assisted with controlling damage from coyotes and black vultures that are predating livestock. Additionally, WS personnel in Columbia County work directly with cattle producers to protect calves from coyote predation. Statewide, WS assists ranchers with obtaining permits to control black vultures that are killing newborn calves.

Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports—With more than 100 airports, Florida reports the second highest number of wildlife collisions with aircraft. The latest Federal Aviation Administration report showed 6,869 bird strikes at Florida airports from 1990 to 2010.

WS is recognized nationally and internationally for its scientific expertise in reducing wildlife hazards to aviation safety. WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) conducts research to understand the nature of wildlife hazards at airports and develops management tools to reduce these hazards. Applying this scientific expertise, WS provided direct assistance to 19 Florida airports and military air bases and technical assistance to an additional 22 airports in FY 2010. Technical assistance included developing wildlife hazard assessments and management plans, and obtaining permits. Direct assistance included removing wildlife habitat from airfields, directly controlling wildlife that threaten aircraft and training airport personnel to reduce the risk of wildlife/aircraft collisions.

Protecting Human Health and Safety from Rabies—In 2010, WS, in collaboration with the State and county agencies, distributed 172,800 oral rabies vaccination baits in three counties to vaccinate raccoons against rabies.



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Protecting Health and Safety in the Workplace—WS has removed large concentrations of birds, mainly pigeons and vultures, from roosting areas in power plants, transmission towers and railway yards where their feces and filth were creating hazardous conditions for workers.

Protecting Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species—WS protects T&E species from wildlife predation and damage. In Florida, 41 T&E species are protected, including four sea turtle species, six species of endangered rodents, and three bird species.

Protecting Florida from Invasive Species— WS has provided advice and direct assistance to the National Park Service, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, water management districts and different counties and municipalities to control invasive species including large constrictor snakes, multiple lizard species, and birds. The program is currently working on eliminating Gambian giant pouched rats from Grassy Key, spiny-tailed iguanas from Gasparilla Island, sacred ibis from South Florida, and prairie dogs in Gilchrist County.

Addressing Residential and Industrial Property Damage Caused by Black and Turkey Vultures—Black and turkey vultures cause extensive damage to homes, watercraft, and other equipment by chewing and ripping up roof shingles, caulking, boat and seat covers and cushions, insulation and other soft, pliable materials. WS' NWRC and WS in Florida have developed ways for Floridians to protect their property from vulture damage including use of vulture effigies. Similarly, vulture effigies developed by WS' NWRC field station in Gainesville are being used extensively to deter vultures from transmission towers.

Protecting Multiple Resources from Feral Swine Damage— Feral swine damage ecosystems important to the State. For ecosystem protection, WS conducted feral swine damage management at several state parks, two military bases, and other locations around the State.

Protecting T&E species, natural wetlands, public and private property, humans and livestock from diseases through feral swine damage management is a major consideration for WS in Florida.

In recent years, feral swine numbers and damage have increased dramatically. Feral swine have no significant natural predators, and swine hunting does not keep the population in check. This invasive species is found throughout most of the State and estimates indicate a rising population. While this population escalation resulted in some benefits derived from recreational hunting, the detrimental impacts from feral swine activities have also increased. From 2000 to 2010, WS received requests for direct assistance with feral swine damage problems from multiple Counties, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (State Parks), St. John's River, Northwest Florida and Southwest Florida Water Management Districts, and Eglin and Avon Park Air Force Bases. Typical requests involved damage to sensitive wetlands, forest resources and croplands, T&E species, erosion and siltation of streams and ponds, and the threat of disease transmission to humans and other animals.

To address some of these problems, cooperatively funded programs were established to hire nine WS professionals to trap and remove feral swine.

Looking to the Future

In Florida, public safety is a concern for wildlife managers, particularly at airports. Additional attention must be given to this very specialized area of work.

Predators of T&E species continue to adversely affect small localized populations. Targeted predator removal efforts allow for increased reproduction and survival of young. Additional resources are needed to meet the expanding need to help resolve these problems.

Escalating feral swine populations are becoming more of an issue. As development reduces natural areas, there is an increased need to protect remaining areas from feral swine damage.

The State also has a need to manage the transmission and spread of raccoon rabies. Florida WS is currently participating in our National effort to prevent the westward spread of raccoon rabies, and, hopefully, to eliminate rabies from the United States.

Florida Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving Federally allocated funds, WS also receives funding from cooperators. Cooperators may include producers, private individuals, businesses, and other Federal, State, and local government agencies.

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting T&E plant and animal species from predation
- Protecting civil and military aviation from wildlife strikes
- Managing damage caused by vultures, feral swine, beavers, and coyotes
- Controlling invasive species such as the Gambian giant pouched rats, Burmese pythons and monitor lizards
- Protecting aquaculture from bird depredation

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Florida:

- Improving surveillance and monitoring techniques
- Managing wildlife transmission of rabies
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Improving management techniques for reducing bird predation to aquaculture
- Identifying and refining methods to control predators of endangered and threatened species