

Wildlife Services

Protecting People
Protecting Agriculture
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2008

Wisconsin



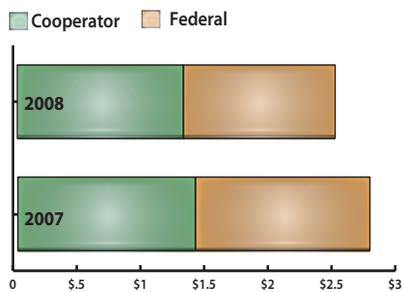
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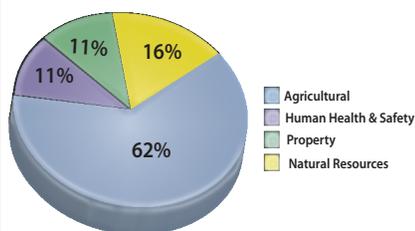
Major Cooperators

- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
- Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
- Wisconsin Department of Health Services
- University of Wisconsin
- U.S. Forest Service
- Counties, Townships, Airports

Total Funding (Millions)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Wisconsin

Every day, Wisconsin residents, industries, organizations, municipalities and agencies call on Wildlife Services (WS) in Wisconsin for assistance in addressing damage or threats posed by wildlife to human health and safety, natural resources, crops and property. Managed by professional wildlife biologists, WS responds with integrated, effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

The WS program in Wisconsin manages a variety of wildlife damage programs, positively impacting a large number of citizens. WS specialists provide assistance to farmers who experience wildlife damage to their crops. Specialists capture and relocate problem black bears and work to reduce conflicts with Canada geese, white-tailed deer, wolves, and beaver. WS' active bird damage management program assists farmers, municipalities, and businesses to deal with over-abundant bird issues. WS also protects public safety and aircraft operations from wildlife hazards at civil and military airports throughout the State.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable 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 Agricultural Crops—High levels of crop damage result from abundant white-tailed deer, black bears, wild turkeys, and Canada geese. Under the State's Wildlife Damage Abatement and Claims Program (WDACP), WS cooperates with 48 counties and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) to provide damage abatement and appraisal assistance. WS investigates and verifies more than \$2 million in wildlife damage each year.

Protecting Livestock from European Starlings Damage—Starling damage remains a concern for Wisconsin dairy farmers and beef producers. High concentrations of starlings consume and contaminate livestock feed and, potentially, increase disease transmission and reduce milk production. WS specialists provide advice about techniques to manage starling damage. When requested and warranted, trained and certified WS personnel directly assist producers by using pesticide to reduce local starling populations.

Protecting Livestock and Gray Wolves—WS works collaboratively with WDNR to continue gray wolf recovery. Roughly 500 wolves in more than 100 packs occurred throughout Wisconsin's forest regions. Under a cooperative agreement with WDNR, WS investigates approximately 200 wolf complaints annually including human safety and wolf depredations involving livestock, pets, and hunting dogs. WS implements an integrated program to reduce valid livestock depredations and threats. WS' ability to effectively alleviate wolf depredation of livestock is essential to recovery because it encourages public support and tolerance for continued recovery of the gray wolf in Wisconsin.

Urban Human Health and Safety Issues—Increasing populations of resident Canada geese cause human-geese conflicts in urban areas. High geese densities in parks, business sites, and residential areas raise human health and safety concerns. To help alleviate such conflicts, WS continues aggressive management including egg oiling, nest removal (when possible), and lethal removal, donating the edible meat to local food pantries and Native American Tribes. WS collects geese for mandatory contaminant testing to enable new locations to participate in the food pantry program.



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Disease Issues—In addition to emergency response assistance in Wisconsin, WS participates in disease monitoring and surveillance projects to safeguard American agriculture, human health, and wildlife. Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) surveillance and management remains a high priority in free-ranging white-tailed deer and captive deer and elk herds. WS assists the WDNR, the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (WDATCP) and USDA-Veterinary Services with CWD sampling and population management. Since 2001, the WDNR and the Department of Health Services (WDHS) have tried to predict and prevent human epidemics of West Nile virus (WNV); WS manages a toll-free phone line to provide WNV and avian influenza information and outreach materials, and for statewide reporting of sick and dead birds. WS collects tissue from suspect specimens for submission to diagnostic laboratories. In cooperation with the WDNR, WS collects samples from live wild birds, hunter-harvested wildfowl and other sources as part of the nationwide surveillance effort for highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1.

Double-crested cormorants—The cormorant breeding population in the Green Bay–Lake Michigan region increased 33 percent annually between 1973 and 1997, raising concerns among sport and commercial fisheries about potential cormorant impacts. Research objectives in 2004–2006 were to obtain data on the food habits and population dynamics of Green Bay cormorants. In recent years WS has assisted the WDNR with egg oiling and limited removal of adults to manage local growing cormorant populations.

Protecting Property—WS also cooperates with WDNR to manage black bear damage to agriculture crops and property as well as threatening human health and safety. WS receives over 1,000 requests for assistance to resolve black bear complaints annually. The majority are resolved through technical assistance. Some require direct management operations, resulting in capture and relocation of more than 700 bears a year.

Protecting Multiple Resources—Protecting multiple natural resources through beaver damage management is a major objective in Wisconsin. WS manages about 200 complaints involving flooding of timber or roadways a year. WS has cooperative agreements with counties and townships to provide damage management for road and timber resources in which beaver and dam removal are estimated to save over \$1 million annually.

WS continues to cooperate with WDNR, Federal agencies, and private organizations to manage beaver damage on high-quality trout streams to protect coldwater natural resources. Beaver dams significantly impact State streams negatively by warming water, blocking trout movement, and reducing trout reproduction and survival. WS' beaver and dam removal efforts, including annual maintenance, have restored approximately 1,500 miles of high-quality trout streams to free flowing conditions, enhancing the natural reproduction of native brook trout populations.

WS also works on a small number of northern Wisconsin lakes to enhance wild rice growth. Dams on lake outlets create water levels too high for wild rice germination in early summer and negatively impact the later growth stage. Beaver and dam removal has restored wild rice beds with positive impact on wildlife habitat and recreational harvest of wild rice.

Looking to the Future

Demands for WS assistance on various issues continue to increase. Two emerging issues are assistance with invasive species (feral swine) and endangered species (Kirtland's warbler). Feral swine may be gaining ground in Wisconsin with wild pigs currently reported in multiple counties. Complaints from landowners have been increasing as has concern from State agencies due to disease transmission and property damage issues. WS partnered with multiple agencies to improve Kirtland's warbler nesting success by removing local brown-headed cowbirds, leading to recent confirmation of nesting in Wisconsin.

Wisconsin Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives funding 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, cooperators request assistance from WS to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting and assessing crop and livestock damage caused by Canada geese, black bear, white-tailed deer, and wild turkeys
- Resolving crop and property damage and human health and safety problems regarding nuisance and depredating black bears and gray wolves
- Protecting coldwater ecosystems, forest resources, roads and bridges from beaver damage
- Protecting public safety and air operations from wildlife hazards at civil and military airports
- Surveillance and monitoring for avian influenza, Chronic Wasting Disease, West Nile virus, and diseases that threaten the health of humans, domestic animals and wildlife

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Wisconsin:

- Investigate techniques for effective management of gray wolf depredations
- Determine effects of overabundant double-crested cormorants on natural resources
- Investigate black bear utilization of agricultural crops; movements, behavior, and damage abatement techniques
- Development of improved techniques to reduce wildlife hazards to aviation
- Improve assessment, sampling, and economic methods for wildlife damage management