

Wildlife Services

Protecting People
Protecting Agriculture
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2008

Minnesota



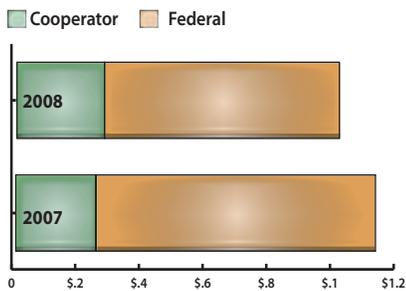
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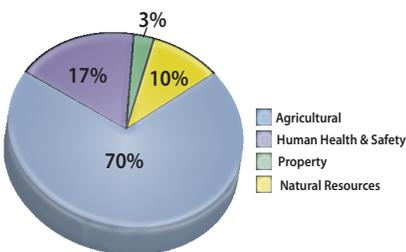
Major Cooperators

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- U.S. Forest Service
- Metropolitan Airports Commission
- Minnesota Department of Transportation
- Minnesota Department of Agriculture
- Minnesota Department of Health
- Minnesota Board of Animal Health
- University of Minnesota Extension Service
- Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association
- St. Louis County Land Department

Total Funding (Millions)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Minnesota

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

WS works to protect property and reduce human health and safety risks at airports, workplaces, and along roadways. It also protects people, pets, and livestock from wildlife-borne diseases; guards many natural resources, such as fisheries and timber, from wildlife depredation; and educates the public about wildlife and wildlife damage management. Specific projects conducted by Minnesota WS include protecting livestock from predators; preventing or minimizing damage caused by beaver; reducing wildlife hazards at airports; protecting public resources from double-crested cormorants; managing problems caused by starlings and pigeons at dairy farms, feed lots and industrial sites; wildlife disease surveillance; and providing technical assistance to individuals and organizations experiencing nuisance wildlife problems.

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.

Protecting Livestock and Domestic Animals from Wolf Predation—A primary function of Minnesota WS has been to assist livestock producers and pet owners experiencing losses due to wolf predation. Each year, WS receives 100 to 250 complaints about wolves harassing or killing livestock and domestic animals including cattle, horses, sheep, poultry and dogs. Once a WS employee verifies that a wolf or wolves are responsible, WS captures and removes the wolves. This depredation management also provides the opportunity to test new wolf capture equipment, such as tranquilizer trap devices, foot snares, and breakaway neck snares. Such research is increasingly important as WS continues to develop more humane and efficient capture methods.

Protecting Multiple Resources from Beaver Damage—Protecting transportation, agriculture, property, and natural resources through beaver damage management is another major task. In 2008, WS conducted 45 beaver trapping and dam removal projects protecting fish habitat and resolving damage to roadways, bridges, forest resources, and wild rice lakes.

Minnesota WS cooperates with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and Federal fisheries personnel and private organizations to manage beaver damage to protect Minnesota's coldwater natural resources. Beaver dams have a significant negative impact on high quality trout streams by warming water, blocking trout movement, and reducing or eliminating trout reproduction and survival. WS' beaver and dam removal efforts, including continued annual maintenance, have restored approximately 100 miles of high quality trout streams to free-flowing conditions, which has enhanced the natural reproduction of the State's trout populations.

In 2008, WS removed beaver and dams from four lakes in northern Minnesota to enhance wild rice germination and growth. Beaver dams on a lake's outlet create water levels too high for wild rice germination in early summer and negatively impact the later growth stage. WS beaver and dam removal on such lakes have restored wild rice beds, which positively impacts wildlife habitat and harvests of wild rice. An important local food, wild rice also has significant cultural importance to many Native American people in northern Minnesota.



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports—Protecting air travelers from wildlife/aircraft collisions is another important function of WS. Growing populations of geese, gulls, hawks and other large birds, coupled with increased air traffic, has resulted in the potential for life-threatening and damaging strikes of wildlife by aircraft at Minnesota airports. In FY 2008, 75 documented wildlife strikes at state airports were reported. In 2008, Minnesota WS personnel, trained and certified in managing wildlife hazards at airports, provided operational assistance to eight Minnesota airports. WS provided 25 Minnesota airports with technical assistance on resolving wildlife hazard issues. WS also reviews airport construction and expansion projects for potential wildlife-related hazards and trains airport managers and operators in the use of proper techniques to reduce wildlife strikes at their airports.

Protecting Multiple Resources from Double-crested Cormorants—WS works cooperatively with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and the MNDNR to protect multiple public resources from an increasing population of double-crested cormorants. Cormorants nesting on Leech Lake increased from 73 nesting pairs in 1998 to 2,524 in 2004. Cormorant nesting on Little Pelican Island is displacing common terns, a State-threatened species in Minnesota. The large birds have also been implicated in the decline of the Leech Lake walleye fishery. WS seeks to maintain a Leech Lake population goal of 500 cormorant nesting pairs to protect common terns and the walleye fishery.

Protecting Dairy Farms and Cattle Feedlots from Starlings—In 2008, WS continued a starling management program to reduce flocks at dairy farms and cattle feedlots experiencing problems with starlings consuming and contaminating livestock feed, potentially transmitting diseases and causing a decrease in milk production. WS personnel, trained and certified as pesticide applicators, use DRC-1339-treated bait to reduce starling numbers by 75-95% at affected farms.

Protecting Health and Safety in the Workplace—WS conducts feral pigeon (rock dove) management at industrial and transportation facilities throughout the state. Feral pigeon feces contaminate work areas, and pose potential health and safety hazards for employees. Accumulated droppings can damage valuable equipment. WS utilizes a variety of management methods, including trapping, DRC-1339 and shooting with pellet guns to reduce pigeon numbers at damage sites.

Wildlife disease surveillance to protect human health and safety, wildlife populations, and domestic livestock and poultry—Nationally, WS is focusing on strengthening emergency preparedness and response, and managing issues related to the health of U.S. animal resources and wildlife conflicts. WS conducts disease surveillance and emergency response to safeguard American agriculture, human health and safety, and wildlife populations. Since FY 2006, WS, in cooperation with MNDNR, has conducted wildlife disease surveillance for highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza by collecting over 2,000 samples annually from live birds, hunter harvested birds and environmental sampling. WS assisted the MNDNR in responding to several bird morbidity/mortality events in FY 2008 leading to the documentation of new castle's disease, duck plague, and botulism in several bird species. Following the detection of bovine tuberculosis (bTB) in cattle and white-tailed deer in NW Minnesota in 2005, WS has actively assisted the Minnesota cattle industry to regain its tuberculosis-free status. Since 2005, WS has cooperated with the MNDNR and Minnesota Board of

Animal Health (MNBAH) in monitoring the presence of bTB in wildlife populations. Since 2006, WS disease biologists have assisted with sampling approximately 8,900 white-tailed deer for bTB and chronic wasting disease (CWD) surveillance in the state. To date, CWD has not been documented in free-ranging or non-captive wildlife populations in Minnesota. WS is also cooperating with the U of MN, MNDNR, and the MN Board of Animal Health in assessing the risk of bTB transmission resulting from interactions between cattle and deer.

Looking to the Future

Maintaining a healthy wolf population in Minnesota will be a challenge as the wolf population approaches de-listing from the Endangered Species Act and WS continues to cooperate with MNDNR to resolve wolf damage issues.

The growing need for wildlife disease surveillance is also an important issue for WS in Minnesota. Continued cooperation with the MNDNR and MNBAH to monitor for avian influenza, bovine TB and CWD will remain important components of the Minnesota WS program in coming years, as these and other wildlife diseases continue to threaten human, livestock, poultry, and wildlife health.

The Minnesota WS program will likely become increasingly involved with double-crested cormorant management in the State if cormorant numbers continue to increase and impact public resources.

Minnesota Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators who have a vested interest in the program: 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:

- Investigating complaints of wolf depredations and implementing non-lethal and lethal means to reduce predation
- Protecting civil and military aviation from wildlife strikes
- Preventing the transmission of wildlife diseases to other wildlife, domestic animals, and humans
- Managing damage caused by beaver
- Managing damage caused by double-crested cormorants

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Minnesota:

- Managing wolf predation through new methods to protect livestock and wildlife
- Reducing the impacts of double-crested cormorants on other wildlife and fish
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Identifying and preventing the transmission of wildlife diseases to other wildlife and humans
- Reducing starling damage at feedlots and dairies