

Background

This plan presents a strategic vision for Wildlife Services (WS), formerly known as Animal Damage Control—a program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). The plan builds upon directions set forth in an earlier strategic plan and reflects changes over the past 5 years in both the organization of the WS program and in public sensitivity to natural resources. The plan also draws upon WS futuring and APHIS visioning processes, as well as perspectives of stakeholders and the public, to establish programwide goals that provide guidelines for future APHIS activities in wildlife damage management.



APHIS photo by Guy Connolly.

Purpose and Mission

The mission of WS is to provide Federal leadership in managing problems caused by wildlife. WS recognizes that wildlife is an important public resource greatly valued by the American people. By its very nature, however, wildlife is a highly dynamic and mobile resource that can damage agricultural and industrial resources, pose risks to human health and safety, and affect other natural resources. The WS program carries out the Federal responsibility for helping to solve problems that occur when human activity and wildlife are in conflict with one another.

Vision—Living With Wildlife

WS' vision is to improve the coexistence of people and wildlife. The program recognizes that the entire field of wildlife damage management is in a period of change, and those involved with this field must consider a wide range of public interests that can conflict with one another. These interests include wildlife conservation, biological diversity, and the welfare of animals, as well as the use of wildlife for purposes of enjoyment, recreation, and livelihood.

The WS program strives to develop and use wildlife damage management strategies that are biologically sound, environmentally safe, and socially acceptable. WS also strives to reduce damage caused by wildlife to the lowest possible levels while at the same time reducing wildlife mortality. This goal represents the future toward which WS is moving. In charting this course, WS must continuously improve and modify wildlife damage-management strategies that—constrained by current technologies, knowledge, or resources—do not reach this high standard.

Trends

The need for effective and environmentally safe wildlife damage management is rising dramatically. Public scrutiny of these services is also increasing. This situation, along with heightened congressional interest, is the result of five major trends that can be expected to continue through the coming years:

- Increasing suburban development,
- Adaptable and overabundant wildlife species,
- A shift in public attitudes toward the welfare of animals,
- Increasing media interest in wildlife issues, and
- Advances in wildlife science and technology.

Federal Leadership

Given these trends, the WS program is effectively positioned to provide Federal leadership in the expanding field of wildlife damage management. WS has highly experienced employees skilled in wildlife damage management in all of the Nation's ecological zones as well as many urban areas. Working in partnership with State and local agencies and with nongovernmental organizations, WS employees provide information, expertise, and specialized wildlife services. WS personnel have a unique understanding of wildlife behavior and interaction with specific human activities. This understanding provides the basis, for example, for mitigating risks posed to aircraft by large bird populations near airports, reducing losses in agriculture, reducing threats to human health from diseases carried by wildlife (e.g., rabies), and even for protecting threatened or endangered species from other wildlife.

The WS program also provides the world's only research center devoted entirely to the development of methods for wildlife damage management. The National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC), at its newly constructed, state-of-the-art facility on the Fort Collins campus of Colorado State University, is providing an expanding range of environmentally sound methods that are effective in protecting diverse resources and human activities while striving to eliminate negative impacts on wildlife populations. The NWRC is strongly committed to using emerging technologies in pursuit of WS' long-term vision for wildlife damage management.

Strategic Areas

WS is dedicated to helping meet the wildlife damage management needs of the Nation by building upon its comparative strengths in three key strategic areas:

- **Methods**—Develop and use effective and flexible methods that are biologically, environmentally, and socially sound. Emerging technologies and improved knowledge of wildlife behavior and human values can lead to new strategies for resolving wildlife damage problems. Methods like the electronic guard, frightening devices, repellants, and chemical immobilizing agents represent the key for reaching WS' vision of the future.
- **People**—Recognize that the highest levels of professionalism, expertise, and ethical standards are required of a workforce in a field as dynamic, broadbased, and scrutinized as wildlife damage management. WS will provide highly skilled personnel who are able to respond flexibly to changing demands placed upon the program. These workers will enable the WS program to continue to be Federal leaders in the field of wildlife damage management.
- **Communication and Information**—Recognize the importance of addressing the social, economic, and environmental issues related to program activities; communicate continually with WS employees, cooperators, and the public on the purpose and methods of wildlife damage management; and manage information dealing with wildlife populations and risks, as well as program activities and results.



Goals

WS has established four national goals that guide program personnel as they conduct their day-to-day activities in a manner which moves the program strategically forward to meet the needs of its stakeholders, customers, and the Nation:

- **Providing Wildlife Services**—Provide high-quality wildlife damage-management services for our customers that result in the protection of agriculture, wildlife, and other natural resources, property, and human health and safety.
- **Developing Methods**—Increase effective methods available for wildlife damage management.
- **Valuing and Investing in People**—Promote an organizational culture that values and invests in our people to support their professionalism, competency, and innovation as Federal leaders of wildlife damage management.
- **Information and Communication**—Collect and analyze internal and external information to monitor and enhance program effectiveness. Communicate internally and externally to accomplish our mission and to build an understanding of the Federal role in wildlife damage management.

Standards—What To Expect

WS strives for the highest possible standards in providing service to the public. When requesting assistance, you can expect

- To be provided with accurate information or expert help to resolve or minimize wildlife conflicts;
- For respect to be shown for people, property, and wildlife;
- To have WS personnel demonstrate respect for varying viewpoints on wildlife damage management;
- To be provided the most humane, selective, and effective control techniques; and
- To have work be conducted in a safe manner.



Suggestions, Comments, or Complaints...

WS employees welcome comments or suggestions to help improve the service we provide. Suggestions, complaints, or requests for more information should be directed to: Director, WS Operational Support Staff, APHIS, USDA, 4700 River Road, Unit 87, Riverdale, MD 20737-1234.



APHIS photo by John Cummings.

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