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

City and USDA Will Remove Resident Canada Geese from City-owned Property within Seven-Mile Zone Around JFK, LaGuardia and Newark Airports; Safety Measures Reduced the Geese Population by 50% Since Last Year

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, John F. Kennedy International, and Newark Liberty 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 in 2009 to coordinate Canada geese and other wildlife mitigation efforts in the New York metropolitan area following the crash landing of US Airways Flight 1549 into the Hudson River after it struck a flock of Canada geese approximately four miles from LaGuardia Airport. 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 Park Service.

"The programs put in place following the emergency landing of US Airways Flight 1549 have been extremely effective," said Commissioner Holloway. "The population of resident Canada geese on city property near city airports is down significantly, roughly 50% since just last year. In many locations, the programs have reduced the potential hazards to the point where additional removals are not currently recommended by the USDA, including Prospect Park. Where Canada geese are removed, they will be donated to food banks. Our top priority in these efforts will always be public safety, and we will be guided by the latest data and the expertise of our state and federal partners; at the same time, we will do everything possible to help those in need."

MORE INFORMATION

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"As wildlife biologists who specialize in airport wildlife hazard reduction, we have observed that removing Canada geese in targeted locations can help provide a safer operating environment for air travelers when used as a part of an integrated management program," said Martin Lowney, Director of the USDA Wildlife Services program in New York. "We all want to enjoy wildlife in our communities but federal, state and local officials must ensure wildlife does not impact human health and safety or cause damage."

In addition to the emergency landing of US Airways Flight 1549, there have been 82 reported Canada goose strikes from 1999 to 2010 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 20,000 to 25,000 resident Canada geese.

The Federal Aviation Administration has established a zero-tolerance policy for Canada geese on or near airports due to the high probability of aircraft damage and reduced public safety. Since 2009, each year in early June, USDA Wildlife Services conducts site evaluations at properties, such as parks and landfills, to determine which sites need to have large populations of resident Canada geese removed to improve public safety. These surveys, conducted within seven miles of local airports, coincide with the time of year that migratory Canada geese are no longer in the metropolitan area. This radius was expanded in 2010 from within five miles of local airports, which is what the FAA requires, to seven miles at the recommendation of the USDA based on a number of scientific research papers that indicated that Canada geese can travel up to eight miles as part of their daily travels. City-owned sites within seven miles of Newark were surveyed for the first time in 2011.

Following the surveys, USDA will remove Canada geese from areas where large populations of Canada geese are encountered 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 2010 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, JFK and Newark 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 between 700 and 800 Canada geese will be removed through these efforts in 2011. Removed geese will be transported and processed at an established facility in Pennsylvania, before being distributed to local food banks in Pennsylvania.

The Steering Committee started comprehensive measures in 2009 to reduce the potential hazard of Canada geese near airports. In the summer of 2009, the USDA removed 1,235 Canada geese from 17 selected City sites in 2009 and 1,676 from 19 selected sites in 2010. Of the 17 sites where geese were removed in 2009, nine of them were found to pose so low a risk that additional removals were not warranted in 2010. The average Canada geese population at LaGuardia had dropped by 80%. In 2010, capture-removal took place at 11 new sites. Surveys at these locations in the spring of 2011, as part of more than 90

total surveys, showed a 67% decrease in Canada goose presence, which represents a decreased hazard to aviation from those sites.

In addition to goose removal, the City has also employed a number of non-lethal measures to reduce the risk by filling a large geese-attracting depression on Rikers Island and installing and enforcing new signage prohibiting all feeding of animals in approximately 40 parks within a five-mile radius of LaGuardia and JFK airports. The Port Authority also employs a number of measures to reduce potential bird hazards on their own property.

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