

**Northeastern IPM Center  
Partnership Grants Program Final Report**

**A. Grant Data**

**Title:** *Developing the first regional IPM core training manual for wildlife control operators in the Northeast*

**Type:** Regional Publications

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**Cooperators:**

This manual was based on a New York State version (*Best practices for wildlife control operators*, published in June 2004) which was developed in partnership with:

- Lynn A. Braband, NYS IPM Program, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY
- Raj Smith, NYS IPM Program, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY
- Bill Altman, Broome Community College, Binghamton, NY
- NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Bureau of Wildlife:  
    Lou Berchielli, Gordon A. Batcheller, Steve Heerkens, Mark Kandel,  
    Ron Newell, Michael Putnam, and Scott Smith.

**State(s) involved:** New York

**Funding Year(s):** 2004-2005

**Funding amount:** \$10,000

**B. Nontechnical Summary.** An overview of the project, briefly outlining its context and key components, *written to a lay audience*. You should cover what you were funded to do, why, and who did it.

The American public places a high value on wildlife, yet at the same time, “nuisance” wildlife may cause formidable and expensive problems. Animals may damage property, threaten human health and safety, or endanger native species and habitats. Nearly all segments of society are vulnerable to wildlife damage.

Traditionally, government agencies handled many of these conflicts, but government support for on-site assistance has not kept pace with increasing public demand for wildlife control services. Consequently, the commercial pest control industry is filling this need. Several state wildlife agencies are facing increasing public pressure to strengthen their oversight of this rapidly expanding industry. More than three-quarters of the Northeastern states lack training programs for wildlife control operators (WCOs), while half either lack regulations or are in the process of developing regulations for this industry.

The goal of this project was to develop and distribute a comprehensive, scientifically-based IPM training manual (based on the New York curriculum) that could serve as the foundation for educational and regulatory programs throughout the region, while also enhancing professionalism within the wildlife control industry.

Dr. Paul D. Curtis (Dept. of Natural Resources, Cornell University) and Jill Shultz (Science Writer, NYS IPM Program, Cornell University) managed the revision process and acted as co-editors of the regional version.

**C. Objectives.** Restate your project objectives. After each objective, provide a brief (1-3 sentence) narrative about whether you've achieved it; if it was modified, mention how.

1. *Teach wildlife control operators in the Northeast the integrated pest management (IPM) approach to wildlife damage management, promoting best practices to enhance the professional standards of the wildlife control industry.*

Although the regional version has not yet been published, it's based on a proven text. The NY manual was validated before publication, as was its complementary test bank, which was developed under the guidance of an educational psychologist to ensure that the test measured the test-taker's understanding of IPM principles and best practices for wildlife control.

This new state certification exam has been administered for about a year. Approximately 80% of test-takers passed in 2004-2005, which required a grade of 80% or higher. This strongly suggests that the NY manual achieved its educational goals. We expect to see similar results with the regional edition.

We have been involved with ongoing discussions with the National Wildlife Control Operators Association (President, Tim Julien) to develop a short-course to accompany the manual. Working with Dr. Greg Yarrow from Clemson University, we piloted such a short course in South Carolina for about 40 WCOs. The course evaluations were very positive, and South Carolina is moving to adopt the curriculum as a requirement for professional WCOs, possibly in 2007. They will use the regional manual when it is published.

2. *Strengthen interstate collaboration among wildlife agencies and stakeholders.*

To generalize from the New York version and best ensure that the regional curriculum meets the diverse needs of wildlife control agencies throughout the region, we invited each state's wildlife agency and wildlife control association to evaluate the NY version, reflecting upon its usefulness for their state. Contributions of resources that would improve the regional manual were encouraged.

Manuscripts were distributed at the 60<sup>th</sup> annual Northeast Fish and Wildlife Conference in April 2004, during an open forum in which we invited participants to discuss their needs for educational materials for this audience. (Both print and compact disk versions were distributed). The session was attended by about a dozen administrators of state wildlife agencies, including some bureau chiefs, and a regional director of NWCOA, the National Wildlife Control Operators Association. Additional copies were given to anyone who expressed interest in reviewing the manuscript.

Although we'd planned to convene an editorial advisory board consisting of stakeholders from both groups, the evaluators' comments were minor, and mostly in accord. Project managers felt it would be unproductive to ask the bureau chiefs to travel for two days; when asked, stakeholders concurred, expressing confidence in the editors and a desire to see the production schedule minimized.

3. *Provide a comprehensive, scientifically-based, peer-reviewed training manual that satisfies a stakeholder-identified need, filling an important gap that would otherwise likely be addressed by each state individually.*

The 500-pg. regional manual describes the IPM decision-making model; a broad array of tools, techniques, and resources for wildlife control; and management strategies for approximately two-dozen species most commonly encountered in nuisance situations in the East. It also addresses legal, safety, and ethical issues related to wildlife control activities. Its publication is eagerly awaited by states such as NJ, PA, VA, and NY.

**D. Results.**

*Publications:* Please append a final printed version or, if not yet printed, append a proposed final draft.

2) Provide a brief explanation of how your publication was (or will be) distributed and a discussion of any unexpected events that seem noteworthy.

After negotiating with four publishers (NRAES, Oxford University Press, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and Thomson), the editors selected Thomson, an internationally-known textbook publisher. In addition to its excellent production

values, Thomson has the ability to develop additional teaching tools that would be of great interest to our stakeholders, such as on-line testing, instructor manuals, and DVDs. They have a skilled national sales force that will contact each state's wildlife agency to encourage the adoption of the regional edition.

Recognizing that this edition was made possible with support from the Northeastern IPM Center specifically to address regional concerns, Thomson has proposed an unexpectedly generous offer: they will sell 3,500 copies of the manual at a wholesale price (50% discount) to the wildlife agencies. This quantity should meet the needs of all of the Eastern states for several years. They will, however, pursue national sales.

During the past year, we have been working with Christina Gifford at Thomson on editing and production of the book. A revised version of the regional curriculum was sent out for national review by Thomson, and we are currently incorporating review comments. Permissions have been received for the necessary line drawing and photos that will be included in the book. We are negotiating with Thomson to add additional photos. We will also be working with Thomson to develop a new exam that will accompany the book when it is published.

In addition to Thomson's proposed distribution efforts, the editors sent copies of the draft manuscript to the IPM Director of each Northeastern state with a cover letter that suggested nontraditional audiences for the manual and possibilities for future projects that would build upon this reference work. We hope this will lead to interstate collaborations.

3) Fill out and append the feedback form, located at the end of "Guidelines for Center-funded Communications Projects," (see [http://northeastipm.org/pubs\\_guide.cfm](http://northeastipm.org/pubs_guide.cfm)).

**E. Impacts.** Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability:

1) How many publications were delivered? To whom?

Sixteen copies of the manuscript were mailed to the directors of IPM Programs in the Northeast in August 2005. CD copies have been provided to several state wildlife agencies for review (PA, NJ, MD, SC, VA, MA).

2) How many more people might adopt IPM practices as a result of your project?

The publisher anticipates national sales. Several Northeastern and Southern states have suggested they'll adopt the manual when it's published. We believe that within a few years, it will be in use throughout the nation, helping several thousand people adopt IPM each year.

3) Are there other ways in which your work might result in improved use or increased implementation of IPM strategies in the region?

If sales meet expectations, a second edition of the regional manual may be developed within five years. At that time, Thomson might develop a regional or national test bank, an instructor's manual, or other ancillary materials for students. None of those products currently exist; all would support the development of experiential educational programs for wildlife control operators.

The editors believe that workshops and vocational college courses in wildlife control based on this manual would increase IPM implementation in the East. The book will be promoted by the Internet Center for Wildlife Damage Management. Also, the curriculum will be available through the national e-Xtension Community of Practice on wildlife damage management.