

Fifth Avenue Dam/Olentangy River Restoration Project – Goose Damage Management

The problem: Now that the dam has been removed, the banks along the re-engineered Olentangy River channel require seeding and plantings of native grasses, bushes and trees to not only protect the banks from erosion, but also to provide additional slowing and filtration of stormwater before it enters the river. Some seeding and planting took place in 2013, but populations of non-migratory (resident) Canada geese moved in and consumed much of the seed and any new vegetation despite passive control efforts that included reflective Mylar strips and predator models (plastic coyotes). Besides an easy source of food, the area has another feature attractive to geese in that it currently lacks vegetation that can conceal potential predators.

The remedy: To temporarily prevent geese from nesting and establishing residence in this area, the city is working with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Wildlife Services program to discourage geese from remaining along the Olentangy River, between Fifth and Lane avenues. Besides continuing the previous passive efforts, to which many geese have now become accustomed, USDA personnel will employ additional strategies including flashing lasers toward the geese, and noisemakers that produce sounds similar to fireworks or a car backfiring, sirens and whistles. These noises, in addition to visual deterrents and physical barriers, potentially will be used within the project area from approximately 30 minutes prior to sunrise until 30 minutes after sunset and until the vegetation matures.

USDA representatives will be easily identifiable with brightly colored clothing, and they will be placing signage along the river corridor notifying the public of activities. They will conduct weekly surveys of the area, recording observations and gauging status and effectiveness of efforts.

Frequently asked questions

- **How many geese are residing in the area?** A: At this time, the USDA estimates there are an average of 100-150 geese residing in the river corridor; however, it has been noted that 250 or more geese have been in the area on multiple occasions.
- **How long will these efforts be ongoing?** A: These efforts are expected to be ongoing from March 2014 through December 2014; however, this may vary based on how quickly the vegetation matures throughout the corridor.
- **How were the tactics selected?** A: The USDA studied the corridor and recommended that no one tactic alone will discourage geese from remaining in the area, so an integrated plan with persistent application and regular evaluation has been recommended. The USDA has advised that the tactics in this plan have been widely used in other related integrated goose damage-prevention efforts and have been chosen to provide the greatest likelihood of discouraging geese from remaining in the area.
- **How frequent will the noise associated with the efforts occur?** A: According to the USDA, due to the complexity of the project, the flexibility of the schedules will be dictated by goose activity, which varies seasonally. Lasers and pyrotechnics will be conducted daily throughout the project (March-December) as needed, generally from about 30 minutes before sunrise to 30 minutes after sunset. USDA advises that initially, approximately 100 pyrotechnics that generate noise may be discharged daily; however, this number may decrease over time. Noise will also be more frequent in the first several hours of daylight and around dusk, though noise may be encountered throughout the day. The noise at any one time will be brief as it is intended to discourage geese from remaining in the area. Once the geese have departed, there is no need for further noise until they return.
- **What can I do to help?** A: You can assist by following the instructions posted on signage in the area, requesting that you not feed the geese or any other wildlife.