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DEP, the Port Authority, USDA Announce Second Year of Canada Geese Mitigation Measures For City-Owned Properties

City and USDA Will Remove Resident Canada Geese from City-owned Property within Expanded Seven-Mile Zone Around JFK and LaGuardia Airports; 2009 Safety Measures Reduced the Geese Population at LaGuardia Airport by 80%

Environmental Protection Commissioner Cas Holloway, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Wildlife Services State Director Martin Lowney today announced the renewal of safety measures to reduce the population of Canada geese near LaGuardia and John F. Kennedy International airports on properties owned by the City. These safety measures are coordinated by the New York City Airports Wildlife Hazard Management Steering Committee, formed last year to coordinate Canada geese and other wildlife mitigation efforts in the New York Metropolitan area. The Steering Committee consists of representatives from the City, USDA, Port Authority, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the National Parks Service.

"The emergency landing of US Airways Flight 1549 demonstrated the potential danger that Canada geese pose to aviation within New York City," said Commissioner Holloway. "The measures we have taken with the Port Authority and the USDA have helped to reduce the risk of a future catastrophe, and we will continue our work with the Port Authority, the Federal government, and all the members of the Wildlife Hazard Management Steering Committee to address any risks to the City's skies posed by wildlife that could come from City property."

"Ensuring the safety of the flying public is our top priority," said Port Authority Executive Director Chris Ward. "The agency's around-the-clock wildlife mitigation efforts are enhanced by our continued coordination with the DEP and USDA on a series of initiatives that include the continued testing of a bird radar system at JFK, the addition of a second wildlife biologist and beginning a gull reduction

MORE INFORMATION

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program. I want to thank the DEP and USDA for their partnership on this comprehensive program."

"The federal government has a responsibility to work with state and local governments to balance human safety and natural resources for the benefit of all," said Martin Lowney, Director of the USDA Wildlife Services program in New York. "The Canada goose management program near airports is effective at providing a safe operating environment for aircraft, minimizing abundant resident Canada geese, and leaving habitat for other wildlife."

In addition to the emergency landing of US Airways Flight 1549, there have been 78 reported Canada Goose strikes from 1999 to 2008 with aircraft at airports in New York, according to the Federal Aviation Administration. The State Department of Environmental Conservation states that the Metropolitan region – encompassing New York City; Nassau, Suffolk, Rockland, and Westchester counties – has an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 resident Canada geese.

The City of New York has extended its agreement with the USDA to remove Canada geese from parks, wastewater treatment plants, and various City-owned properties within seven miles of JFK and LaGuardia airports. This radius has been expanded from the 2009 radius of five miles of JFK and LaGuardia airports to seven miles in 2010 at the recommendation of the National Wildlife Research Center. USDA and City personnel will remove Canada geese from targeted areas, including Flushing Meadows-Corona Park and Fort Totten Park, during the molting season from the middle of June through the middle of July. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, has issued a permit to the USDA to capture and remove Canada geese, which in this instance pose a public safety hazard. In addition, the City and the Port Authority will renew their 2009 Memorandum of Understanding under which the Port Authority will pay half the cost of the USDA culling program. The City and the Port Authority will continue to work with the Wildlife Hazard Management Steering Committee to implement additional mitigation strategies for Canada geese and other potential threats to aircraft at LaGuardia and JFK airports. The City and USDA will work with the Port Authority to measure the impact and effectiveness of the culling throughout the year. It is estimated that up to 800 Canada geese will be removed through these efforts.

During several days in June and July 2009, the USDA removed more than 1,200 Canada geese from 17 selected sites. In addition, the City filled a large geese-attracting depression on Rikers Island and the Department of Parks and Recreation installed and enforced new signage prohibiting all feeding of animals in approximately 40 parks within a five mile radius of LaGuardia and JFK airports. Since 2009, the average Canada geese population at LaGuardia has dropped by 80%. The Canada geese population at JFK airport showed no change between the 2009 geese removal effort and 2010.

New York City is already engaged in non-lethal wildlife mitigation efforts on its reservoirs and watershed lands, wastewater treatment plants, re-vegetated landfills, and parks, including public education to discourage feeding; visual deterrents and use of border collies for herding; pyrotechnics; bird deterrent wires and netting; and egg addling – all recommended by the USDA Office of Wildlife Services. The City, Port Authority and USDA conduct egg addling and an annual culling of Canada geese on Rikers Island.

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