

## Development of a Science-Based Monitoring Program for Nutria in Maryland's Coastal Marshes



- **The Challenge:** The study is being conducted in support of the Fish and Wildlife Service's nutria eradication program in Maryland. This program was implemented to abate the widespread loss of emergent marsh in Maryland's lower eastern shore due to nutria over grazing. The study is supported in part by the USGS Invasive Species program and is coordinated through the FWS Chesapeake Bay Field Office, the Maryland Nutria Eradication Team, and USDA-APHIS Division of Wildlife Services, the agency in charge of the eradication.



- **The Science:** We are developing and testing methods to detect rare remnant animals and resurgent populations following initial trap out. Various technologies are being used in this effort including GPS collars to determine nutria movements, use of scent and playback of nutria vocalizations to attract nutria, and release of sterilized "Judas" nutria that can be tracked via conventional VHF telemetry to locate remaining animals.



- **The Future:** Tracking studies have shown nutria to be gregarious and highly mobile. These characteristics underscore the efficacy of attracting nutria from great distances with sound and scent. Judas nutria have been used successfully in trials to locate remnant animals for removal. It is hoped that these research techniques will increase nutria removal and assist in affecting a true eradication.