

# Wildlife Services

Protecting People  
Protecting Agriculture  
Protecting Wildlife

## State Report

FY 2008

# Rhode Island



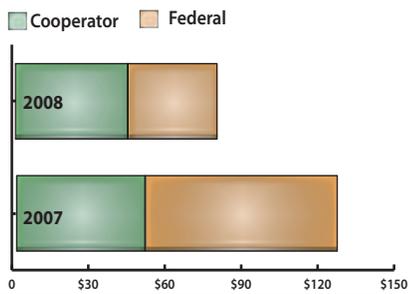
### Contact Information:

Monte Chandler,  
State Director for Rhode Island  
463 West Street,  
Amherst, MA 01002  
Phone: (413) 253-2403  
FAX: (413) 253-7577  
Toll-Free Number: 1-866-4USDAWS  
1-866-487-3297  
monte.d.chandler@aphis.usda.gov  
www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife\_damage

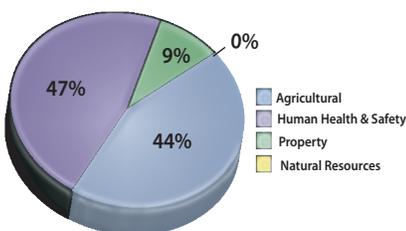
### Major Cooperators

- Rhode Island Department of Agriculture
- Rhode Island Department of Environmental management, Division of Wildlife
- Rhode Island Extension System
- Rhode Island Airport Corporation
- Private Industrial Companies
- U.S. Air National Guard
- Private and Municipal Airports

### Total Funding (Thousands)



### Resources Protected % of Total Funds



### USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Rhode Island

Every day, residents, industries, organizations, and agencies call upon Wildlife Services (WS) in Rhode Island 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 personnel respond with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

Rhode Island is a diverse ecological mix of urban, suburban, and rural settings with approximately one million residents. The ecological and geographic diversity of the State provides for a remarkably varied and growing wildlife population that also increases the likelihood of conflicts with the public. WS provides integrated wildlife management programs that are biologically, environmentally, and socially sound, and comply with local, State, and Federal wildlife management regulations.

WS provides agricultural assistance primarily to vegetable and turf farmers experiencing damage by Canada geese. WS also assists the public when buildings are damaged or water supplies are contaminated by gulls, pigeons, crows, or bats. WS protects the traveling public by reducing hazards caused by crows, geese, ospreys, or other wildlife, on or near an airport. The WS Rhode Island program also provides assistance as needed to resolve a variety of other wildlife damage or conflict situations.

### Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

The WS program 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 may also provide cooperative on-site help, or direct assistance, to address complex wildlife problems that may be difficult or cannot be safely and effectively 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 Air Travel**—Wildlife strikes with airplanes cost U.S. civil aviation more than \$625 million annually and create hazards to flight crews, passengers, and aircraft. Many Rhode Island airports are expanding as air travel is expected to increase to and from the State. Unfortunately, as wildlife populations such as geese, coyotes, and deer increase around these airports, the risk to air travelers grows as well.

WS is recognized internationally for its scientific expertise in reducing wildlife hazards to the aviation industry. WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) conducts research to understand the nature of wildlife hazards at airports, develops management tools to reduce these hazards, and provides airport personnel with information to manage hazards.

WS personnel present training, conduct wildlife hazard assessments, and direct wildlife management projects at Rhode Island airports through partnerships with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), airport management, and various other State and Federal agencies. In FY 2008 WS Rhode Island personnel provided operative cooperative assistance to a joint military-and-civilian airport and a civilian airport, as well as technical assistance to both airports.

**Wildlife Disease Management and Protecting Human and Livestock Health**—As human and wildlife populations grow, the threat of wildlife-borne diseases being passed to humans and livestock increases. To enhance preparedness for emergency disease response the WS program continues to collaborate with USDA-Veterinary Services (VS) and several State and local health agencies.



United States Department of Agriculture  
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Avian influenza (AI)—the bird flu—is a disease caused by a virus that infects domestic poultry, wild birds (geese, ducks, and shorebirds). Each year, there is a bird flu season just as there is for humans and, as with people, some forms of the flu are worse than others.

The highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 strain of bird flu has been found in an increasing number of countries in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Currently, HPAI H5N1 is not present in the United States, however the U.S. Government is taking steps to prepare for and minimize the potential impact of this disease. WS continues to lead a national multi-interagency collaboration effort to monitor wild migratory birds in the United States for avian influenza. WS Rhode Island personnel are collaborating with State agencies and other public and private organizations to conduct surveillance activities for avian influenza by collecting samples from wild migratory birds. March 2009 will bring to a close the program's third surveillance year.

**Protecting Personal Property**—The resident Canada goose population has been increasing in Rhode Island during the past 30 years and continues to be a major wildlife problem. During FY 2008 approximately 62.5% of public requests for assistance in Rhode Island involved conflicts caused by Canada geese and gulls. While goose populations continue to grow, recently some traditional management methods often have become limited in effectiveness. WS' NWRC is working to develop more socially acceptable and effective management methods. WS in Rhode Island recommends an integrated wildlife damage management program in which several methods are used in combination to manage goose damage. Examples include habitat management, exclusion, harassment, and repellants. WS program specialists currently conduct integrated programs, including egg addling, with towns and homeowner associations to prevent goose eggs from hatching, significantly slowing goose population growth.

Gulls also cause serious property damage and other conflicts in Rhode Island. In FY 2008, 16 consultations and evaluations involving gulls, many of which also involve assistance in providing recommendations on the issuance of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) depredation permits. Assistance with recommendations to the FWS was provided at no charge to the cooperators or FWS.

### **Looking to the Future**

Preventing wildlife-borne diseases from affecting humans and livestock has also become a growing concern in Rhode Island. Increased air travel through Rhode Island airports, coupled with the population growth of many bird species, has created a greater need for airport managers to deal with safety threats posed by wildlife.

### **Rhode Island Wildlife Services Funding**

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators who have a vested interest in the programs: producers, private individuals, businesses, and other Federal, State, and local government agencies. In most cases, cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or actually have a key role in wildlife damage management.

### **Top Major Assistance Activities:**

- Protecting civilian and military aircraft and passengers from wildlife collisions
- Protecting property, agriculture, and vegetable crops from Canada geese
- Protecting buildings from damage by gulls, crows, pigeons, and various other wildlife species
- Continuing to develop and enhance a collaborative support network to participate in the management of hazards at airports

### **Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Rhode Island:**

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Reducing goose damage through improved methods of harassment and direct management
- Evaluating activities of waterfowl and impacts to disease and parasite reservoirs
- Monitoring and surveillance various wildlife zoonotic diseases
- Improving assessment, sampling, and economic methods for wildlife damage management