

NEW YORK STATE



WILDLIFE
REHABILITATION
COUNCIL

FY 2026 BUDGET TESTIMONY

Standing Committee on Environmental Conservation

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on issues pertaining to the New York State Wildlife Rehabilitation program. Founded in 1980, The New York State Wildlife Rehabilitation Council (NYSWRC) is the oldest statewide rehabilitation organization in the country. New York was one of the first states to give legal status for wildlife rehabilitation: "Aid to Distressed Wildlife", 11-0515, and the amendment allowing for the rehabilitation of rabies vector species (bats, skunks, raccoons).

NYSWRC has a long history of collaboration with NYSDEC establishing the process and protocols for a state wildlife rehabilitation license. Annually NYSWRC offers both virtual and in-person training for new and experienced rehabilitators led by experts. Most rehabilitators are volunteers and non-profit organizations that provide a service to the public by answering thousands of calls about distressed native wild animals and providing care for the sick, injured, orphaned, or displaced. This service includes hours of time educating the public and ensuring public safety when human and wildlife interactions occur. These services are free of charge to the public as required by law, but do come at considerable expense for the rehabilitator. By providing these services we are a resource for the Department and the community.

NYSWRC requests financial assistance from New York State, and the Department of Environmental Conservation, in two areas to better support wildlife rehabilitation:

- Provide financial assistance to individual licensed wildlife rehabilitators and non-profit organizations who house and care for wildlife confiscated by the Department of Environmental Conservation. Currently, these expenses are borne by the wildlife rehabilitator.
- Fund a program to offer pre-exposure rabies vaccinations for licensed wildlife rehabilitators. Prophylactic rabies vaccination is preferred to protect anyone caring for wild mammals, but it is a license requirement to obtain the Rabies

Vector Species License. The cost for these vaccinations is prohibitive and precludes many from obtaining this license. Raccoons are one of the most common orphan animal calls we receive. Currently, there is an extreme shortage of licensed Rabies Vector Species rehabilitators in the state. Without rehabilitators to respond to these calls, many animals go into the hands of the untrained and unlicensed public creating a health risk.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share this information today and for your dedication and commitment to the wildlife of New York State.

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