

# USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services Wisconsin Wildlife Damage Abatement and Claims Program - 2009 Summary Report



Prepared by:



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Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service  
Wildlife Services



## **INTRODUCTION**

The Wildlife Damage Abatement and Claims Program (WDACP) was enacted in 1983 by the State of Wisconsin. The purpose of the program is to assist producers with agricultural losses caused by white-tailed deer, black bear, Canada geese, wild turkey, and elk. Sandhill cranes may become eligible for the WDACP if the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) authorizes a hunting season.

While the WDACP provides financial compensation, the program emphasis is one of abatement. The state placed a \$1.00 surcharge on hunting licenses to help fund the cost of program administration, abatement, and compensation. By 1991, requests for assistance by farmers with crop damage by the eligible species had expanded throughout the state, with deer complaints leading the way. To offset the increased costs, the state began charging for bonus deer tags with the proceeds going to the WDACP. In 2005, the license surcharge was increased to \$2.00 (\$4.00 for patron licenses) to help offset reduced funding levels coming from the bonus tag sales. The reduction in funds was a result of changes to the deer season structure that reduced bonus tag sales and the expanded use of the WDACP funds for the Deer Donation Program and Chronic Wasting Disease Management.

The State of Wisconsin requires the WDACP to be implemented by county government, thus assuring local oversight. Enrollment into the WDACP is voluntary, however, for farmers to receive assistance their county must fully participate in the program. There is no direct program cost for counties that participate in the WDACP because it is funded by the WDNR from hunting license sales dollars and from Federal cost share money. The WDNR role is to coordinate the WDACP statewide, including administration and distribution of program funding.

As wildlife populations identified in the WDACP continue to grow in the state, so did interest in the WDACP. The WDACP started consuming a significant amount of county staff time. Numerous counties were experiencing increased requests for crop appraisals, which required significant commitment of time and training for their staff. In the mid 1980's the counties were afforded another option for implementation of the WDACP when the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)-Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)-Animal Damage Control, now known as USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services (USDA-WS), entered the state. USDA-WS brought wildlife damage management expertise and federal cost-sharing to the WDACP. For those counties that wished to offload the day-to-day administration of the WDACP and free up time for their staff, USDA-WS has been a viable option.

## **COOPERATIVE PARTNERS**

In 1986, USDA-WS began work in Wisconsin with the opening of a state office in Sun Prairie and a district office in Waupun. In 1987, USDA-WS entered into Cooperative Service Agreements (CSA) with three Wisconsin counties (Dodge, Fond Du Lac, and Green Lake) to administer the WDACP on their behalf. A year later, USDA-WS opened a second district office in Rhinelander and signed a fourth CSA to administer the

WDACP for Langlade County. In 2009, USDA-WS administers the WDACP on behalf of 48 Wisconsin counties (Figure 1).

## **AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS**

In 2009, USDA-WS offices were contacted by over 1,000 agricultural producers who reported wildlife damage to their crop(s). After initial consultation and site visits, 770 farmers requested assistance through the WDACP. Producers with farms ranging from only a couple of acres to over 3,500 acres enrolled in the WDACP during 2009, totaling more than 167,000 acres (Table 1).

## **WILDLIFE DAMAGE TO AGRICULTURE**

During 2009, USDA-WS verified damage to 39 different agricultural crops (including livestock) by white-tailed deer, black bear, Canada geese, or wild turkeys (Table 2). Of the 39 agricultural crops reported to USDA-WS, 32 were verified as deer damage. Bear, geese, and turkeys damaged 14, 9, and 6 different agricultural crops, respectively.

### **White-tailed Deer**

White-tailed deer range throughout the state, adapting to every habitat type in Wisconsin. Their ability to live in close proximity to people has allowed deer to flourish in environments with increasing human development, thus the agriculture damage they cause is no longer restricted to traditional rural areas. Although WDNR's current post hunt population estimate (990,000) is slightly lower than in 2008, deer complaints will likely continue to out number the other three species combined. Corn, soybeans, and hay account for the majority of acreage damaged by deer.

### **Black Bear**

Black bears inhabit mainly the northern two-thirds of Wisconsin. However, black bears have recently been found in many southern Wisconsin counties. Black bears frequently inhabit areas close to people if a food source is available. The majority of bear damage complaints occur in the northern portion of the state, but an increasing number of complaints are coming from southern Wisconsin. The majority of agricultural bear damage complaints are associated with corn and apiaries (beehives). WI DNR currently estimates the statewide bear population at 21,500.

### **Canada Geese**

Canada geese can be found throughout Wisconsin where suitable habitat exists. Within the state, goose populations are grouped into one of two categories, migratory geese (those that migrate through the state) or resident geese (those that nest in the state). Generally, larger wetland complexes associated with migration corridors will attract higher numbers of birds. Agricultural crops in close proximity to these areas are an attractive food source for both populations of geese. Traditionally, the southeast and eastern portion of Wisconsin has received the majority of goose damage complaints. However, with increasing resident goose populations, damage reported in other areas of the state is becoming more common. WI DNR currently estimates the resident Canada goose population at 165,000.

### **Wild Turkey**

The wild turkey population has increased significantly since their successful reintroduction in 1976. There are now huntable turkey populations inhabiting the entire state. Turkeys are diurnal, thus they are readily seen in agricultural fields during the day. Agricultural producers often blame turkeys for damage because of their presence in a field. The agricultural crops that are most susceptible to turkeys are ginseng, emerging corn, and stored feed/crops. In 2009, hunters harvested 52,581 turkeys during the Spring hunt and 8,265 during the Fall hunt.

### **Elk**

Elk were reintroduced in Wisconsin in the Clam Lake area of the Chequamegon National Forest in 1995. The 2009 population is estimated at 142 animals (down slightly from 2008), with 71 animals currently radio collared. The current elk population is located in Sawyer, Bayfield, and Ashland Counties. To date, USDA-WS has not received any elk damage complaints.

### **Non-WDACP Wildlife Species**

While the 5 species above are eligible for assistance through the WDACP, not all damage to crops are caused by these species. Annually, USDA-WS responds to damage complaints that are reported as deer, bear, geese, or turkey, only to be verified as non-wildlife related or caused from an ineligible wildlife species. For example, it is common for USDA-WS to receive complaints of corn damage by deer or bear, only to verify that raccoons are the cause. Less common are those complaints that are non-wildlife related, including weather, insects, and/or crop management issues. In these instances, USDA-WS provides technical assistance to the farmer so they can alleviate their wildlife damage or they are directed to an appropriate professional so they can address the non-wildlife issue.

As mentioned in the introduction, sandhill cranes may become eligible for WDACP assistance once they become a huntable species. Each year, USDA-WS receives sandhill crane complaints, with the majority of damage associated with corn, wheat, and potatoes.

## **INTREGATED ABATEMENT**

USDA-WS incorporates an integrated approach when recommending abatement strategies to reduce ongoing wildlife damage to crops. The goal of the WDACP is to recommend abatement methods that are successful in minimizing the damage, practical to the farmer, and cost-effective to the program. The abatement methods that were recommended/utilized during 2009 include pyrotechnics, propane cannons, flagging, effigies, exclusion/fence systems (including temporary electric, and temporary woven), repellents, agricultural shooting permits, culvert traps, cage traps, foot snares, habitat modification, relocation of stored feed/crop, and changing crop variety.

### **White-tailed Deer**

USDA-WS received deer damage complaints in 47 of 48 counties. In response to these damage complaints, USDA-WS distributed 246 rounds of pyrotechnics, loaned over 2.3 miles of temporary woven fence, loaned over 65 miles of temporary electric fence,

distributed over 15 gallons of deer repellent, loaned 8 propane cannons, recommended 442 shooting permits which resulted in the harvest of 2,642 deer, and conducted annual inspections on 118 permanent high-tensile woven wire fence projects totaling 138.7 miles of fence.

### **Black Bear**

USDA-WS received agricultural bear damage complaints in 25 of 48 counties. In response to these damage complaints, USDA-WS loaned over 12 miles of temporary electric fence to protect 404 apiaries, distributed 5 gallons of repellent, captured 95 bears (94 relocated, and 1 euthanized) at 53 agricultural sites, and recommended 6 shooting permits which resulted in the harvest of 15 bear. Additionally, eleven WDACP counties that USDA-WS does not administer requested bear trapping assistance for agricultural damage. In these counties, USDA-WS captured and relocated 171 bears from 50 agricultural sites.

### **Canada Geese**

USDA-WS received goose damage complaints in 27 of 48 counties. In response to these damage complaints, USDA-WS distributed 3,925 rounds of pyrotechnics, loaned 21 propane cannons, distributed 64 sets of flagging, loaned 6,920 feet of temporary woven fence, loaned 1,320 feet of temporary electric fence, loaned 2 coyote effigies, and recommended 39 federal shooting permits which resulted in the harvest of 206 geese.

### **Wild Turkey**

USDA-WS received turkey damage complaints in 15 of 48 counties. In response to these damage complaints, USDA-WS loaned 40 miles of temporary woven fence, loaned 29,040 feet of temporary electric fence, loaned 4 propane cannons, distributed 400 rounds of pyrotechnics, loaned 2 coyote effigies, and recommended 37 shooting permits which resulted in the harvest of 36 turkeys.

## **ASSESSMENT OF DAMAGE**

Annually, USDA-WS assesses loss on a diverse variety of agricultural crops. In 2009, 291 farmers in 38 of the 48 counties requested formal appraisals on 23 different agricultural crops/commodities (Table 3). The appraised crops were associated with standard, certified organic, fresh market, canning, wholesale, and/or retail production. These requests resulted in USDA-WS appraising nearly 39,000 acres. The damaged areas totaled more than 3,300 acres, resulting in appraised losses totaling \$940,530.07. Total appraised loss for deer, bear, geese, and turkeys were \$806,624.64, \$76,833.99, \$79,474.00, and \$1,930.09, respectively (Table 4).

## **DEER DONATION**

The Deer Donation Program continues to receive excellent support at the local level since its start in 2000. Annually, the WDACP county committees approve participation in the program, hunters voluntarily donate their deer, and those in need continue to utilize the venison provided by their local food pantries.

The program, primarily funded through the WDACP, allows hunters to donate deer to participating processors free of charge. Those processors are reimbursed through the WDACP at a rate of \$50/deer. The donated venison is then distributed to local food pantries to help feed those in need.

USDA-WS coordinated the administration of the Deer Donation Program on behalf of 40 of 48 counties that chose to participate through the WDACP (Table 5). In 2009, 84 processors and 106 pantries agreed to participate in the program. These processors took in 2,839 deer for the program, resulting in nearly 128,000 lbs. of ground venison processed. Statewide 3,921 deer were donated during 2009. Since the program's inception, over 73,000 deer have been donated by hunters, resulting in over 3.3 million lbs. of venison utilized by food pantries throughout Wisconsin.

## **PROGRAM BENEFITS**

USDA-WS continues to see significant participation in the WDACP from a diverse and expanding group of agricultural producers. While this agricultural diversity presents challenges with regard to wildlife damage management, it has afforded USDA-WS the opportunity to modify/develop methods to address abatement and claims issues associated with the WDACP. This effort has allowed USDA-WS to not only better assist producers in the 48 WDACP cooperating counties, but has benefited the statewide program as well.

Given Wisconsin's strong dedication to both agriculture and natural resources, wildlife damage issues will continue to be at the forefront. With statewide populations of deer, bear, geese, and turkey either stable or trending upwards, crop prices at all time highs, and land-use changes that inhibit hunting access, the demand for the WDACP is expected to remain high. The cooperative partnership between WDACP counties, USDA-WS, and WDNR will continue to be the foundation in managing wildlife damage issues associated with Wisconsin agriculture.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

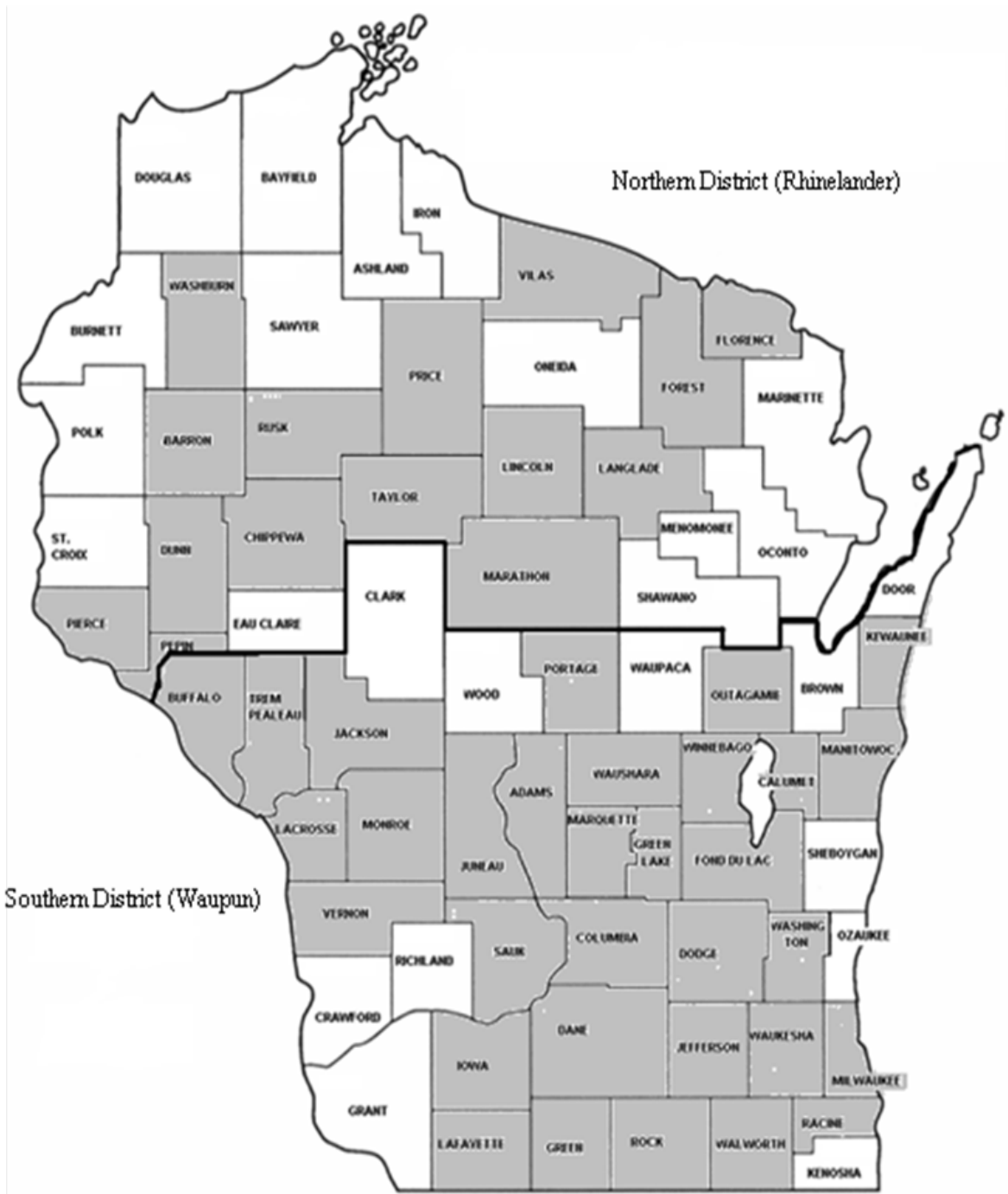
### **State Office:**

USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services  
732 Lois Dr.  
Sun Prairie, WI 53590  
(608) 837-2727

### **District Offices:**

Northern District (Rhineland Office)  
USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services  
P.O.Box 1064  
Rhineland, WI 54501  
(800) 228-1368  
(715) 369-5221

Southern District (Waupun Office)  
USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services  
1201 Storbeck Dr.  
Waupun, WI 53963  
(800) 433-0663  
(920) 324-4514



**Figure 1. Wisconsin Counties with WDACP Cooperative Service Agreements with USDA, Wildlife Services in 2009 (highlighted in gray).**

**Table 1. WDACP Enrollment and Acreage by County in USDA-WS Managed Counties during 2009.**

<b>County:</b>	<b>Number Enrolled:</b>	<b>Acreage Enrolled:</b>
Adams	20	6,674
Barron	18	6,310
Buffalo	10	4,222
Calumet	6	874
Chippewa	14	1,196
Clark	23	2,438
Columbia	24	6,637
Dane	40	5,896
Dodge	45	8,370
Dunn	17	3,561
Florence	9	3,023
Fond Du Lac	19	3,454
Forest	2	487
Green	0	0
Green Lake	17	4,405
Iowa	18	3,816
Jackson	19	5,537
Jefferson	10	5,693
Juneau	4	133
Kewaunee	8	1,027
LaCrosse	11	2,335
Lafayette	2	870
Langlade	14	2,741
Lincoln	13	1,966
Manitowoc	9	1,468
Marathon	72	15,901
Marquette	26	7,952
Milwaukee	1	20
Monroe	22	4,882
Outagamie	40	9,024
Pepin	2	170
Pierce	15	1,701
Portage	25	5,184
Price	16	4,097
Racine	4	377
Rock	7	2,504
Rusk	10	2,567
Sauk	10	1,785
Taylor	12	3,007
Trempealeau	21	5,187
Vernon	28	4,420
Vilas	5	1,637
Walworth	6	678
Washburn	13	4,972
Washington	20	1,759
Waukesha	7	343
Waushara	19	3,638
Winnebago	17	3,205
<b>Total</b>	<b>770</b>	<b>167,543</b>

**Table 2. USDA-WS Verified Agricultural Crop Damage by WDACP Species during 2009.**

<b>Crops:</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>Crops:</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>T</b>
alfalfa	X		X		livestock, sheep		X		
alfalfa grass	X		X		onions	X			
apiaries (beehives)		X			peas	X			
asparagus	X				pumpkins	X	X		
cabbage	X				nuts, hazel	X			
carrots	X				small grains, barley			X	
clover	X				Small grains, oats	X	X	X	X
corn, field	X	X	X		small grains, rye	X		X	
corn, sweet	X	X			small grains, wheat	X			X
fruit, apples	X	X		X	soybeans	X		X	X
fruit, blueberries	X				stored feed, corn	X	X		
fruit, cranberries	X		X		stored feed, hay	X	X		
fruit, grapes	X				tomatoes	X			
fruit, raspberries	X				trees, apple	X	X		
fruit, strawberries	X	X		X	trees, cherry	X			
ginseng	X			X	trees, christmas	X			
green beans	X		X		trees, hazelnut	X			
lettuce	X								
livestock, cattle		X							
livestock, chickens		X							
livestock, goats									
livestock, horses		X							

**D = white-tailed deer, B = black bear, G = Canada geese, T = wild turkey**

**Note:** *Verified damage (versus formal appraisal) is wildlife damage that has been verified as being caused by one of the four WDACP species.*

**Table 3. Agricultural Crops Formally Appraised by USDA-WS during 2009.**

<b>Formal Appraisals Conducted on Listed Crops:</b>
alfalfa
alfalfa grass
apiaries (beehives)
clover
corn, field
corn, sweet
fruit, apples
fruit, cranberries
green beans
livestock
nursery stock
peas
potatoes
pumpkins
nuts, filberts
small grains, barley
small grains, oats
small grains, wheat
soybeans
stored feed- silage
strawberries
trees, apple
trees, Christmas
<i><b>Note:</b> Formal appraisal (versus verified damage) is the actual measurement of loss that was caused by one of the five WDACP species.</i>

**Table 4. USDA-WS Total Appraised Loss by Species and County during 2009.**

<b>County:</b>	<b>WT. Deer (# of claims):</b>	<b>Black Bear (# of claims):</b>	<b>Canada Geese (# of claims):</b>	<b>Wild Turkey (# of claims):</b>	<b>Total Appraised Loss (# of claims):</b>
Adams	\$19,347.39(11)				\$19,347.39(11)
Barron	\$5,876.22 (2)	\$10,163.85 (4)	\$1,804.18(1)		\$17,844.25 (7)
Buffalo					<i>No Appraisal Request</i>
Calumet	\$6,769.04(2)		\$613.29(2)	\$316.41(1)	\$7,698.74(5)
Chippewa	\$897.30(1)	\$4,462.50(2)			\$5,359.80 (3)
Clark	\$8,241.58(3)	\$900.00(1)		\$779.70(1)	\$9,921.28(5)
Columbia	\$56,948.83(11)				\$56,948.83(11)
Dane	\$20,304.77(7)		\$3,007.89(1)		\$23,312.66(8)
Dodge	\$39,702.11(5)		\$17,166.87(8)	\$217.08(1)	\$57,086.06(14)
Dunn					<i>No Appraisal Request</i>
Florence	\$2,662.68(3)				\$2,662.68 (3)
Fond Du Lac	\$20,014.73(6)		\$351.25(1)		\$20,365.98(7)
Forest					<i>No Appraisal Request</i>
Green					<i>No Appraisal Request</i>
Green Lake	\$62,814.18(10)				\$62,814.18(10)
Iowa	\$11,779.67(5)				\$11,779.67(5)
Jackson	\$19,053.78(6)	\$525.00(1)			\$19,578.78(7)
Jefferson			\$3,642.07(2)		\$3,642.07(2)
Juneau		\$600.00(1)			\$600.00(1)
Kewaunee					<i>No Appraisal Requested</i>
LaCrosse	\$3,398.17(1)				\$3,398.17(1)
Lafayette					<i>No Appraisal Request</i>
Langlade	\$16,585.40(1)	\$168.91(1)			\$16,754.31(2)
Lincoln	\$60.85 (1)				\$60.85(1)
Manitowoc	\$4,075.62(2)		\$32,318.52(3)	\$530.31(1)	\$36,924.45(6)
Marathon	\$54,546.88(11)				\$54,546.88(11)
Marquette	\$159,038.65(15)		\$1,552.86(1)		\$160,591.51(16)
Milwaukee					<i>No Appraisal Requested</i>
Monroe	\$3,918.17(2)	\$2,540.08(1)			\$6,158.25(3)
Outagamie	\$111,974.91(23)	\$12,806.35(1)	\$15,215.06(4)		\$139,276.32(28)
Pepin					<i>No Appraisal Requested</i>
Pierce	\$353.98(1)	\$40.00(1)			\$393.98(2)
Portage	\$21,811.68(9)		\$281.36(1)		\$22,093.04(10)
Price	\$3,710.16(3)	\$12,642.69(7)	\$366.30(1)		\$16,719.16(11)
Racine					<i>No Appraisal Request</i>
Rock	\$231.35(1)		\$1,581.59(1)		\$1,812.94(2)
Rusk		\$21,414.45(7)			\$21,414.45(7)
Sauk	\$11,845.57(3)	\$2,714.31(2)			\$14,559.88(5)
Taylor	\$180.00(1)	\$3,993.88(2)			\$4,173.88(3)
Trempealeau	\$12,834.76(5)	\$1000.00(2)			\$13,834.76(7)
Vernon	\$7,350.01 (4)				\$7,350.01(4)
Vilas					<i>No Appraisal Request</i>
Walworth			\$1,146.83 (1)		\$1,146.83 (1)
Washburn	\$1,297.87(1)	\$2,861.97(3)			\$4,159.83(4)
Washington	\$9,667.08(3)		\$425.93(2)	\$86.59(1)	\$10,179.61(4)
Waukesha	\$1,179.21 (2)				\$1,179.21 (2)
Waushara	\$78,171.77 (11)				\$78,171.77 (11)
Winnebago	\$29,980.27 (8)				\$29,980.27 (8)
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$806,624.64(180)</b>	<b>\$76,833.99(36)</b>	<b>\$79,474.00(29)</b>	<b>\$1,930.09(5)</b>	<b>\$940,530.07(250)</b>

**Table 5. WDACP funded Deer Donation Totals in Counties Managed by USDA-WS during 2009.**

<b>County:</b>	<b>Number of Deer Donated:</b>	<b>Estimated lbs. of Venison Ground:</b>
Adams	24	1080
Barron	103	4,635
Buffalo	258	11,610
Calumet	3	135
Chippewa	79	3,555
Clark	14	630
Columbia	200	9,000
Dane	483	21,735
Dodge	45	2,025
Dunn	78	3,510
Florence	<i>No processor in county</i>	
Fond Du Lac	113	5,085
Forest	3	135
Green	111	4,995
Green Lake	<i>No processor in county</i>	
Iowa	<i>No processor in county</i>	
Jackson	81	3,645
Jefferson	29	1,305
Juneau	68	3,060
Kewaunee	12	540
LaCrosse	82	3,690
Lafayette	172	7,740
Langlade	6	270
Lincoln	6	270
Manitowoc	5	225
Marathon	69	3,105
Marquette	<i>No processor in county</i>	
Milwaukee	19	855
Monroe	38	1,710
Outagamie	78	3,510
Pepin	<i>No processor in county</i>	
Pierce	110	4,950
Portage	20	900
Price	<i>No participating processor</i>	
Racine	<i>No participating processor</i>	
Rock	24	1,080
Rusk	24	1,080
Sauk	28	1,260
Taylor	19	855
Trempealeau	157	7,065
Vernon	78	3,510
Vilas	4	180
Walworth	16	720
Washburn	<i>No processor in county</i>	
Washington	40	1,800
Waukesha	36	1,620
Waushara	69	3,105
Winnebago	35	1,575
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,839</b>	<b>127,755</b>