

Fish and Wildlife Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 19, 2025

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board held an in-person meeting at 5:00 pm on Wednesday, February 19, 2025, at the National Life Dewey Conference Room, 1 National Life Drive, Montpelier, VT 05620. A recording of the meeting is available on the department's YouTube channel.

Agenda

1. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (January 15, 2025)
2. Public Comments (Limited to 2-minutes per speaker)
3. 2024 Migratory Game Bird Season Preview – Preliminary Approval
4. Proposed Turkey Rule Changes – First Vote
5. 2024 Moose Season Recommendation – Preliminary Approval
6. Proposed Deer/Moose Regulation Changes – First Vote
7. Commissioner's Update

Board Members Present: Brian Bailey, Michael Bancroft (Acting Chair), Nicholas Burnham, Richard Craig, Beth Deimling, Neal Hogan, Paul Noel, Robert Patterson, Jay Sweeny

Virtual: David Deen, Brad Ferland, Allison Frazier, Linda Hook, Martin Van Buren

Department Staff Present: Interim Commissioner Andrea Shortsleeve, General Counsel Hannah Smith, Wildlife Division Director John Austin, Wildlife Management Program Manager David Sausville, Deer and Moose Project Leader Nick Fortin, Migratory Game Bird Project Leader Andrew Bouton, Game Warden Major Sean Fowler, Game Warden Lieutenant Mike Scott, Game Warden Sargent Jenna Reed, Game Warden Sargent Randy Hazard, Game Warden Sargent David Taddei, Game Warden Dustin Circe, Game Warden Trainee William Buckley, Principal Assistant Abigail Connolly

Virtual: Fish Division Director Eric Palmer, Director of Outreach Alison Thomas, Upland Game Bird Biologist Toni Mikula, Information Specialist John Hall, Information Program Manager Megan Duni

Members of the Public Present: Rod Coronado, Jordan Schroeder, Fred Schroeder, Chris Pritchard, Cassie Burdyslaw, Mike Covey, David Laskey

Virtual: Derek G, Travis George, Linda Huebner, Mark Green, Bubba, Gabe Tempesta

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm

Acting Chair Bancroft edited the agenda to 2025 Migratory Game Bird Season Preview – Preliminary Approval and 2025 Moose Season Recommendation – Preliminary Approval, instead of 2024 for both agenda items.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Board Member Patterson moved to approve the January 15, 2025 meeting minutes. Board Member Sweeny seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve the minutes (14-0).

Public Comment Period

Rod Coronado, Orange, regarding wildlife connectivity
Fred Schroeder, Bristol, regarding commercial fishing
Jordan Schroeder, Bristol, regarding commercial fishing

[The recording of the public comments and the meeting can be viewed here.](#)

2025 Migratory Game Bird Season Preview – Preliminary Approval

Andrew Bouton presented the 2025 migratory game bird season recommendations. The presentation and recommendations are included below. The Board Members asked questions about the resident Canada Geese season, Brant harvest in Vermont, the public survey responses, and participation in migratory game bird hunting. The Board voted by straw vote (14-0) to approve the recommendations as presented by the department. The next steps include public hearings, accepting public comment, and a final Board vote in April 2025.

Proposed Turkey Rule Changes – First Vote

David Sausville presented the proposed changes to the turkey rule, which are included below. Board Member Bancroft asked about the potential change to the turkey harvest and Toni Mikula explained it is expected to be minimal. Board Member Deen moved to begin rulemaking for the turkey rule, 10 V.S.A. Appendix §22, with the amendments presented by the department. Board Member Bailey seconded the motion. The Board voted by roll call (14-0) to approve the motion.

2025 Moose Season Recommendation – Preliminary Approval

Nick Fortin presented the 2025 moose season recommendation. The presentation and recommendation are included below. The Board Members asked questions about the impact of winter severity on moose population and winter ticks, the effects of climate change, brain worm, the effects of winter ticks by sex and age, the higher moose density in Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) C, the number of permits issued previously, how Vermont moose health compares to neighboring states, and the winter browse of moose and forest regeneration. The Board voted by

straw vote (14-0) to approve the recommendations as presented by the department. The next steps include public hearings, accepting public comment, and a final vote in April 2025.

The Board recessed for dinner at 6:15 pm and returned at 6:45 pm.

Proposed Deer/Moose Regulation Changes – First Vote

Nick Fortin reviewed the proposed changes to 10 V.S.A. Appendix §17, the rule governing the importation and possession of deer or elk from chronic wasting disease endemic areas and captive hunt or farm facilities. The presentation and proposed changes are included below. Board Member Deen asked if there are captive hunting facilities in Vermont and Nick Fortin explained that there are no captive hunting facilities in Vermont, but the rule applies to hunters going out of state to captive hunting facilities and importing carcasses back to Vermont. Board Member Sweeny moved to begin rulemaking for 10 V.S.A. Appendix §17 with the amendments presented by the department. Board Member Noel seconded the motion. The Board voted by roll call (14-0) to approve the motion.

Nick Fortin reviewed the proposed changes to 10 V.S.A. Appendix §33, the moose management rule. The proposed changes are included below. The substantive changes include establishing a special opportunity season and extending the regular season to 9 days instead of 6 days. The Board Members asked questions about establishing the season in rule, the number of special and lottery permits issued, language about honorable discharge, the Board's discretion around the number of permits issued, about whether the department could draw alternatives for the moose hunt in case of medical deferment, and the timing of the regular season. Board Member Patterson moved to begin rulemaking for 10 V.S.A. Appendix §33 with the amendments presented by the department and the addition of language in Section 4.2a extending the moose hunting season beginning in 2026, and edits to Section 18 clarifying issuance of Special Opportunity Moose permits. Board Member Sweeny seconded the motion. The Board voted by roll call (14-0) to approve the motion.

Nick Fortin reviewed the proposed changes to 10 V.S.A. Appendix §37, the deer management rule. The proposed changes are included below. The changes include establishing expanded archery zones, moving youth weekend back to the weekend before the regular season, reinstating the antler point restriction in WMU D1, allowing antlerless permits to be used during the regular season, removing the archery season closure during the regular season, allowing hunters to hold two antlerless permits, and allowing hunters to take a conditional second buck. The Board Members asked questions and discussed antler point restrictions, whether the changes affect over-browse by deer, allowing antlerless permits during the regular season, getting more data from allowing antlerless permits to be used during the regular season, the permit process, filling unallocated antlerless permits, and deer reporting requirements. Nick Fortin reviewed the proposed changes to the deer hunting tags. The Board Members asked questions and discussed allowing early muzzleloader season for buck harvest, how the changes provide more opportunities for archery hunters, the change allowing hunters to take a conditional second buck,

hunting license numbers, extending the regular season, whether allowing rifles during muzzleloader season for antlerless deer was considered, and whether the number of rifle antlerless permits for a zone has been established yet.

Board Member Bailey moved to begin rulemaking for 10 V.S.A. Appendix §37 with the amendments presented by the department. Board Member Burnham seconded the motion. The Board Members discussed whether to vote on the changes to the rule individually as opposed to the rule as a whole. The Board voted to approve the motion (13-1), with Board Member Ferland voting no, and Board Members Deen, Frazier, Hogan, Hook, and Van Buren noting their votes were procedural votes to initiate rulemaking.

Commissioner's Update

Commissioner Shortsleeve thanked Board Members Michael Bancroft, Brian Bailey, and Jay Sweeny for serving on the Board for the past six years and helping steward and manage Vermont's fish and wildlife. The Board Members each spoke to their experience on the Board and thanked the Department.

Motion To Adjourn:

The Board voted to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 pm.



2025 Migratory Game Bird Hunting Seasons and Bag Limit Recommendations

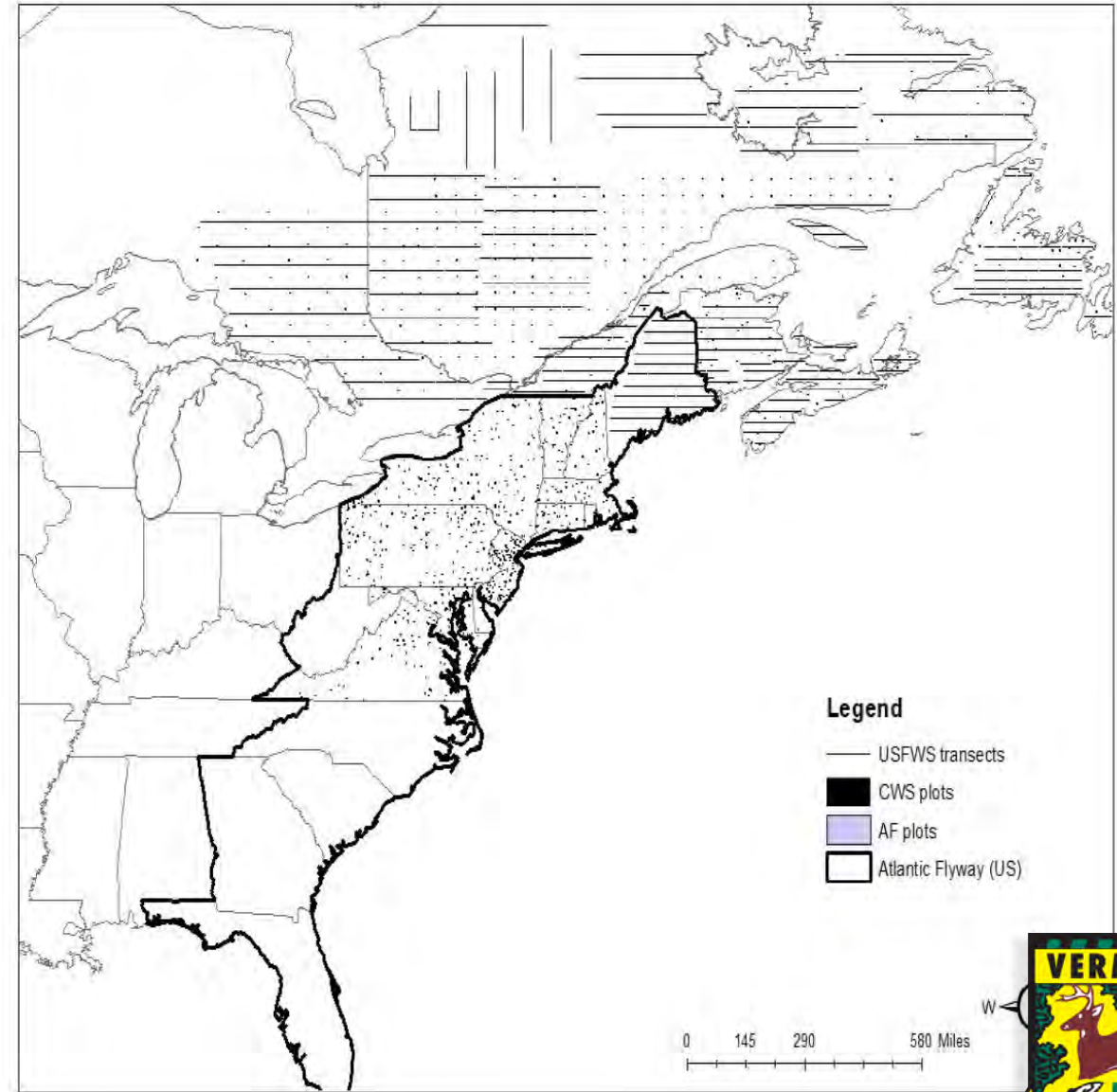
How are Migratory Game Birds Managed?

- Migratory in nature managed by the USFWS with input from states and stakeholders
- Four Flyways in the US
- Atlantic Flyway
 - Eastern States and Provinces including Vermont

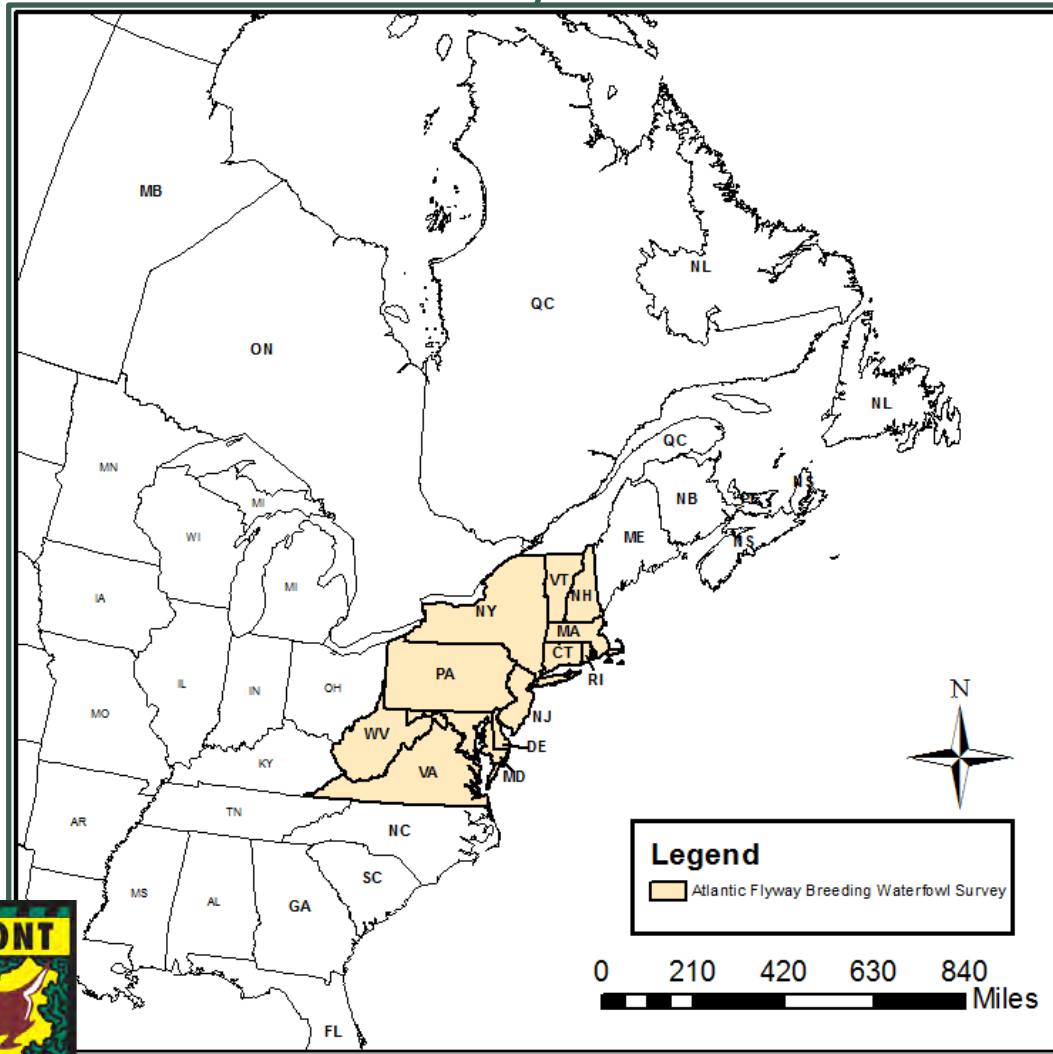


How do we Understand Populations?

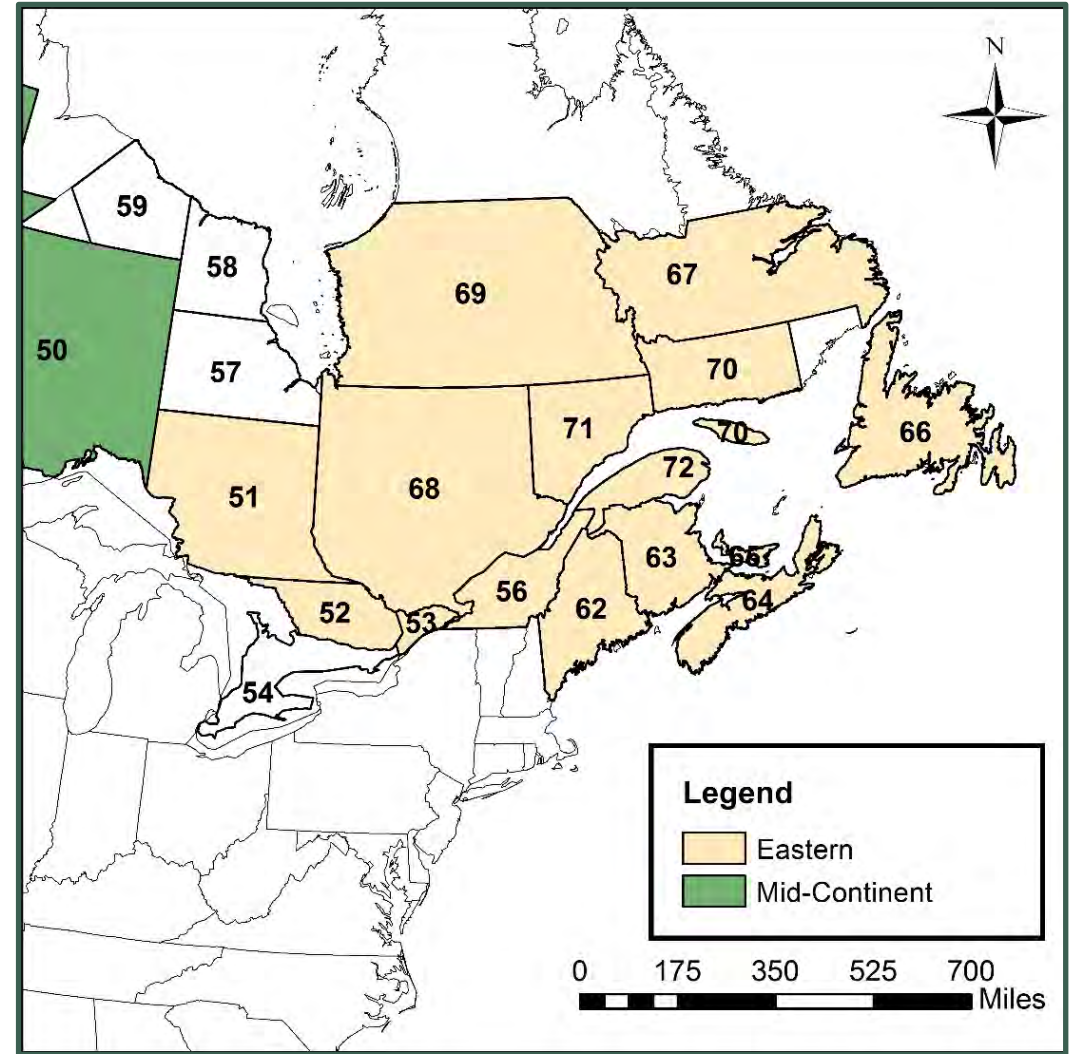
- Breeding surveys provide the best estimate of waterfowl abundance



Atlantic Flyway Breeding Waterfowl Survey Area

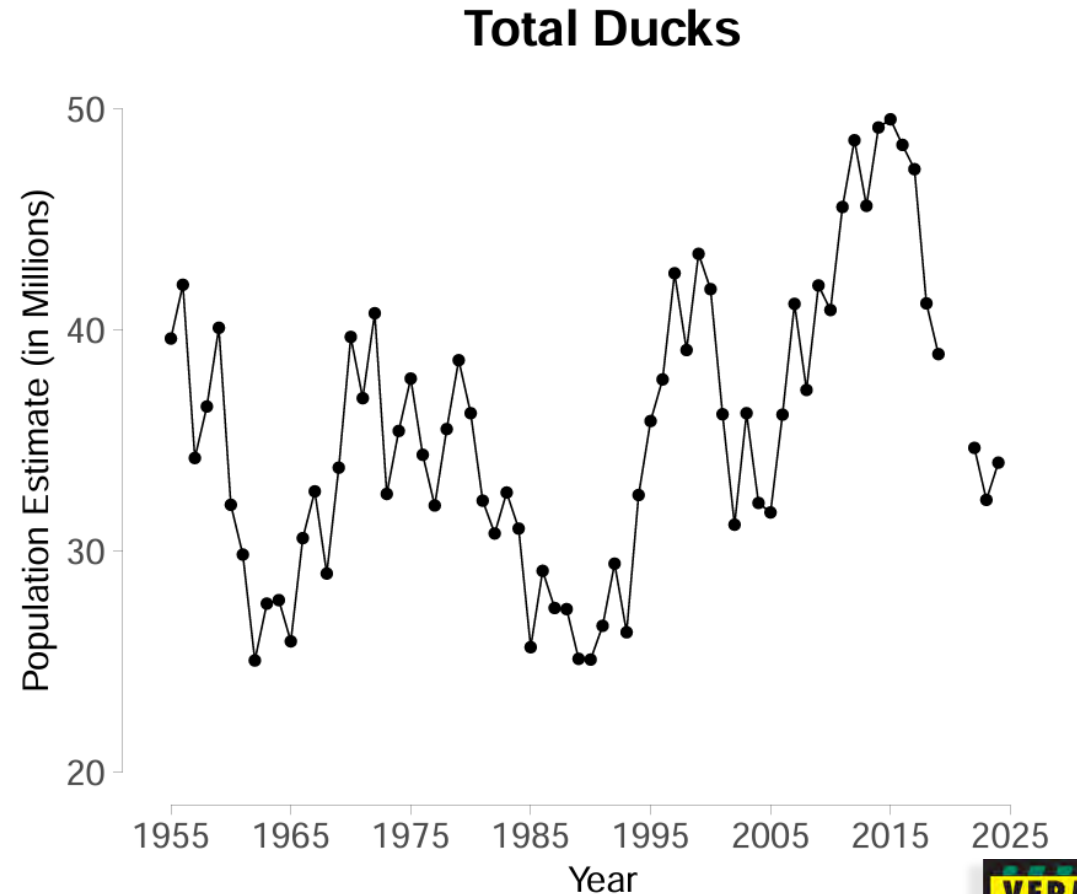


Eastern Survey Area



Duck Breeding Populations in Eastern Survey Areas

- 2024 breeding habitat conditions ranged from fair to excellent
- Mallard breeding pop. in AF decreased by 4% from 2023 and remains 9% below long-term avg.
- Total duck breeding pop. est. increased by 5% from 2023 and is 4% below the long-term avg. in the traditional survey area.



Vermont Waterfowl Production 2024

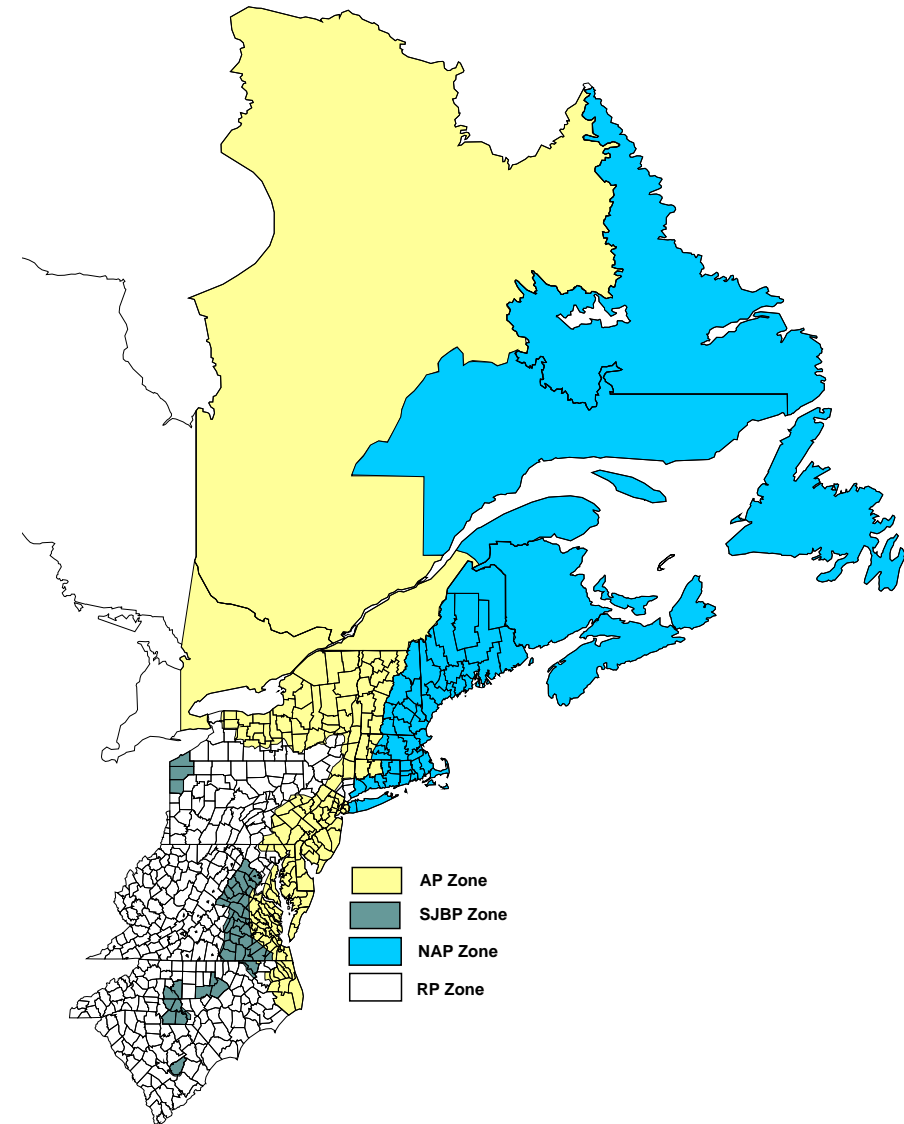
- Banding efforts and survey results indicated that the resident goose population was stable
- Overall duck production was good with good brood rearing cover in early spring, heavy rains in mid summer that turned to drought in late summer and early fall.
- Fall duck banding was successful at 4 banding sites (over 1300 total new bands)



Canada Goose Harvest Zones in the Atlantic Flyway

Three Subpopulations in VT

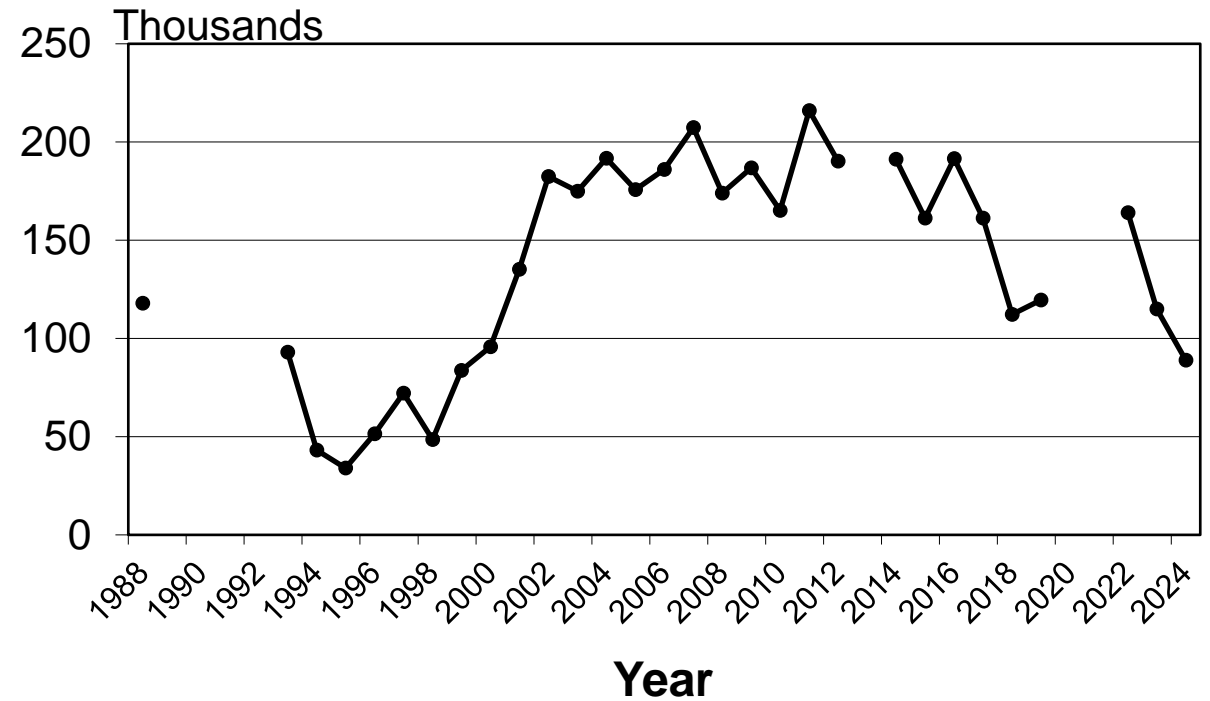
- Atlantic Population
- North Atlantic Population
- Resident



Atlantic Population Canada Geese Breeding pairs 1988-2024

~89,000 Breeding Pairs

Atlantic Population Canada Geese Breeding Pairs 1988-2024



Hunter Harvest Estimates

Three main methods of data collection


- Harvest Information Program
- Parts Collection Survey
- Hunter Diaries

Harvest Information Program (HIP)

Federal law requires migratory bird hunters to register with the Migratory Bird Harvest Information Program (HIP). Migratory game birds include: ducks, geese, brant, coots, snipe, and woodcock.

How do I register?

Registering is easy. You will be asked for your name, address, date of birth and a brief summary of last year's hunting activity. There is **no charge** for a HIP registration number.



There are two ways to get a HIP registration number:

1. Get your HIP number by registering online.
2. Call 1-877-306-7091 Monday Friday, 7:45 am to 4:30 pm EST. A live operator will give you a HIP registration number.

You must write the HIP registration number in the Harvest Information Program section of your hunting license.

Permanent or lifetime license holders should print the response form with your HIP registration number and carry it with you while hunting migratory birds.

Please remember Vermont and federal migratory waterfowl stamps are also needed to hunt ducks or geese, if you are 16 years old or older.

Hunters must re-register annually.

Forgot your HIP registration number?

look up your h.i.p. registration number

Hunt

- White-tailed Deer
- Black Bear
- Moose
- Wild Turkey
- Small Game
- Upland Game Birds
- Waterfowl
 - Harvest Information Program (HIP)
- Furbearers and Trapping
- Seasons
- Hunter Education
- Hunting Regulations
- Youth Hunting
- Find A Place To Hunt
- Shooting Ranges

Quick Links

- Buy a License
- Migratory Bird Hunting Regulations



Vermont Waterfowl Hunting and Harvest Data Comparisons

	No. of Active Adult Duck Hunters	Average Seasonal Duck Bagged Per Hunter	Total Season Estimated Duck Harvest	Total Season Estimated Canada Goose Harvest	Total Season Estimated Snow Goose Harvest	Vermont Duck Stamp Sales
2012	2,100	10.0	20,500	8,600	34	5,882
2013	4,000	8.0	31,900	9,600	0	6,436
2014	2,600	6.8	17,800	12,300	46	6,635
2015	2,800	5.8	14,700	6,733	30	6,244
2016	3,400	5.2	17,600	8,800	0	6,016
2017	2,500	7.9	19,900	15,900	0	5,954
2018	2,100	7.8	16,200	7,400	0	5,725
2019	3,000	6.1	18,100	5,600	0	5,620
2020	2,200	9.0	19,900	11,800	116	6,089
2021	2,000	6.4	11,500	5,600	0	6,111
2022	1,900	7.8	14,500	15,683	107	5,956
2023	3,600	7.2	26,100	12,900	119	6,067



Controlled Hunting Areas 2025

Mud Creek Controlled Hunt Area

- Tuesday, Thursday & Saturday
- First two hunting days by lottery and blinds will be assigned
- Self registration after first two days

Dead Creek Goose Management Area

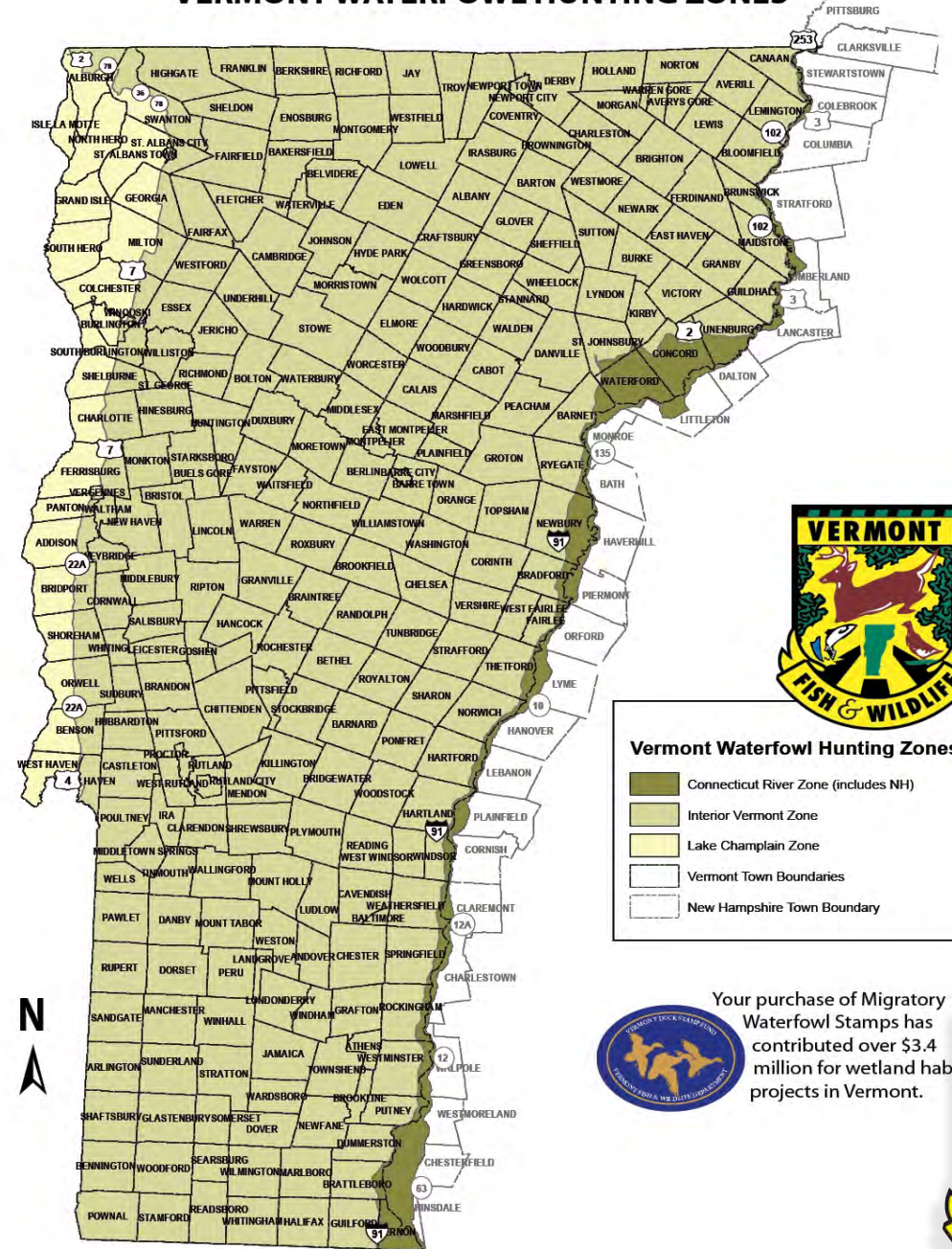
- Tuesdays and Thursdays (and One Friday for youth hunters)
- 5 Hunting Zones
- Hunters supply their own blinds
- All sites are by lottery and zones will be assigned
- All hunting is self registration beginning 1.5 hours prior to shooting
- Currently reviewing potential changes



Vermont Waterfowl Hunting Zones

- Lake Champlain Zone (LCZ)
 - Shared with NY set by VT
- Interior Vermont Zone (IVZ)
 - Entirely in VT
- Connecticut River Zone (CRZ)
 - Shared with NH set by NH

VERMONT WATERFOWL HUNTING ZONES*

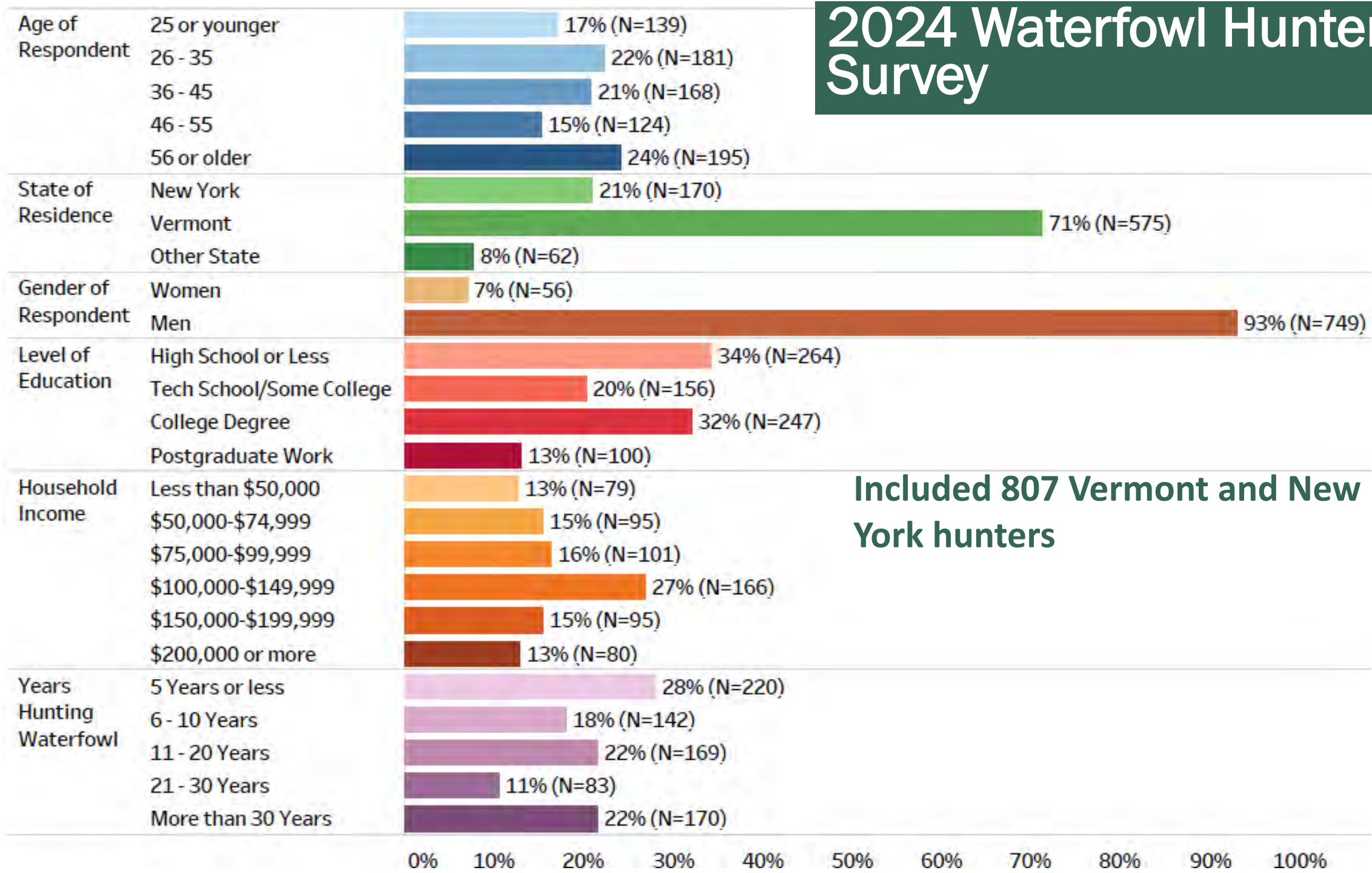


Your purchase of Migratory Waterfowl Stamps has contributed over \$3.4 million for wetland habitat projects in Vermont.



2025 Hunting Seasons and Bag Limit Recommendations

2024 Waterfowl Hunter Survey



Included 807 Vermont and New York hunters

Woodcock Season Recommendation

Federal Framework:

Season Length: 45 days

Outside Dates: Sept. 13- Jan. 31

Daily Bag limit: 3/day

Recommendation:

Season Length: 45 days

Dates: Sept. 27 – Nov. 10

Daily Bag Limit: 3/day



Snipe Season Recommendation

Federal Framework:

Season Length: 107 days

Outside Dates: Sept. 1- Jan. 31

Daily Bag Limit: 8/day

Recommendation:

Length: 45 days

Dates: Sept. 27 – Nov. 10

Daily Bag Limit: 8/day



September Early Resident Canada Goose Hunting Season Recommendations

Federal Framework:

Season Length: 25 days

Outside Dates: Sept 1-25

Limit: 15/day

Recommendation:

Season Length: 25 days

LCZ, IVZ and CRZ

Dates: Sept. 1 - 25

Daily Bag Limit: 8/day LCZ and IVZ

5/day CRZ



Migratory AP Canada Goose Hunting Season

Federal Framework:

Season Length: 30 days

Outside Dates: Oct. 10 – Feb. 5

Daily Bag Limit: 1/day

Recommendation:

Season Length: 30 days

LCZ and IVZ

Dates: Oct. 11 – Nov. 9

Daily Bag Limit: 1/day



Late Resident Canada Goose Hunting Season Recommendations

Federal Framework:

Season Length: 77 days

Outside Dates: Dec. 1 – Feb. 15

Daily Bag Limit: 5/day

Recommendation:

Season Length: 50 days

LCZ and IVZ

Dates: Dec. 1 – Jan. 19

Daily Bag Limit: 5/day LCZ and IVZ



Greater Snow Goose Hunting Season

Federal Framework:

Season Length: 107 days

Outside Dates: Oct. 1 – March 10

Daily Bag Limit: 25/day

Recommendation:

Dates: Oct. 1 - Dec. 31, 2025 (92 days)

Feb. 26 – Mar. 10, 2026 (13 days)

Mar. 11 – Apr. 25, 2026(CO:40 days)

Daily Bag Limit: 25/day Regular

15/day Conservation Order

Possession limit: No limit



Atlantic Brant Hunting Season Recommendation

Federal Framework:

Season Length: 30 days

Outside Dates: Sept. 23 – Jan. 31

Daily Bag Limit: 1/day

Recommendation:

Season Length: 30 days

LCZ and IVZ

Dates: Oct. 11 – Nov. 9

Daily Bag Limit: 1/day



Jim McKnight



Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days

Federal Framework:

Season Length: 2 days

Outside Dates: Within 2 weeks of either end of the allowable hunting days

Recommendation:

Season Length: 2 days

LCZ, IVZ, and CRZ

Dates: Sept. 27 & 28

Legal Species: Ducks, geese, mergansers, and coots.

Other Requirements:

Youth hunter must be accompanied by an adult at least 18 years old, Adult may assist in calling, setting decoys, retrieving downed birds



Figure 12b: Prefer opening day of duck hunting season - By Zone Hunted In

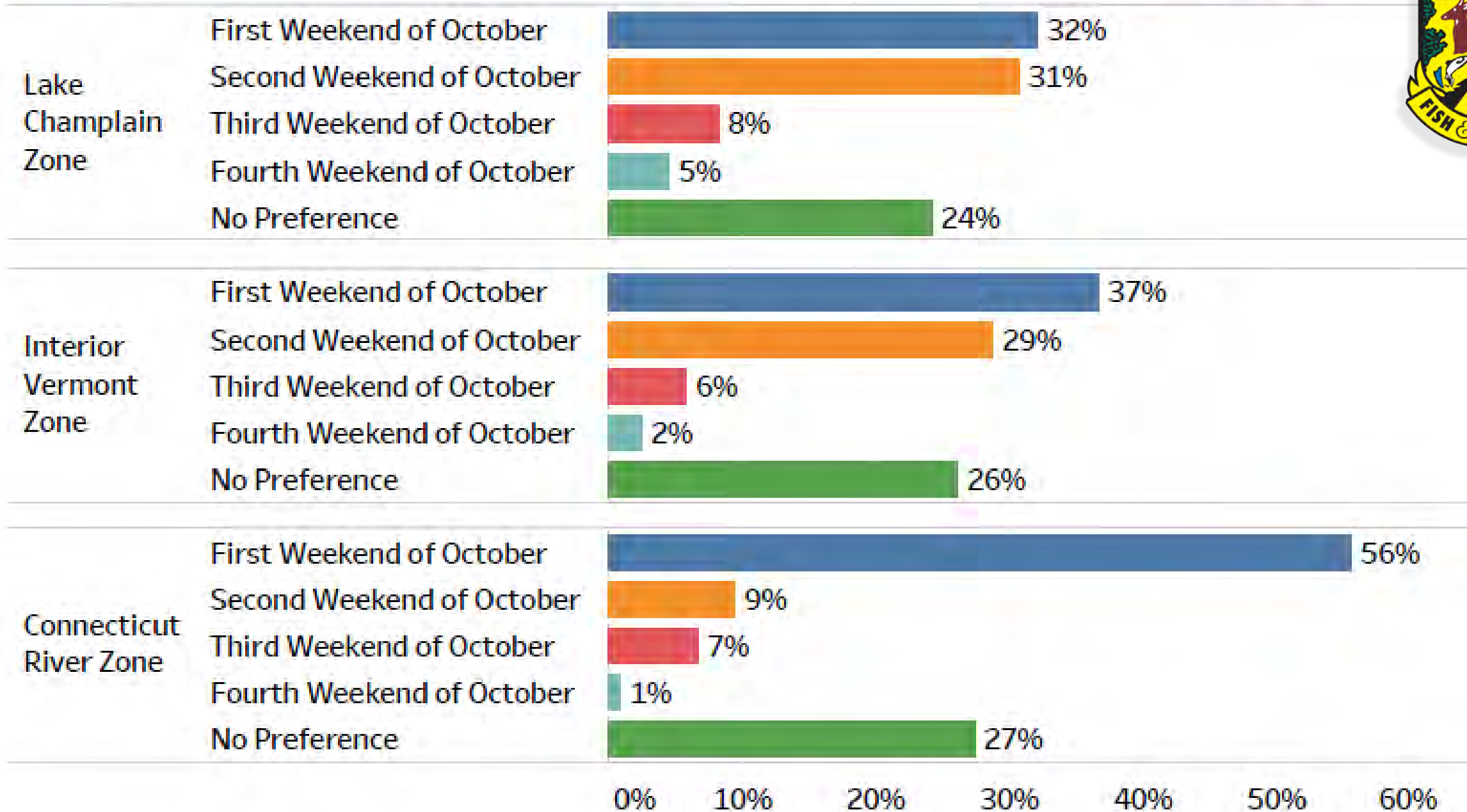
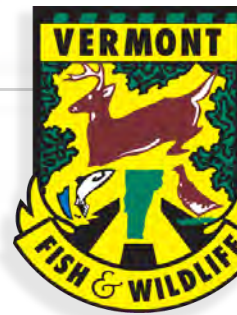




Figure 15b: Preferred month to have the most duck hunting days open - By Zone Hunted In

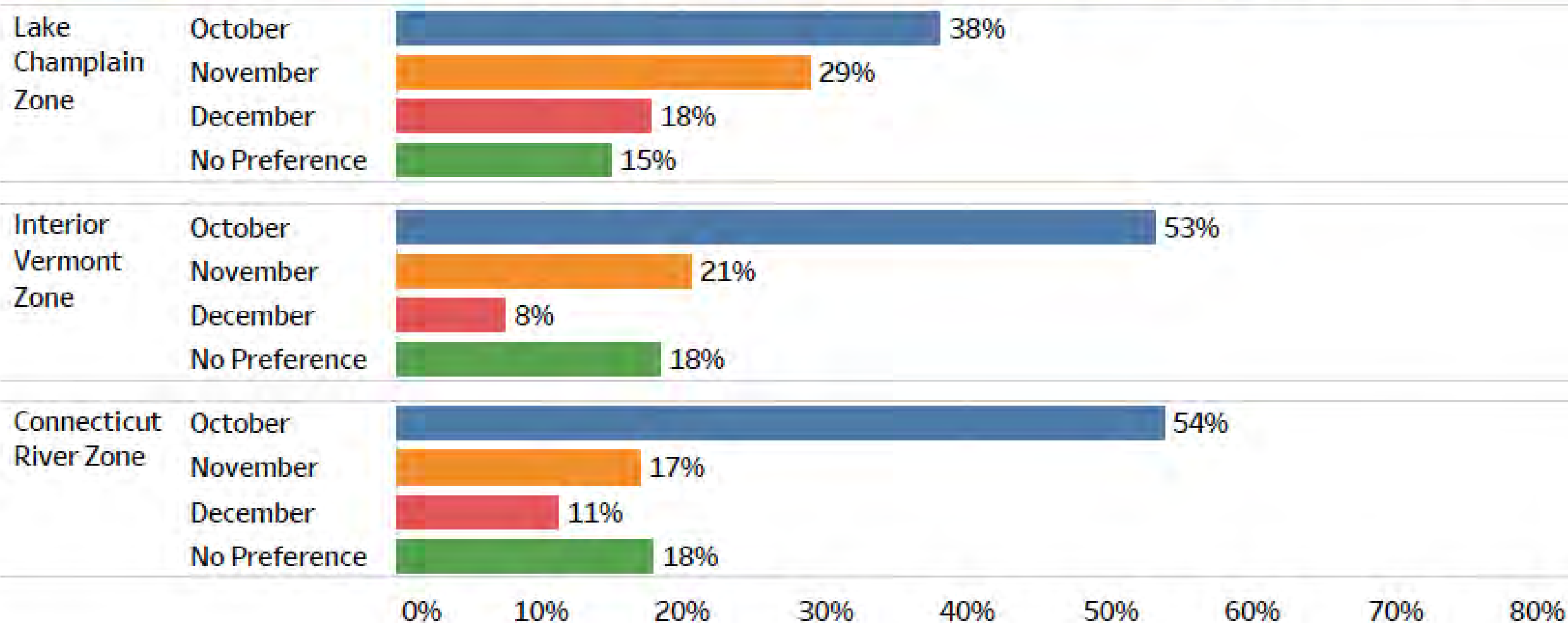




Figure 16b: Prefer a straight or split duck season - By Zone Hunted In

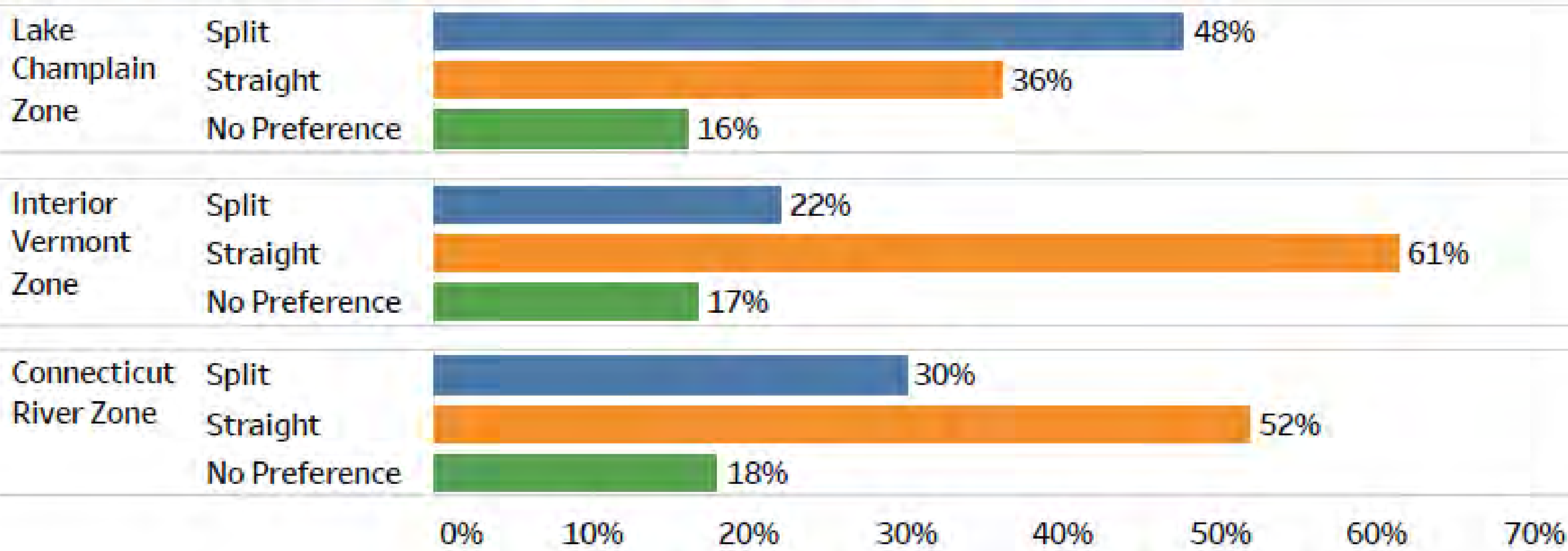
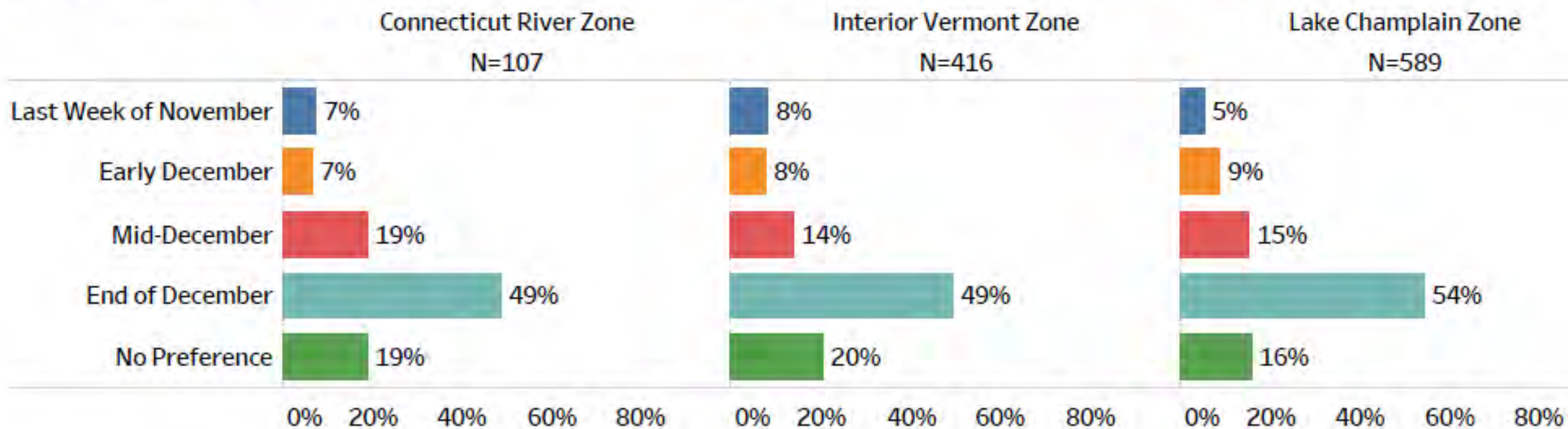




Figure 18b: If the duck season is split, preference for the end date of the season - By Zone Hunted In



Duck Hunting Season Recommendations

Federal Frameworks:

Season length: 60 days

Outside Dates: Sept. 21 – Jan. 31

Daily Bag Limit: 6/day

Recommendation:

Season Dates:

IVZ: Oct. 11 – Dec. 9 (60 days)

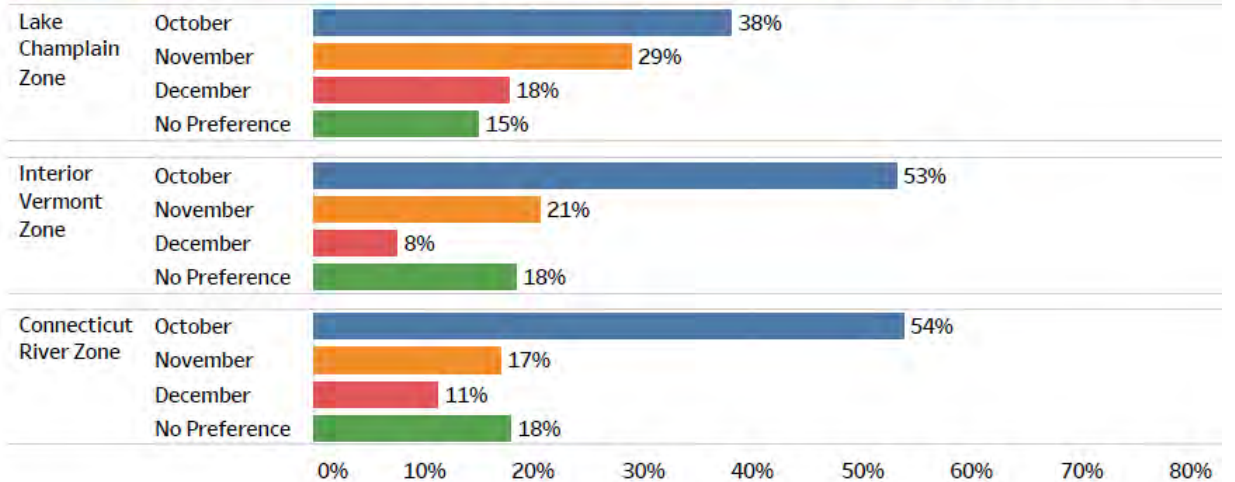
LCZ: Oct. 11 – Nov. 23 (44 days)

Dec. 13 – Dec. 28 (16 days)

Daily Bag Limit: 6/day

Daily bag may include no more than, 4 Mallards (2 hens), 3 Wood Ducks, 2 Canvasback, 2 Redheads, 1/40 & 2/20 Scaup, 3 Pintail, 2 Black Duck, 3 Sea Ducks (No more than 3 Scoters, 3 Eiders (1 hen), 3 Long-tailed duck, and no Harlequin).

Figure 15b: Preferred month to have the most duck hunting days open - By Zone Hunted In



Merganser Hunting Season Recommendations

Federal Frameworks:

Season length: 60 days

Outside Dates: Sept. 21 – Jan. 31

Daily Bag Limit: 5/day

Recommendation:

Season Dates:

IVZ: Oct. 11 – Dec. 9 (60 days)

LCZ: Oct. 11 – Nov. 23 (44 days)

Dec. 13 – Dec. 28 (16 days)

Daily Bag Limit: 5/day



Falconry Season

Recommendation:

Season Dates: Coincides with established seasons for each migratory bird species.

Legal Species: All legal migratory game bird species which have a current open season in Vermont (woodcock, snipe, ducks, geese, mergansers, and coots)

Shooting Hours: Same as established open seasons for each migratory game bird species.

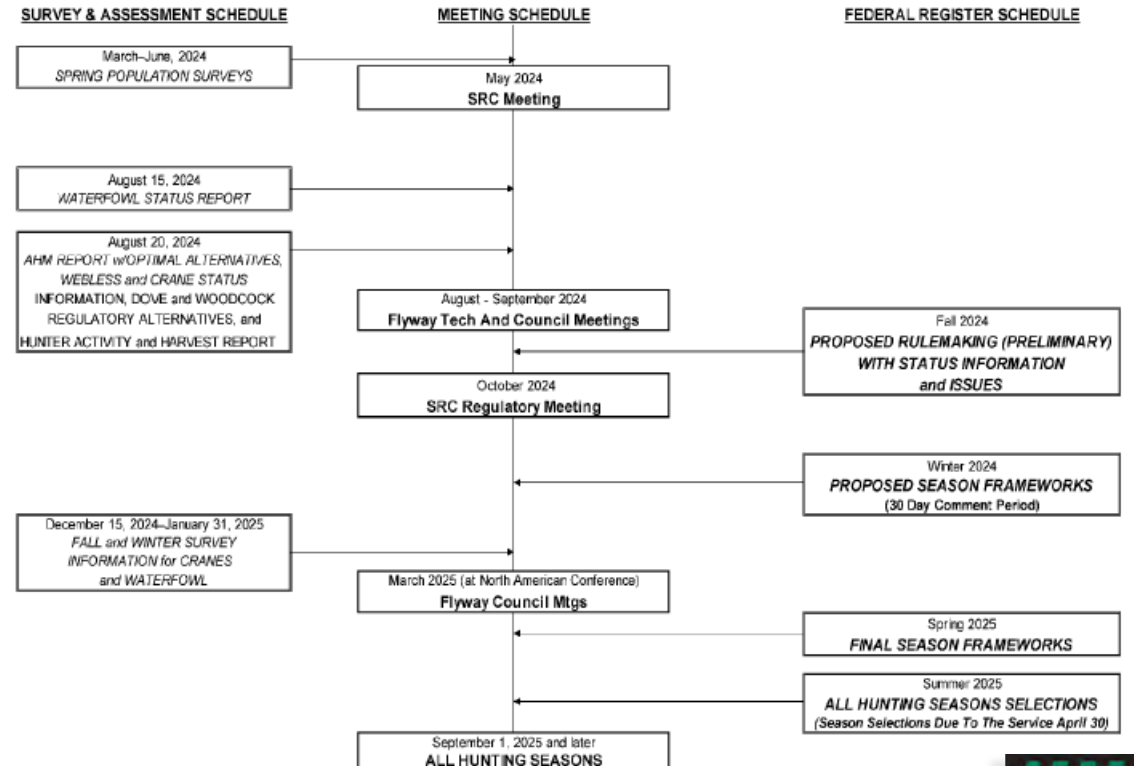
Bag Limit: Three (3) migratory game birds; singly or in an aggregate of species, but not to exceed established restrictions which currently exist.



Regulation Setting/Next Steps

- Presentation to Board (Feb 2025)
- FW Board 1st Vote Feb. 19
- Rulemaking Process (Feb. – April 2025)
 - Post Online and Publish in Newspapers (Feb. 2025)
 - Hold Public Hearings (in-person and video posted on website, March 2025)
 - Whitehall, NY, March 11, 2025
 - Essex Jct., VT, March 13, 2025
 - Final FW Board Vote (April 2025)
 - Commissioner signs off on season selection (April)
 - Submitted to USFWS by April 30, 2025
 - Posted in federal register
- Release of Syllabus August 2025

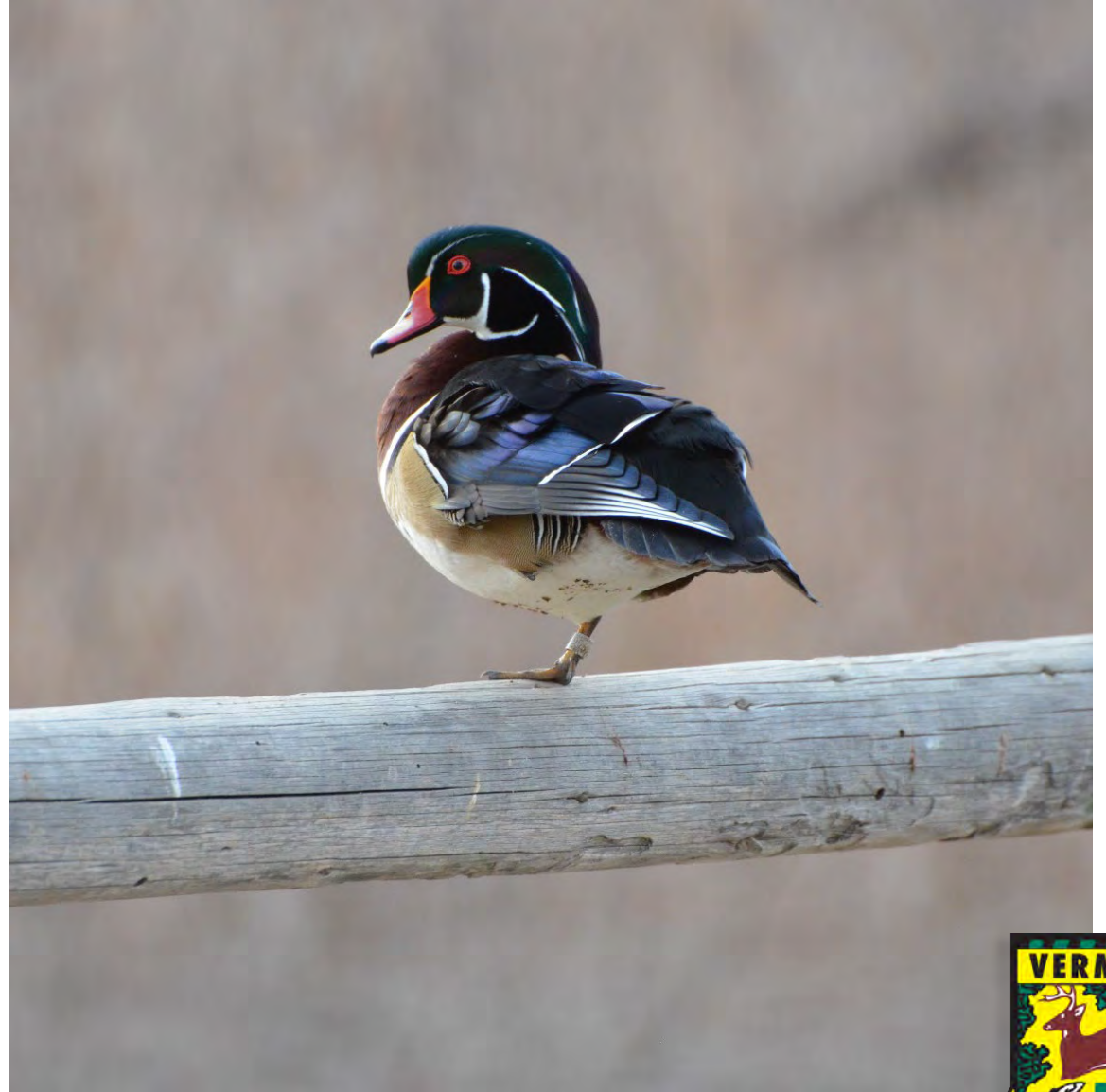
SCHEDULE^(a) OF BIOLOGICAL INFORMATION AVAILABILITY, REGULATIONS MEETINGS AND FEDERAL REGISTER PUBLICATIONS FOR THE 2025–26 HUNTING SEASON



(a) All publication dates of Federal Register documents are target dates.



Questions?



2025 Migratory Game Bird Season Recommendations

to the

Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board



Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department
Agency of Natural Resources
1 National Life Drive, Davis 2
Montpelier, VT 05620-3208
802-828-1000

2025 MIGRATORY GAME BIRD SEASON PREVIEW

Summary of Issues for Consideration:

The majority of Vermont's waterfowl season is driven by the federal framework for the Atlantic Flyway. Below are a few issues that must be decided for the 2025 hunting season. The Department would like the Board to consider the following:

- Hold the liberal season allowed under the federal framework related to season lengths and daily bag limits.
- For the 2025 Duck Season.
 - Open the 2025 duck season on a Saturday, October 11.
 - Interior Zone: October 11 and run through December 9.
 - Lake Champlain Zone: October 11 – Nov. 23 and Dec. 13 - Dec. 28
- For the 2025 Goose Seasons
 - Open the resident Canada goose season September 1st and continue through September 25.
 - Open the migratory Canada goose season on October 11 and run through November 9.
 - Open the late resident Canada goose on December 1, 2025. End the season on January 19, 2026. Allow a five-bird daily bag limit. Within the Lake Champlain and Interior zones.
 - Open the Snow goose season on October 1.
- Hold youth hunting weekend – September 27-28.
- Open the Atlantic Brant season on Oct. 11 and run through Nov. 9
- Hold woodcock/snipe season: September 27- November 10.

2025 Waterfowl and Migratory Game Bird Season Proposals:

The Department makes these 2025 recommendations based on results from the 2024 Waterfowl Hunters survey, comments received from waterfowl hunters in recent years, data collected on availability of various waterfowl species in Vermont, including eBird, internal discussions among Vermont Wildlife Biologists and State Game Wardens, and frameworks provided by the USFWS.

Table 1.

2025-2026 WATERFOWL SEASON RECOMMENDATION

LAKE CHAMPLAIN ZONE

	<u>SEASON TYPE</u>	<u>SEASON LENGTH</u>	<u>INCLUSIVE DATES</u>	<u>DAILY LIMIT</u>	<u>POSSESSION LIMIT</u>
DUCKS *	Split	60 Days	<u>Oct. 11 – Nov. 23</u> <u>& Dec. 13 - Dec. 28</u>	6	18
SCAUP*	Split	40 Days	<u>Oct. 11–Nov. 19</u>	1	3
	Hybrid	20 Days	<u>Nov. 20 – Nov. 23</u> <u>& Dec. 13 – Dec. 28</u>	2	6
MERGANSERS *	Split	60 Days	<u>Oct. 11 – Nov. 23</u> <u>& Dec. 13 - Dec. 28</u>	5	15
COOTS	Split	60 Days	<u>Oct. 11 - Nov. 23</u> <u>& Dec. 13 - Dec. 28</u>	15	45
GEESE					
Canada Geese	Straight	25 Days	<u>Sept. 1 - Sept. 25</u>	8	24
	Straight	30 Days	<u>Oct. 11 – Nov. 9</u>	1	3
	Straight	50 Days	<u>Dec. 1 – Jan. 19</u>	5	15
Snow Geese *	Split	105 Days	<u>Oct. 1 - Dec. 31, 2025</u> <u>Feb. 24 – Mar. 10, 2026</u>	25	NONE
	Straight (CO)		<u>Mar. 11 – Apr. 25, 2026</u>	15	NONE
Brant	Straight	30 Days	<u>Oct. 11 – Nov. 9</u>	1	3

SHOOTING HOURS - All Waterfowl - All Days - ½ hour before sunrise to sunset

CO: Conservation Order

* Includes blue geese also.

Table 2.

2025-2026 WATERFOWL SEASON RECOMMENDATION**VERMONT INTERIOR ZONE**

	<u>SEASON TYPE</u>	<u>SEASON LENGTH</u>	<u>INCLUSIVE DATES</u>	<u>DAILY LIMIT</u>	<u>POSSESSION LIMIT</u>
DUCKS *	Straight	60 Days	<u>Oct. 11 - Dec. 9</u>	6	18
SCAUP*	Straight	40 Days	<u>Oct. 11 – Oct. 19</u>	1	3
		20 Days	<u>Oct. 20 – Dec. 9</u>	2	6
MERGANSERS *	Straight	60 Days	<u>Oct. 11 - Dec. 9</u>	5	15
COOTS	Split	60 Days	<u>Oct. 11 - Dec. 9</u>	15	45
GEESE					
Canada Geese	Straight	25 Days	<u>Sept. 1 - Sept. 25</u>	8	24
	Straight	30 Days	<u>Oct. 11 – Nov. 9</u>	1	3
	Straight	50 Days	<u>Dec. 1 – Jan. 19</u>	5	15
Snow Geese *	Split	105 Days	<u>Oct. 1 - Dec. 31, 2025</u>	25	NONE
	Straight (CO)		<u>Feb. 24 – Mar. 10, 2026</u> <u>Mar. 11 – Apr. 25, 2026</u>		
Brant	Straight	30 Days	<u>Oct. 11 – Nov. 9</u>	1	3

SHOOTING HOURS - All Waterfowl - All Days - ½ hour before sunrise to sunset

CO: Conservation Order

* Includes blue geese also.

Table 3.

2025-2026 VERMONT MIGRATORY GAME BIRD HUNTING SEASONS
(regulations in effect September 1, 2025 through April 19, 2026)

Species	<u>Lake Champlain Zone</u>	Interior Vermont Zone	Connecticut River Zone
Ducks, Coots and Mergansers	Oct. 11 – Nov. 23 Dec. 13 – Dec. 28	Oct. 11 – Dec. 9	Oct. ? – Nov. ? Nov. ? – Dec. ?
Canada Geese	Sept. 1 – Sept. 25 Oct. 11 – Nov. 9 Dec. 1 – Jan. 19	Sept. 1 – Sept. 25 Oct. 11 – Nov. 9 Dec. 1 – Jan. 19	Sept. ? – Sept. ? Oct. ? – Nov. ? Nov. ? – Dec. ?
Snow Geese (includes blue geese)	Oct. 1 - Dec. 31, 2025 Feb. 26 - Mar. 10, 2026 Mar. 11 – Apr 25, 2026	Oct. 1 - Dec. 31, 2025 Feb. 26 - Mar. 10, 2026 Mar. 11 – Apr 25, 2026	Oct. ? – Dec. ?
Brant	Oct. 11 – Nov. 9	Oct. 11 – Nov. 9	Oct. ? – Oct. ?
Woodcock	Statewide		
		Sept. 27 – Nov. 10	
Snipe	Statewide		
		Sept. 27 – Nov. 10	

Youth Waterfowl Hunting Weekend – September 27 & 28

BAG LIMITS

The daily bag limit is the maximum number of birds of each species that any person may take (or possess in the field) during any one day. The possession limit is three times the daily bag limit for all waterfowl species except snow geese.

<u>Species</u>	<u>Daily Limit</u>	<u>Possession Limit</u>
Ducks *	6	18
Mergansers	5	15
Coot	15	45
Canada Geese		
September season		
Lake Champlain Zone	8	24
Interior Vermont Zone	8	24
Connecticut River Zone	5	15
Oct. - Nov. season		
Lake Champlain Zone	1	3
Interior Vermont Zone	1	3
Connecticut River Zone	2	6
Dec. – Jan. season		
Lake Champlain Zone	5	15
Interior Vermont Zone	5	15
Snow Geese	25	No limit
Mar. 11 – Apr. 25, 2026	15	No limit
Brant	1	3
Woodcock	3	9
Snipe	8	24

* The daily limit of 6 ducks may include no harlequin, and no more than 4 mallards (only 2 of which may be hens), 2 black ducks, 3 wood ducks, 3 pintail, 2 canvasbacks, 2 redheads, 2 or 1 scaup depending on dates, 3 Sea ducks including no more than 3 scoters, 3 eiders (1 of which may be a hen), and 3 long-tailed duck.

Background On Waterfowl Season Setting and Management:

Migratory game bird managers currently base the migratory bird population estimates and recommendations on predictions derived from long-term biological information and harvest strategies instead of current year surveys. In 2018 the Atlantic Flyway region implemented a Multi-Stock Adaptive Harvest Management Strategy based on a suite of four duck species that represent the population dynamics and various habitat types used by waterfowl throughout the flyway, in lieu of relying solely upon the status of eastern mallards. The four species include green-winged teal, common goldeneye, ring-necked ducks, and wood ducks. These species compose more than 40% of the harvest within the flyway and supply a sufficient time series of estimates of annual abundance, harvest rates and harvest to monitor population trends. This was necessary because one species, the mallard, was driving all the seasons, which had an effect on multiple species. Within this system, species of concern such as mallard and black duck are evaluated separately with an assessment under the adaptive harvest management strategies developed for the target species. The objectives are to sustain duck populations for all and to allow harvest where appropriate. The estimates allow for a liberal season of 60 days with a 6-bird bag limit. Species specific bag limits follow their respective harvest strategies, with the majority of species bag limits being the same as last year.

Tables 4 and 5 provide background information on past migratory game bird hunting seasons. Table 4 shows the hunting seasons approved during 2024 and is provided as a reference while considering bag limits and the seasons frameworks for 2025. Appendix A provides the history, 1942-2024, of Vermont's waterfowl seasons broken down into season type, season length, dates, and bag limits. This may help one's understanding of how Vermont arrived at our current zones and season types.

Table 5 provides a historic look at waterfowl hunter participation and estimated harvest levels, Vermont waterfowl stamps sold, and the number of individuals that registered with the Harvest Information Program (HIP). HIP is a method used to generate more reliable estimates of hunting activity and number of all migratory game birds harvested. The HIP program numbers include youth and adult waterfowl hunters, woodcock, and snipe hunters. Only adult waterfowl hunters, 16 years of age and older, are required to purchase the state waterfowl stamp. The Department will populate the remaining portions of the table this summer after the USFWS examines wings collected randomly from last season's hunters and harvest estimates are completed.

Vermont currently has three waterfowl zones (Figure 1):

- Lake Champlain Zone that we share with New York. Vermont sets the dates for this zone.
- Interior Zone that is entirely within Vermont.
- Connecticut River Zone that we share with New Hampshire. New Hampshire sets the dates for this zone as an extension of their inland zone.

Under Vermont's current three zones, Vermont can split any zone once to create two hunting segments. Vermont currently has sixty days to divide between the two segments in an effort to accommodate the diverse desires of the variety of Vermont waterfowl hunters. The zones were also set up to take into consideration the differences in the physiographic regions of the state and

the climatic differences each has. Federal regulations allow for zone and split changes every five years. Vermont's next opportunity to adjust zone boundaries and splits is in 2025. Any changes will take effect in the 2026-2031 season and be in effect for 5-years.

2025 Migratory Game Bird Seasons:

Tables 6 and 7 provide the expected USFWS season frameworks for the 2025 duck and goose seasons, respectively, the latter including other migratory game birds as well. Potential changes from 2024 hunting seasons are shown on Table 4.

2025 Duck Season: The 2025 duck season options allow the opportunity to utilize a 60-day season within the dates of September 20, 2025 to January 31, 2026. The allowed daily bag limit is six birds, with species specific limits listed on Table 6. Vermont may allow a possession limit of 18 ducks total. The Board may be more restrictive on the length of the season and bag limits if desired, but the Board cannot set regulations more liberal. The Department recommends taking the liberal hunting option allowed under the federal framework.

The Board has also traditionally held the youth waterfowl weekend the last weekend in September. The Department has withheld any fishing tournament permits for that weekend to reduce conflicts between anglers and youth waterfowlers. The youth weekend must be within 14 days of either end of the federal framework dates.

2025 Goose, Brant, Mergansers, Coots, Snipe, and Woodcock Seasons: Table 7 lays out the season options for geese, brant, mergansers, coots, snipe, and woodcock. The available season lengths, outside dates for the seasons, daily bag limits and possession limits are broken down by species.

We often receive requests to open the migratory Canada goose season in early October. We are not allowed to open the season on migratory Canada geese until October 10th to reduce hunting pressure on the Atlantic population that is flying through the state. Prior to 2010 we were unable to open the season until October 20th. This change came about because of efforts pursued by Vermont and some other New England states. Breeding pairs in 2024 totaled 89,000 decreasing from 2023's total of 115,000 a decrease of 23%. The integrated population model predicts that breeding pairs will increase to 133,500 in 2025.

The Brant Hunt Plan and Harvest Strategy were revised in 2020. The revised plan uses an Integrated Population Model (IPM) to generate a prediction of the brant population. This model prediction will be used in place of the mid-winter survey estimate to determine the annual hunting season recommendation. Advantages of the IPM are that the population estimate is available in the summer, prior to the regulatory flyway meeting and federal register framework publication. In addition, estimates provided by the IPM are less variable than the MWS and will likely result in fewer changes to hunting packages over time. The model prediction for 2025 is 111,000 brant, and the harvest strategy recommends a 30-day season with a 1-bird daily bag limit, which is not changed from last year.

2025 Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days: The Department and Board may select two days per duck-hunting zone, designated as “Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days”, in addition to the regular duck seasons. The days must be held outside any regular duck season on a weekend, holiday, or other non-school days when youth hunters would have the maximum opportunity to participate. The days may be held up to 14 days before or after any regular duck-season frameworks or within any split of a regular duck season, or within any other open season on migratory birds. The daily bag limits may include ducks, geese, mergansers, and coots, and would be the same as those allowed in the regular season. Flyway species and area restrictions would remain in effect.

States are allowed to use their established definition of age for youth hunters. However, youth hunters may not be 18 years of age or older. In addition, an adult at least 18 years of age must accompany the youth hunter into the field. This adult may not duck hunt but may participate in other seasons that are open on the special youth day. Youth hunters 16 years of age and older must possess a Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (also known as Federal Duck Stamp). In 2016 Vermont changed the youth waterfowl hunters age to 17 and younger. Vermont also requires all hunters 16 years of age and older to have a state duck stamp. In some years, the end of the resident Canada goose season overlaps the youth waterfowl hunting weekend. This will not occur in our proposal for 2025 Youth Hunting Weekend, Saturday and Sunday, September 27th and 28th.

Special Falconry Regulations: Falconry is a permitted means of taking migratory game birds in any State meeting Federal falconry standards in 50 CFR 21.29. These States may select an extended season for taking migratory game birds in accordance with the following:
 Extended Seasons: For all hunting methods combined, the combined length of the extended season, regular season, and any special or experimental seasons must not exceed 107 days for any species or group of species in a geographical area. Each extended season may be divided into a maximum of 3 segments. Framework Dates: Seasons must fall between September 1 and March 10.

Daily Bag Limits: Falconry daily bag limits for all permitted migratory game birds must not exceed 3 birds, singly or in the aggregate, during extended falconry seasons, any special or experimental seasons, and regular hunting seasons in all States, including those that do not select an extended falconry season.

Regular Seasons: General hunting regulations, including seasons and hunting hours, apply to falconry in each State listed in 50 CFR 21.29. Regular season bag limits do not apply to falconry. The falconry bag limit is not in addition to gun limits.

Vermont has traditionally run the falconry season during any open migratory game bird season. Last year falconers had the opportunity to begin on September 1st with the resident Canada goose season and hunt through January 19th. A three-bird daily bag limit was in effect.

In summary, the proposed 2025 waterfowl and migratory bird hunting regulations were made based on the following information:

- Decide when to open the season. Based on comments from previous years, many hunters prefer the season to open earlier when the temperatures are warmer, and they can still pursue early migrating species like blue-winged teal.
- Decide which zones to propose for splits and in which seasons. Goose hunters preferred a straight season. Duck hunters in the Lake Champlain zone, regardless of residency, chose split seasons more than straight seasons. For the Interior Vermont zone, hunters chose straight seasons most commonly for duck and goose seasons.
- Decide on the length of the Lake Champlain Zone split. In comments from previous years and responses to the survey, many hunters preferred to run the season later in the year which results in a longer split between segments.
- Decide when to have the split for the Lake Champlain Zone. Based on the 2024 Waterfowl hunter survey the highest percentage of hunters preferred to have the majority of days in October, followed by more days in November, and have the season end in late December.

Legal Framework for Hunting Season Decision

Beginning in 2015 the Board was given authority by the Legislature to set the migratory bird hunting regulations by procedure instead of rule. Part of Title 10 § 4082 reads:

(b)(1) Except as provided for under subdivision (2) of this subsection, the Board annually may adopt rules relating to the management of migratory game birds and shall follow the procedures for rulemaking contained in 3 V.S.A. chapter 25. For each such rule, the Board shall conduct a hearing but, when necessary, may schedule the hearing for a day before the terms of the rule are expected to be determined.

(2) Beginning with the 2015 hunting season, the Board may set by procedure the daily bag and possession limits of migratory game birds that may be harvested in each Waterfowl Hunting Zone annually without following the procedures for rulemaking contained in 3 V.S.A. chapter 25. The annual daily bag and possession limits of migratory game birds shall be consistent with federal requirements. Prior to setting the migratory game bird daily bag and possession limits, the Board shall provide a period of not less than 30 days of public notice and shall conduct at least two public informational hearings. The final migratory game bird daily bag and possession limits shall be enforceable by the Department under its enforcement authority in part 4 of this title.

For your information, included below is the segment of the federal register that pertains to establishing zones and splits. The information below only applies to the regular duck season. The below rules apply to the selections for the 2026-2030 seasons as well.

Federal Register /Vol. 85, No. 163 /Friday, August 21, 2020 / Final Rule 51857-58

Guidelines for Duck Zones and Split Seasons

The following guidelines for zones and split seasons apply only for the regular duck season:

- (1) A zone is a geographic area or portion of a State, with a contiguous boundary, for which independent dates may be selected for the regular duck season.
- (2) Consideration of changes for management-unit boundaries is not subject to the guidelines and provisions governing the use of zones and split seasons for ducks.
- (3) Only minor (less than a county in size) boundary changes will be allowed for any grandfathered arrangement, and changes are limited to the open season.
- (4) Once a zone and split-season configuration is selected during an open season, it must remain in place for the following five years.

Any State may continue their zone and split-season configuration used in the previous five-year period. If changes are made, the zone and split-season configuration must conform to one of the following five options:

- (1) One zone (same as no zones) with up to three season segments;
- (2) Two zones with up to two season segments in each zone;
- (3) Two zones with up to three season segments in each zone;
- (4) Three zones with up to two season segments in each zone; or
- (5) Four zones with a continuous season (i.e., no segments) in each zone.

Because the two zones and three season segments configuration is new, States that select this configuration must conduct an evaluation of impacts to hunter dynamics (e.g., hunter numbers, satisfaction) and harvest during the fixed five-year period it is implemented (e.g., 2021-25 period).

Grandfathered Zone and Split Arrangements

When we first implemented the zone and split-season guidelines in 1991, several States had completed experiments with zone and split-season arrangements different from our original options. We offered those States a one-time opportunity to continue (“grandfather”) those arrangements, with the stipulation that only minor changes could be made to zone boundaries. If any of those States now wish to change their zone and split arrangement:

- (1) The new arrangement must conform to one of the five options identified above; and
- (2) The State cannot go back to the grandfathered arrangement that it previously had in place.

Eastern Mallard Collaborative Research Project:

Atlantic Flyway states are conducting a regional study of the eastern mallard population. Vermont is participating and deployed 17 geolocators in 2025. The project aims to deploy GSM/GPS units and geolocators on female mallards in Eastern Canada and the Northeastern United States to answer several important questions about mallard movements, productivity, and biases within our banded sample. Specifically, the project proposes the following objectives:

- 1) Quantify and compare reproductive metrics such as reproductive attempts, full-term incubation, and brood-rearing between mallards in the Northeastern US and Eastern Canada, and the extent to which behavior and weather explains variation in reproductive metrics.
 - a. Use proportion of stationary behavior from ACC data and daily displacement from GPS data to infer nesting attempts and success
 - b. Develop detailed time activity budgets of mallard behavior throughout the annual cycle at the sub-population scale

- c. Explore the extent to which behavior and weather patterns (precipitation, temperature, winter severity) influence reproductive success both directly and through cross-seasonal effects
- 2) Estimate seasonal survival rates of female mallards in Eastern Canada vs. Northeastern US
- 3) Quantify and compare female mallard movements and habitat use and selection throughout the annual cycle in the Northeastern US and Eastern Canada
 - a. Understand mallard movements during the pre-season banding window to better inform implications for pre-season banding data analyses.
- 4) Characterize habitat-use and selection of mallards and black ducks throughout the annual cycle.

New York and Pennsylvania secured internal funding to support much of the project but solicited in-kind and financial support from other flyway states, federal and Canadian partners to reach marking sampling goals/distribution and fully fund the project. The project has begun deployments of GSM and geolocator units during the winter of 2024-2025, coinciding with the American black duck joint venture project.

During the 2023-2024 capture period Vermont deployed 3 GSM/GPS units and 13 geolocators attached to red tarsal bands at three locations within the Champlain Valley from February 1st to March 15th.

Public Input and Outreach:

The Department, in conjunction with the Board, is currently planning to hold two public hearings in 2025. Meetings are planned for the week of March 10th in Whitehall, NY and the Essex Junction District office conference room, as well as a recording to be posted on the Department website, beginning at 6:30pm. During the hearings, the Department will review the season options, recommendations, current biological information, answer questions, and record public comments for the Board. The public will be encouraged to submit comments through email or a recorded phone line. Hearing times and website posting locations will be advertised on the Department website and through news releases.

After the Board approves final season dates and bag limits (scheduled for April 9, 2025 Board meeting), the Department will submit selections to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by April 30th and the information will be sent to a printer for production of the 2025 syllabus of state and federal hunting regulations. The early decision deadlines allow the Department to have the syllabus available to the public in print version by August 1st, a full month prior to any migratory bird hunting season. Approved seasons will be placed on the Department's website within days after the Board's vote.

The Department conducted a survey of waterfowl hunters in Vermont (statewide) and New York (those that hunt the Lake Champlain Zone) during summer/fall of 2024. This survey was sent to a broad spectrum of waterfowl hunters in hopes of obtaining an accurate representation of all waterfowl hunters. The goal of this survey was to obtain preferences and opinions about waterfowl seasons for use in the season setting process.

Table 4. 2024 Migratory Bird Hunting Seasons

2024-2025 VERMONT MIGRATORY GAME BIRD HUNTING SEASONS
(regulations in effect September 1, 2024 through April 26, 2025)

Species	Lake Champlain Zone	Interior Vermont Zone	Connecticut River Zone
Ducks, Coots and Mergansers	Oct. 12 – Nov. 3 Nov. 23 – Dec. 29	Oct. 12 – Nov. 10 Nov. 23 – Dec. 22	Oct. 9 – Nov. 11 Nov. 27 – Dec. 22
Canada Geese	Sept. 1 – Sept. 25 Oct. 12 – Nov. 10 Dec. 1 – Jan. 19	Sept. 1 – Sept. 25 Oct. 12 – Nov. 10 Dec. 1 – Jan. 19	Sept. 1 – Sept. 25 Oct. 9 – Nov. 11 Nov. 27 – Dec. 22 Dec. 23 – Jan. 11
Snow Geese (includes blue geese)	Oct. 1 - Dec. 31, 2024 Feb. 26 - Mar. 10, 2025 Mar. 11 – Apr 20, 2025	Oct. 1 - Dec. 31, 2024 Feb. 26 - Mar. 10, 2025 Mar. 11 – Apr 20, 2025	Oct. 9 – Nov. 11 Nov. 27 – Dec. 22 Mar. 11 – Apr 20, 2025 (applies to land, not CT River waters)
Brant	Oct. 12 – Nov. 10	Oct. 12 – Nov. 10	Oct. 9 – Nov. 7
Woodcock	Statewide	Sept. 28 – Nov. 11	
Common Snipe	Statewide	Sept. 28 – Nov. 11	

Youth Waterfowl Hunting Weekend – September 28 & 29

BAG LIMITS

The daily bag limit is the maximum number of birds of each species that any person may take (or possess in the field) during any one day. The possession limit is three times the daily bag limit for all waterfowl species except snow geese.

Species	Daily Limit	Possession Limit
Ducks *	6	18
Mergansers	5	15
Coot	15	45
Canada Geese		
September season		
Lake Champlain Zone	8	24
Interior Vermont Zone	8	24
Connecticut River Zone	5	15
Oct. - Nov. season		
Lake Champlain Zone	3	9
Interior Vermont Zone	3	9
Connecticut River Zone	2	6
Dec. – Jan. season		
Lake Champlain Zone	5	15
Interior Vermont Zone	5	15
Connecticut River Zone	5	15 (Vermont land portions only)
Snow Geese	25	No limit
Mar. 11 – Apr. 23, 2023	15	No limit
Brant	1	3
Scaup*		
Lake Champlain Zone		
Oct. 12 – Nov. 3 & Nov. 23 - Dec. 9	1	3
Dec. 10 - Dec. 29	2	6
Interior Vermont Zone		
Oct. 12 – Nov. 10 & Nov. 23 – Dec. 2	1	3
Dec. 3 - Dec. 22	2	6
Connecticut River Zone		
Oct. 9 - Nov. 11	1	3
Nov. 27 - Dec. 22	1	3
Woodcock	3	9
Common Snipe	8	24

* The daily limit of 6 ducks may include no harlequin, and no more than 4 mallards (only 2 of which may be hens), 2 black ducks, 3 wood ducks, 1 pintail, 2 canvasbacks, 2 redheads, 2 or 1 scaup depending on dates, 4 sea ducks (including no more than 3 scoters, 3 eiders {1 of which may be a hen}, and 3 long-tailed ducks).

Table 5. Vermont Waterfowl Hunting and Harvest Data Comparisons (Lake Champlain and Interior Vermont Zones Combined)

	Federal Duck Stamp Sales	Vermont Duck Stamp Sales	Vermont HIP Registration	No. of Active Adult Duck Hunters	Average Seasonal Duck Bagged Per Hunter	Total Season Estimated Duck Harvest	Total Season Estimated Canada Goose Harvest	Total Season Estimated Snow Goose Harvest
1999	4,542	6,320		1,600	11.9	25,000	4,100	1,700
2000	4,741	5,418		1,700	10.4	17,700	3,600	4,200
2001	4,824	5,685		1,700	10.4	17,600	4,300	2,200
2002	5,201	5,722		2,600	9.6	26,800	7,100	1,300
2003	5,242	6,012		1,300	12.6	16,300	3,600	3,400
2004	4,723	6,242		2,600	9.3	24,300	7,100	1,700
2005	4,956	5,682		2,400	10.6	25,400	9,300	400
2006	3,391	5,581		2,000	9.9	19,600	7,800	100
2007	3,193	6,137		2,300	9.2	16,700	6,300	500
2008	3,391	5,746	↑\$5-\$7.50	2,900	11.9	34,800	12,300	2,100
2009	not available	6,051		2,400	10.7	25,500	11,500	90
2010	not available	6,065 Last Stamp	5,404***	2,700	8.5	22,900	9,600	0
2011	not available	4,872 First Tag	4,949***	2,600	9.0	23,000	8,300	134
2012	not available	5,882	6,283***	2,100	10.0	20,500	8,600	34
2013	not available	6,436	8,719***	4,000	8.0	31,900	9,600	0
2014	not available	6,635	9,913***	2,600	6.8	17,800	12,300	46
2015	not available	6,244	11,122***	2,600	5.8	14,700	6,733	0
2016	not available	6,016	18,598***	3,400	5.2	17,600	8,800	0
2017	not available	5,954	7,006***	2,500	7.9	19,900	15,900	0
2018	not available	5,725	10,541***	2,100	7.8	16,200	7,400	0
2019	not available	5,620	10,359***	3,000	6.1	18,100	5,600	0
2020	not available	6,089	10,123***	2,200	9.0	19,900	11,800	116
2021	not available	6,111	10,236***	2,000	6.4	12,700	6,182	0
2022	not available	5,956	10,088***	1,900	7.8	14,500	15,683	107
2023	not available	6,067	9,581***	3,600	7.2	26,100	12,900	119
2024	not available	6,197	9,809***	To Date Not Available	To Date Not Available	To Date Not Available	To Date Not Available	To Date Not Available

*** Includes youth hunters and woodcock/snipe hunters

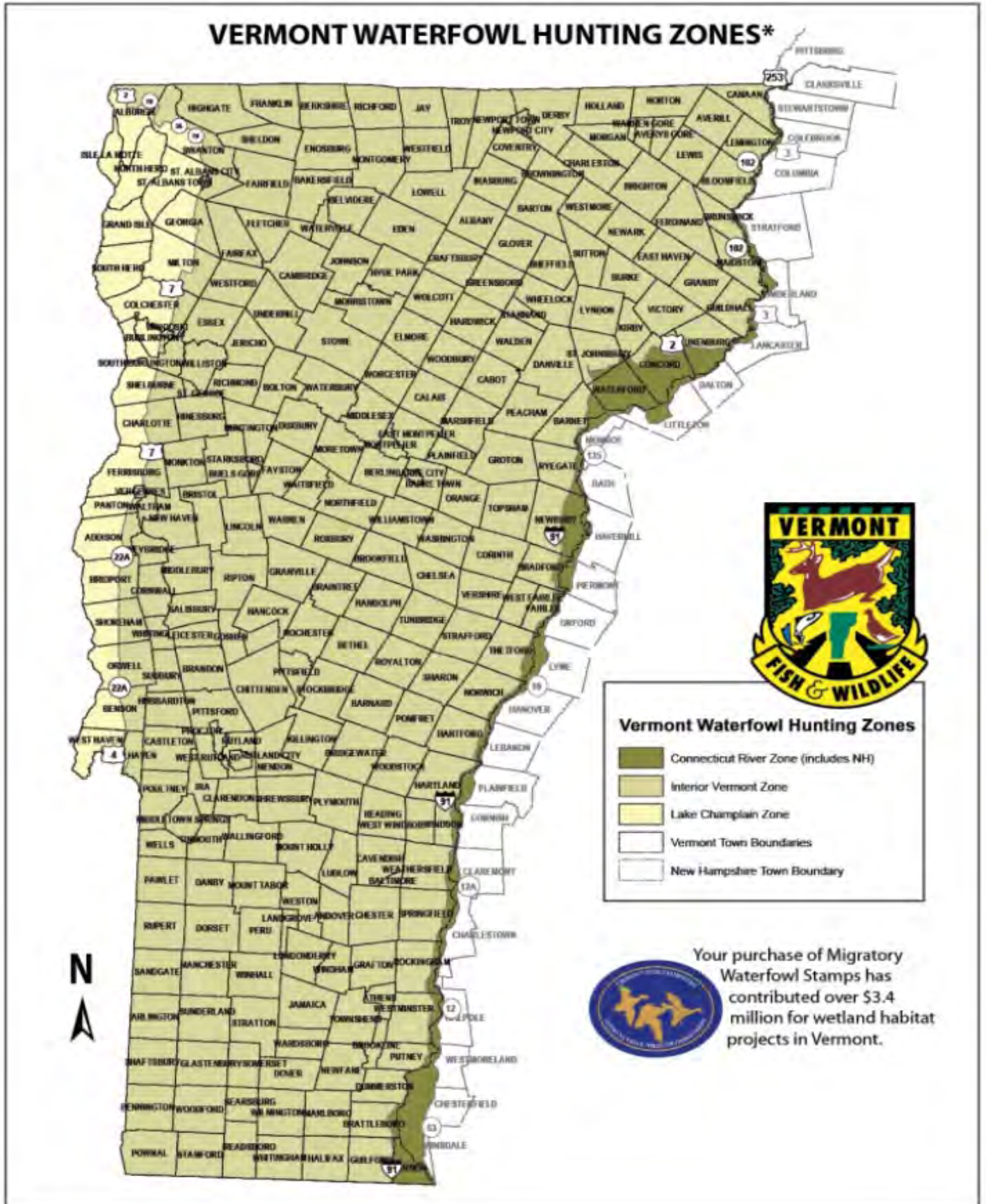


Figure 1. Vermont waterfowl hunting zones

Table 6. USFWS Framework for 2025 Duck Seasons*

<u>LENGTH</u>	<u>OUTSIDE DATES</u>	<u>DAILY BAG</u>	<u>POSSESSION LIMIT**</u>
60 Days	Sept. 20 – Jan. 31	6	18

SPECIES RESTRICTIONS -**Daily Bag**

MALLARD	4 (only 2 hens)
WOOD DUCK	3
BLACK DUCK	2
PINTAIL	3
REDHEAD	2
SCAUP	2/day for 20-days 1/day for 40-days Or 1/day for 60-days
SCOTER	3
EIDERS	3 (only 1 hen)
LONG-TAILED DUCK	3
CANVASBACK	2
HARLEQUIN	CLOSED
MOTTLED DUCK	1
FULVOUS WHISTLING DUCK	1

* Apply to Lake Champlain, Interior Vermont, and Connecticut River Zones.

** Possession limit is equal to three times the daily bag limit for these species.

*** Three total sea ducks in aggregate, with species specific limits, (no more than 3-scoters, 3-eiders (1hen), or 3-long tailed ducks)

SHOOTING HOURS - ½ HOUR BEFORE SUNRISE TO SUNSET (all days – all species)

Table 7. USFWS Framework for 2025 Geese, Brant, Merganser, Coot, Snipe, and Woodcock Seasons

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>SEASON LENGTH</u>	<u>OUTSIDE DATES</u>	<u>DAILY POSSESSION BAG LIMIT**</u>	
Canada Geese (No more than 107 days combined)				
Resident	25 days	Sept. 1 – Sept. 25	15	45
Regular	30 days	Oct. 10 – Feb. 5	1	3
Resident	77 days	Dec. 1 – Feb. 15	5	15
Snow & Blue Geese	107 days	Oct. 1 – Mar. 10	25	NONE
Brant	30 days	Sept. 20 – Jan. 31	1	3
Mergansers*	60 days	Sept. 20 – Jan. 31	5	15
Coots**	60 days	Sept. 20 – Jan. 31	15	45
Snipe	107 days	Sept. 1 – Jan. 31	8	24
Woodcock	45 days	Sept. 13 – Jan. 31	3	9

* Season length for mergansers equals season option chosen for ducks. Mergansers may be included as part of the daily duck bag, in which case the limit would be 6 mergansers/day.

** Season length for coots equals season option chosen for ducks.

SHOOTING HOURS - ½ HOUR BEFORE SUNRISE TO SUNSET (all days – all species)

APPENDIX A

Vermont Waterfowl Seasons				
YEAR	SEASON TYPE	SEASON LENGTH	SEASON DATES	GENERAL BAG LIMIT
1942	Straight	70	Sept. 26 – Dec. 4	10-20
1943	Straight	70	Sept. 25 – Dec. 3	10-20
1944	Straight	80	Sept. 20 – Dec. 8	10-20
1945	Straight	80	Sept. 20 – Dec. 8	7-14
1946	Straight	45	Oct. 5 – Nov. 18	7-14
1947	Straight	30	Oct. 21 – Nov. 19	3-6
1948	Straight	30	Oct. 15 – Nov. 13	3-6
1949	Straight	40	Oct. 21 – Nov. 29	3-6
1950	Straight	40	Oct. 20 – Nov. 28	3-6
1951	Straight	45	Oct. 12 – Nov. 25	3-6
1952	Straight	55	Oct. 7 – Nov. 11	3-6
1953	Straight	60	Oct. 5 – Dec. 3	3-6
1954	Straight	60	Oct. 10 – Dec. 8	3-6
1955	Straight	70	Oct. 5 – Dec. 13	3-6
1956	Straight	70	Oct. 5 – Dec. 13	3-6
1957	Straight	70	Oct. 10 – Dec. 18	3-6
1958	Straight	60	Oct. 10 – Dec. 8	3-6
1959	Straight	50	Oct. 10 – Nov. 28	3-6
1960	Straight	50	Oct. 7 – Nov. 25	3-6
1961	Straight	40	Oct. 14 – Nov. 22	3-6
1962	Straight	40	Oct. 12 – Nov. 20	3-6
1963	Split	45	Oct. 11 – Oct. 27 / Nov. 11 – Dec. 8	3-6
1964	Straight	50	Oct. 10 – Nov. 28	3-6
1965	Straight	50	Oct. 16 – Dec. 4	3-6
1966	Straight	55	Oct. 8 – Dec. 1	3-6
1967	Split	45	Oct. 7 – Nov. 4 / Nov. 25 – Dec. 10	3-6
1968	Straight	50	Oct. 12 – Nov. 30	3-6
1969	Straight	50	Oct. 11 – Nov. 29	3-6
1970	Straight	50	Oct. 10 – Nov. 28	4-8
1971	Straight	50	Oct. 9 – Nov. 27	4-8
1972	Split	50	Oct. 7 – Oct. 15 / Oct. 28 – Dec. 7	4-8
1973	Split	45	Oct. 6 – Oct. 21 / Nov. 3 – Dec. 1	4-8
1974	Straight	50	Oct. 9 – Nov. 27*	4-8
1975	Straight	50	Oct. 8 – Nov. 26*	4-8
1976	Straight	50	Oct. 6 – Nov. 24*	4-8
1977	Straight	50	Oct. 5 – Nov. 23*	4-8
1978	Straight	50	Oct. 4 – Nov. 22*	4-8
1979	Split	50	Oct. 3 – Oct. 14 / Oct. 27 – Dec. 3*	4-8
1980	Straight	50	Oct. 8 – Nov. 26*	4-8
1981	Straight	50	Oct. 10 – Nov. 28*	4-8

Vermont Waterfowl Seasons – Page 2

YEAR	SEASON TYPE	SEASON LENGTH	SEASON DATES	GENERAL BAG LIMIT
1982	Split	50	Oct. 2 – Oct. 10 / Oct. 16 – Nov. 25*	5-10
1983	Split	50	Oct. 8 – Oct. 16 / Oct. 22 – Dec. 1*	5-10
1984	Straight	50	Oct. 10 – Nov. 28*	5-10
1985	Zoned**	40	Oct. 9 – Oct. 13 / Oct. 26 – Nov. 29 (LCZ)* Oct. 9 – Nov. 17 (IVZ)	5-10 5-10
1986	Zoned**	40	Oct. 8 – Oct. 12 / Oct. 25 – Nov. 28 (LCZ)* Oct. 8 – Nov. 16 (IVZ)	5-10 5-10
1987	Zoned**	40	Oct. 7 – Oct. 11 / Oct. 24 – Nov. 27 (LCZ)* Oct. 7 – Nov. 15 (IVZ)	4-8 4-8
1988	Zoned/Split	30	Oct. 8 – Oct. 23 / Nov. 24 – Dec. 7 (LCZ)* Oct. 8 – Oct. 30 / Nov. 24 – Nov. 30 (IVZ)	3-6 3-6
1989	Zoned/Split	30	Oct. 11 – Oct. 29 / Nov. 23 – Dec. 3 (LCZ) Oct. 11 – Nov. 5 / Nov. 23 – Nov. 26 (IVZ)	3-6 3-6
1990	Zoned/Split	30	Oct. 10 – Oct. 21 / Nov. 15 – Dec. 2 (LCZ) Oct. 10 – Nov. 4 / Nov. 22 – Nov. 25 (IVZ)	3-6 3-6
1991	Zoned/Split	30	Oct. 12 – Oct. 27 / Nov. 23 – Dec. 6 (LCZ) Oct. 12 – Nov. 3 / Nov. 25 – Dec. 1 (IVZ)	3-6 3-6
1992	Zoned/Split	30	Oct. 7 – Oct. 11 / Nov. 7 – Dec. 1 (LCZ) Oct. 7 – Nov. 1 / Nov. 26 – Nov. 29 (IVZ)	3-6 3-6
1993	Zoned/Split	30	Oct. 20 – Nov. 7 / Nov. 25 – Dec. 5 (LCZ) Oct. 13 – Nov. 7 / Nov. 25 – Nov. 28 (IVZ)	3-6 3-6
1994	Zoned/Split	40	Oct. 15 – Nov. 6 / Nov. 19 – Dec. 5 (LCZ) Oct. 8 – Nov. 9 / Nov. 21 – Nov. 27 (IVZ)	3-6 3-6
1995	Zoned/Split	50	Oct. 11 – Oct. 22 / Nov. 4 – Dec. 11 (LCZ) Oct. 4 – Nov. 12 / Nov. 18 – Nov. 27 (IVZ)	4-8 4-8
1996	Zoned/Split	50	Oct. 9 – Oct. 20 / Nov. 2 – Dec. 9 (LCZ) Oct. 2 – Nov. 11 / Nov. 23 – Dec. 1 (IVZ)	5-10 5-10
1997	Zoned**	60	Oct. 4 – Oct. 19 / Oct. 25 – Dec. 7 (LCZ) Oct. 4 – Dec. 2 (IVZ)	4-8*** 4-8***
1998	Zoned**	60	Oct. 7 – Oct. 11 / Oct. 17 – Dec. 10 (LCZ) Oct. 7 – Dec. 5 (IVZ)	6-12 6-12
1999	Zoned**	60	Oct. 6 – Oct. 11 / Oct. 23 – Dec. 15 (LCZ) Oct. 6 – Dec. 4 (IVZ)	6-12 6-12
2000	Zoned/Split	60	Oct. 7 – Oct. 9 / Oct. 21 – Dec. 16 (LCZ) Oct. 7 – Nov. 12 / Nov. 18 – Dec. 10 (IVZ)	6-12 6-12
2001	Zoned/Split	60	Oct. 10 – Oct. 14 / Oct. 20 – Dec. 13 (LCZ) Oct. 10 – Dec. 8 (IVZ) Oct. 2 – Nov. 4 / Nov. 21 – Dec. 16 (CRZ)****	6-12 6-12 6-12
2002	Zoned/Split	60	Oct. 9 – Oct. 13 / Oct. 22 – Dec. 15 (LCZ) Oct. 9 – Nov. 14 / Nov. 23 – Dec. 15 (IVZ) Oct. 2 – Nov. 5 / Nov. 27 – Dec. 21 (CRZ)****	6-12 6-12 6-12

Vermont Waterfowl Seasons – Page 3

YEAR	SEASON TYPE	SEASON LENGTH	SEASON DATES	GENERAL BAG LIMIT
2003	Zoned**	60	Oct. 11 - Oct. 13 / Oct. 25 - Dec. 20 (LCZ) Oct. 11 - Dec. 9 (IVZ) Oct. 7 - Nov. 9 / Nov. 26 - Dec. 21 (CRZ)*****	6-12 6-12 6-12
2004	Zoned**	60	Oct. 6 - Oct. 10 / Oct. 23 - Dec. 16 (LCZ) Oct. 6 - Dec. 4 (IVZ) Oct. 5 - Nov. 14 / Nov. 24 - Dec. 12 (CRZ)*****	6-12 6-12 6-12
2005	Zoned**	60	Oct. 5 - Oct. 10 / Oct. 26 - Dec. 18 (LCZ) Oct. 5 - Dec. 3 (IVZ) Oct. 4 - Nov.13/ Nov. 23 - Dec. 11 (CRZ)*****	6-12 6-12 6-12
2006	Zoned**	60	Oct. 7- Oct. 15/ Oct. 25 - Dec. 14 (LCZ) Oct. 7 - Dec. 5 (IVZ) Oct. 3 - Nov. 5/ Nov. 22 - Dec. 17 (CRZ)*****	6-12 6-12 6-12
2007	Zoned**	60	Oct. 10- Oct. 14/ Oct. 27 - Dec. 20 (LCZ) Oct. 10- Dec. 8 (IVZ) Oct. 3- Nov. 4/ Nov. 21 - Dec. 17 (CRZ)*****	6-12 6-12 6-12
2008	Zoned**	60	Oct. 8- Oct. 12/ Oct. 25 - Dec. 18 (LCZ) Oct. 8- Dec. 6 (IVZ) Oct. 2- Nov. 2/ Nov. 23 - Dec. 20 (CRZ)*****	6-12 6-12 6-12
2009	Zoned**	60	Oct. 10- Oct. 13/ Oct. 24 - Dec. 18 (LCZ) Oct. 10- Dec. 8 (IVZ) Oct. 6- Nov. 8/ Nov. 25 - Dec. 20 (CRZ)*****	6-12 6-12 6-12
2010	Zoned**	60	Oct. 6-Oct. 10/Oct. 23 - Dec. 16 (LCZ) Oct. 6-Dec. 4 (IVZ) Oct. 5-Nov. 7/ Nov. 24 - Dec. 19 (CRZ)	6-12 6-12 6-12
2011	Zoned**	60	Oct. 12-Oct. 16/Oct. 29 - Dec. 22 (LCZ) Oct. 12-Dec 10 (IVZ) Oct. 4-Nov. 6/Nov. 23- Dec. 18 (CRZ)*****	6-12 6-12 6-12
2012	Zoned**	60	Oct. 13-Oct. 17/Oct. 27 - Dec. 20 (LCZ) Oct. 13-Dec 11 (IVZ) Oct. 2-Nov. 4/Nov. 21- Dec. 16 (CRZ)*****	6-12 6-12 6-12
2013	Zoned**	60	Oct. 9-Oct. 13/Oct. 26 - Dec. 19 (LCZ) Oct. 9-Dec 7 (IVZ) Oct. 2-Nov. 3/Nov. 19- Dec. 15 (CRZ)*****	6-18 6-18 6-18
2014	Zoned**	60	Oct. 8-Oct. 12/Oct. 25- Dec. 18 (LCZ) Oct. 8-Dec. 6 (IVZ) Oct. 2-Nov. 2/Nov. 16- Dec. 13 (CRZ)*****	6-18 6-18 6-18
2015	Zoned**	60	Oct. 10-Oct. 14/Oct. 24- Dec. 17 (LCZ) Oct. 10-Dec. 8 (IVZ) Oct. 6-Nov. 5/Nov. 15- Dec. 13 (CRZ)*****	6-18 6-18 6-18
2016	Zoned**	60	Oct. 12-Oct. 16/Oct. 29- Dec. 22 (LCZ) Oct. 12-Dec. 10 (IVZ) Oct. 4-Nov. 6/Nov. 22- Dec. 22 (CRZ)*****	6-18 6-18 6-18
2017	Zoned**	60	Oct. 11-Oct. 15/Nov. 7 - Dec. 31 (LCZ) Oct. 11-Dec. 9 (IVZ) Oct. 3-Nov. 5/Nov. 22- Dec. 17 (CRZ)*****	6-18 6-18 6-18

2018	Zoned**	60	Oct. 13-Oct. 21/Nov. 10 - Dec. 30 (LCZ) Oct. 13-Dec. 11 (IVZ) Oct. 2-Nov. 4/Nov. 21- Dec. 16 (CRZ)****	6-18 6-18 6-18
2019	Zoned**	60	Oct. 10-Nov. 1/Nov. 23 - Dec. 29 (LCZ) Oct. 10-Dec. 8 (IVZ) Oct. 2-Nov. 3/Nov. 20- Dec. 16 (CRZ)****	6-18 6-18 6-18
2020	Zoned**	60	Oct. 10-Nov. 1/Nov. 21 - Dec. 27 (LCZ) Oct. 10-Dec. 8 (IVZ) Oct. 6-Nov. 8/Nov. 17- Dec. 12 (CRZ)****	6-18 6-18 6-18
2021	Zoned**	60	Oct. 13-Oct. 17/Oct. 30 - Dec. 23 (LCZ) Oct. 13-Dec. 11 (IVZ) Oct. 5-Nov. 7/Nov. 24- Dec. 19 (CRZ)****	6-18 6-18 6-18
2022	Zoned**	60	Oct. 15-Oct. 23/Oct. 29 - Dec. 18 (LCZ) Oct. 15-Dec. 13 (IVZ) Oct. 4-Nov. 6/Nov. 23 - Dec. 8 (CRZ)****	6-18 6-18 6-18
2023	Zoned**	60	Oct. 7-Oct. 11/Nov. 4 - Dec. 28 (LCZ) Oct. 7-Dec. 5 (IVZ) Oct. 5-Nov. 3/Nov. 22 - Dec. 21 (CRZ)****	6-18 6-18 6-18
2024	Zoned **	60	Oct. 12-Nov. 3/Nov. 23 - Dec. 29 (LCZ) Oct. 12-Nov. 10/Nov. 23 - Dec. 22 (IVZ) Oct. 9-Nov. 11/Nov. 27 - Dec. 22 (CRZ)****	6-18 6-18 6-18

* Regular season was followed by a 16-day special goldeneye/scaup season – 3-bird bag

** Lake Champlain Zone – Split Season

Interior Vermont Zone – Straight Season

*** Two teal (either blue-winged or green-winged) allowed in addition to regular bag limit

**** Connecticut River Zone set by New Hampshire Fish and Game Commission, same as NH Inland Zone

**TITLE 10 APPENDIX
CHAPTER 1. GAME
Subchapter 1. General Provisions**

§ 22. Turkey Seasons

1.0 Authority

1.1 This rule is adopted pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 4081(a). In adopting this rule, the Fish and Wildlife Board is following the policy established by the General Assembly that the protection, propagation, control, management, and conservation of fish, wildlife and fur-bearing animals in this State is in the interest of the public welfare and that the safeguarding of this valuable resource for the people of the State requires a constant and continual vigilance.

1.2 In accordance with 10 V.S.A. § 4082, this rule is designed to maintain the best health, population and utilization levels of the turkey flock.

1.3 In accordance with 10 V.S.A. § 4084, this rule establishes daily, season and possession limits for game, territorial limits; to prescribe the manner and means of taking; to establish territorial limits for the taking of turkeys; and to establish restrictions on taking based upon sex, maturity or other physical distinction.

2.0 Purpose The purpose of this regulation is to establish seasons for the taking of turkeys, to establish open Wildlife Management Units (WMUs) for the taking of turkeys, to establish methods of taking turkeys and to establish limits on the number of turkeys to be taken.

3.0 Definitions

3.1 "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department.

3.2 "Crossbow" means a device consisting of a bow mounted to a rigid stock for discharging bolts or arrows and having a mechanical means to hold and release the drawn string, which must be fired from the shoulder. A bolt means a short projectile for a crossbow that resembles an arrow and has a head that measures no less than 7/8 inch at its widest point. A crossbow shall have a minimum pull of 125 pounds, a working mechanical safety and a stock no less than 23 inches in length.

3.3 "Department" means the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department.

3.4 "Legal means" means the taking of a turkey by shotgun, crossbow, or archery equipment in conformance with Section 6 of this rule.

~~3.5 "Permit" means a document issued by the Department authorizing the taking of a turkey.~~

3.6 "Wildlife Management Unit" (WMU) means one of 21 geographical areas in Vermont for which big game regulations may vary.

4.0 Spring Season

4.1 Dates: May 1, through May 31, inclusive.

4.2 Shooting hours: One-half hour before sunrise to twelve noon.

4.3 Legal turkey: Only wild turkeys with beard(s).

4.4 Bag Limit: Two bearded wild turkeys per person per season.

4.5 Open WMUs: Open statewide

4.6 A person hunting under this section shall obtain a turkey license as provided in 10 V.S.A. § 4252.

5.0 Fall Season.

5.1 Dates and Open WMU's.

(a) Bow and Arrow, and crossbow only:

i. Dates: From ~~the 1st Saturday in~~ October 1 to ~~the~~ Friday prior to the regular deer season inclusive ~~beginning of the shotgun/bow and arrow/crossbow season.~~

ii. Open WMUs: Open Statewide

(b) Shotgun/Bow & Arrow/Crossbow Season

i. Dates: Nine consecutive days beginning 21 days prior to the regular deer season, inclusive.

ii. Open WMUs: B, D, G, H, I, J, L, M, O, P, and Q and their respective subunits:.

(c) Shotgun/Bow & Arrow/Crossbow Season

i. Dates: For 16 consecutive days beginning 21 days prior to the regular deer season, inclusive.

ii. Open WMUs: subunits: WMUs F, K, and N and their respective subunits:.

5.2 Shooting hours: One-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset.

5.3 Legal Turkey: Any wild turkey.

5.4 Bag limit: One turkey per person.

5.5 A person hunting under this section shall obtain a turkey license as provided in 10 V.S.A. § 4252.

6.0 Legal Method of Taking:

6.1 Only a shotgun, crossbow, or bow and arrow may be used.

6.2 Only number 2 through number 8 shot shall be used or possessed.

6.3 An arrowhead must be at least 7/8th of an inch in width and have two or more cutting edges.

6.4 Rifles shall not be used or carried by any person while hunting turkeys. A person taking a turkey with a crossbow or bow and arrow may carry a handgun in accordance with 10 V.S.A. § 4252(b), however, that person may not use the handgun to take turkey.

6.5 No person shall use dogs in the spring, nor electronic calling devices, bait, live decoys, or participate in cooperative drives during either season.

6.6 Any person wishing to hunt turkey with a crossbow or bow and arrow must hold proof of having held an archery license or a certificate of satisfactory completion of a bowhunter education course from Vermont or another state or province of Canada which is approved by the Commissioner.

6.7 Unless it is uncocked, a person shall not possess or transport a crossbow in or on a motor vehicle, motorboat, airplane, snowmobile, or other motor-propelled vehicle except as permitted in accordance with 10 V.S.A. § 4705.

7.0 Youth Turkey Hunting Weekend

7.1 Youth turkey hunting weekend shall be the Saturday and Sunday prior to opening day of spring turkey season on May 1. Persons aged 15 or under holding a free youth turkey hunting weekend license shall be entitled to take wild turkey during these dates.

7.2 Legal Turkey: Only bearded turkeys may be taken.

7.3 Bag limit: One bearded turkey per youth. A youth may also hunt during the spring season and take two bearded turkeys during that season.

7.4 Season: One half hour before sunrise until 5 p.m.



2025

Moose Harvest

Recommendation

2024 Moose Harvest

Archery Season:

12 moose

(all bulls)

52% success rate (12/23)

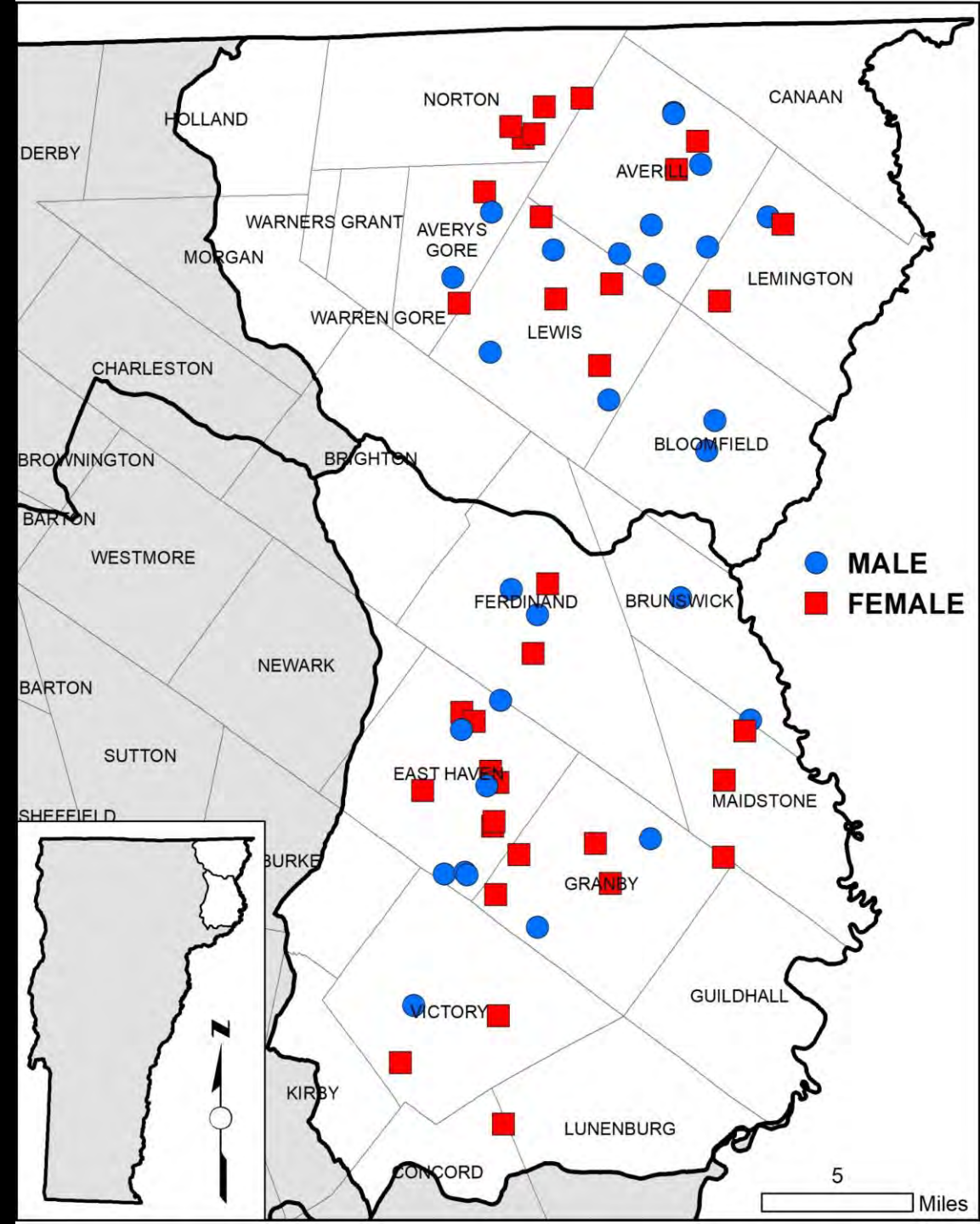
Regular Season:

50 moose

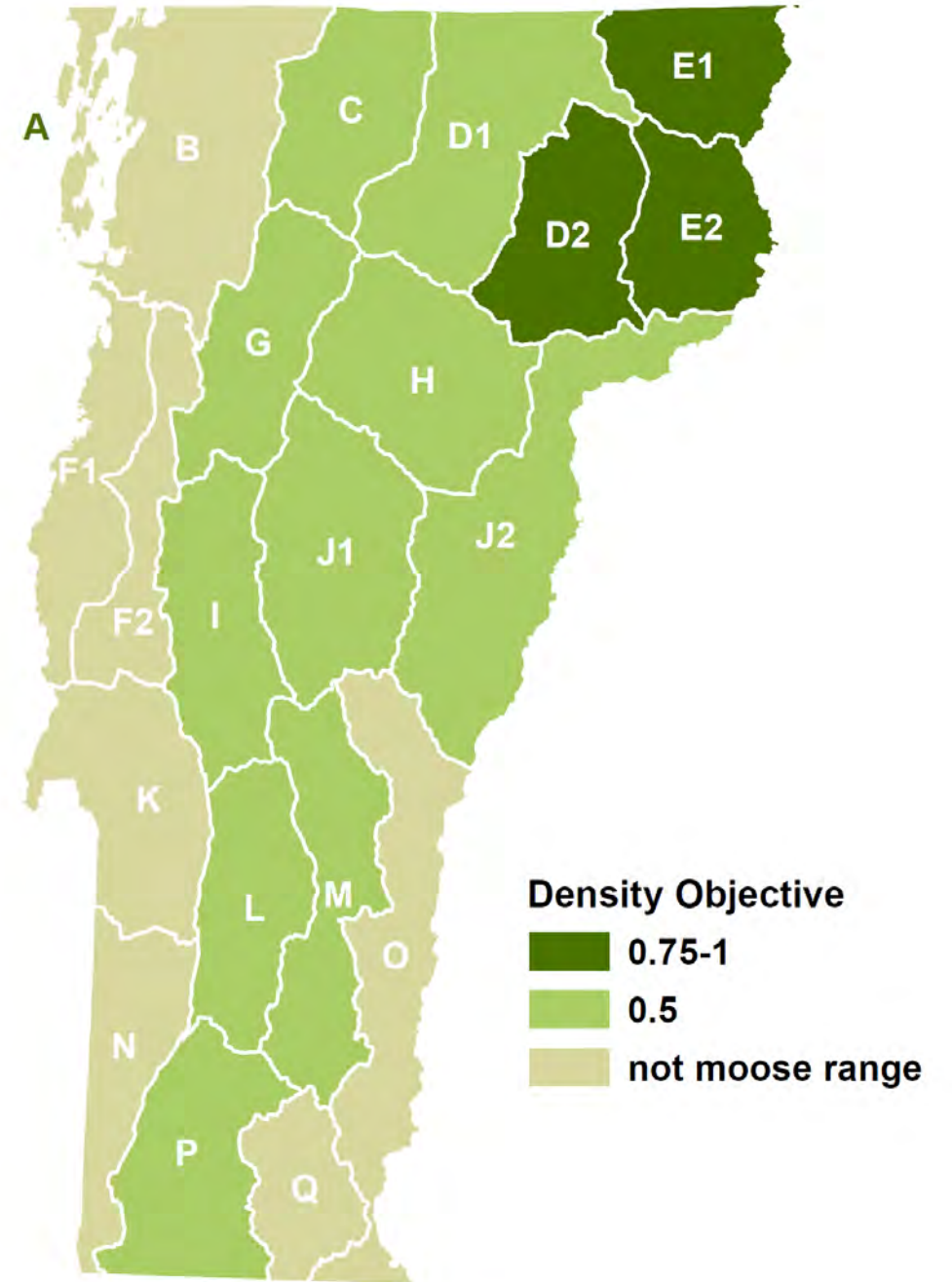
(16 bulls/33 cows/1 calf)

37% ES success rate (21/57)

30% AO success rate (29/98)

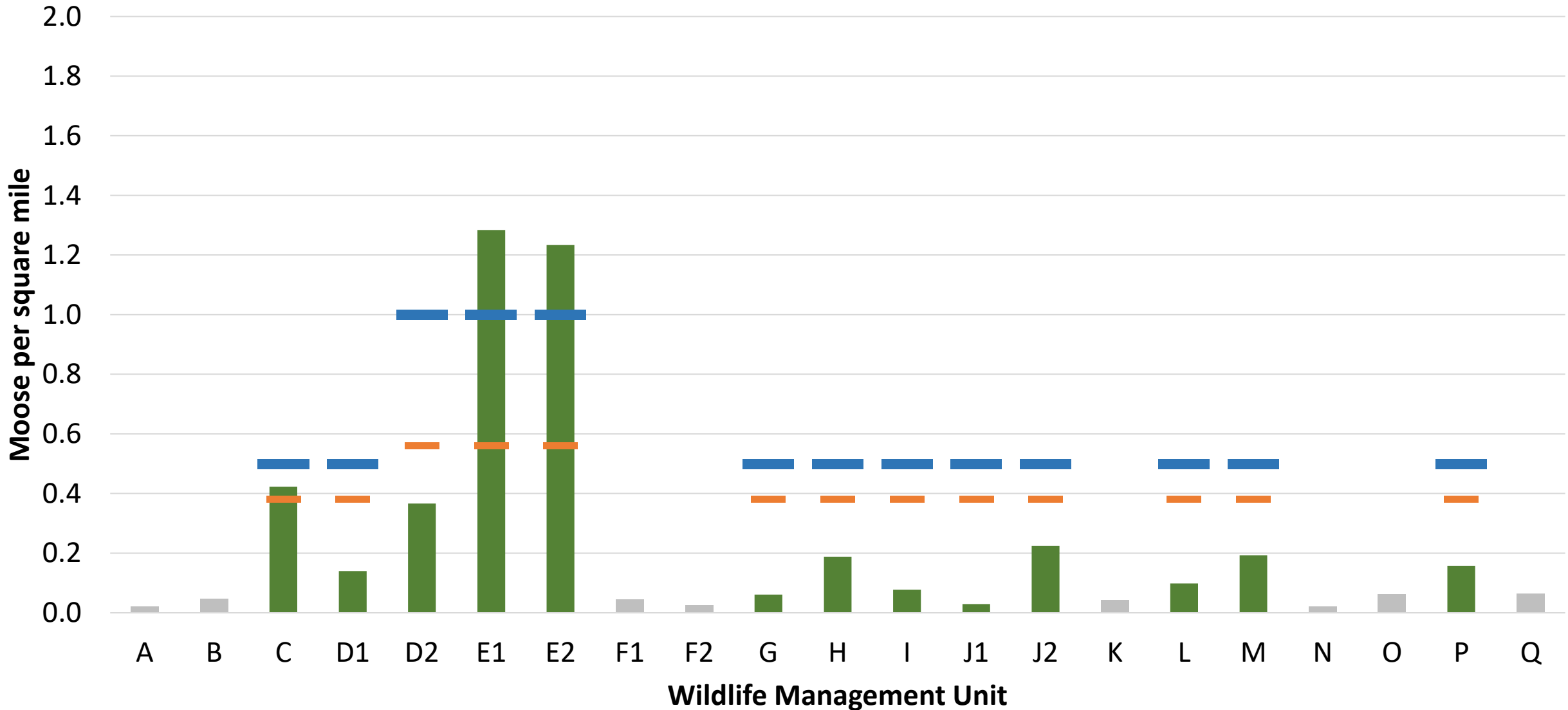


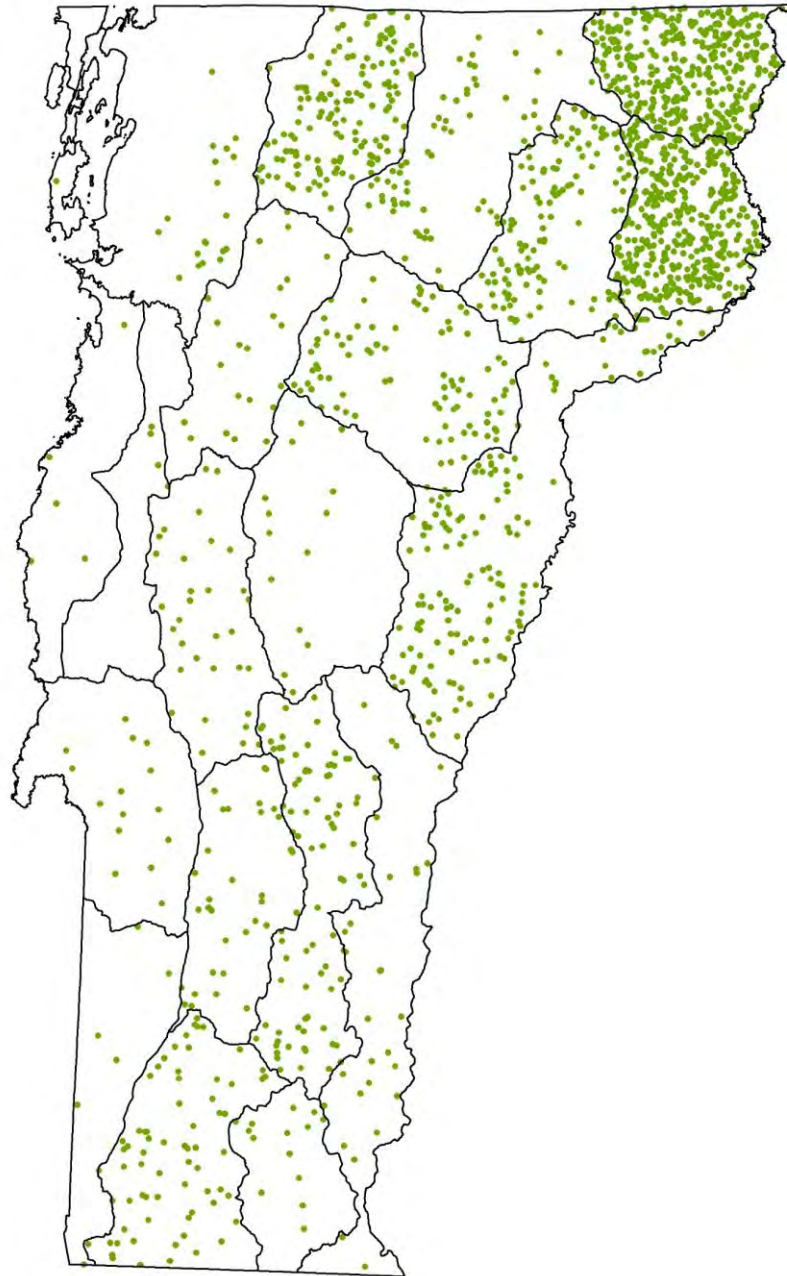
Moose Population Objectives

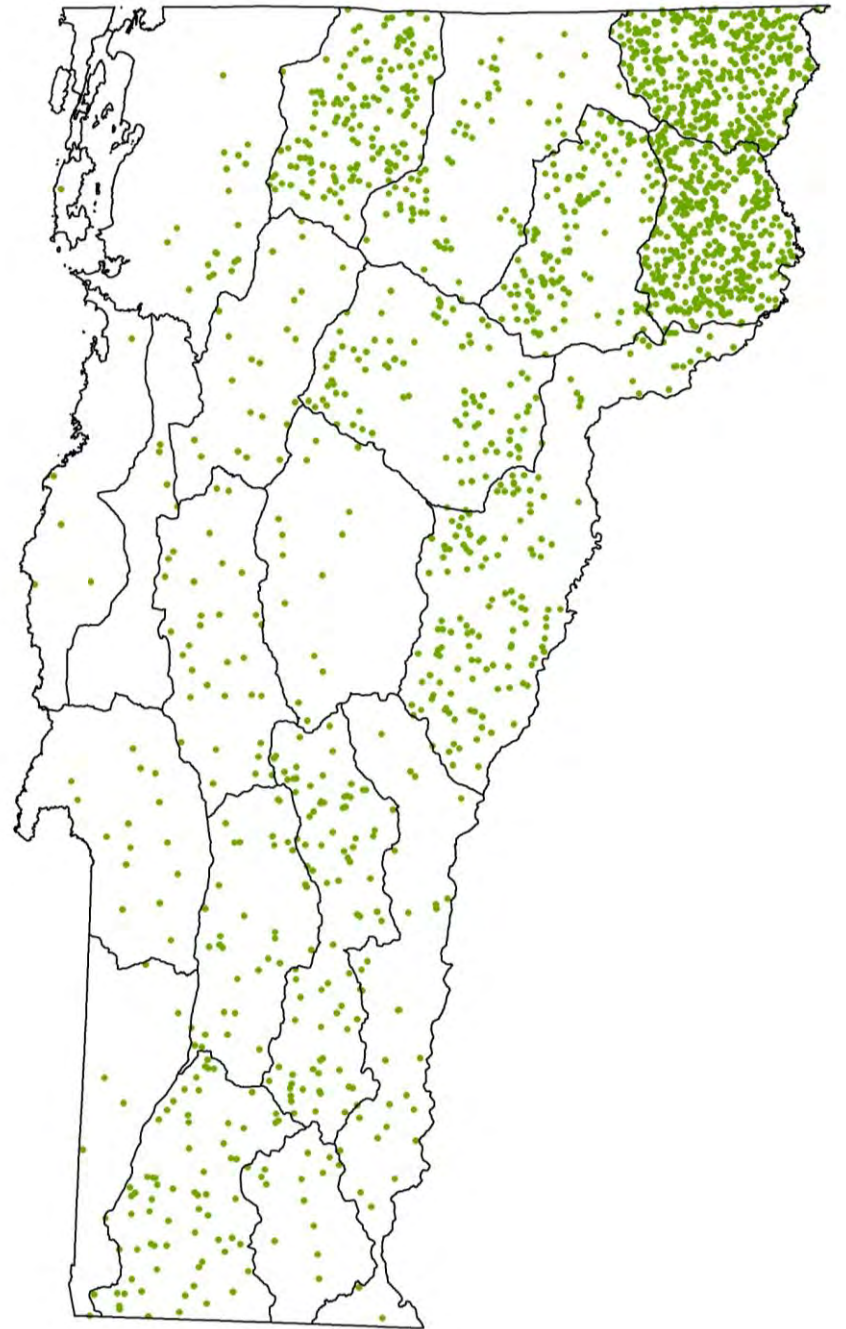


Moose Distribution in Vermont

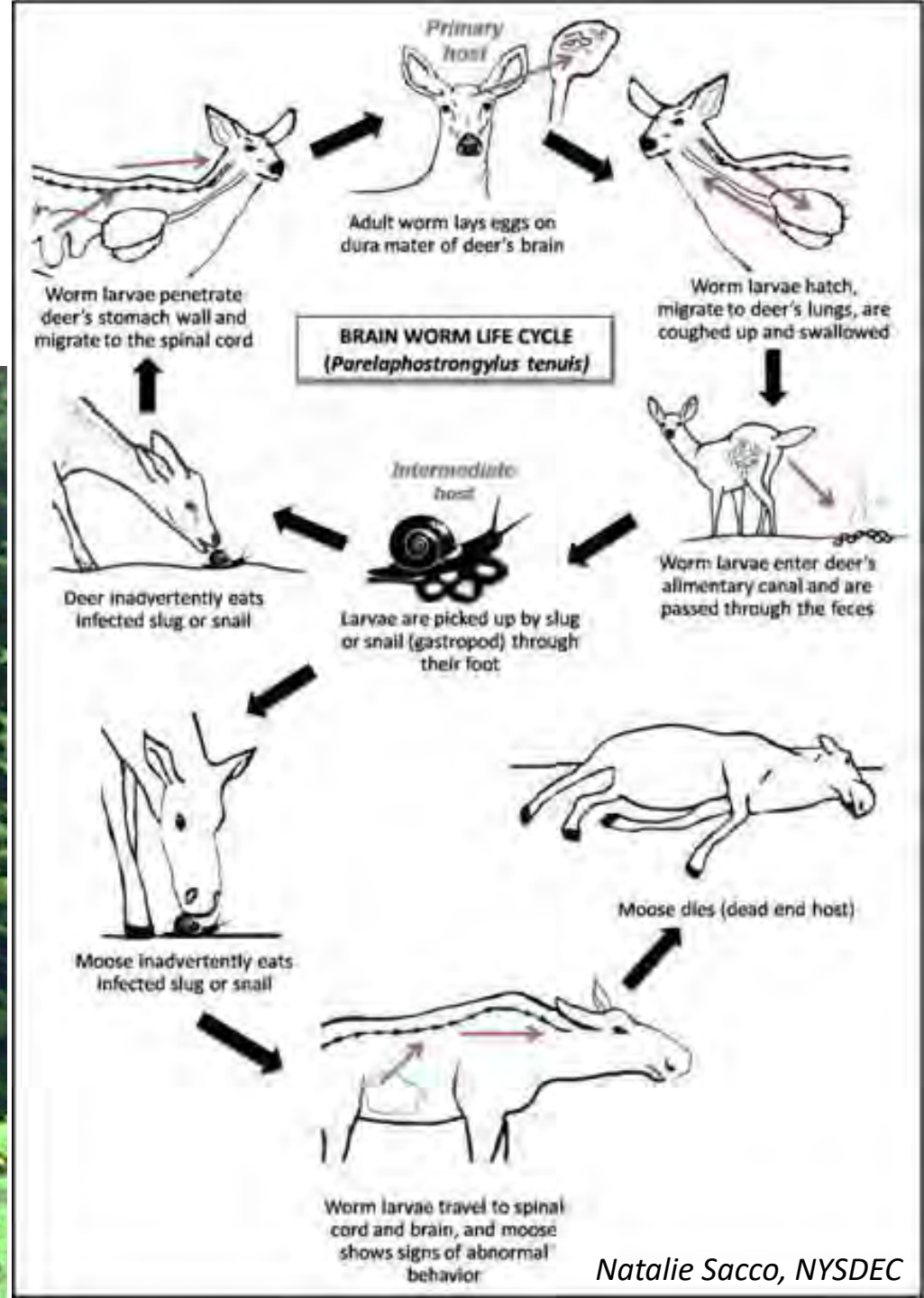
Density Estimate Objective Hunting Threshold







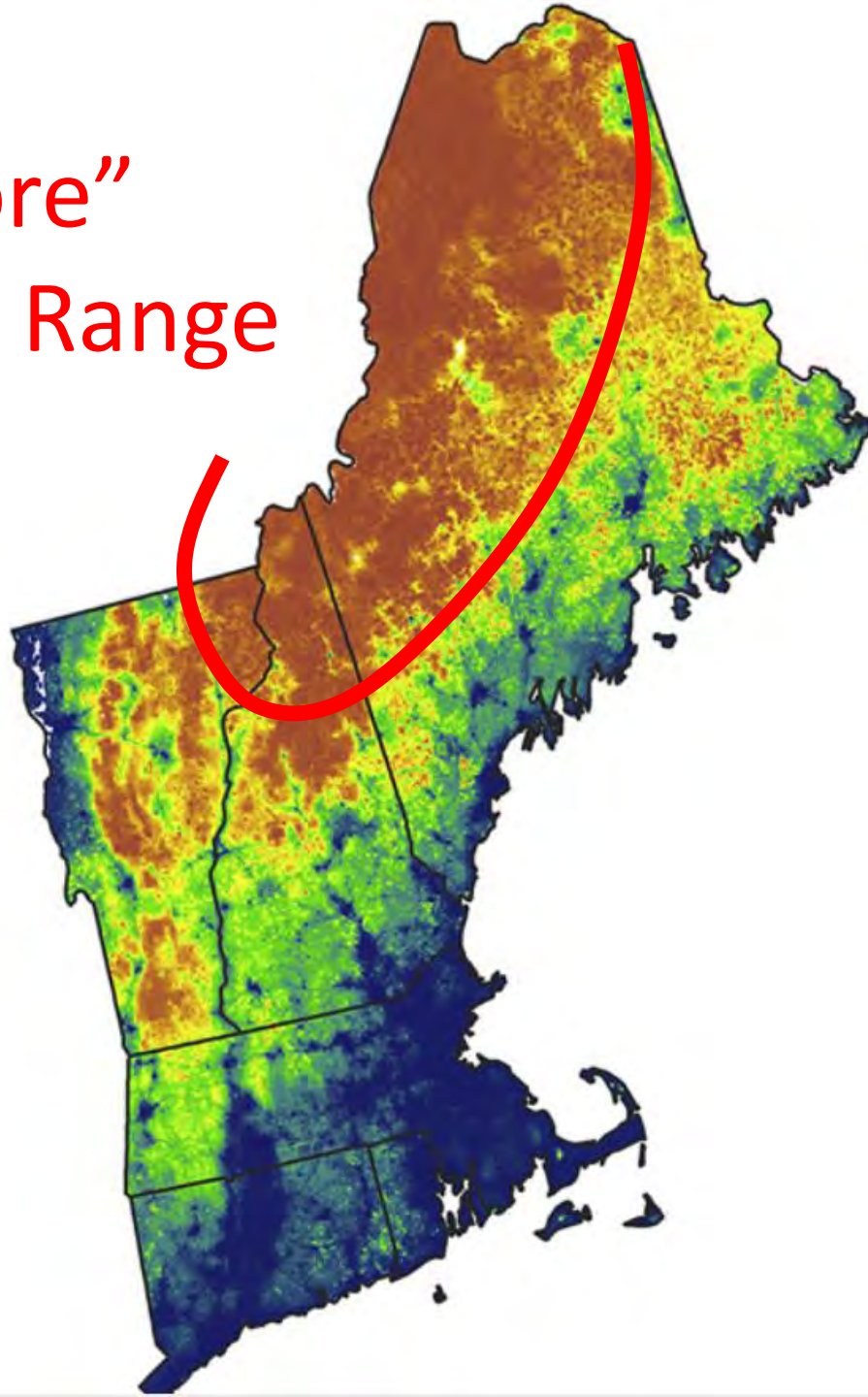
Brainworm



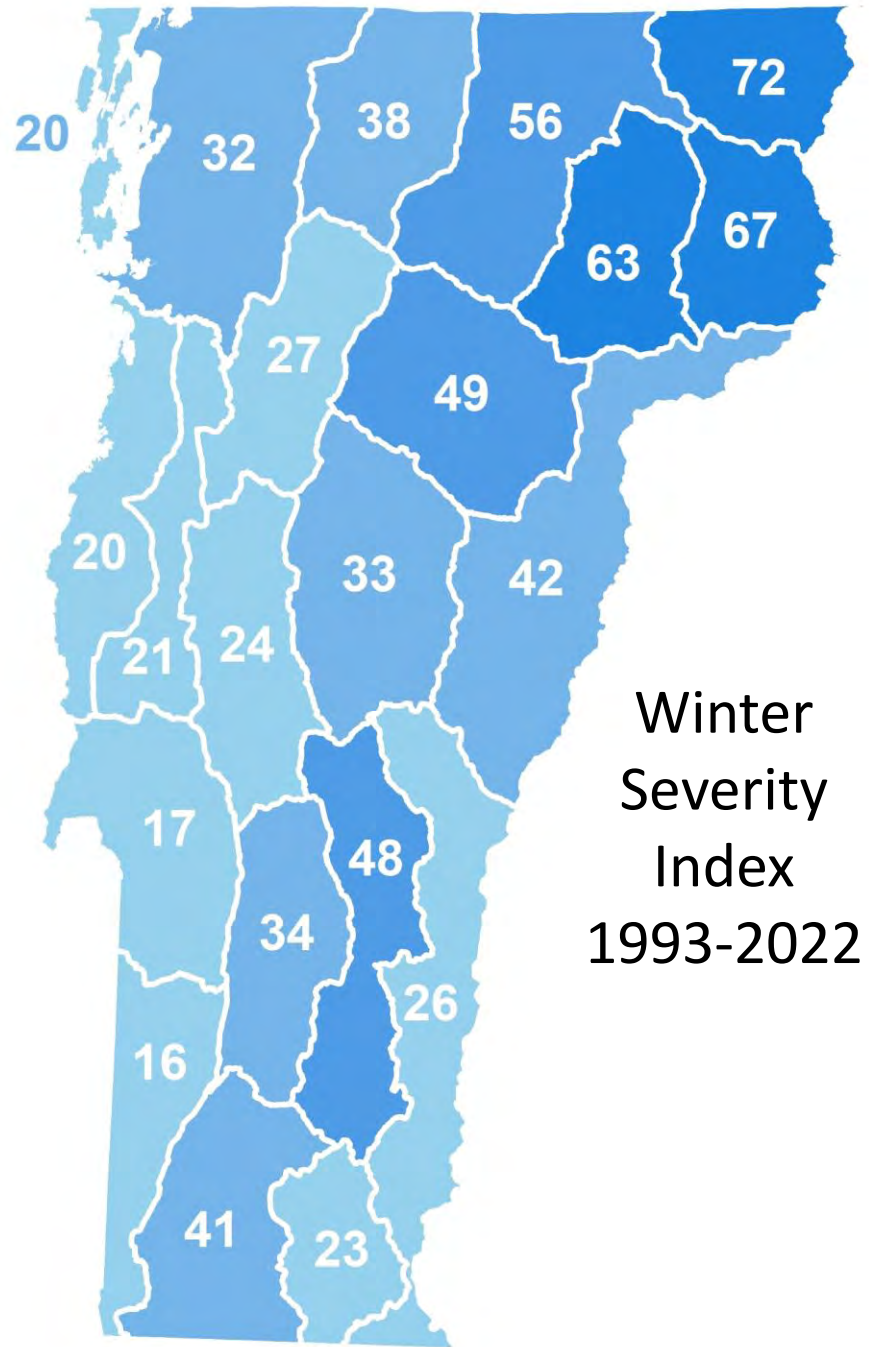
Loss of Young Forest Habitat



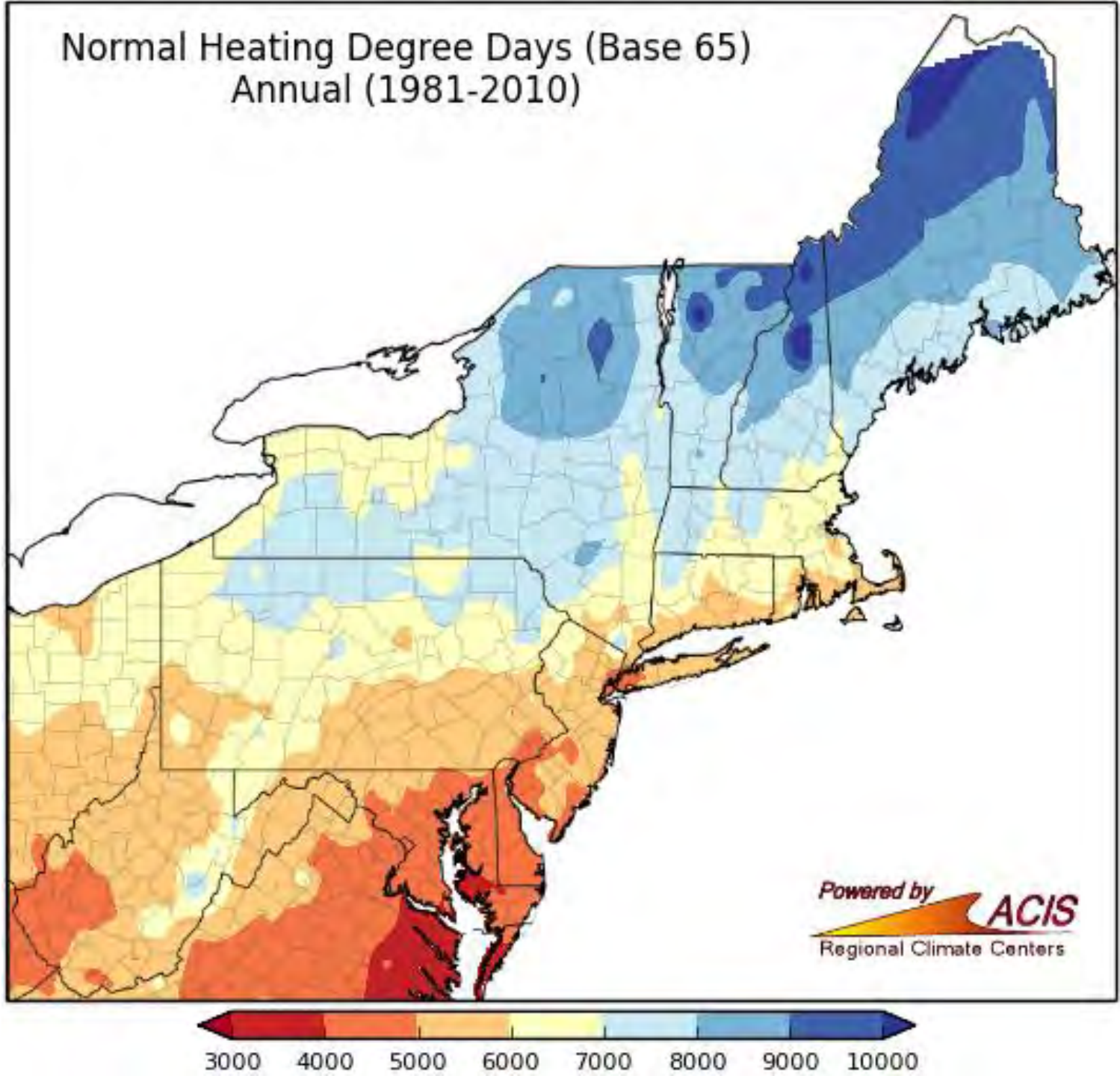
“Core”
Moose Range



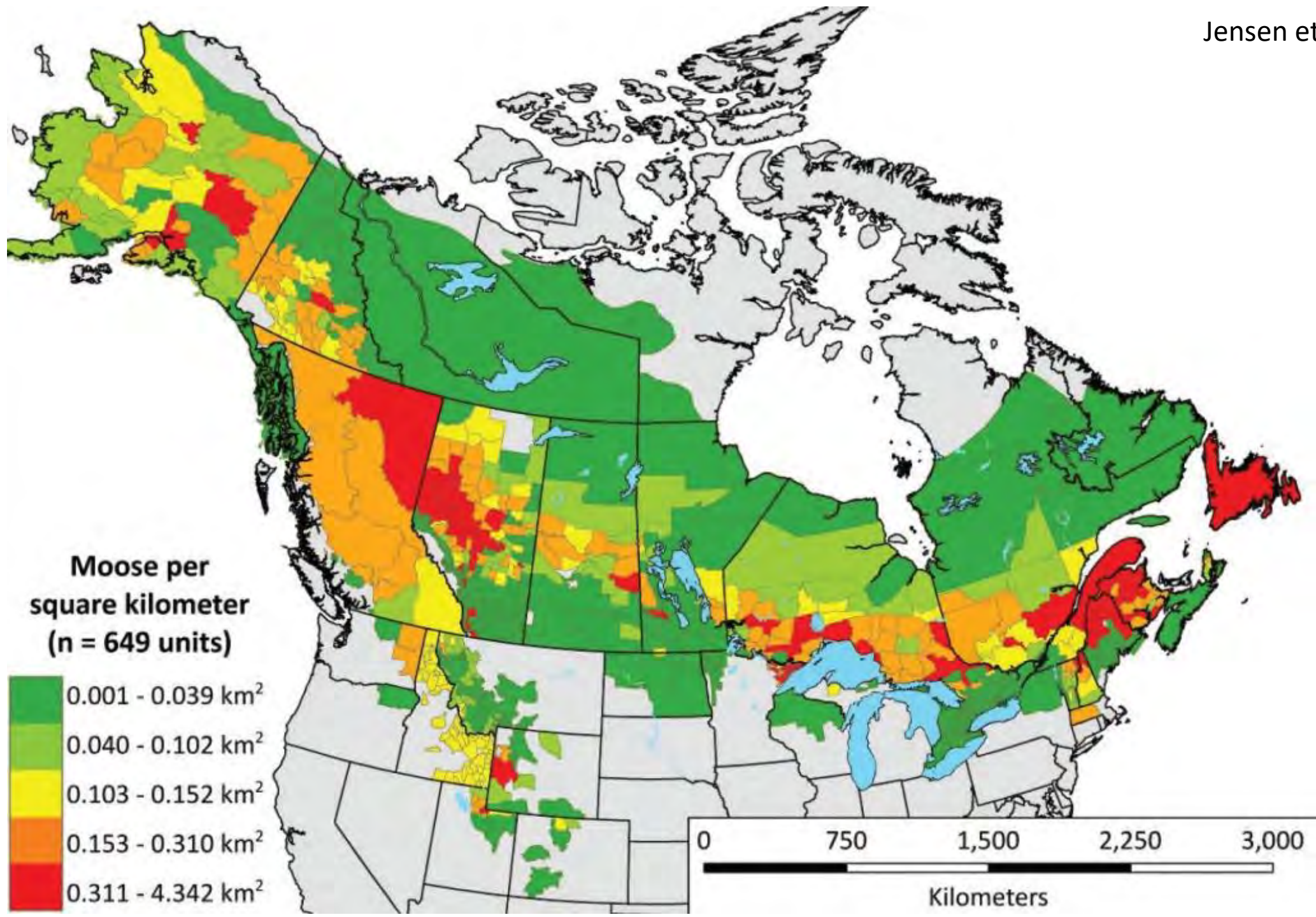
Probability of moose occurrence
Pearman-Gillman et al. 2020

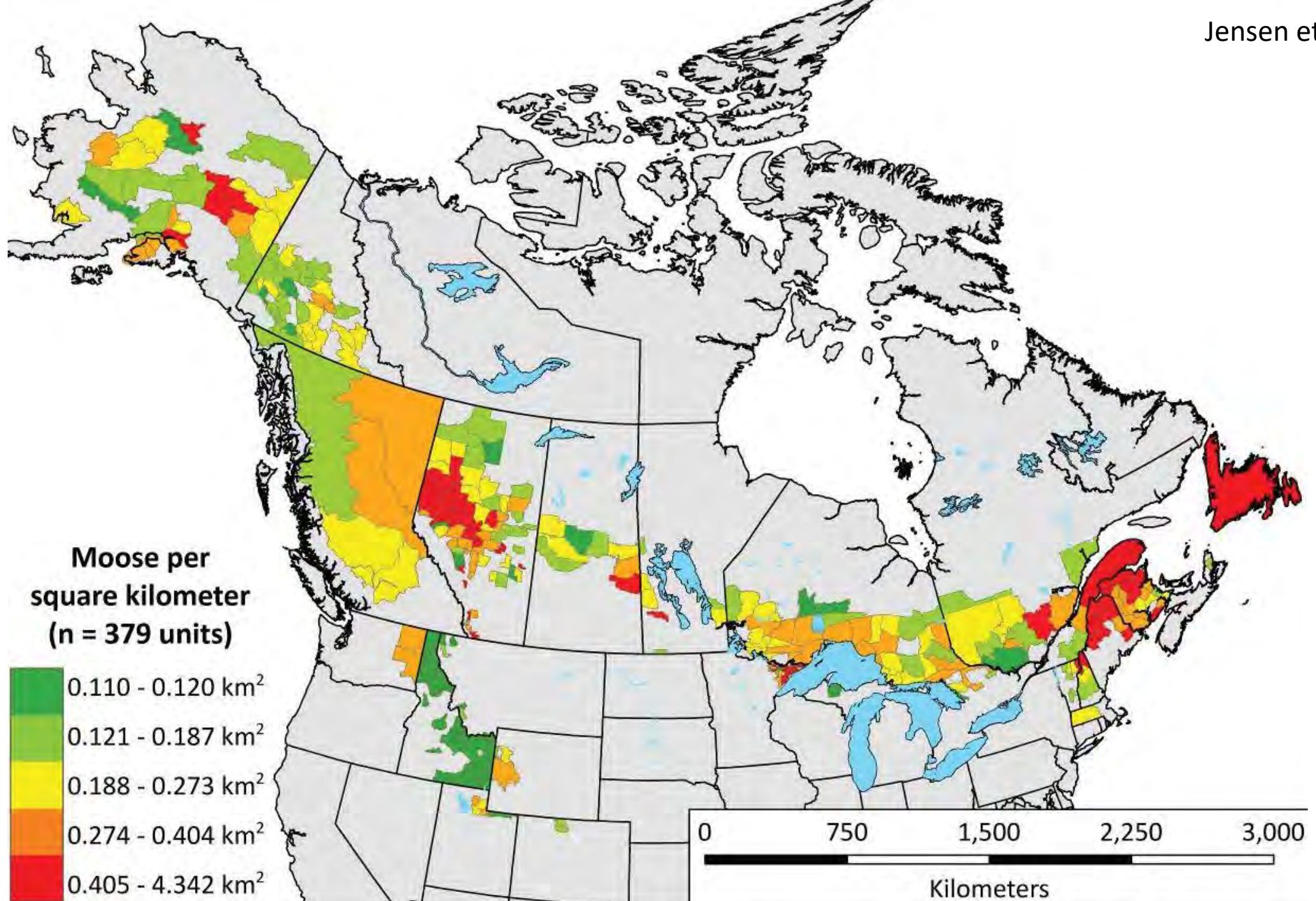


Winter Severity Index 1993-2022









Winter Tick



WINTER TICK LIFE CYCLE

Moose are most active during this period of time because it is mating season. This increases the moose's chance of walking past a cluster of questing winter ticks.

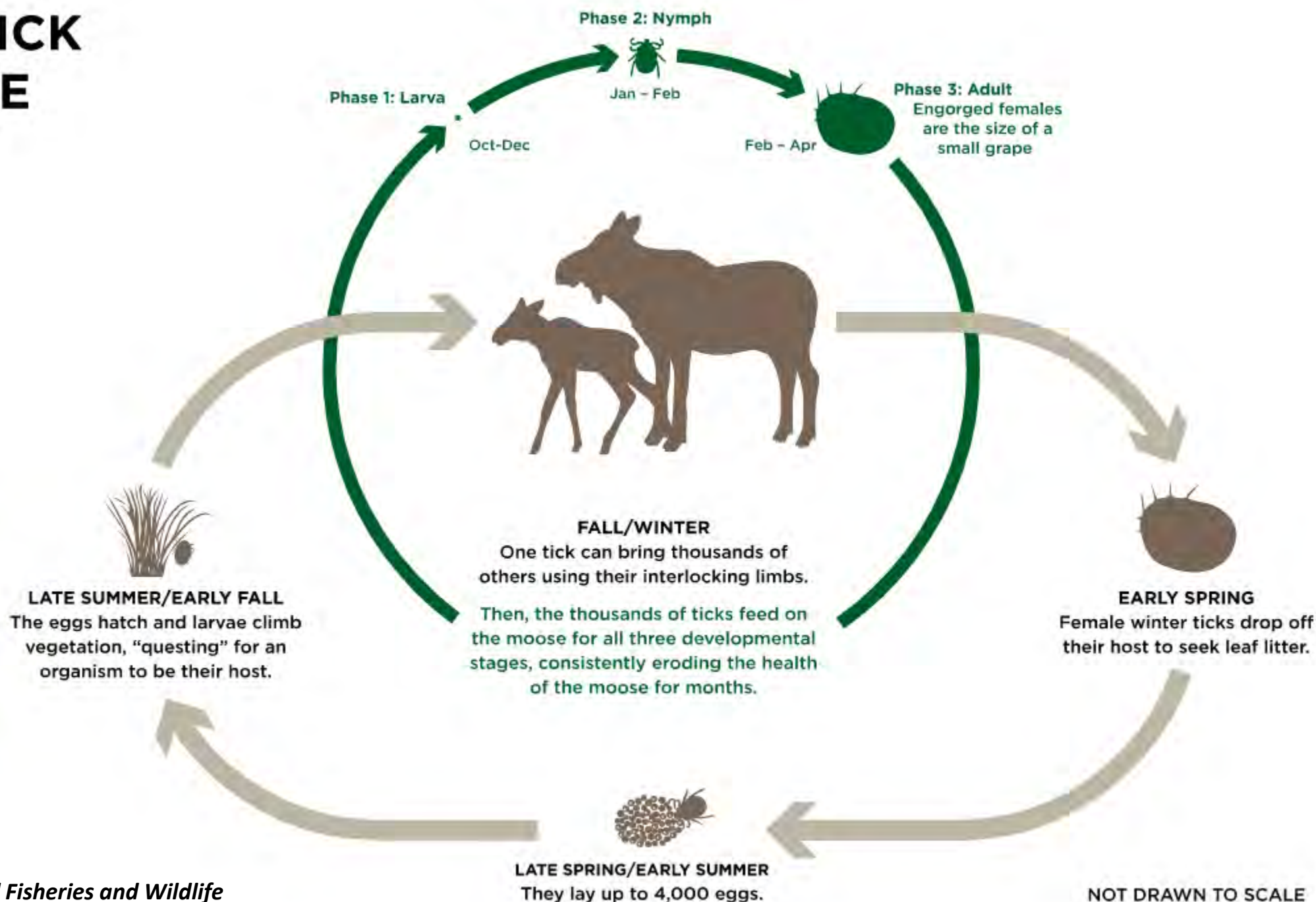
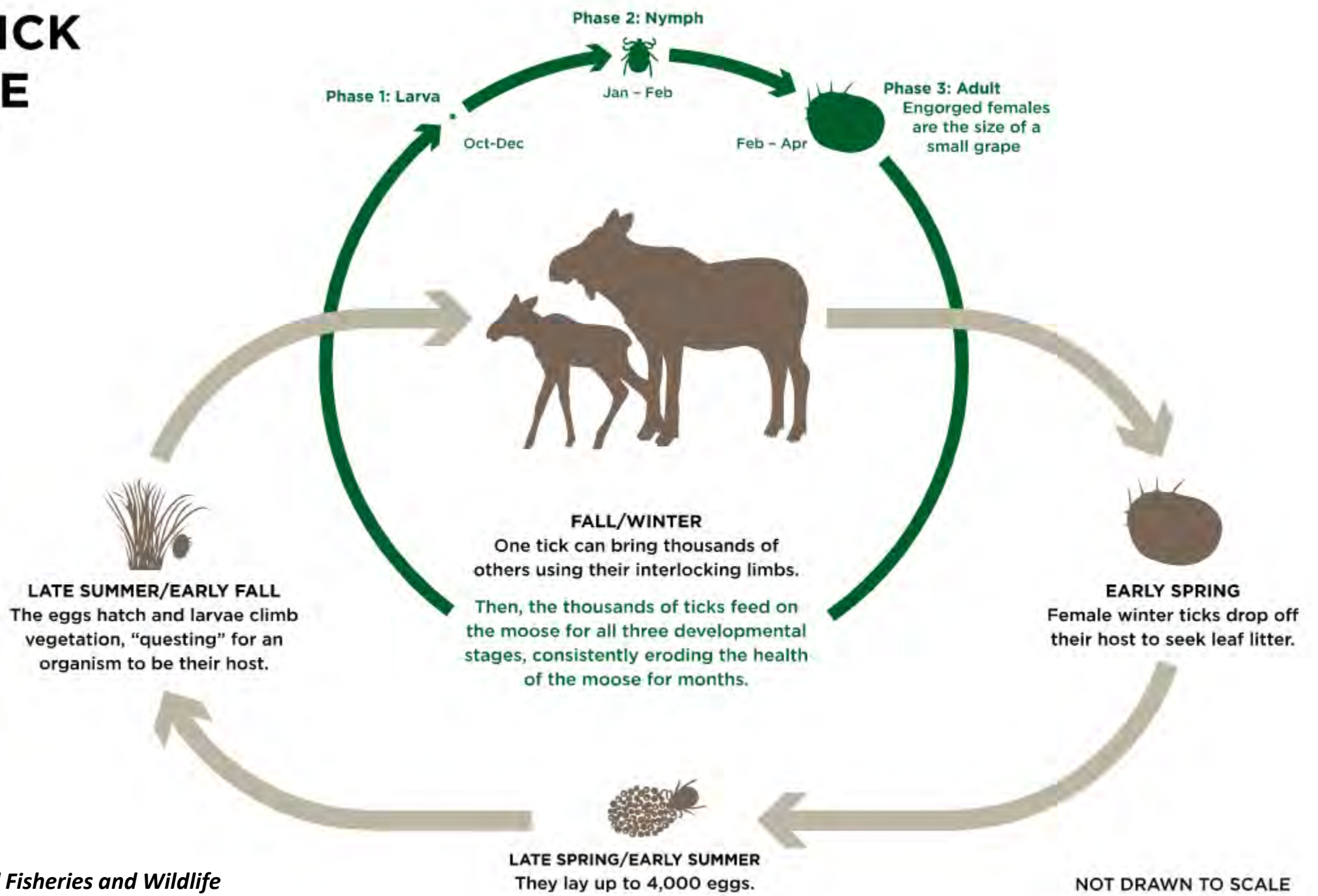




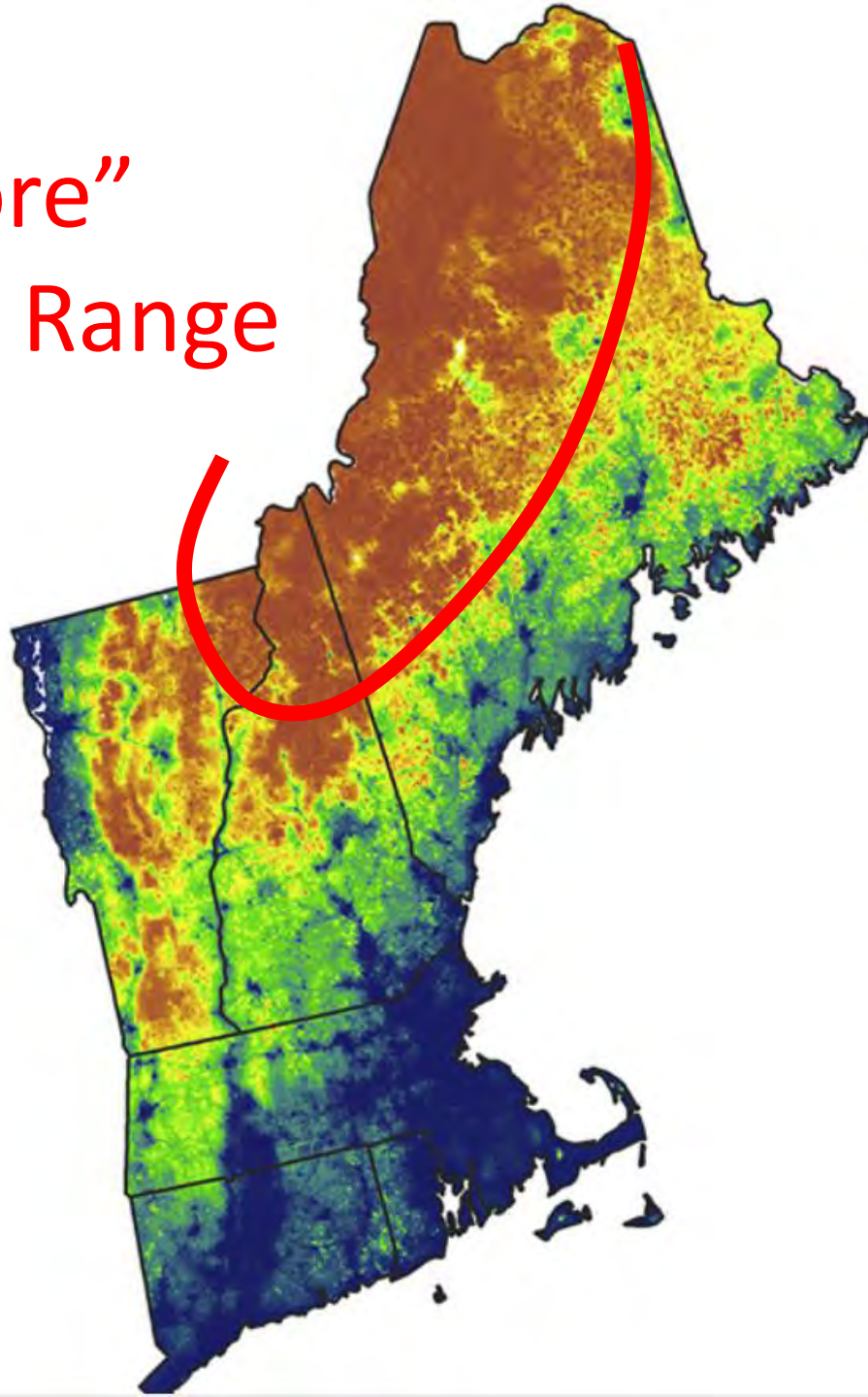
Photo by Cheryl Sullivan

WINTER TICK LIFE CYCLE

Moose are most active during this period of time because it is mating season. This increases the moose's chance of walking past a cluster of questing winter ticks.



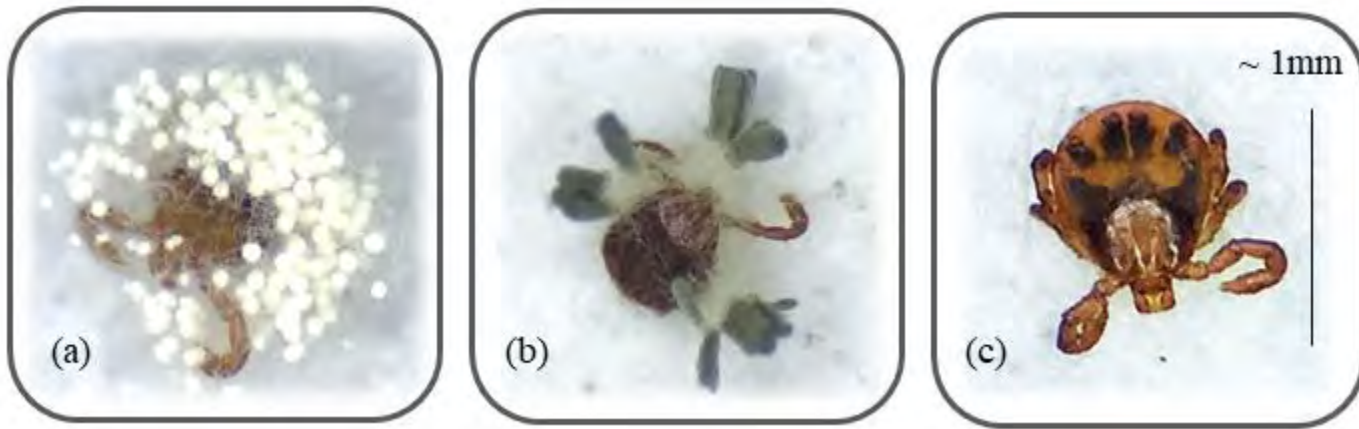
“Core”
Moose Range



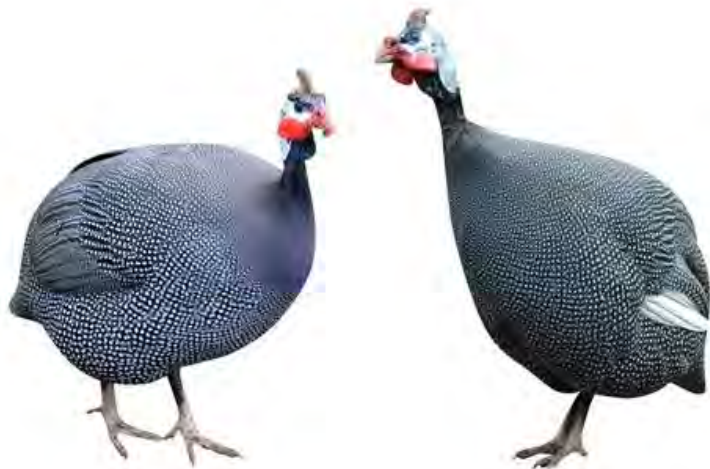
Probability of moose occurrence
Pearman-Gillman et al. 2020

Our Goal:
Healthy
Moose!

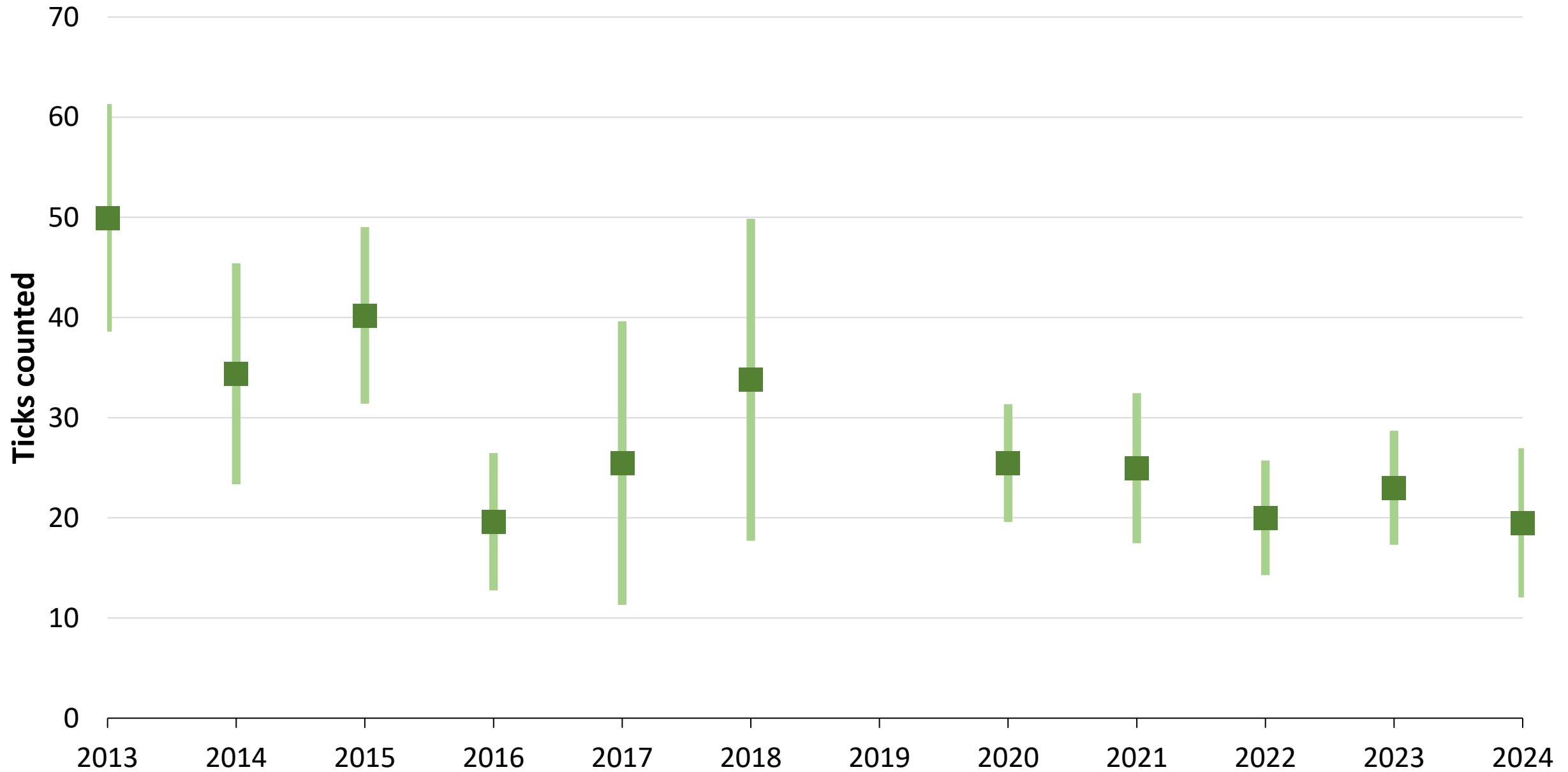




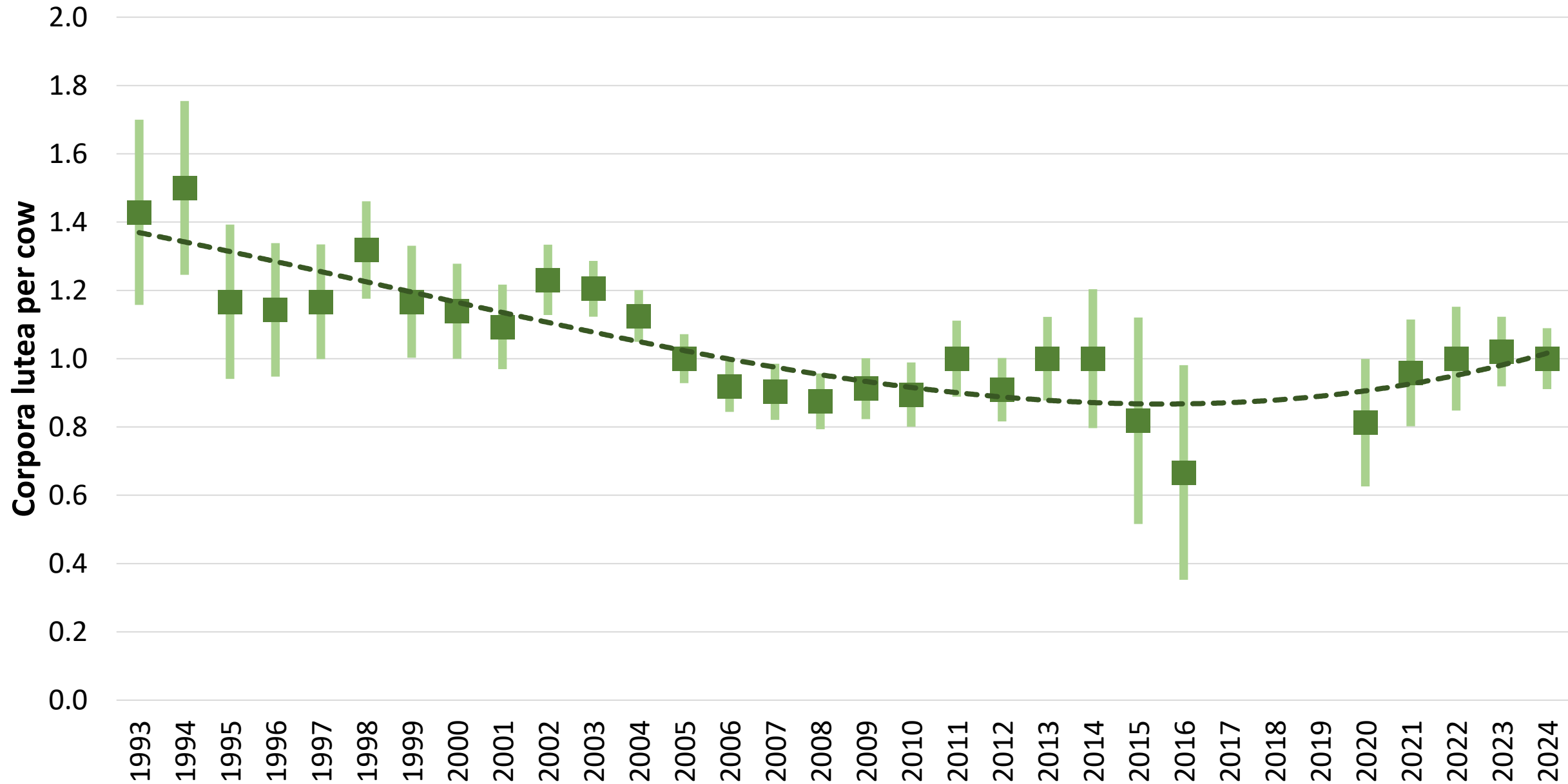
We Can't Manage Winter Ticks Directly



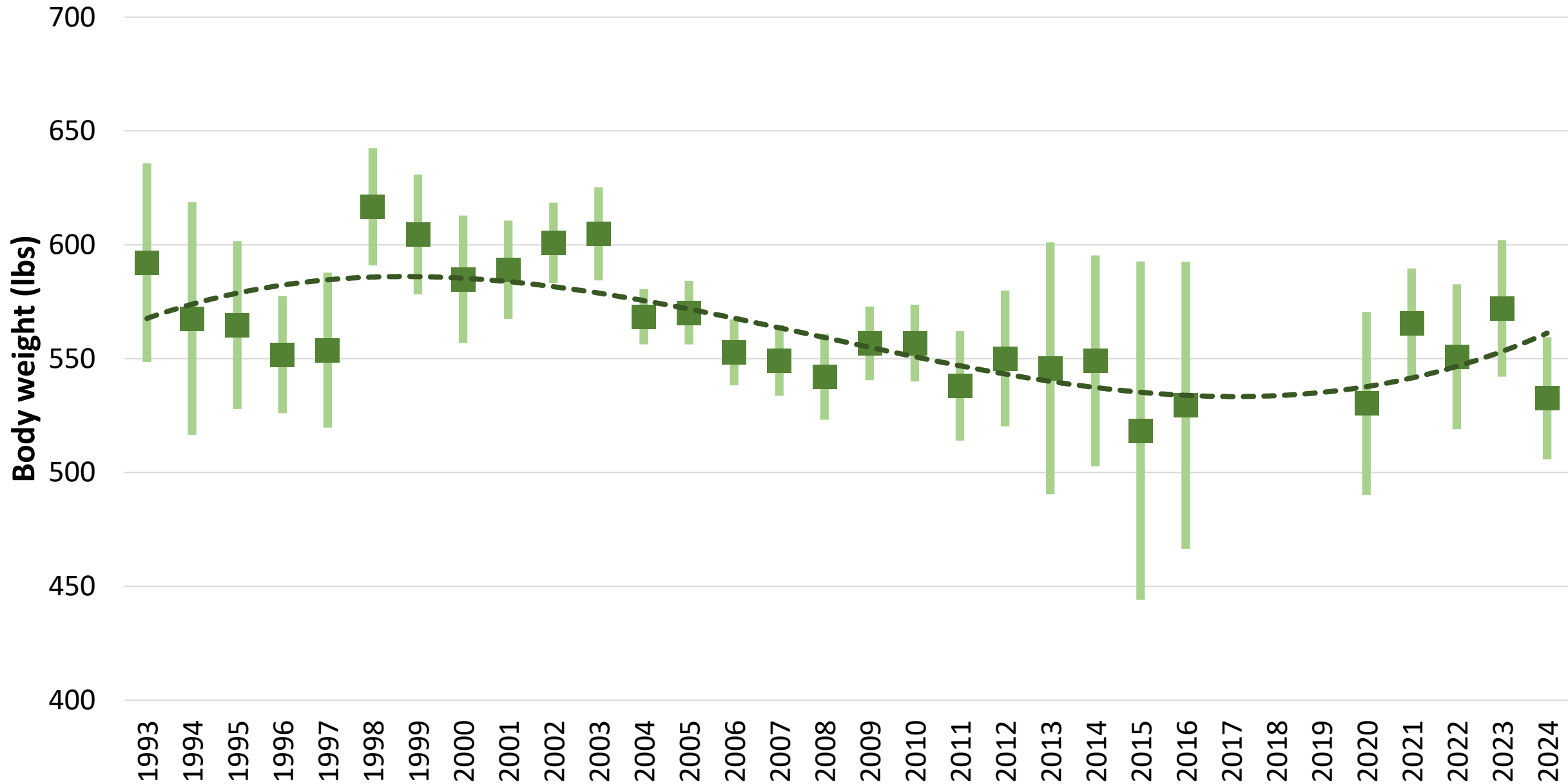
Tick Counts on Harvested Bull Moose



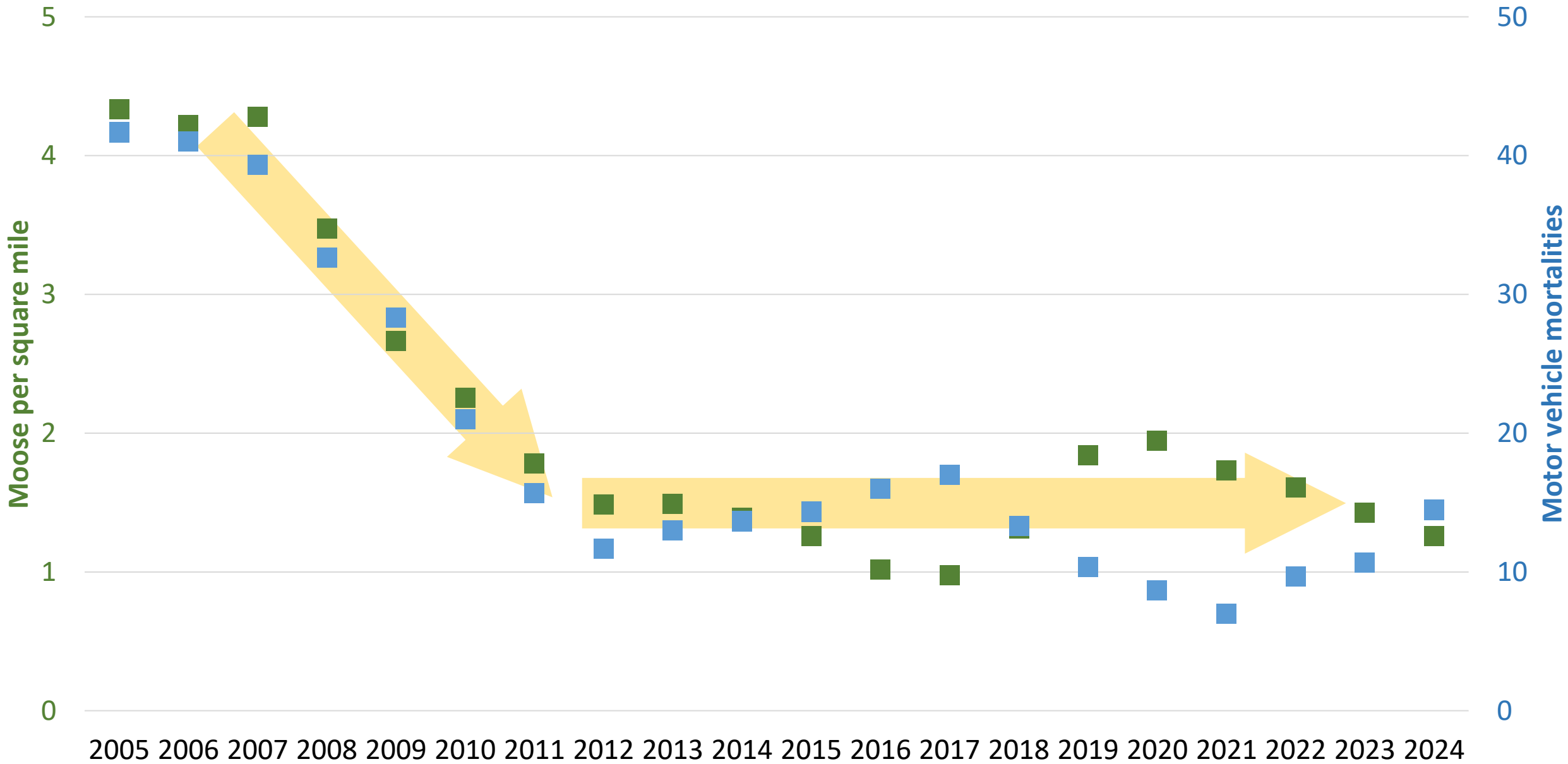
Health Measures: Ovulation Rate



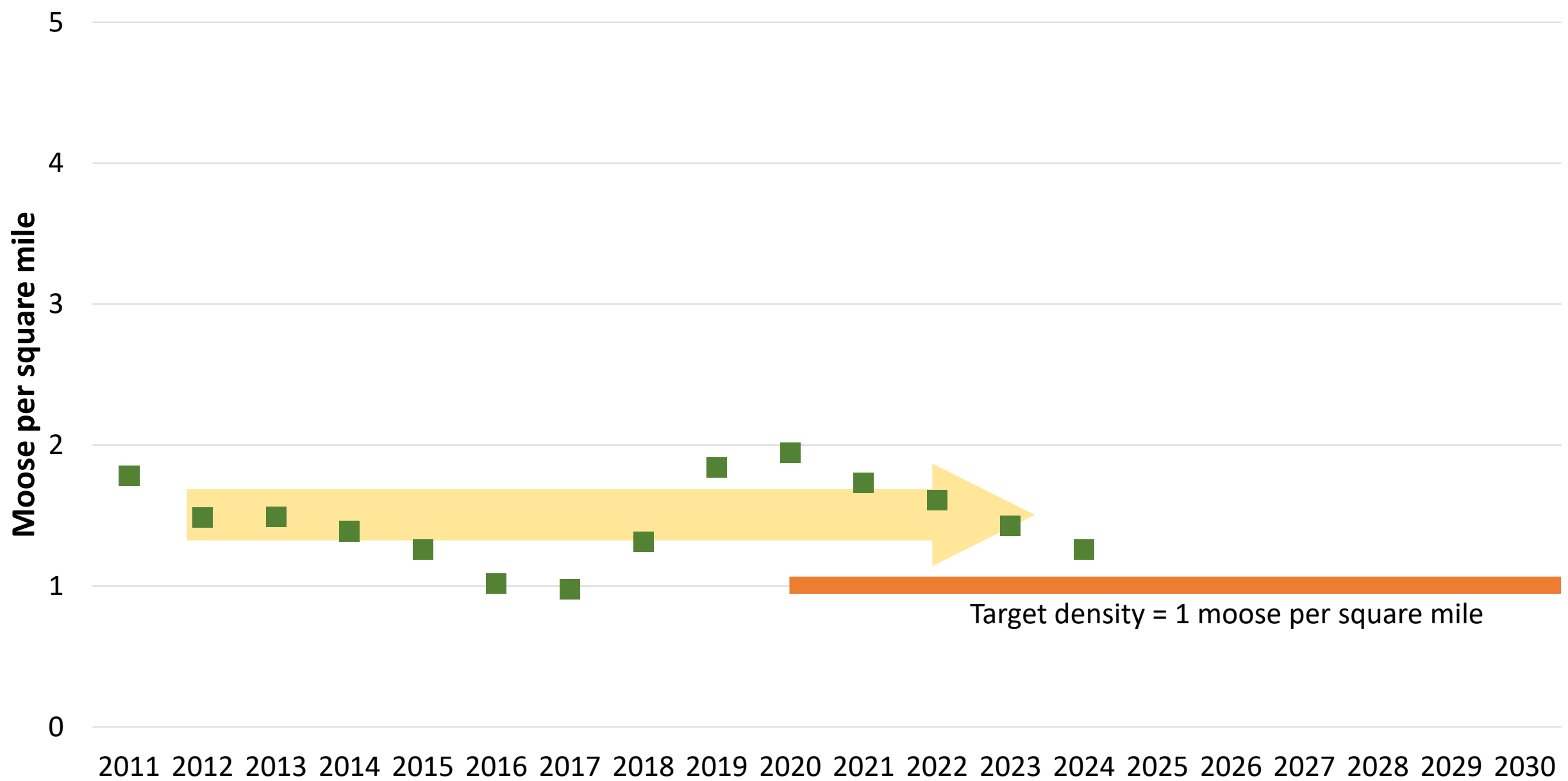
Health Measures: Adult Female Weight



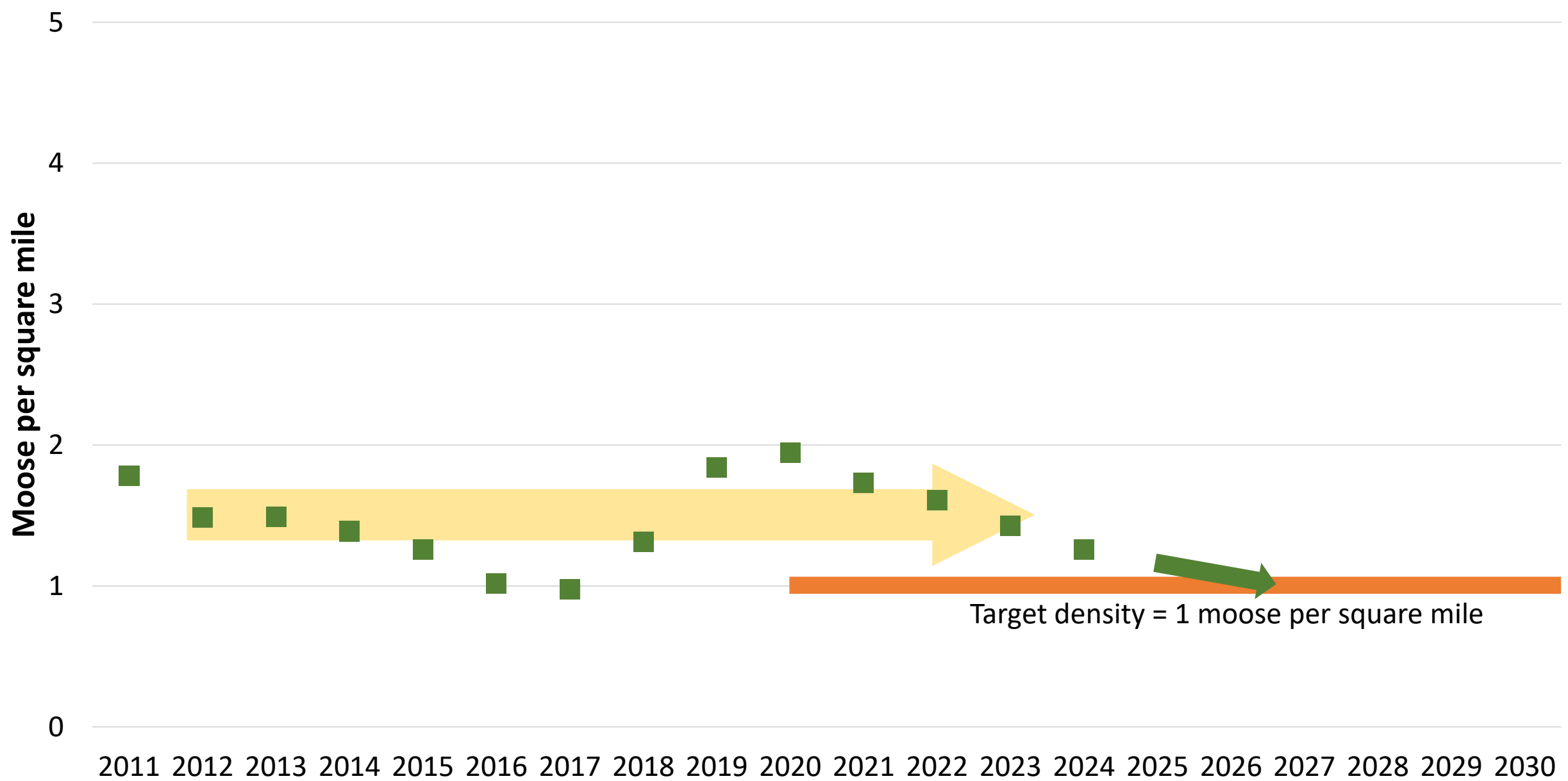
Population Trend in WMU E



Population Projection in WMU E



Population Projection in WMU E



Permit Recommendation

	Permits			Expected Harvest
	E1	E2	Total	
Archery Season				
Either-sex	11	9	20	10 (7-13)
Regular Season				
Either-sex	29	25	54	32 (26-40)
Antlerless-only	55	45	100	40 (30-50)
Auction	<i>choice</i>		3	2 (0-3)
Special Opportunity	<i>choice</i>		3	2 (0-3)
TOTAL			180	86 (62-105)



Next Steps

Tonight

- Presentation to Board
- Preliminary Approval
(vote on what is presented to public for comment)

Public Comment

- Public Hearings
 - 3/17 – Bennington
 - 3/18 – Orleans
 - 3/20 – East Montpelier
- Presentation & recommendation available online
- Public comments by email

April 9th

- F&W Board Final Vote

Questions?

2025
Moose Harvest
Recommendation

to the
Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board



Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department
Agency of Natural Resources
1 National Life Drive, Davis 2
Montpelier, VT 05620-3208
802-828-1000

This recommendation aims to achieve moose population objectives established in the [2020-2030 Big Game Management Plan](#) and to improve the health of moose in Wildlife Management Units (WMUs) E1 and E2 by reducing the impact of winter ticks. The Department recommends issuing 180 moose hunting permits between WMUs E1 and E2 to reduce the moose population and thereby reduce winter tick abundance. No permits are recommended for the other 19 WMUs, because moose densities remain below established objectives and hunting thresholds. The recommended permit allocation is the same as approved by the Board in 2023 and 2024.

The current number of moose in WMU E has been sufficient to sustain winter ticks at high levels that are negatively affecting moose health and survival. Winter ticks are a host-dependent parasite with moose being the primary host responsible for major fluctuations in winter tick densities. Therefore, reduction in moose population density decreases the number of available hosts which in turn decreases the number of winter ticks on the landscape. Moose population reduction will be necessary to break the winter tick cycle and improve the health of moose in this region.

Reducing winter tick numbers directly, either by treating moose or the landscape with some form of acaricide or fungal pathogen, is not currently a viable option. Research in this area is ongoing, but the realities of treating an entire landscape or a sufficient portion of the moose population make it unlikely that this will be a practical option soon. Importantly, this approach would not address the cause of high winter tick abundance, which is high moose population density.

Failure to reduce moose population density will perpetuate the current, unhealthy state of moose in WMU E and would be inconsistent with the Department's established objective of managing for a healthy moose population. Importantly, 65% of Vermont residents support maintaining a smaller moose population through hunting if it reduces the number of moose that die each year from winter ticks. Only 15% oppose this approach (*Responsive Management 2019*).

Although winter ticks can be found on moose throughout the northeast, they do not significantly impact moose populations across the more-peripheral parts of their range, including the rest of Vermont, due to lower moose population densities that limit tick abundance.

Summary of Key Points

- The moose population remains stable in most of Vermont, but may be declining in WMU E (E1 & E2), as intended, due to recent moose harvests.
- Moose density in WMU E remains above the objective of 1 moose per square mile established in the [2020-2030 Big Game Management Plan](#).
 - Moose densities greater than 1 moose per square mile are uncommon in North America, occurring in less than 10% of moose range.
 - In Vermont, no WMU outside the Northeast Kingdom ever had a moose density of 1/mi².
 - Moose densities greater than 1/mi² support high numbers of winter ticks that negatively impact the health of moose.
 - Moose densities below 0.75/mi² support relatively few winter ticks that do not impact moose populations. This is the case in most of Vermont – winter ticks are present, but do not cause population level impacts.
- Results of moose research and ongoing monitoring in WMU E indicate health of moose is poor in that region.
 - Adult survival remains relatively good, but detrimental health impacts of winter ticks have caused birth rates to be low.
 - Heavy winter tick loads can cause more than half of moose calves to die in late winter.
- The Department recommends 180 moose hunting permits (80 either sex and 100 antlerless only) be allocated in WMU E to reduce moose numbers and thereby reduce the impacts of winter ticks on the health of moose and help maintain a sustainable moose population.
 - This is expected to result in the harvest of approximately 86 moose, or about 10% of the current estimated population in WMU E.
- No permits are recommended for the other 19 WMUs, which cover 93% of Vermont, because moose densities remain below objectives and hunting thresholds established in the [2020-2030 Big Game Management Plan](#).

Goals

This recommendation aims to achieve moose population objectives established in the [2020-2030 Big Game Management Plan](#) and to improve the health of moose in WMUs E1 and E2 by reducing the impact of winter ticks.

Management Objectives

Moose population objectives for each WMU were established in Vermont's [2020-2030 Big Game Management Plan](#). These objectives aim to maintain healthy regional moose populations at levels that are socially acceptable and ecologically sustainable.

Moose density objectives throughout most of moose range in Vermont have been set at 0.5 moose/mi² (**Figure 1**). This objective is a carryover from earlier moose management plans, and reflects ecological limitations on moose densities in these regions due to limited young forest habitat, higher deer densities, and a warming climate. Moose densities in most of these WMUs have never reached 0.5 moose/mi².

In WMUs D2, E1, and E2, density objectives reflect higher historical densities and the impact of winter ticks on the size and health of the region's moose population. Research has found reduced frequency of winter tick epizootics (where more than 50% of calves die from winter tick infestations) at moose densities near 1/mi² and no tick epizootics at densities below 0.75/mi² (Samuel 2007, Jones 2016). The Department will initially try to maintain moose densities at or below 1/mi² to reduce winter tick abundance and the frequency of epizootics and improve the health of the moose population. However, if tick impacts are not reduced, the moose density may need to be reduced to 0.75/mi². Ultimately, the goal is to have healthy moose, with fewer calves dying each year from heavy winter tick loads and healthier cows with higher birth rates.

Hunting thresholds have also been established for each WMU at 75% of the density objective (**Table 1**). The Department will only consider hunting moose when densities exceed this threshold for two consecutive years. This ensures the other values of moose are maximized at these lower densities.

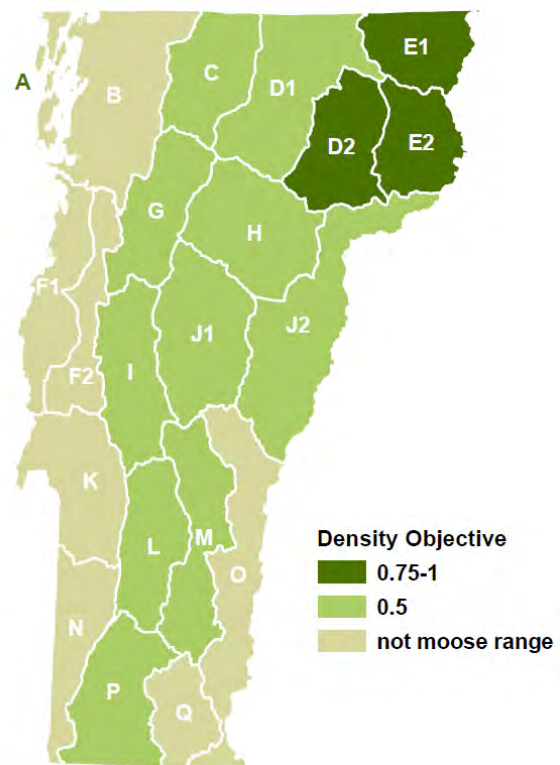


Figure 1. Moose density objectives (moose per square mile of moose habitat) established in Vermont's [2020-2030 Big Game Management Plan](#).

Population Status

Population Estimates

Regional moose densities in Vermont are estimated from moose sighting rates reported by deer hunters during the November rifle season. This approach, originally developed by the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, relates sighting rates to moose densities determined by aerial surveys (Bontaites et al. 2000). Aerial surveys conducted in Vermont allowed the Department to modify this model to better fit Vermont sighting data. Sighting rates often vary from year to year due to factors other than the number of moose (e.g., weather conditions), so a 3-year rolling average is used to smooth out some of this variation.

Using this approach, the 2024 (2022–2024 rolling average) density estimates for WMUs E1 and E2 are 1.28 and 1.23 moose/mi², respectively, which are well above the density objectives established in the [2020-2030 Big Game Management Plan](#). Moose population densities in all other WMUs except WMU C remain below established hunting thresholds (**Table 1**).

Table 1. Moose density estimates based on sighting rates by deer hunters and density objectives and hunting thresholds established in the [2020-2030 Big Game Management Plan](#), by WMU. Density estimates are based on average sighting rates during 2022–2024.

WMU	Habitat (mi ²)	Density (moose/mi ²)			Population Estimate	
		Objective	Hunting Threshold	Current Estimate	N	(80% CI)
A	35	n/a	n/a	0.02	1	(1–1)
B	420	n/a	n/a	0.05	19	(11–27)
C	351	0.5	0.38	0.42	148	(125–172)
D1	449	0.5	0.38	0.14	63	(47–79)
D2	346	0.75-1	0.56	0.37	127	(100–154)
E1	306	0.75-1	0.56	1.28	393	(346–441)
E2	326	0.75-1	0.56	1.23	402	(337–468)
F1	108	n/a	n/a	0.05	5	(3–7)
F2	158	n/a	n/a	0.03	4	(3–5)
G	363	0.5	0.38	0.06	22	(14–30)
H	466	0.5	0.38	0.19	88	(70–105)
I	407	0.5	0.38	0.08	31	(22–41)
J1	464	0.5	0.38	0.03	14	(10–17)
J2	633	0.5	0.38	0.22	142	(115–170)
K	359	n/a	n/a	0.04	15	(8–21)
L	346	0.5	0.38	0.10	34	(23–45)
M	424	0.5	0.38	0.19	82	(57–107)
N	275	n/a	n/a	0.02	6	(6–6)
O	478	n/a	n/a	0.06	29	(15–44)
P	447	0.5	0.38	0.16	70	(50–91)
Q	219	n/a	n/a	0.06	14	(8–19)
STATE	7380				1709	(1371–2050)

Moose density in WMU C exceeded the hunting threshold in 2024. However, according to the guidelines of the [2020-2030 Big Game Management Plan](#), hunting will only be considered if a WMU exceeds the hunting threshold for two consecutive years. Moose density in WMU C had not previously exceeded the hunting threshold since 2016.

The Department continues to receive interest in moose hunting in areas outside WMU E, and some local areas could likely sustain a limited moose harvest. However, the uneven distribution of functional moose habitat (and therefore moose) in much of Vermont is a challenge for management. The Department will be reevaluating moose habitat mapping, taking advantage of recent research efforts (e.g., Pearman-Gilman et al. 2020, Blouin et al. 2021a) to better reflect the area of functional habitat in each WMU. This should allow for setting more appropriate and achievable population objectives and calculating more meaningful estimates of moose density in WMUs with less homogeneous moose habitat.

Moose Population Trends in WMU E

In WMU E, moose were overabundant in the early 2000s and the Department intentionally worked to reduce moose numbers. Since population reduction efforts ended in 2010, moose density has remained relatively stable in WMU E near 1.5 moose/mi² (**Figure 2**). Importantly, the density of moose over that time has been high enough to support problematic numbers of winter ticks. The population may now be declining, as intended, as a result of higher moose harvests in recent years.

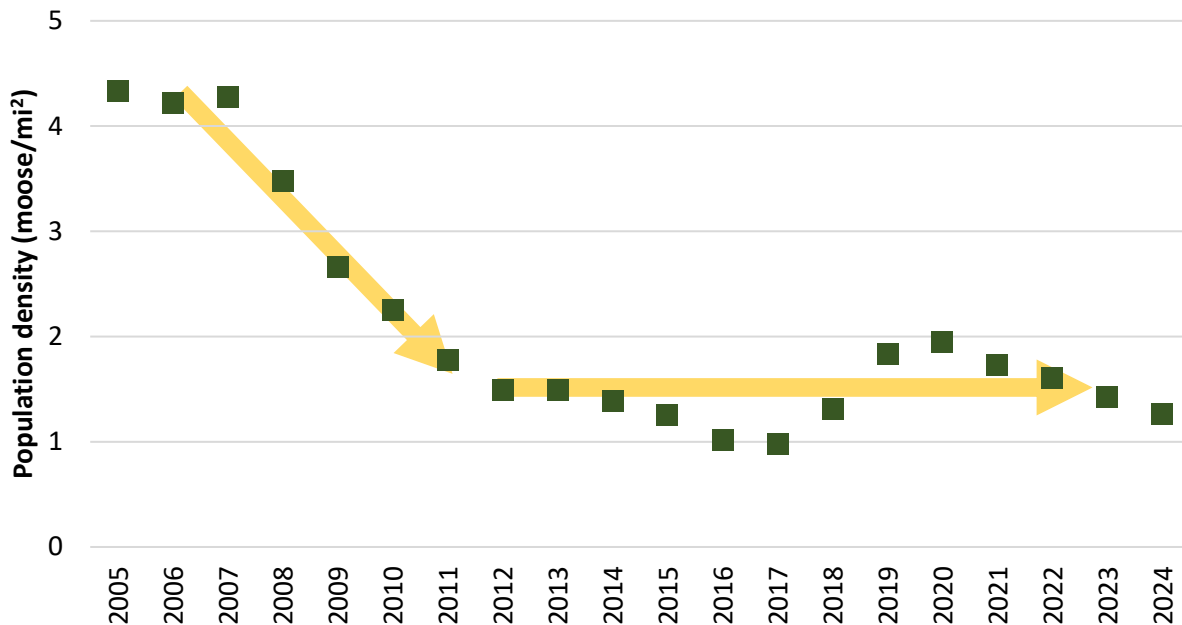


Figure 2. Moose density estimates (green squares) and major trends (yellow arrows) in WMU E during 2005–2024. Density estimates are based on moose sighting rates reported by deer hunters.

Moose and Winter Ticks

Studies in Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine have concluded that winter ticks are the primary cause of moose mortality across their core range in New England (Musante et al. 2007, 2010, Bergeron et al. 2013, Dunfey-Ball 2017, Jones et al. 2017, Ellingwood et al. 2019, Jones et al. 2019, DeBow et al. 2021), with some moose hosting an astonishingly high number of ticks (>50,000/individual; Jones et al. 2019).

Core moose range (continuous red/brown area in **Figure 3**) in New England extends from northeastern Vermont through northern New Hampshire and western and northern Maine. This part of the region has a colder climate with longer winters, low deer densities, large blocks of forest, and an abundance of young forest created by commercial timber management which allows it to sustain higher densities of moose than more peripheral parts of their range. Population-level effects of winter ticks have only been observed in the region's core moose range, where moose densities have been high enough to support large numbers of winter ticks.

Although winter ticks can be found on moose throughout the region, they have little impact on moose populations across the more-peripheral parts of their range in the northeast, including the rest of Vermont, due to lower moose densities which limit tick abundance. Moose numbers outside of the Northeast Kingdom have declined from their peak in the early 2000s, but the main cause of that decline was not winter ticks. It was primarily due to a combination of declining quantity of young forest, increased parasite loads (particularly brainworm linked to increasing deer densities), and fewer moose in core moose range to migrate out to these other regions. These factors continue to limit moose abundance across much of Vermont.

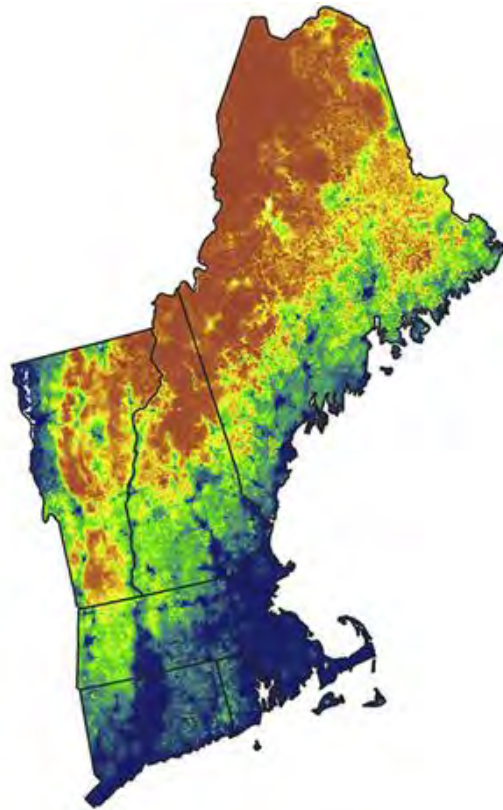


Figure 3. Estimated probability of occurrence of moose in the New England region from Pearman-Gilman et al. 2020.

Vermont Research

During 2017–2019, 126 moose (36 adult cows and 90 calves) were fitted with GPS radio collars in WMU E to monitor survival and birth rates. Results of this research clearly showed that chronic, high winter tick loads caused the health of moose in WMU E to be poor. Birth rates were low and overwinter calf survival was poor (49%; DeBow et al. 2021). Although adult female survival remained relatively good, it was lower than expected for a population without major predators. Survival of breeding age females has significant influence on population trends in long-lived species like moose.

Ongoing and Future Research

Fieldwork associated with the survival study concluded in 2019; however, the Department continued to monitor survival and calf recruitment in the remaining collared cows through 2024. Additionally, the

large amounts of data collected during this study allowed University of Vermont researchers to analyze other aspects of moose and winter tick ecology. This related research focused on understanding 1) How winter tick impacts on moose relate to habitat use and quality (see Blouin et al. 2021a and Blouin et al. 2021b), 2) How winter ticks affect moose nutritional condition and stress levels (see Rosenblatt et al. 2021), and 3) Moose genetic diversity and connectivity (see Rosenblatt et al. 2023).

Other related research at UVM assessed the effect of various fungal pathogens on survival of winter tick larvae (see Sullivan et al. 2021 and Sullivan et al. 2022). While some of these fungi resulted in high mortality of winter tick larvae in the lab, an important next step is to determine the effectiveness and feasibility of using these pathogens to control winter ticks in the field.

The Department is currently partnering with multiple northeastern universities and state and federal agencies on regional research efforts focused on non-invasive monitoring of moose and winter ticks. A component of this involves deployment of hundreds of long-term camera monitoring stations that will hopefully allow for better monitoring of moose health and population trends, particularly in parts of the region with little or no moose harvest.

Recent Winter Tick Impacts in WMU E

The severity of annual tick infestations is dependent not only on moose density, but also on climate, including temperature, humidity, wind, and snow. Annual variation in climate conditions results in variation in winter tick loads on moose. As long as climate conditions periodically result in reduced winter tick infestations, moose densities can remain at levels that perpetuate heavy tick loads and unhealthy moose for the foreseeable future. Vermont has not collared moose calves since 2019. As a result, the Department relies on other sources of information to estimate winter tick impacts since that time.

Winter tick counts on bull moose harvested in October 2024 were comparable to those observed in recent years (Figure 6). The long-term trend in this index is encouraging, but there has been little change since 2016.

This measure provides an indication of tick abundance on the landscape, but final tick loads on moose are largely determined by the length of the questing period. The questing period is typically ended by weather conditions (e.g., persistent snow or freezing conditions) that kill questing winter tick larvae. Higher elevations of WMU E received some snow in mid-October, 2024 which lasted for several days. However, persistent snow for the entire WMU did not arrive until late November.

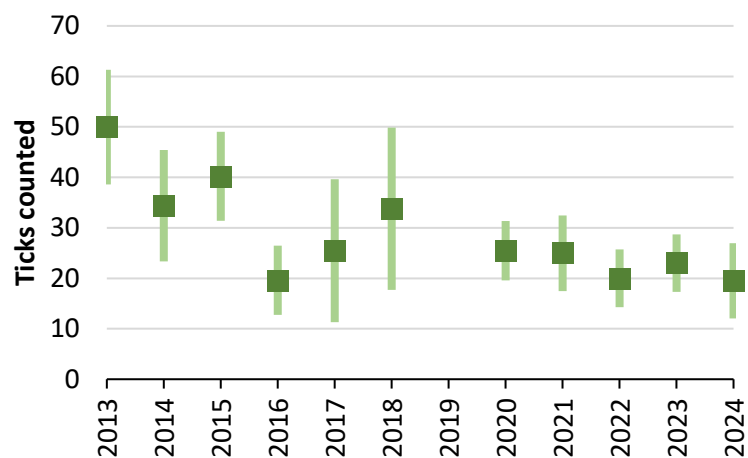


Figure 6. Winter tick counts on bull moose harvested in Wildlife Management Unit E, 2013–2024.

Population Health in WMU E

In the early 2000s, moose were overabundant in WMU E. They were causing significant damage to forest regeneration and their physical condition was declining as habitat quality declined. The Department actively reduced the moose population in this area to bring it into balance with the habitat and to improve the health of moose. By 2011, the population had been reduced to a level the habitat could support; however, health measures did not improve (**Figures 7 and 8**).

Moose body condition and reproductive rates have remained poor since 2011 due to the impacts of chronic high winter tick loads. Moose are not currently limited by habitat in the core part of their range, including WMU E (Dunfey-Ball 2017). However, habitat quality can influence the distribution of moose on the landscape (i.e., higher densities of moose in areas with the highest quality habitat), which can influence local winter tick abundance and impacts on moose health (Healy et al. 2019, Blouin et al. 2021a and b). Broader distribution and increased volume of timber harvests in WMU E over the past decade has resulted in a better distribution of optimal habitat. As a result, it appears moose are less concentrated around a limited number of areas with the highest quality habitat.

Body condition and reproductive rates have shown signs of improvement in recent years. However, body weights, particularly for yearling moose, declined sharply in 2024 (**Figure 7**). Ultimately, we hope to see sustained improvement in these metrics.

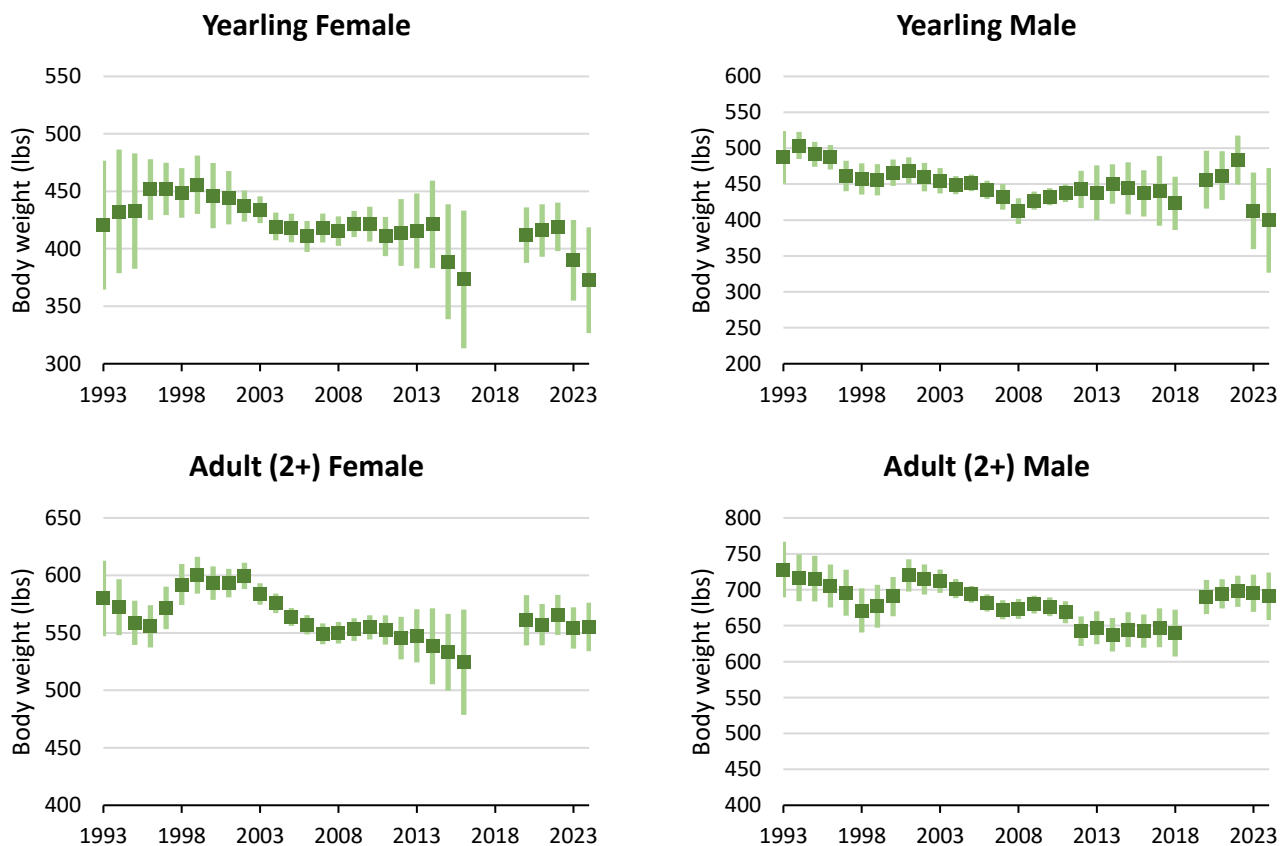


Figure 7. Field-dressed body weights of moose harvested during the regular season in Wildlife Management Unit E, 1993–2024. Data are 3-year rolling averages with 95% confidence intervals.

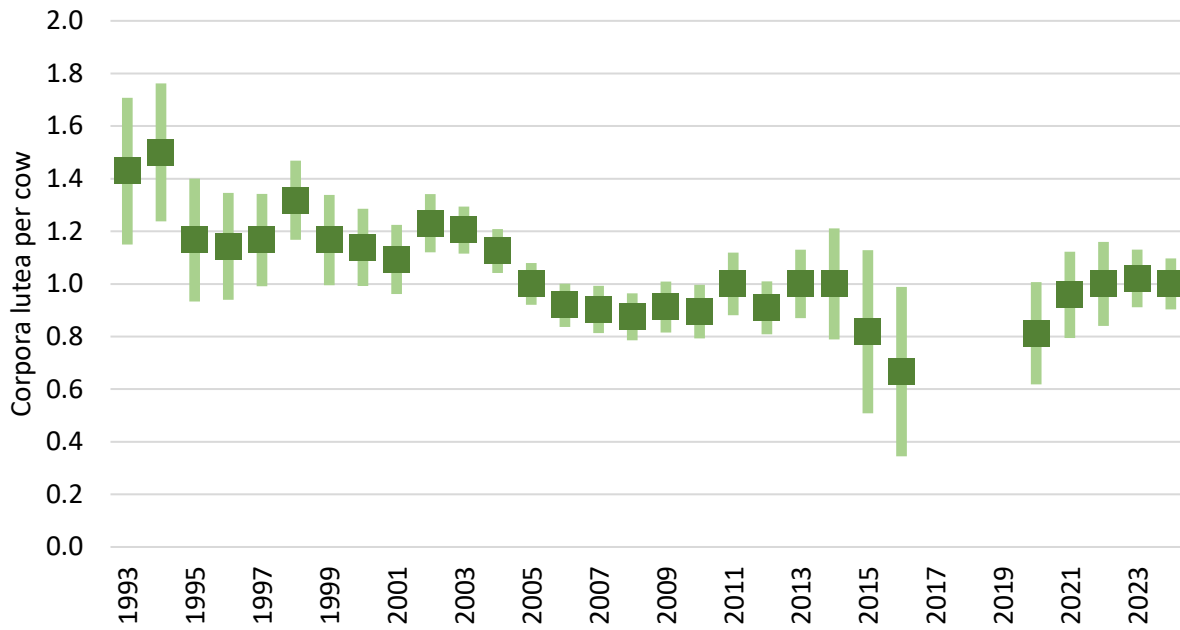


Figure 8. Ovulation rate of prime-aged (≥ 3 years old) cow moose in WMU E, 1993-2024. Data are 3-year rolling averages from counts of corpora lutea in ovaries collected from hunter-harvested moose.

Harvest Recommendation

The Department recommends harvesting approximately 45 adult cow moose (~11% of the cow population) in WMU E during the 2025 moose hunting seasons. The Department further recommends that this be accomplished through the issuance of 80 either-sex hunting permits and 100 antlerless-only hunting permits. Given recent success rates and sex-age composition of the harvest for each permit type, this allocation is expected to result in the harvest of approximately 86 moose with an expected breakdown of 38 bulls, 45 cows, and 3 calves.

Approximately 55% of permits are recommended to be allocated to WMU E1 due to higher moose densities in that WMU. The recommended allocation to the archery season is 25% of either-sex permits, based on the percentage of total applications that were for this season in recent years and the need to obtain sufficient biological data during the regular season. Allocations to the auction, special opportunity, and veterans are the same as prior years and are limited by statute and regulation. Permit breakdown by season, type, WMU, and special allocation is provided below in **Table 2**. This is the same permit allocation approved by the Fish and Wildlife Board in 2023 and 2024.

Table 2. Recommended 2025 moose hunting permit allocations and expected harvest by season, permit type, and WMU.

	Permits			Expected Harvest
	E1	E2	Total	
Archery Season				
Either-sex	11	9	20	10 (7–13)
Regular Season¹				
Either-sex	29	25	54	32 (26–40)
Antlerless-only	55	45	100	40 (30–50)
Auction²	choice		3	2 (0–3)
Special Opportunity²	choice		3	2 (0–3)
TOTAL			180	86 (62–105)

¹ Veteran permits are a priority draw for the first 5 regular season permits.

² Auction and Special Opportunity Permits are either sex and allow choice of season and WMU.

The results of the moose study and continued monitoring of moose clearly show that the current density of moose in WMU E has been sufficient to sustain winter ticks at high levels that negatively affect moose health and survival. Research has shown that winter tick abundance is directly related to moose population density. Reducing the density of moose decreases the number of available hosts which in turn decreases the number of winter ticks on the landscape. Moose population reduction will be necessary to break the winter tick cycle and improve the health of moose in this region.

The Department is committed to achieving a healthy moose population in WMU E by meeting the population objectives established in the [2020-2030 Big Game Management Plan](#). The proposed permit allocation and resulting cow harvest would be expected to reduce the population by 4-5% per year and reach the objective of 1 moose/mi² (632 moose in WMU E) in 2030. However, given the trend in recent population estimates for WMU E, the objective could be reached as soon as 2026. (**Figure 9**).

These projections assume constant harvest each year and no change in moose survival or reproductive rates. In practice, the moose population and winter tick impacts are dynamic, and management must remain adaptive. Actual permit allocations and harvest will be adjusted annually based on new information as it becomes available. Importantly, the Department’s primary goal is to improve the health of moose in WMU E. If health does not improve at 1 moose/mi², moose density may need to be reduced even further.

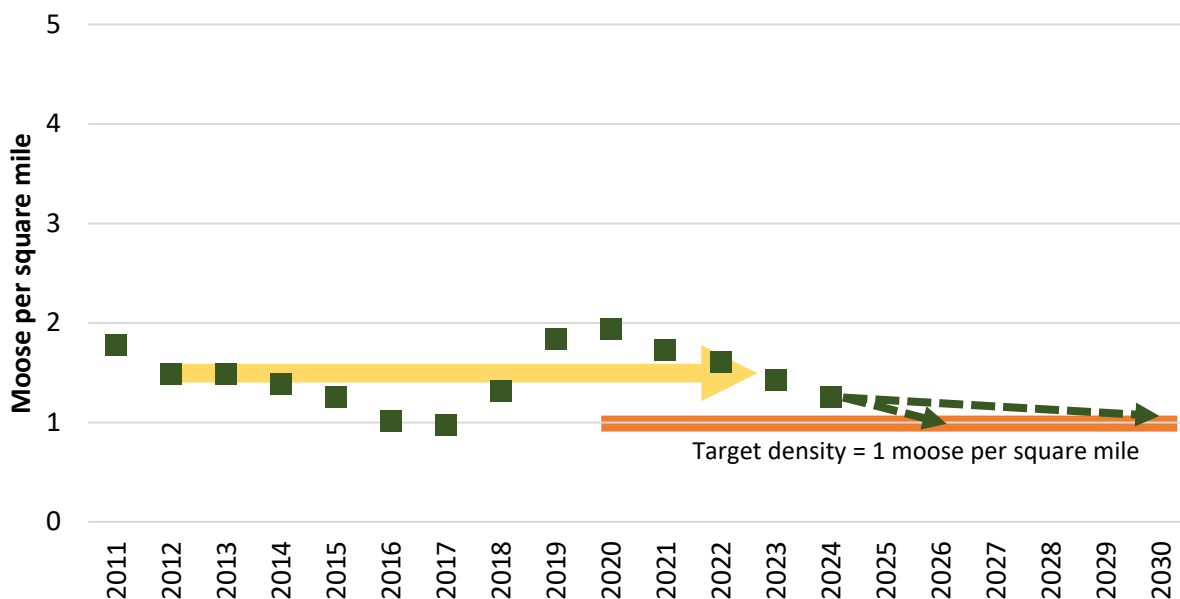


Figure 9. Moose density trends in WMU E and projections to reach the target density of 1 moose per square mile at current harvest rates. Projections assume consistent harvest each year.

Maintaining a healthy, stable, and sustainable moose population requires action to improve moose health. Without management action to reduce the moose population, high tick loads will continue to impact the health of moose in WMU E. The resulting chronic stress, low birth rates, and high calf mortality will make the population less resilient to diseases, parasites, and environmental variation, which could cause the population to destabilize. Importantly, 65% of Vermont residents support maintaining a smaller moose population through hunting if it reduces the number of moose that die each year from winter ticks. Only 15% oppose this approach (*Responsive Management 2019*).

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Deer & Moose Rule Change Recommendation





Next Steps

February

- Rule Change Recommendations to Board
- 1st Vote
 - Begins APA process
 - What is presented to public for comment

Public Comment

- Public Hearings
 - Hearings March 17, 18, 20
 - 2 Hearings May 5-9
 - Presentation & recommendation available online
- Public Comments by email
(ANR.FWPublicComment@vermont.gov)

Approval

- 2nd Vote in June
- Final Vote in July/August
- New Regulations Take Effect in 2026

10 V.S.A. Appendix §17

Rule governing the importation and possession of deer or elk from chronic wasting disease endemic areas and captive hunt or farm facilities

10 V.S.A. Appendix §17

Rule governing the importation and possession of ~~deer or elk~~ cervids from chronic wasting disease endemic areas and captive hunt or farm facilities

Questions?

10 V.S.A. Appendix §33
Moose Management Rule

Recommended Change:

Establish a Special Opportunity Season

				Archery Season		
Archery Season						
	Regular Season					

Recommended Change:

Extend the regular moose season to 9 days

					Archery Season	Archery Season
Archery Season	Archery Season	Archery Season	Archery Season			
Regular Season	Regular Season	Regular Season	Regular Season	Regular Season		

				Archery Season		
Archery Season						
	Regular Season					

Questions?

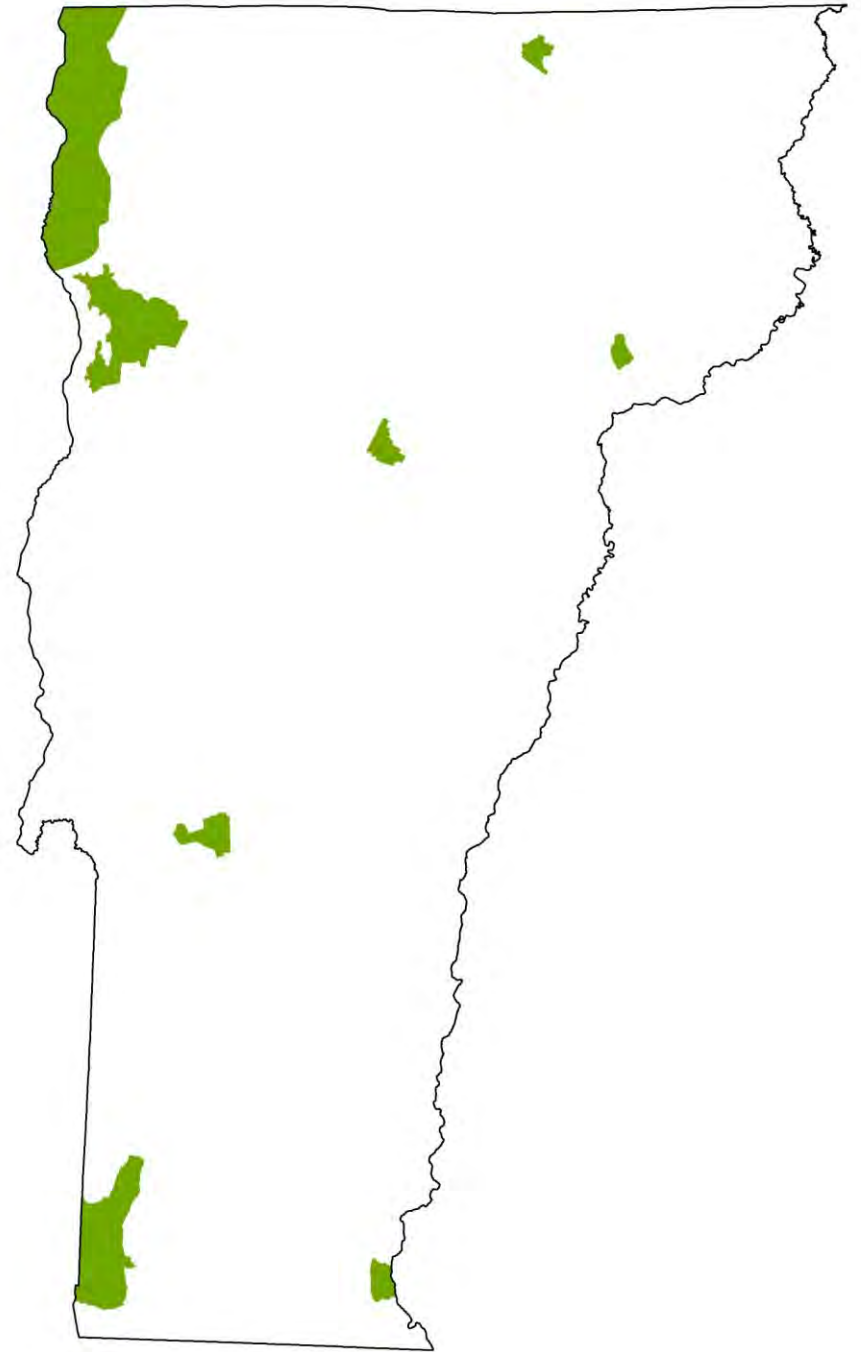
10 V.S.A. Appendix §37
Deer Management Rule

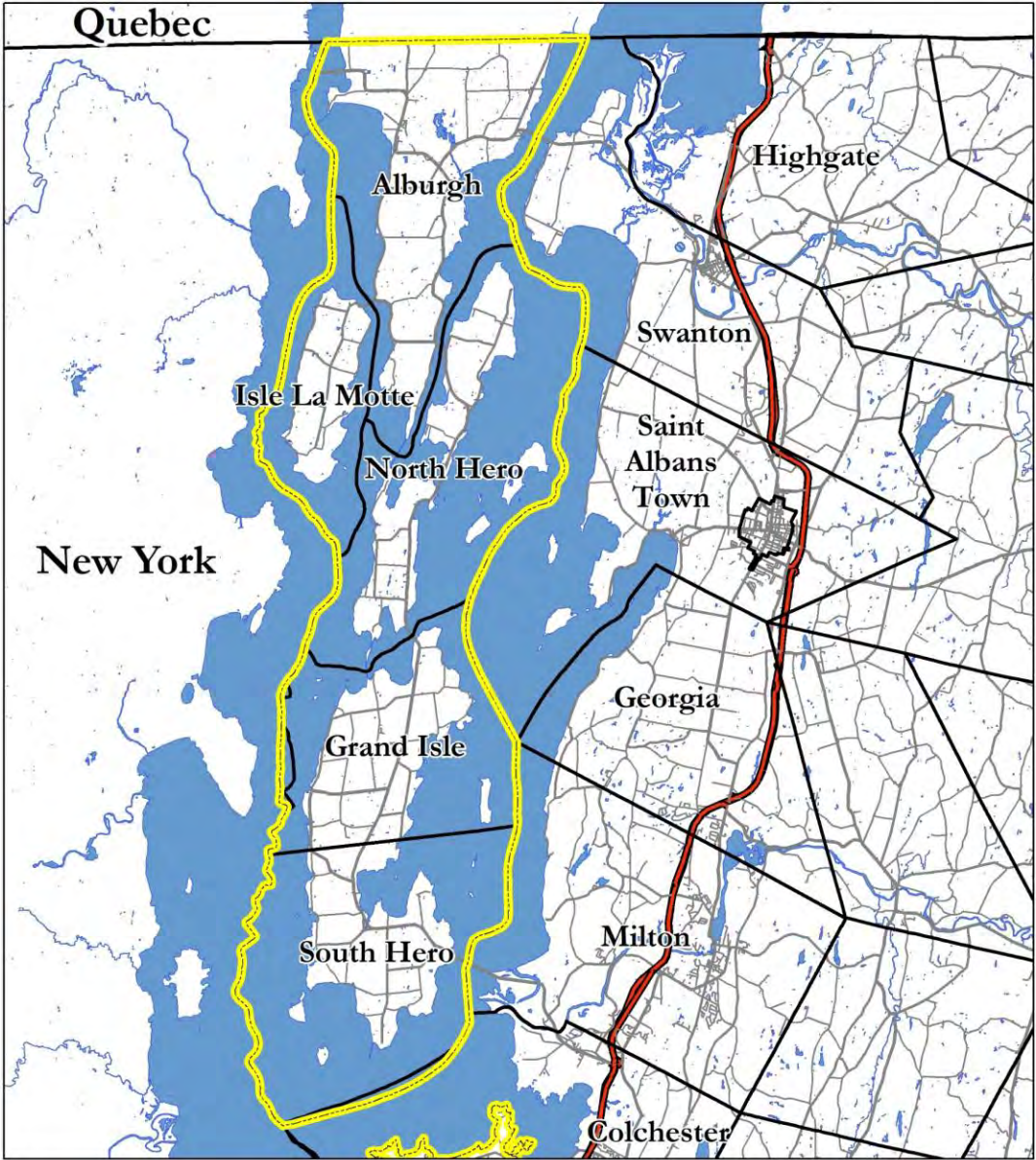
Recommended Change:

Establish Expanded Archery Zones

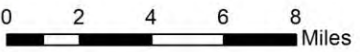
Archery Season Begins
September 15

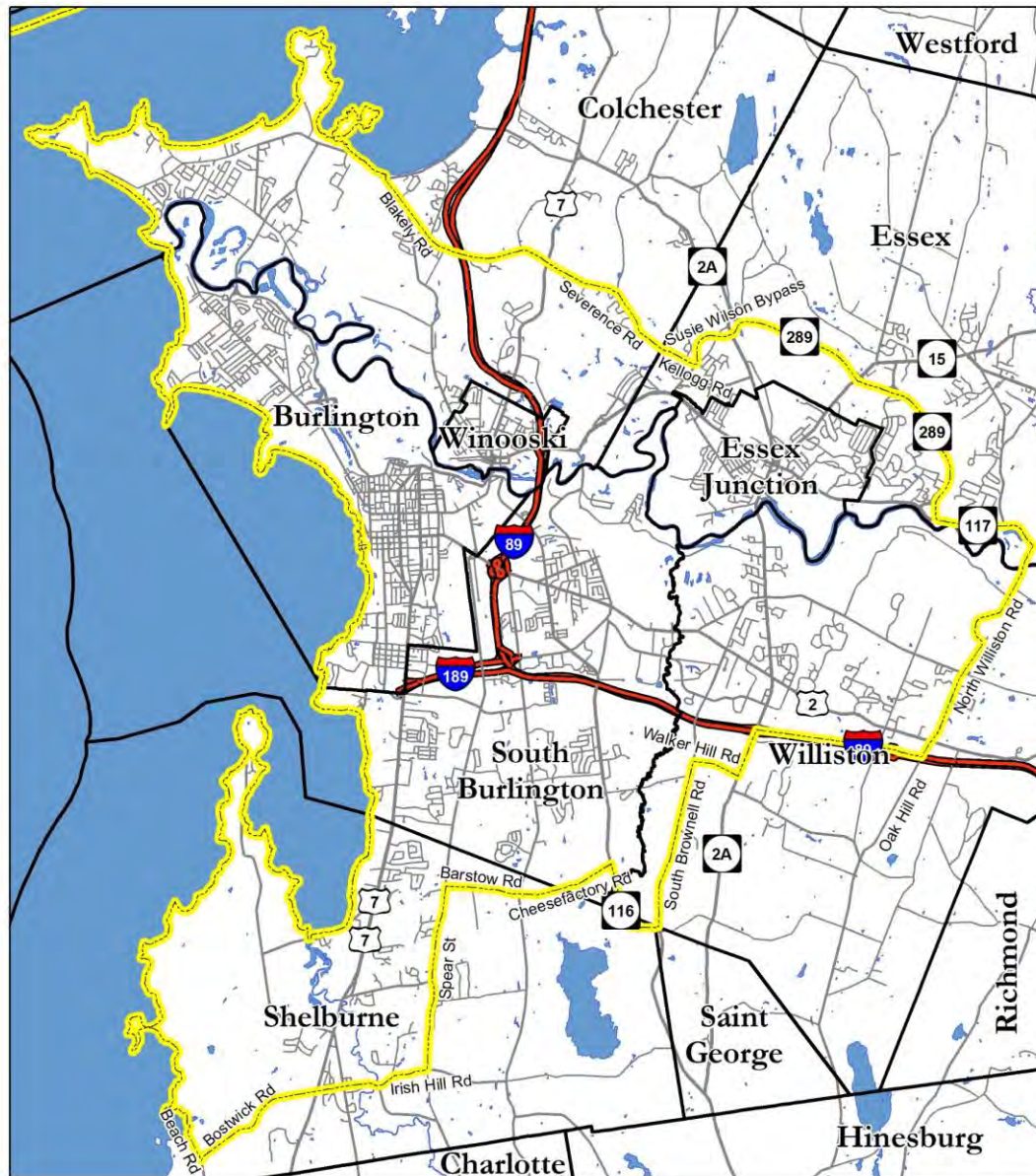
Antlerless Deer Only
September 15-30



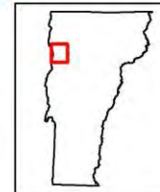
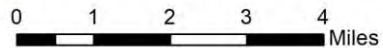


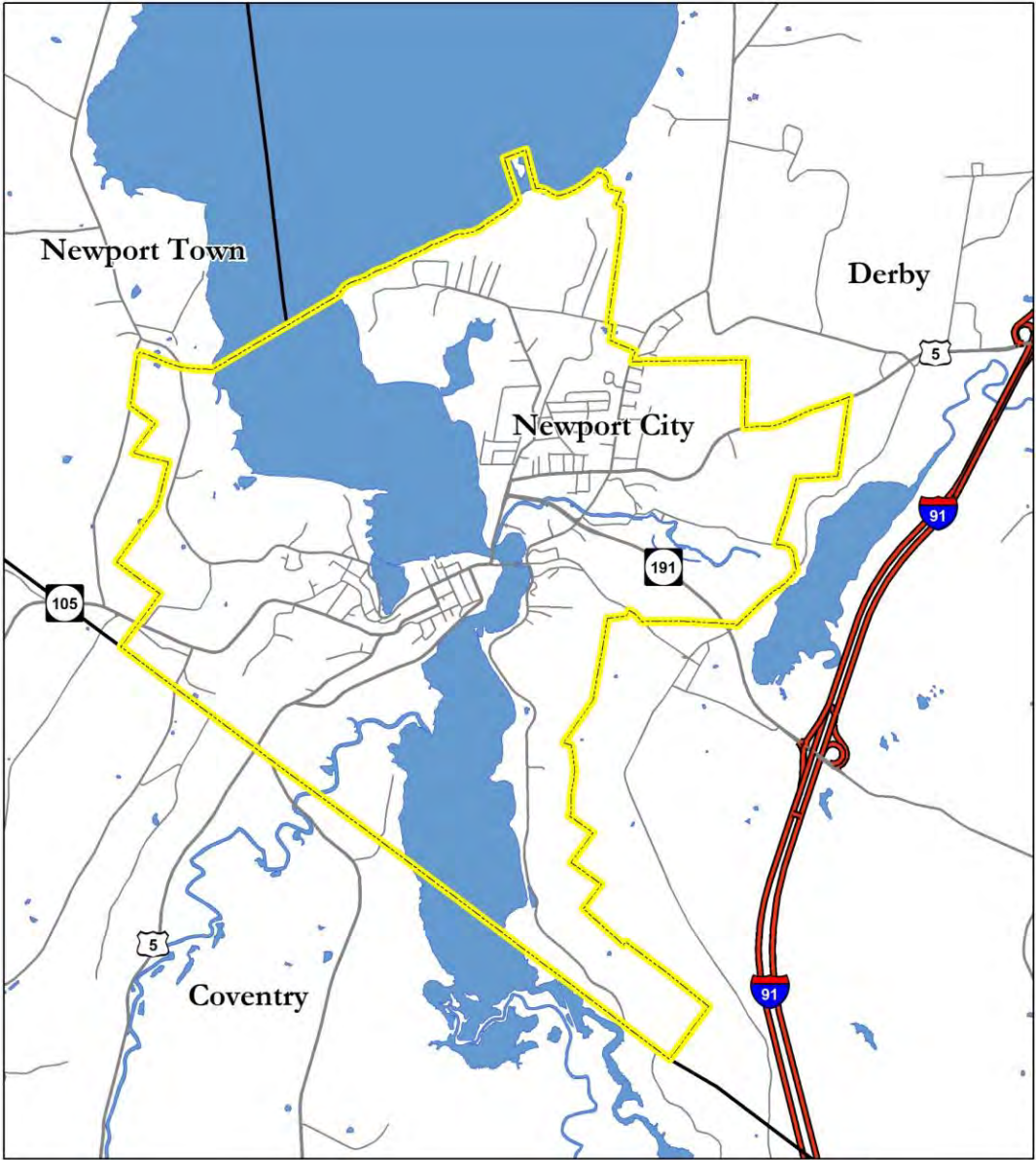
Vermont Expanded Archery Zone
Wildlife Management Unit A



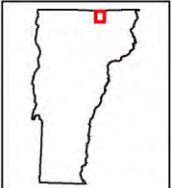
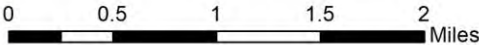


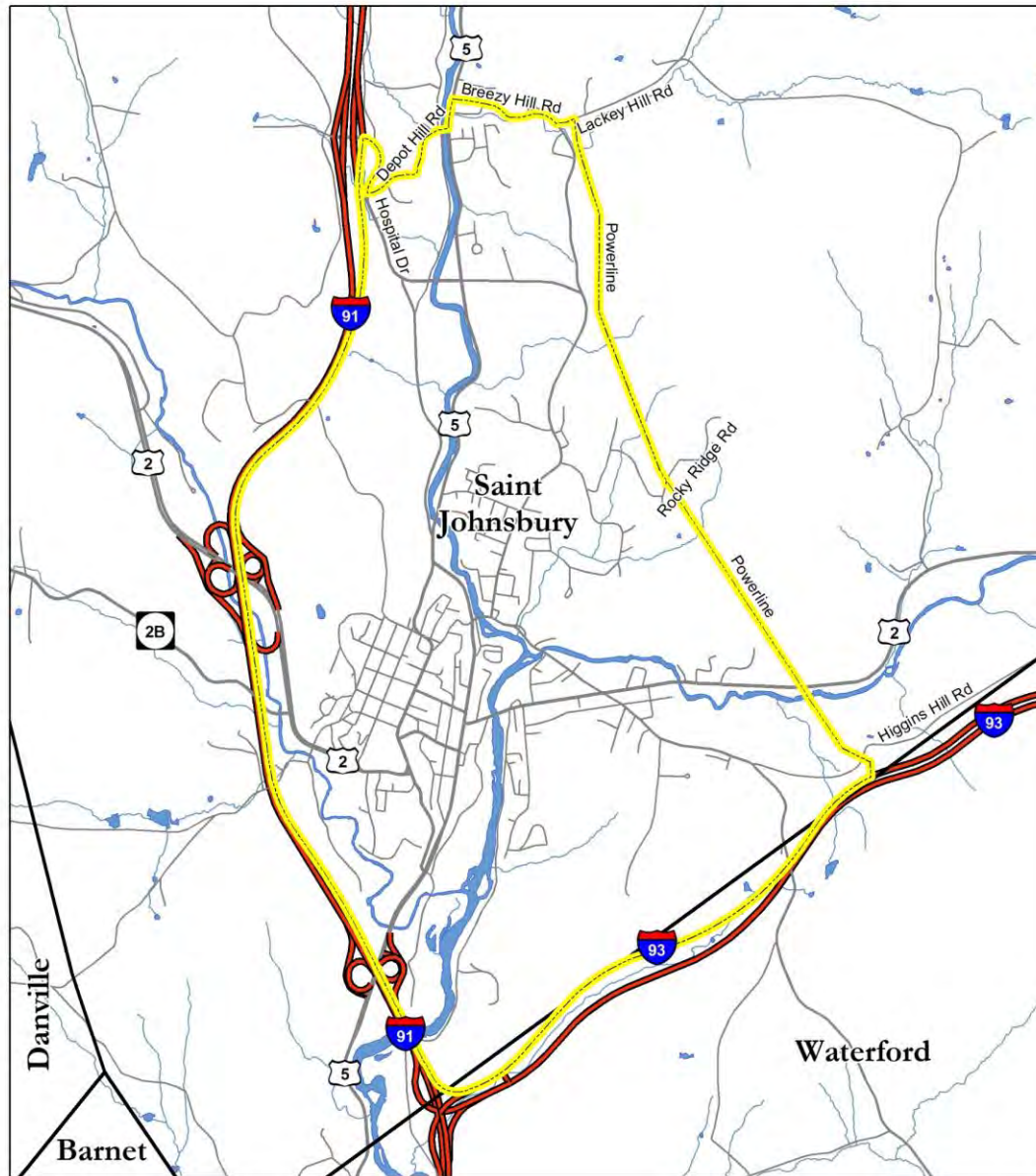
Vermont Expanded Archery Zone
Burlington Area



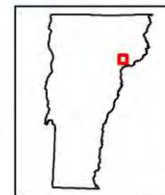
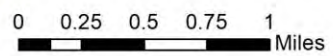


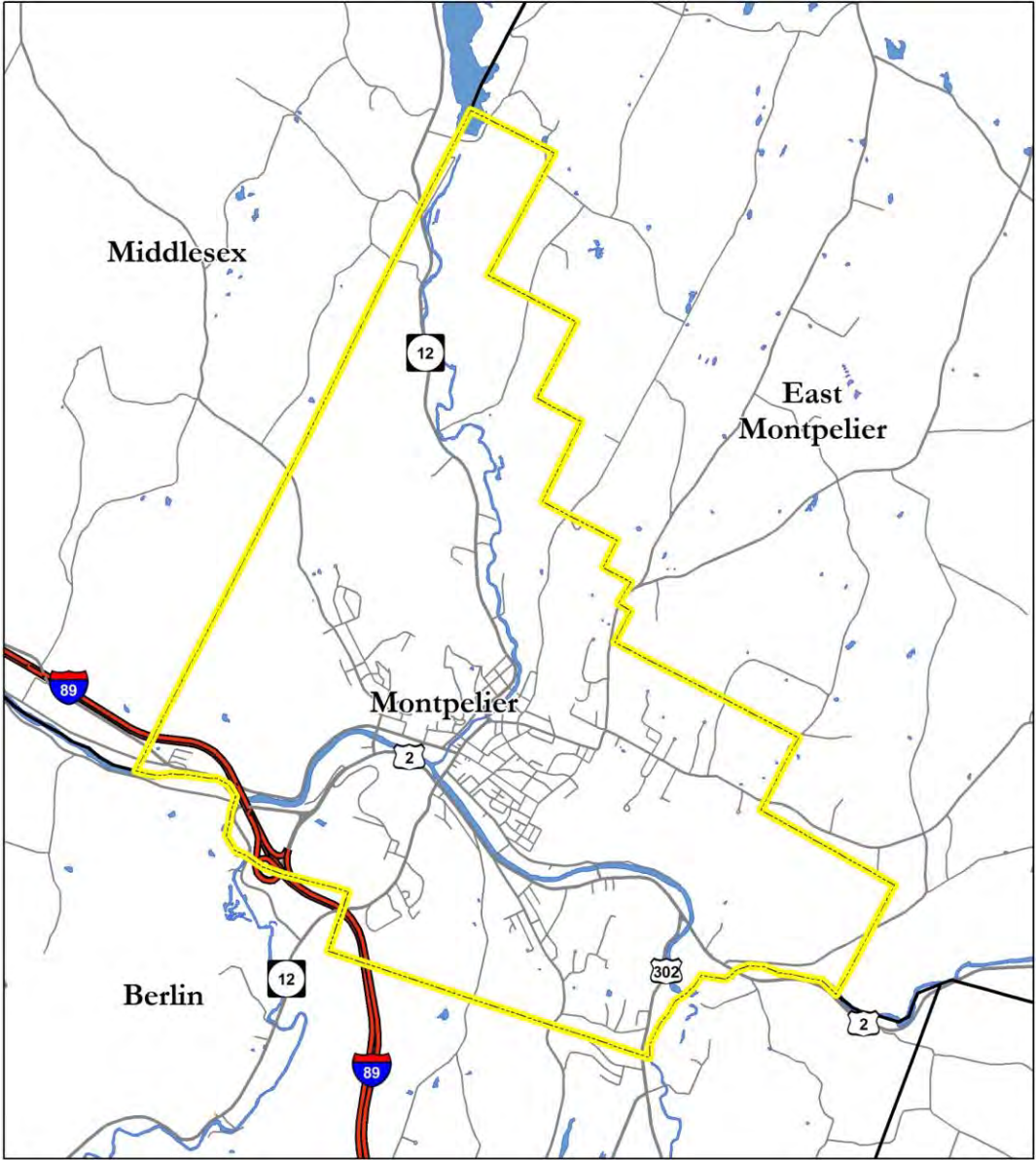
Vermont Expanded Archery Zone
Newport City



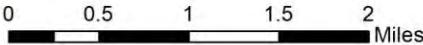


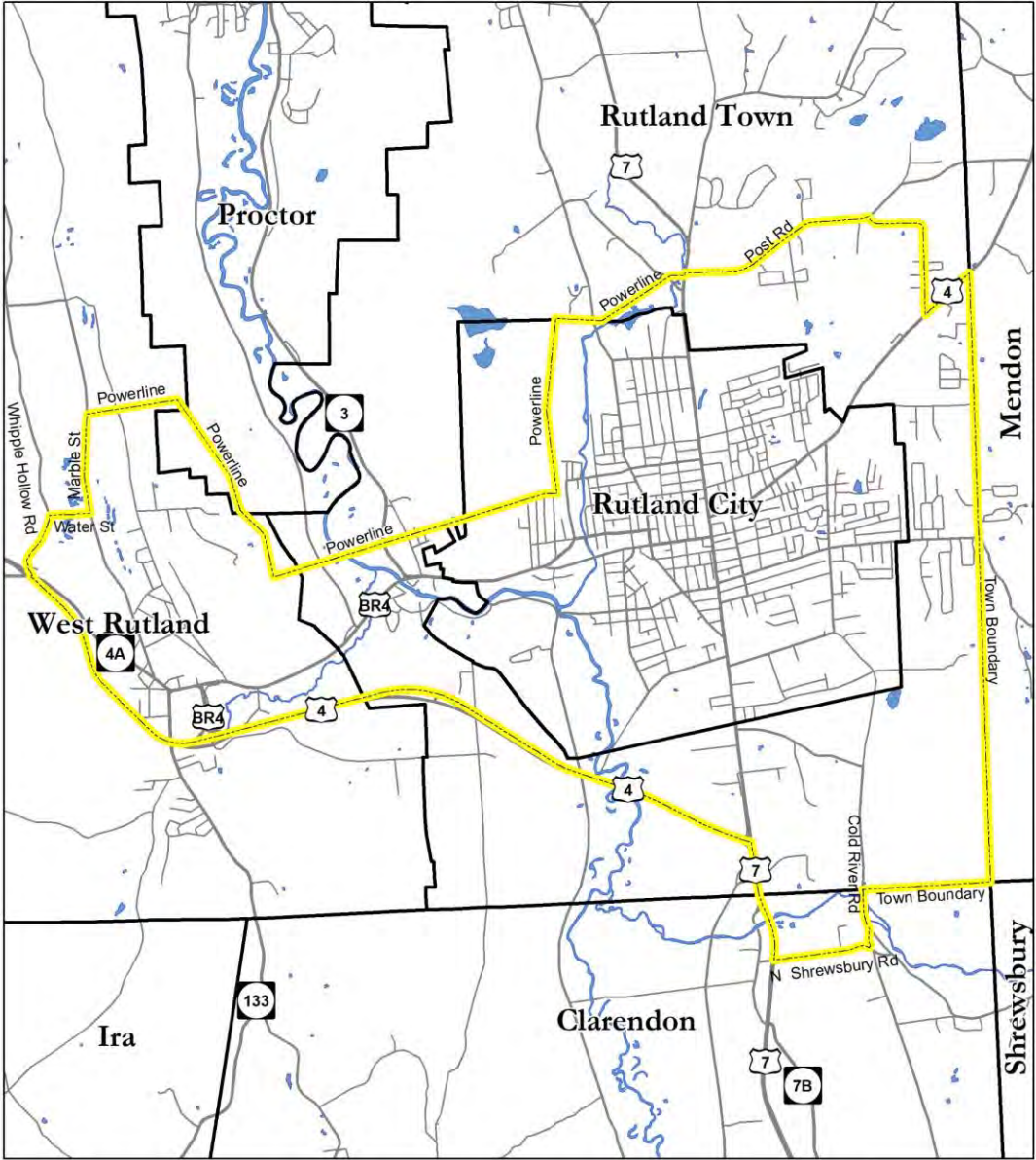
Vermont Expanded Archery Zone
Saint Johnsbury Area



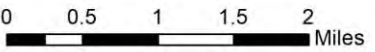


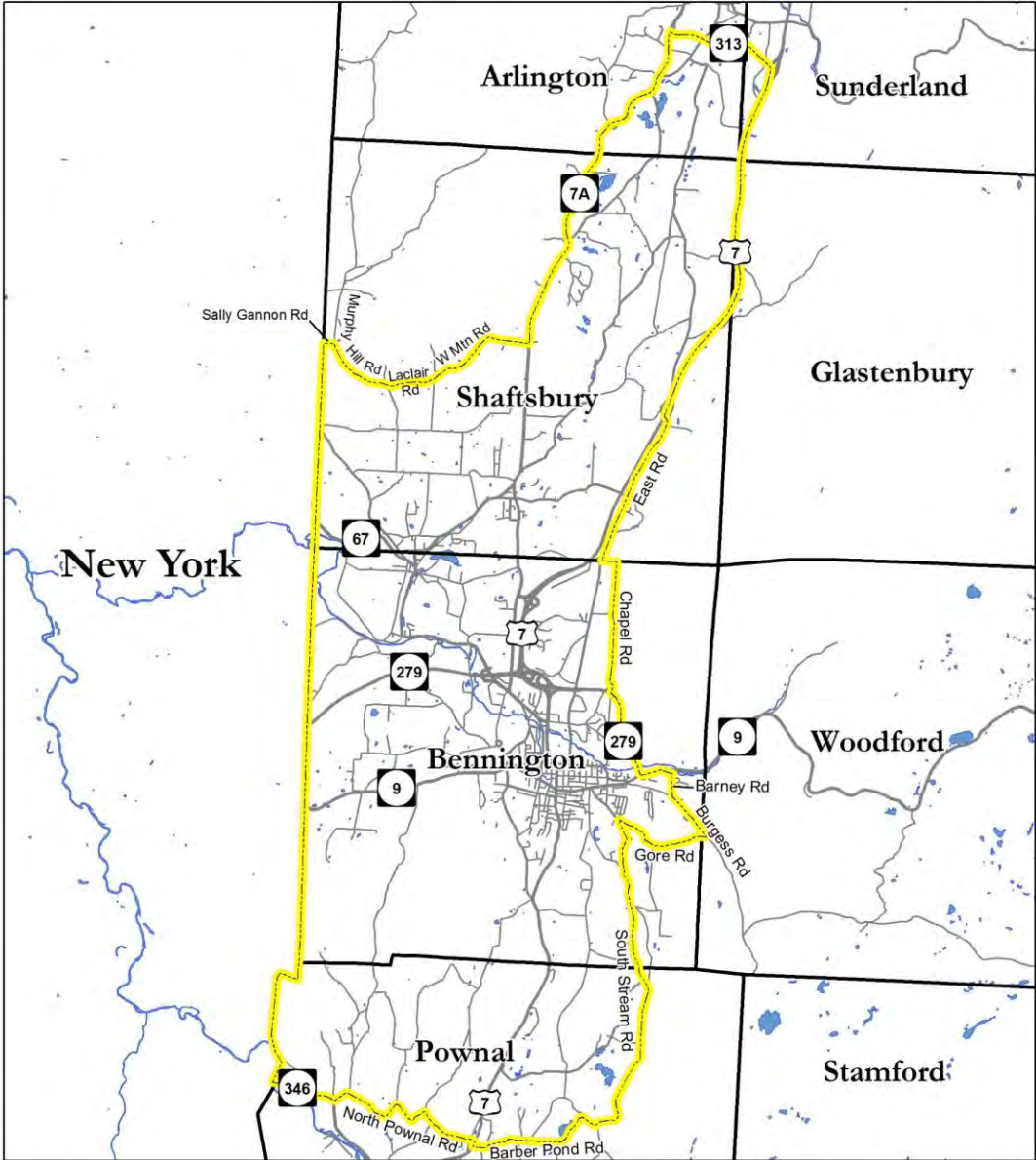
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Montpelier



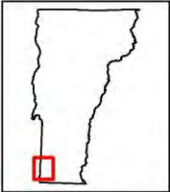
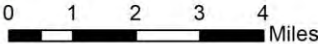


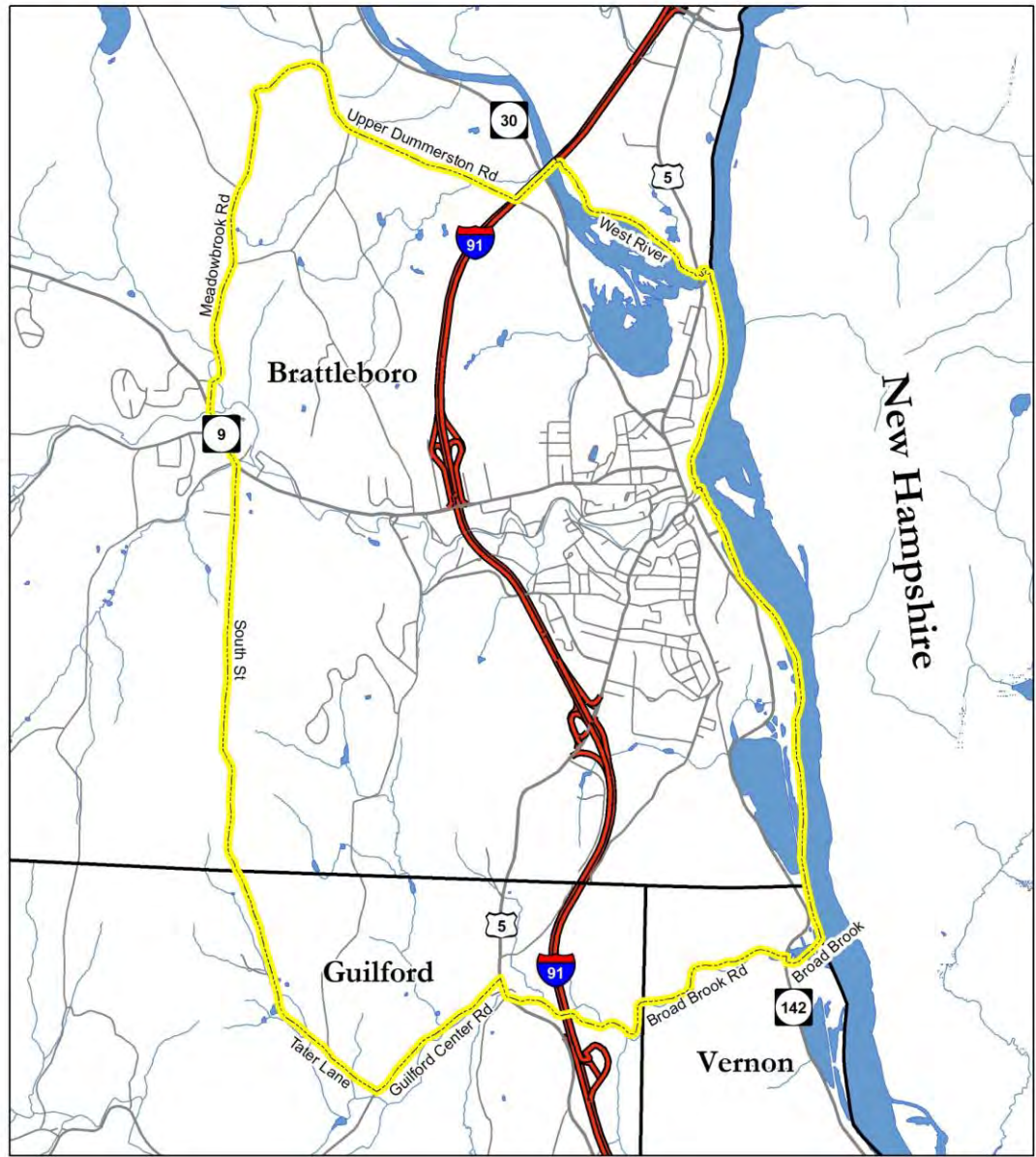
Vermont Expanded Archery Zone
Rutland Area



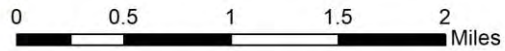


Vermont Expanded Archery Zone
Bennington Area





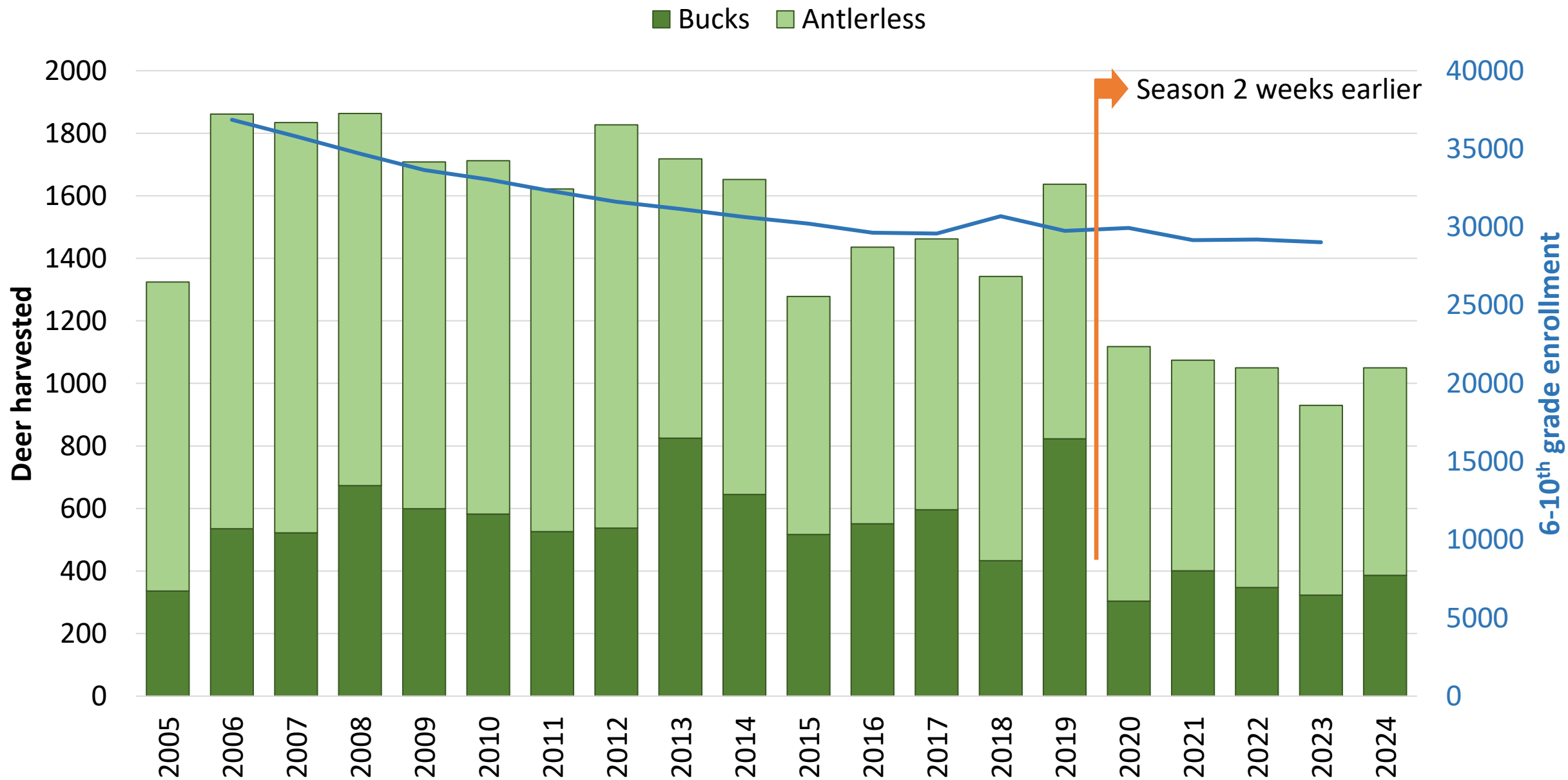
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Brattleboro Area



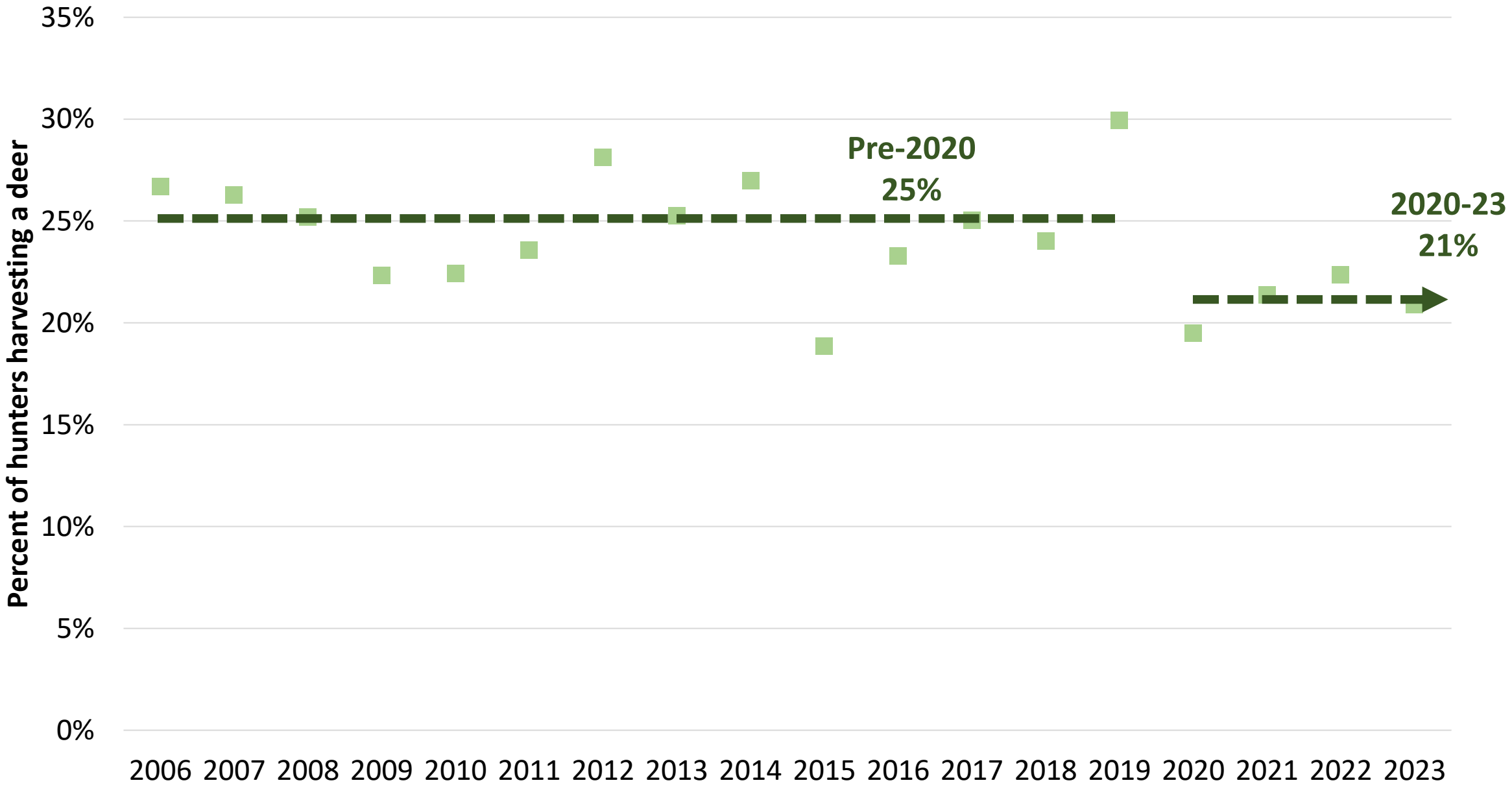
Recommended Change:

Move youth weekend to the weekend before
the regular season

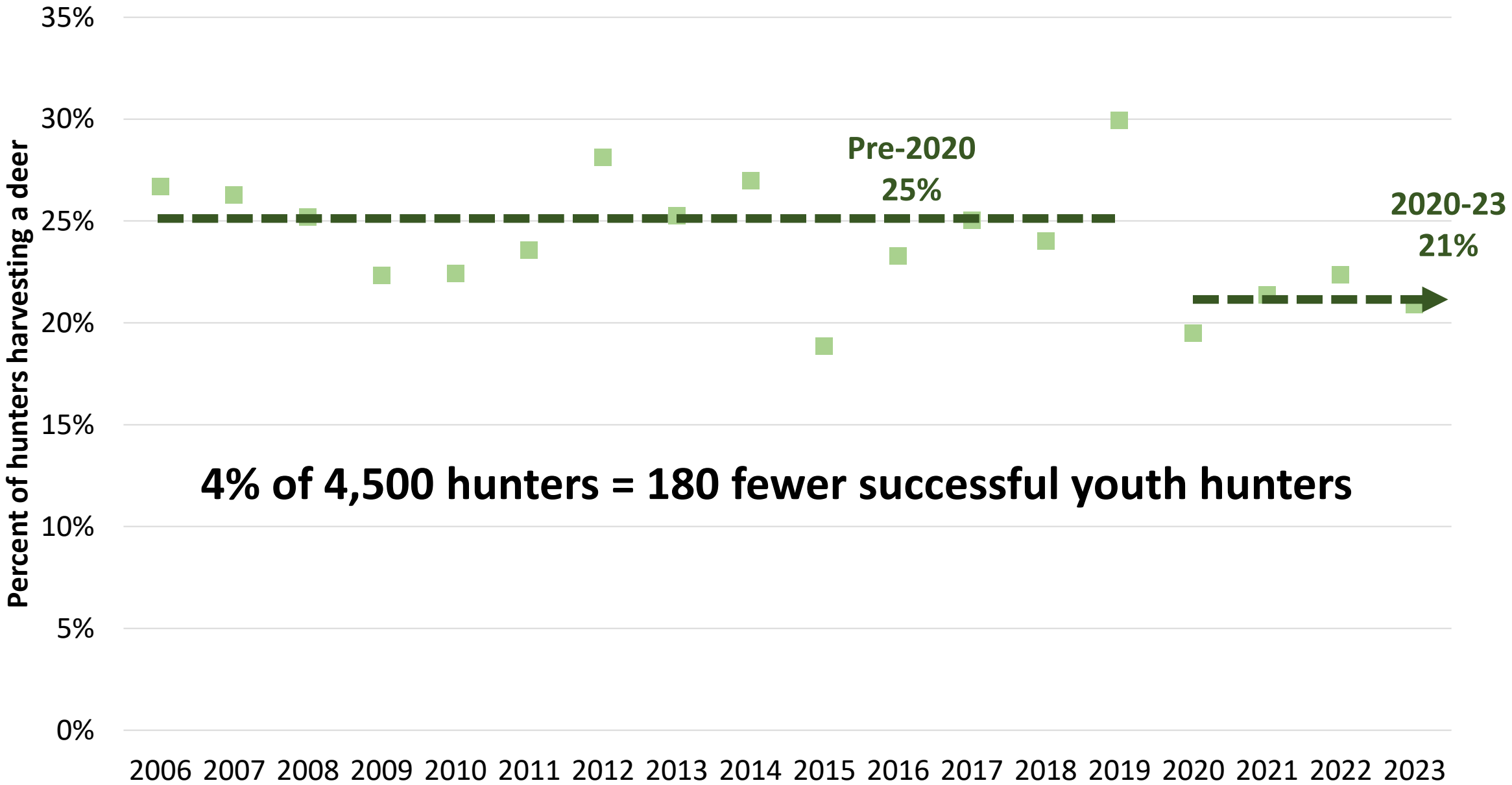
Youth Weekend Deer Harvest, 2005-2024



Youth Weekend Success Rates



Youth Weekend Success Rates

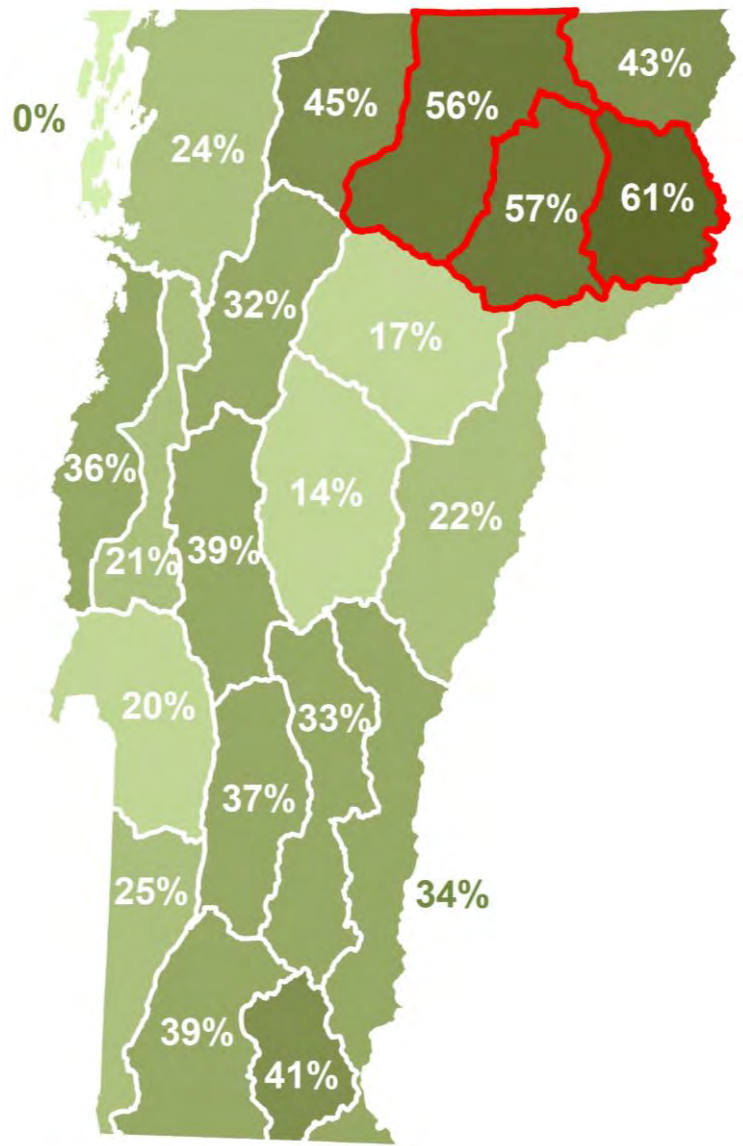


Recommended Change:

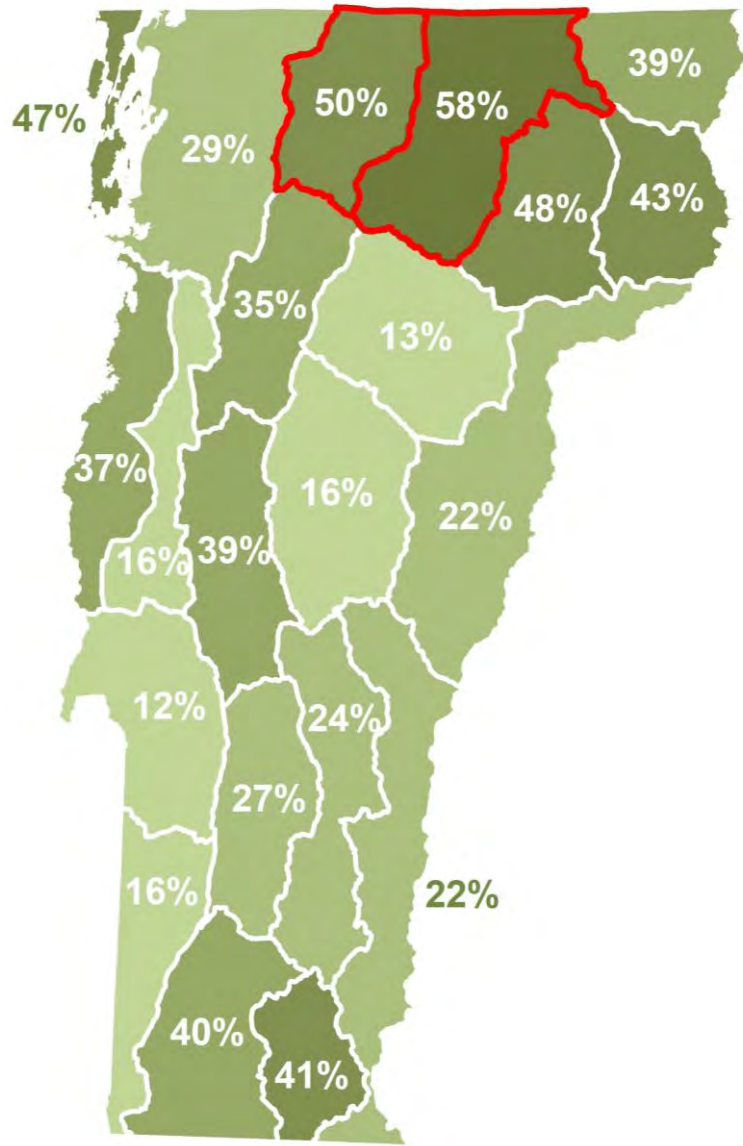
Reinstate the antler point restriction in WMU D1

Percent Yearlings in the Buck Harvest

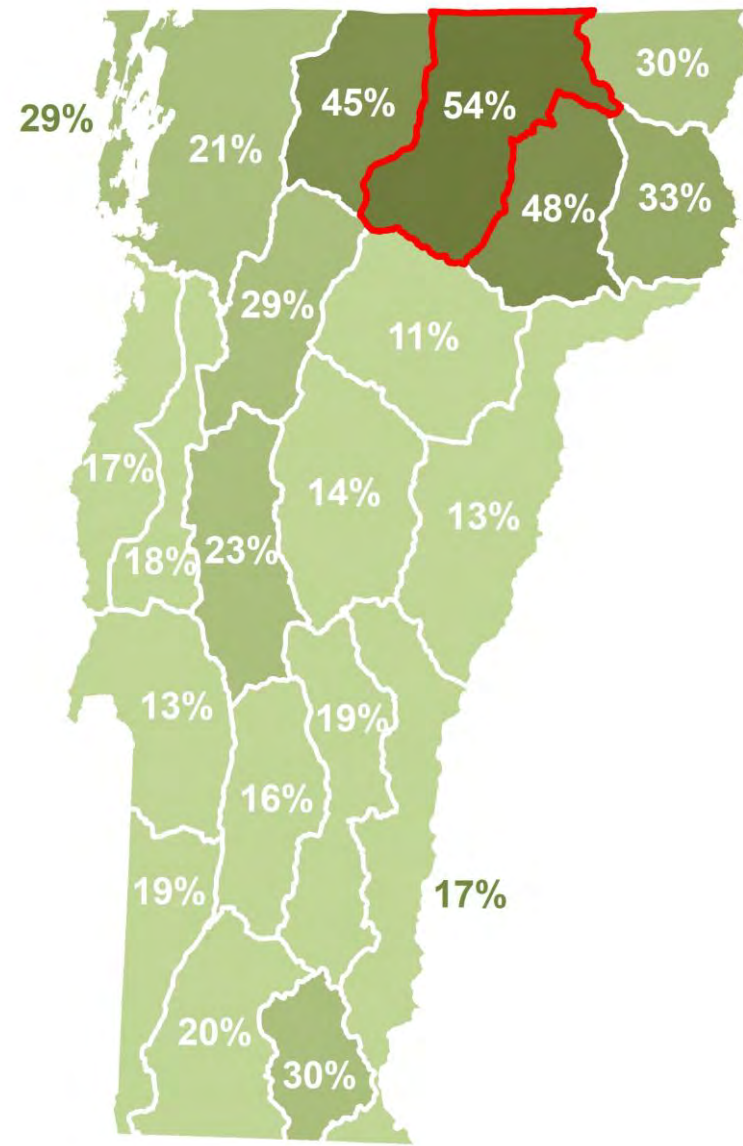
2021



2022



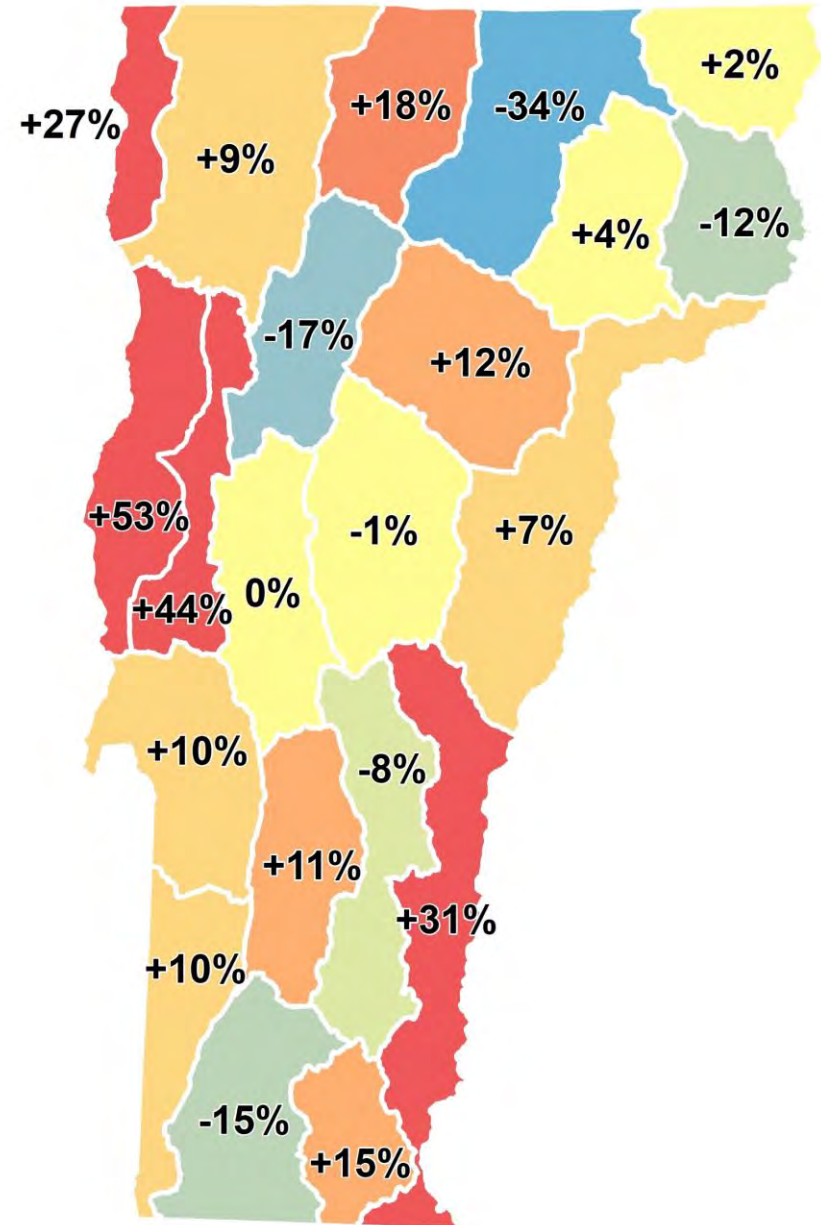
2023

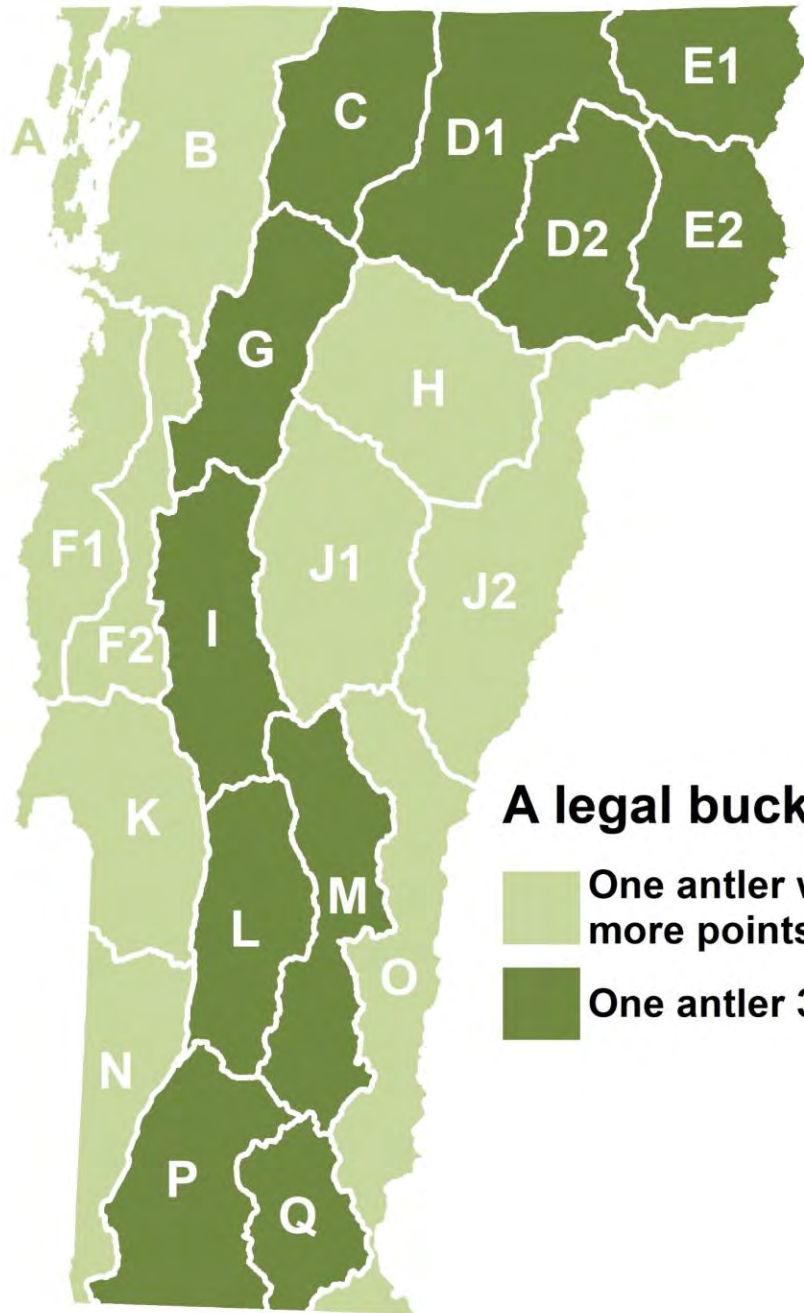


Change in mature (≥ 3 years old) buck harvest (2016-2019 vs 2020-2023)

WMUs with Antler Restriction
+14% (range: -1% to +53%)

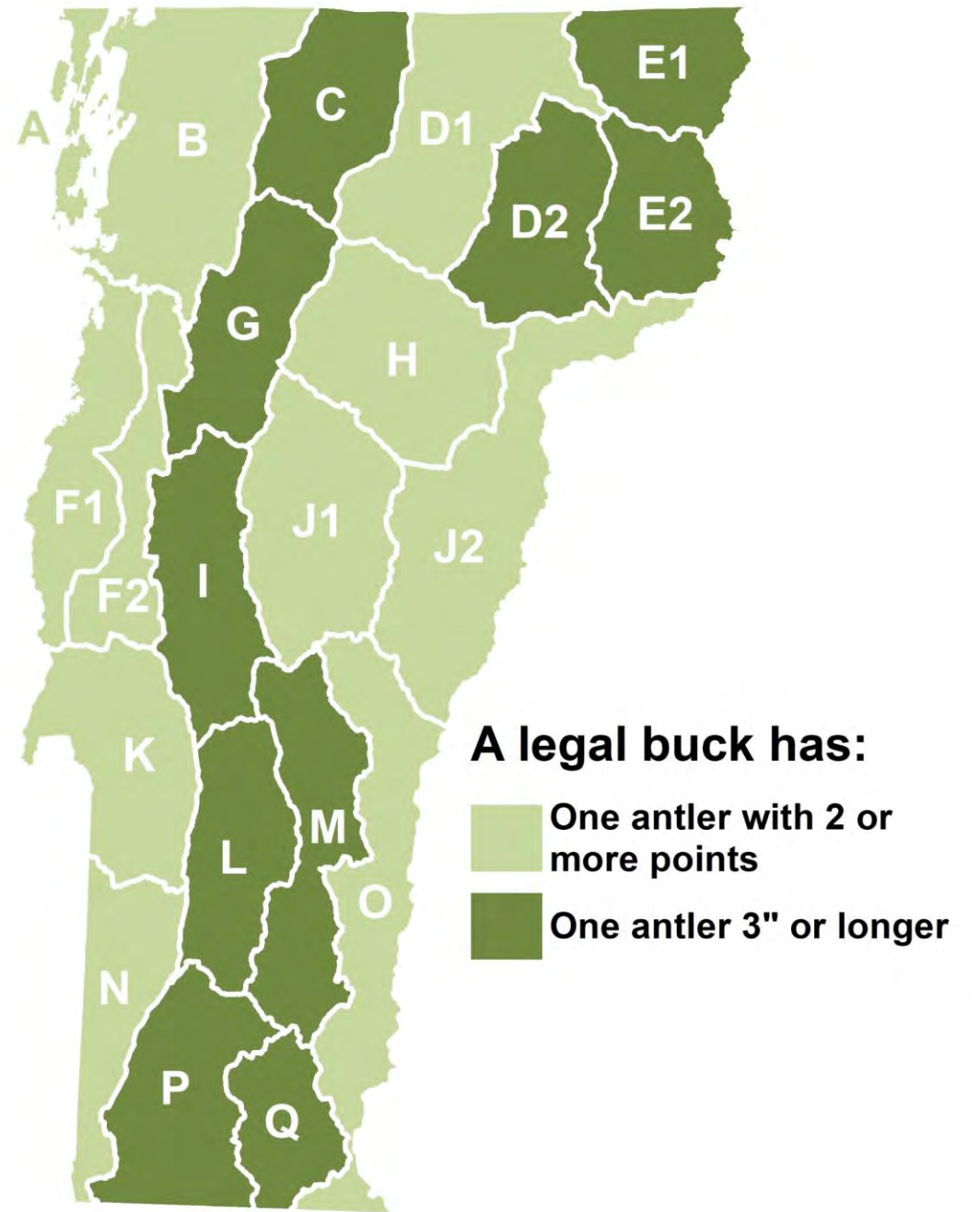
WMUs without Antler Restriction
-7% (range: -34% to +18%)





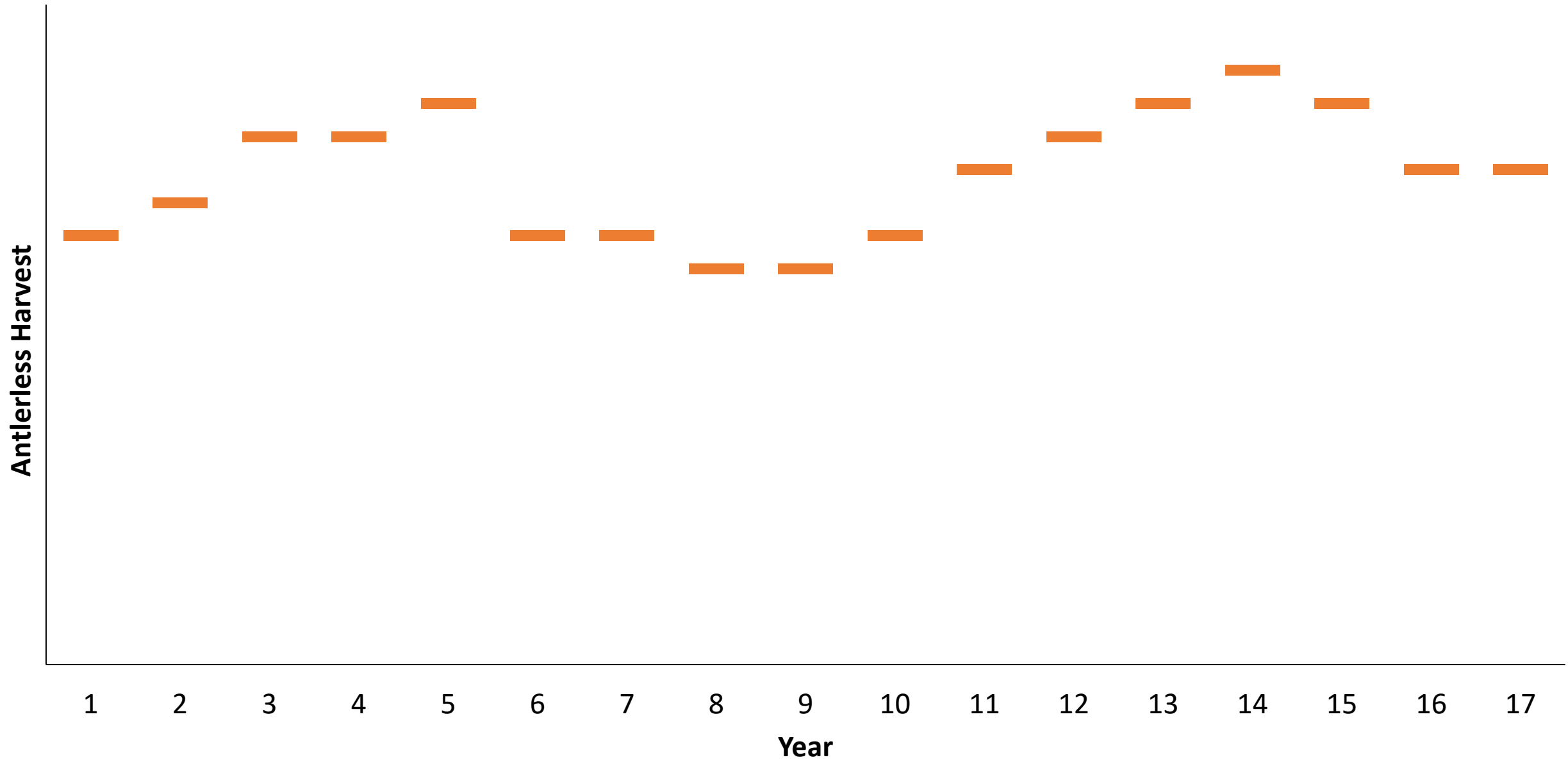
A legal buck has:

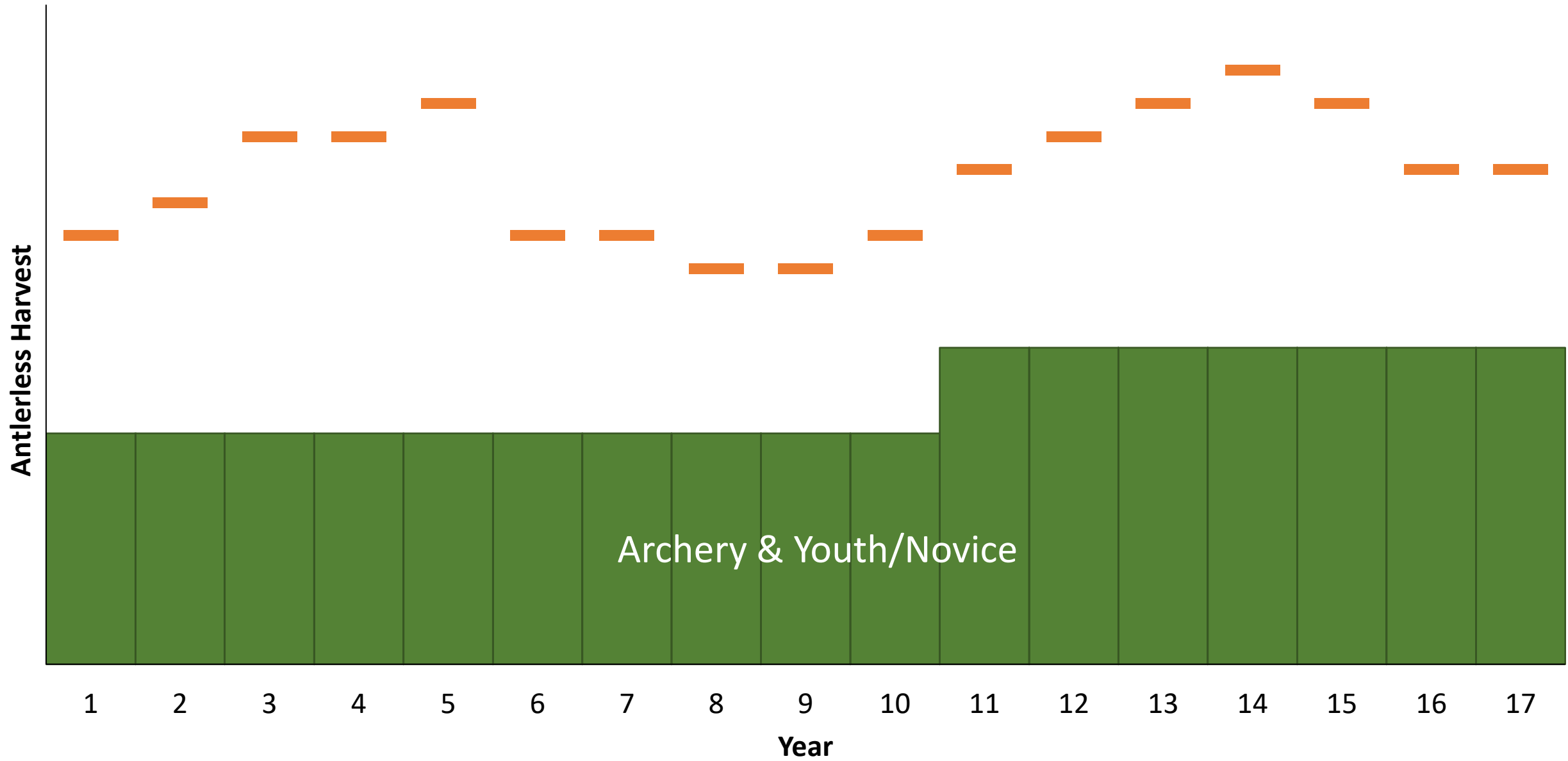
- One antler with 2 or more points
- One antler 3" or longer

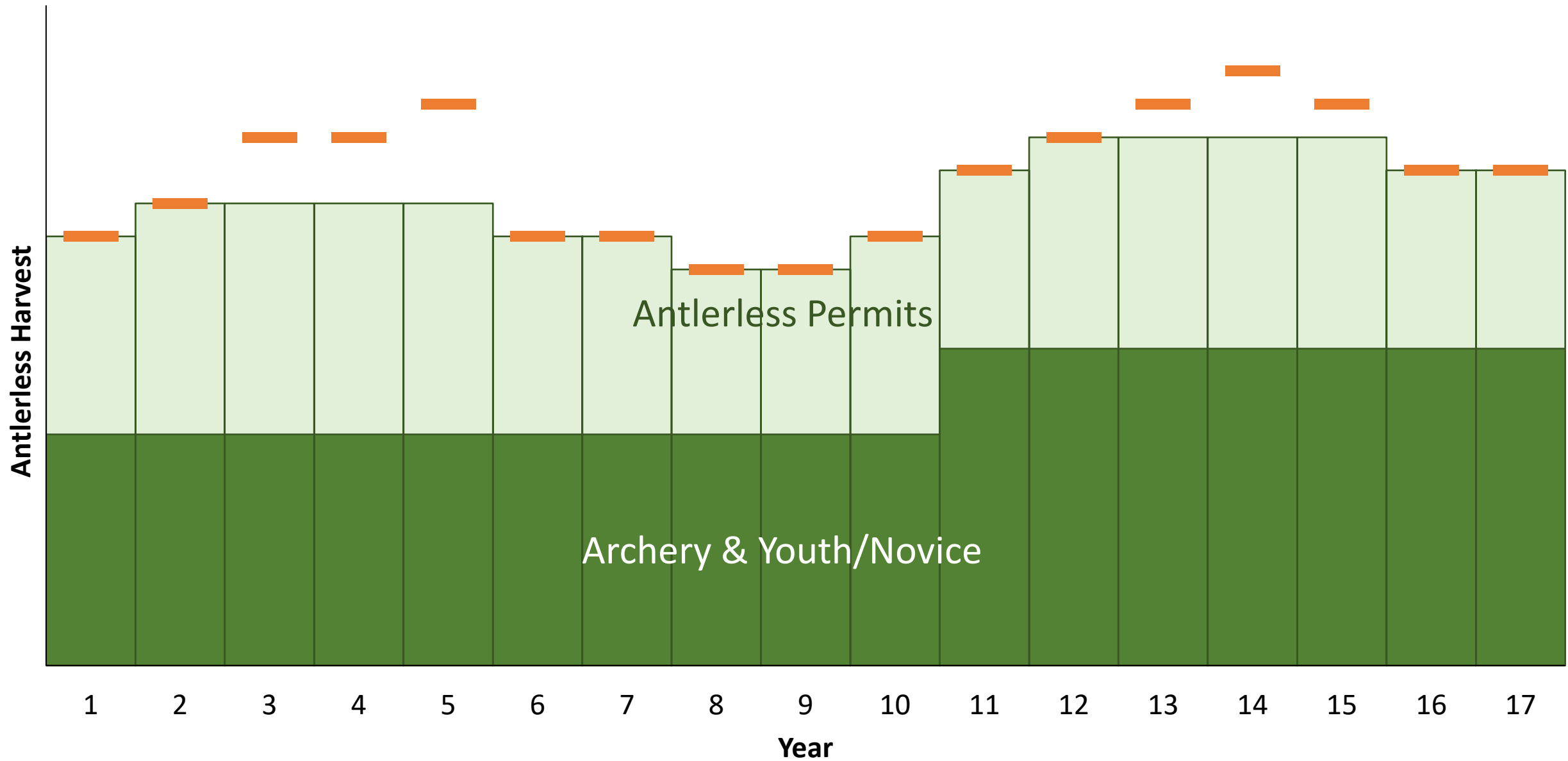


Recommended Change:

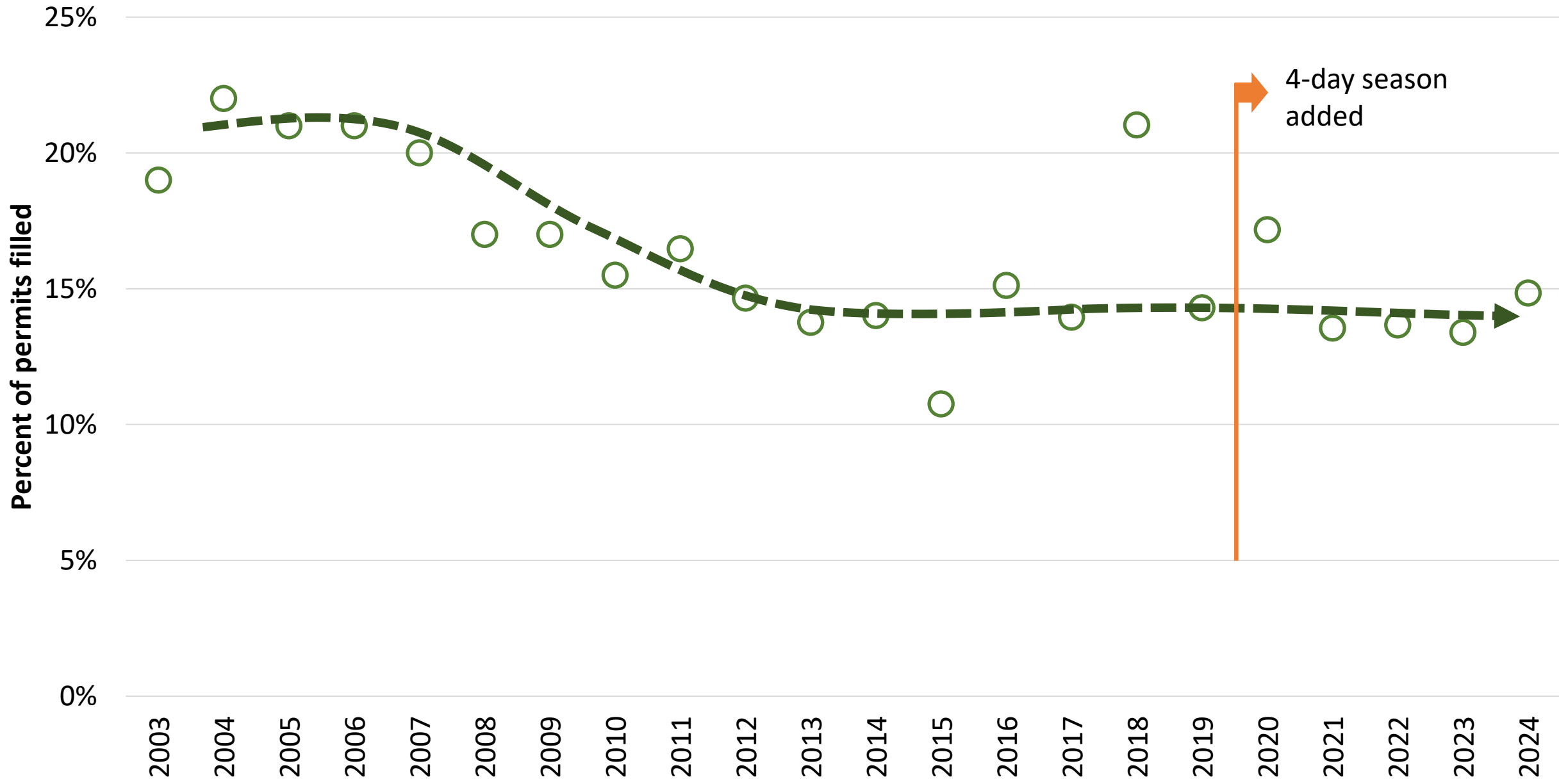
Allow antlerless permits to be used during
the regular season







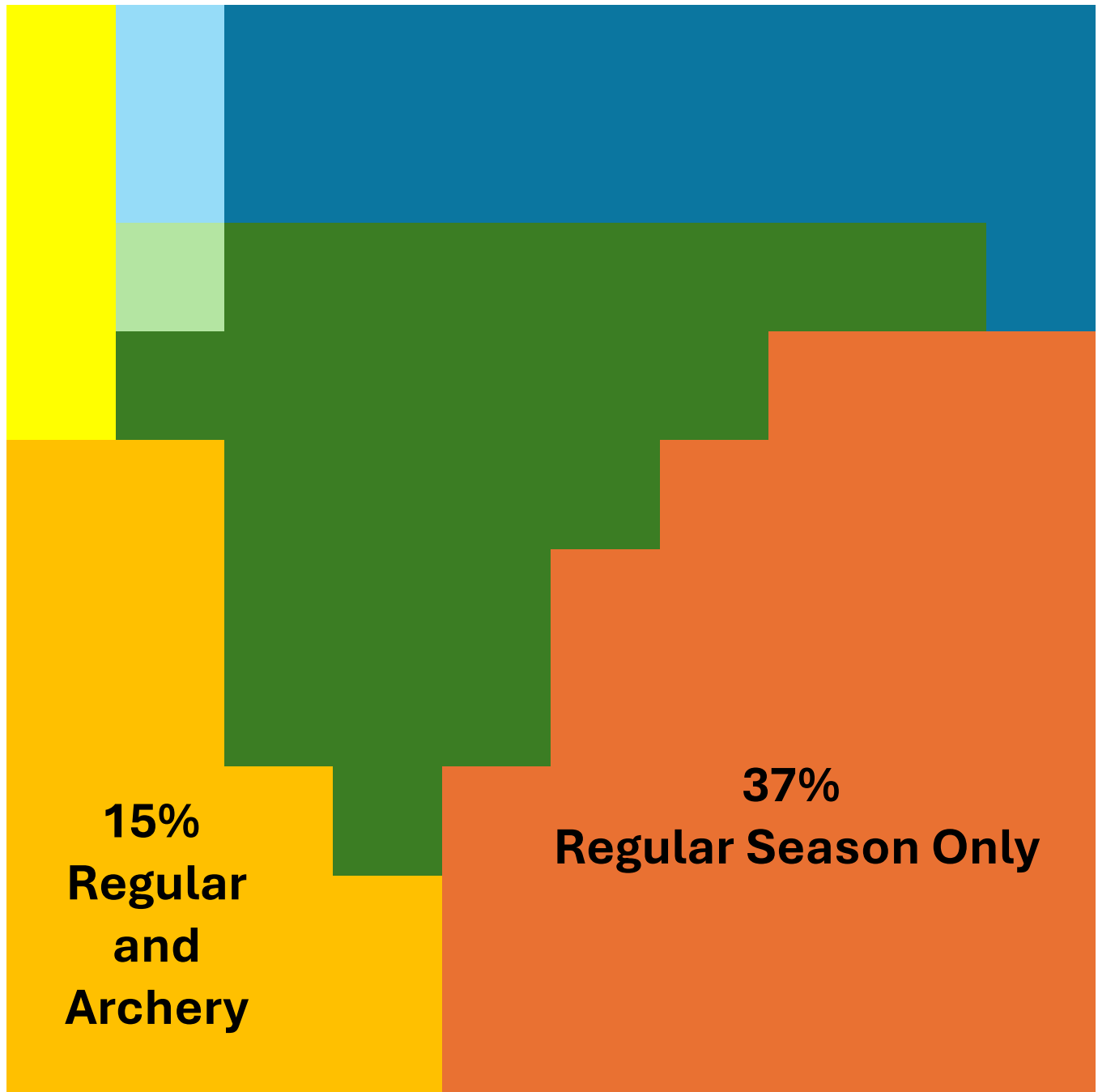
Antlerless Permit Fill Rates



Regular

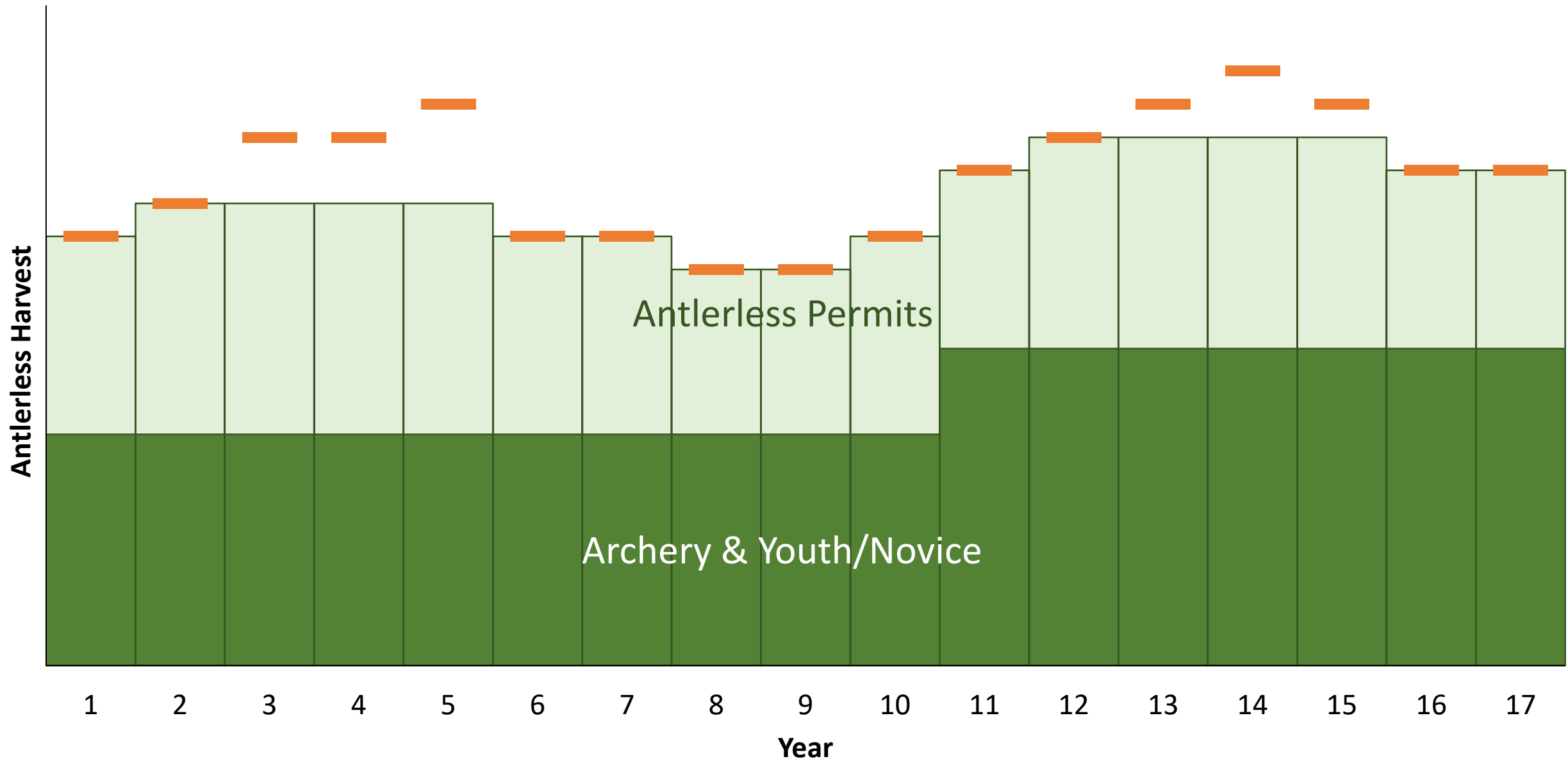
Archery

Muzzleloader

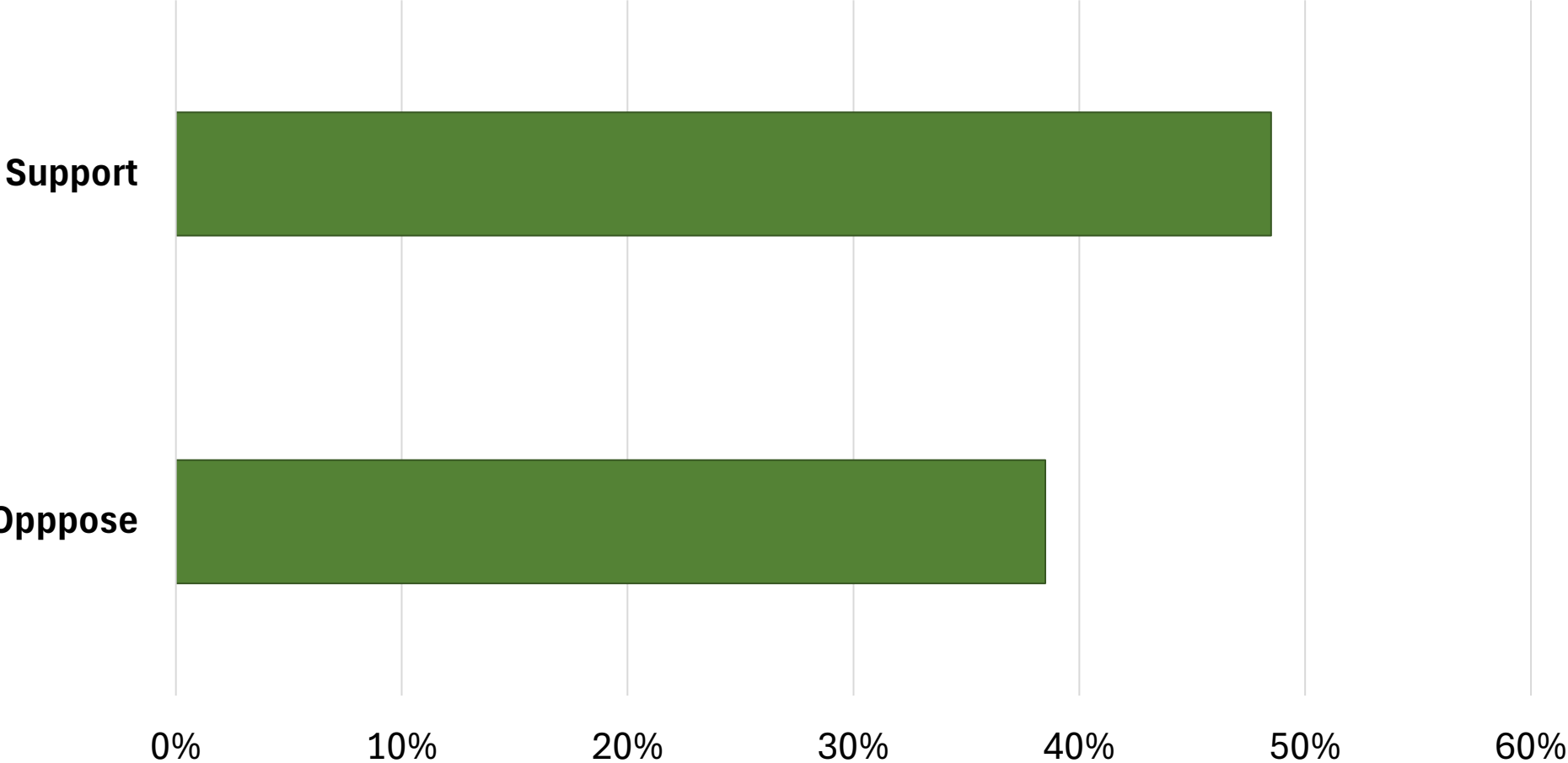


15%
**Regular
and
Archery**

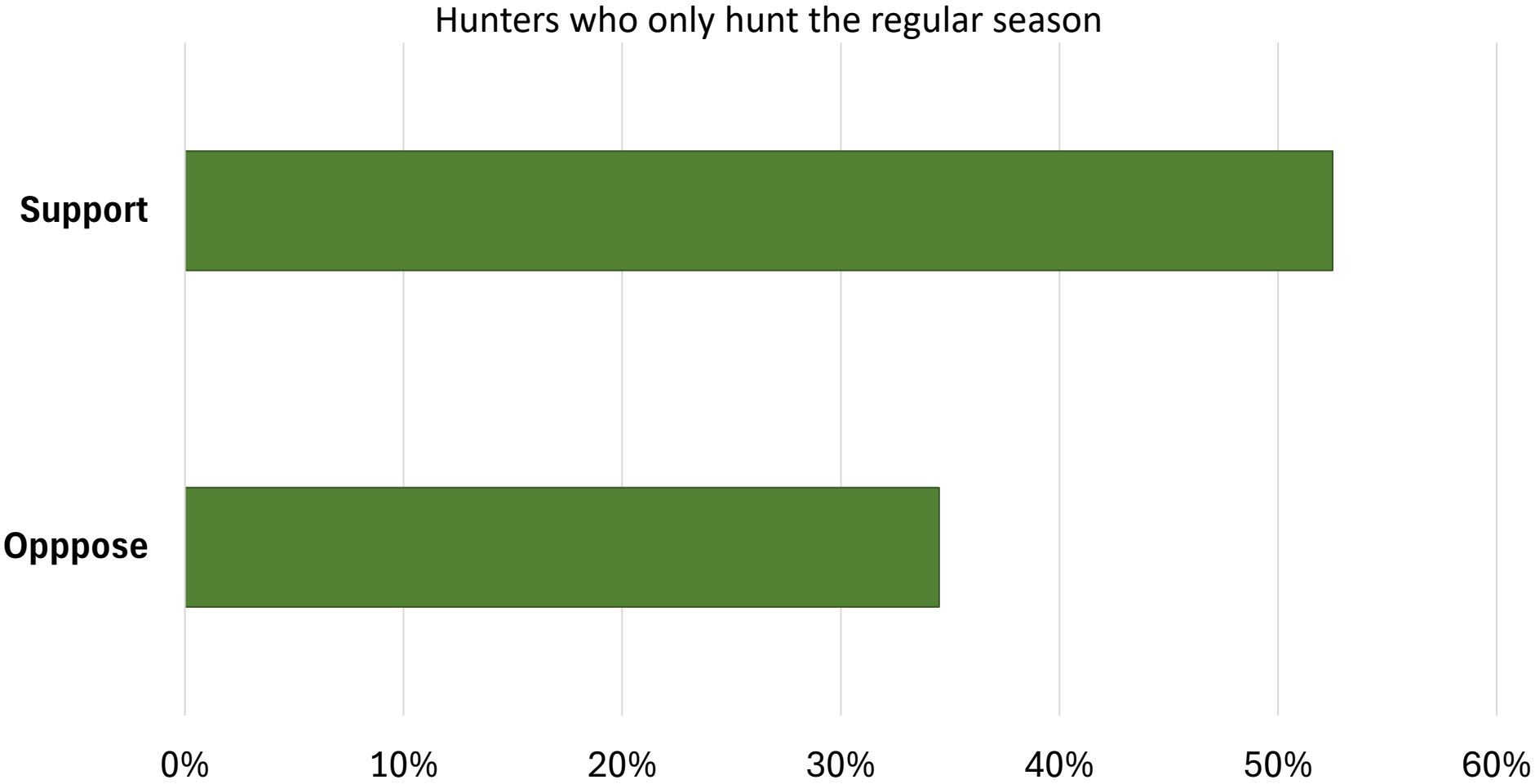
37%
Regular Season Only



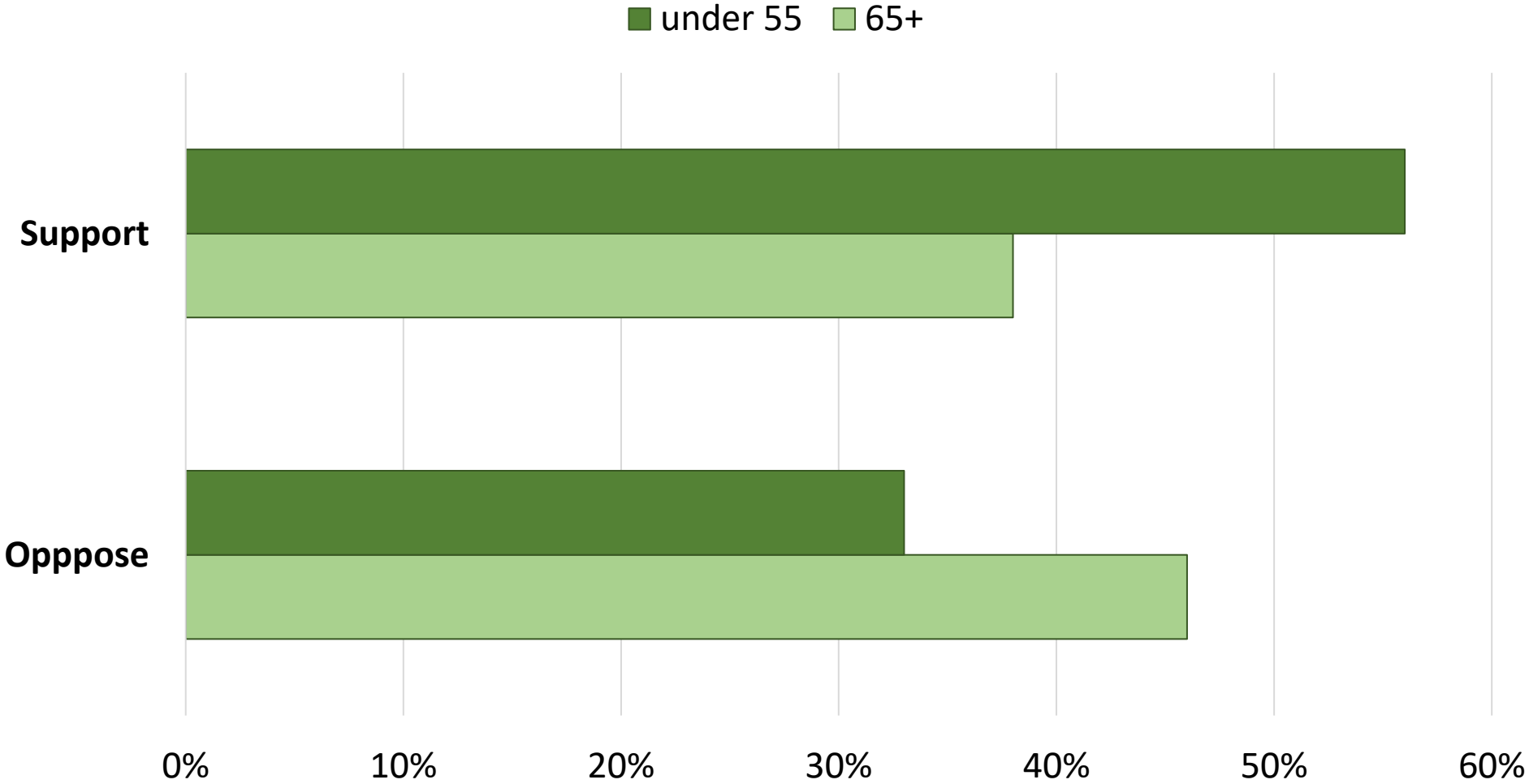
In addition to the current regulations, would you support or oppose allowing antlerless deer permits to also be used during the regular rifle deer season?



In addition to the current regulations, would you support or oppose allowing antlerless deer permits to also be used during the regular rifle deer season?



In addition to the current regulations, would you support or oppose allowing antlerless deer permits to also be used during the regular rifle deer season?



Recommended Change:

Remove the archery season closure during
the regular season

		Archery Season				
		Regular Season				
		(Archery Closed)				
		Archery Season				

	Archery Season					
		Regular Season				
			Archery Season			

Recommended Change:

Allow hunters to hold two antlerless permits

Hunters can...

Acquire one permit via the lottery

Purchase an unallocated permit
in a different WMU

Only 1 permit per WMU at a time

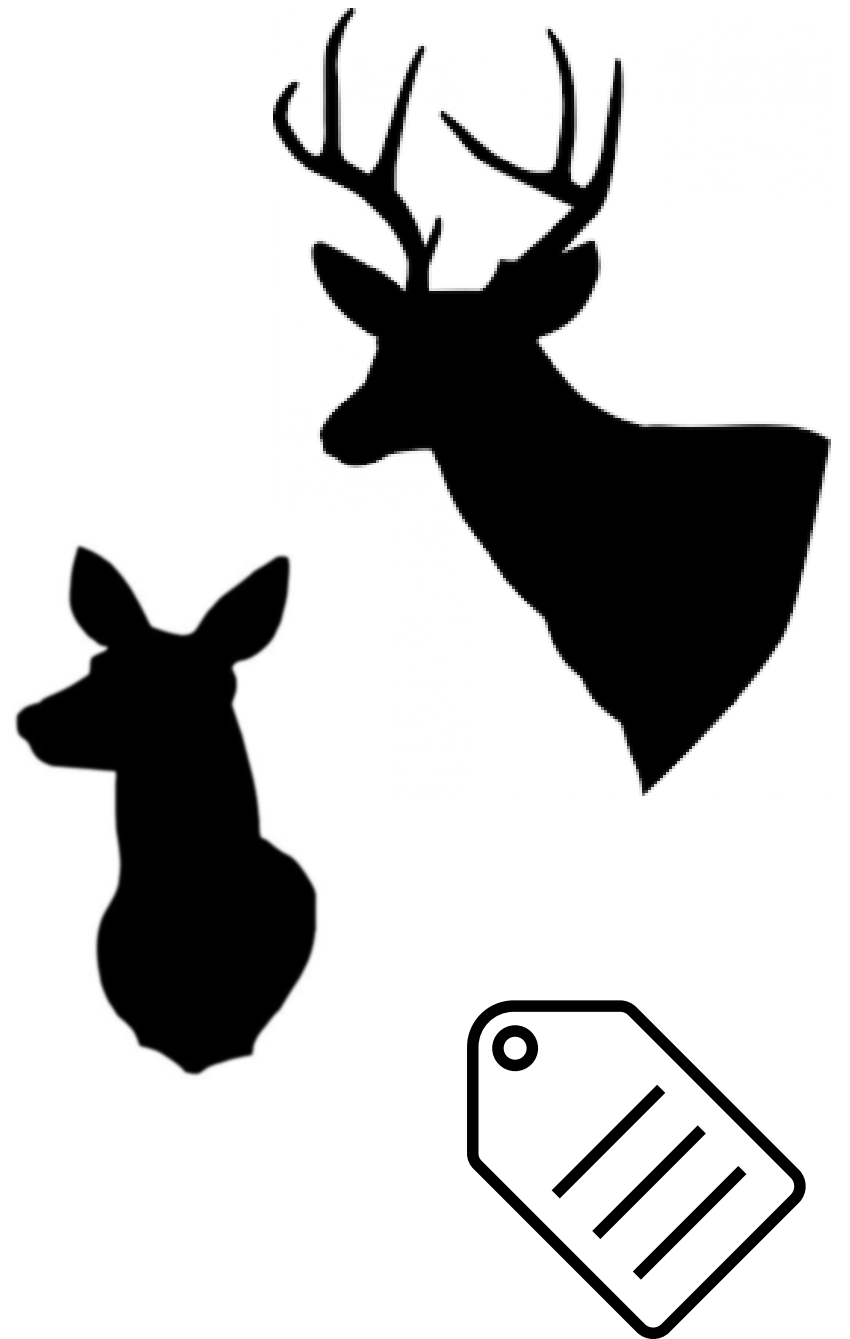


Recommended Change:

Allow hunters to take a conditional second buck

Hunters can take a 2nd buck if...

1. Purchase a 2nd buck tag
2. First buck has 3+ points on one antler
3. Harvest an antlerless deer



Questions?

RIFLE BUCK TAG

2025

VERMONT RESIDENT

W0123456789

ARCHERY TAG

2025

VERMONT RESIDENT

W0123456789

MUZZLELOADER TAG

2025

VERMONT RESIDENT

W0123456789

**ANTLERLESS
MUZZLELOADER PERMIT**

2025

VERMONT RESIDENT

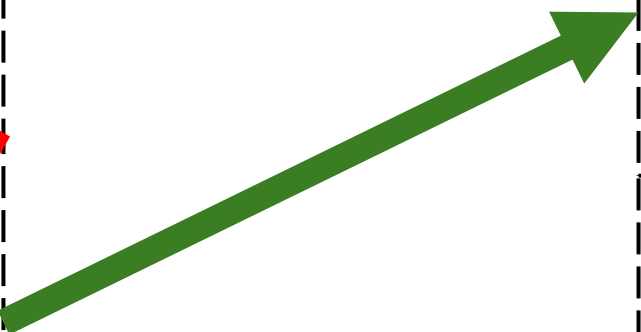
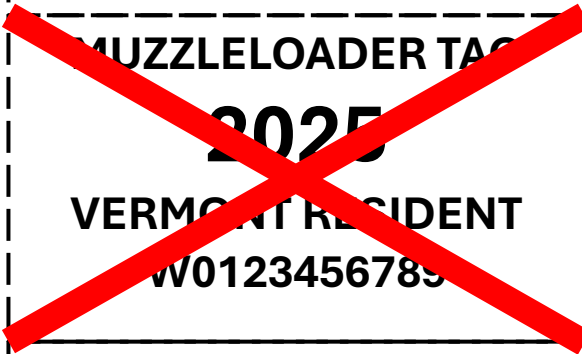
W0123456789

RIFLE BUCK TAG
2025
VERMONT RESIDENT
W0123456789

ARCHERY TAG
2025
VERMONT RESIDENT
W0123456789

~~MUZZLELOADER TAG
2025
VERMONT RESIDENT
W0123456789~~

ANTLERLESS
MUZZLELOADER PERMIT
2025
VERMONT RESIDENT
W0123456789



BUCK TAG
2026
VERMONT RESIDENT
W0123456789

ARCHERY ANTLERLESS
TAG
2026
VERMONT RESIDENT
W0123456789

ANTLERLESS PERMIT
2026
VERMONT RESIDENT
W0123456789

SECOND BUCK TAG
2026
VERMONT RESIDENT
W0123456789

10 V.S.A. Appendix §17

Cervid Carcass Importation Rule - Annotated

§ 17. Rule governing the importation and possession of deer or elkcervids from chronic wasting disease endemic areas and captive hunt or farm facilities

1.1 This rule is promulgated pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 4081. In promulgating this rule, the Fish and Wildlife Board is following the policy established by the General Assembly that the protection, propagation, control, management, and conservation of fish, wildlife and furbearing animals in this State is in the interest of the public welfare and that the safeguarding of this valuable resource for the people of the State requires a constant and continual vigilance.

1.2 In accordance with 10 V.S.A. § 4082, this rule is designed to maintain the best health, population and utilization levels of the regulated species and other necessary or desirable species which are related to the regulated species.

1.3 This rule applies to importation and possession of deer or elkcervid carcasses or the parts thereof, from chronic wasting disease endemic areas and captive hunt or farm facilities.

1.4 This rule shall apply to all persons who import, possess, transport, use, or deal with deer or elkcervid carcasses, or parts thereof, from chronic wasting disease endemic areas and captive hunt or farm facilities.

1.5 For the purposes of this rule, “cervid” means any species in the family Cervidae.

The purpose of this rule is to:

- (a) ensure the conservation of the wildlife in the State, and
- (b) maintain the best health of native ~~cervidae~~Cervidae of the State, and
- (c) prevent the introduction or spread of a disease that is potentially harmful to humans and wild species.

3.0 Permitted Activities and Restrictions

3.1 The importation or possession of deer or elkcervid carcasses, or the parts thereof, from chronic wasting disease endemic areas and captive hunt or farm facilities is prohibited except as provided below:

- (a) Meat that is cut up and packaged, and not mixed with other deer or elkcervids during processing.
- (b) Meat that is boneless.
- (c) Hides or cape with no part of the head attached.

(d) Clean skull-cap with antlers attached.

(e) Antlers with no other meat or tissue attached.

(f) Finished taxidermy heads.

(g) Upper canine teeth with no tissue attached.

3.2 All hunters shall identify their ~~deer and elk~~cervid with their ~~non-resident hunting~~ license information in accordance with section 2a of this title.

4.0 Chronic Wasting Disease Endemic Areas

The Department shall provide a list of chronic wasting disease endemic areas and shall update the list as areas are added or deleted. The list shall be available on the Department's web site, from the Department's headquarters and from the Department's district offices. The list shall also be made available to the media as much as practicably possible to provide maximum notice to the public.

5.0 Captive Hunting or Farm Facilities Defined.

5.1 Captive Hunting Facilities are any facilities with captive ~~deer or elk~~cervids held in a fenced or walled enclosure for the purpose of taking by hunting.

5.2 Farm Facilities are any facilities with captive ~~deer or elk~~cervids held in a fenced or walled enclosure and are raised for meat, hides, antlers or other products.

Changes Included in this Document

1. Updating language related to permit allocations to veterans and the auction so it is consistent with statute. This rule hasn't been updated since statute was changed in 2019.

2. Adding language to allow Special Opportunity Permit holders to choose to hunt during the archery season with a gun. This is in response to a petition requesting this change. This is accomplished by creating a "Special Opportunity Season" solely for these permit holders that is concurrent with the archery season, avoiding complications of allowing guns to be used during an archery season.

3. Extending the length of the regular season from six days to nine days.

4. Miscellaneous changes for consistency and clarity (not highlighted)

DRAFT

§ 33. Moose Management Rule

1.0 Authority.

1.1 This rule is adopted pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 4081(a). In adopting this rule, the Fish and Wildlife Board is following the policy established by the General Assembly that the protection, propagation, control, management, and conservation of fish, wildlife and furbearing animals in this State is in the interest of the public welfare and that the safeguarding of this valuable resource for the people of the State requires a constant and continual vigilance.

1.2 In accordance with 10 V.S.A. § 4082, this rule is designed to maintain the best health, population and utilization levels of the moose herd.

1.3 In accordance with 10 V.S.A. § 4082, the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board may: establish open seasons; daily, season and possession limits for game; territorial limits; prescribe the manner and means of taking moose; establish territorial limits for the taking of moose; and establish restrictions on taking based upon sex, maturity and other physical distinctions.

1.4 In accordance with 10 V.S.A. § 4254(i)(1), this rule establishes a process to auction ~~five (5)~~ up to ~~six (6)~~ moose permits to be awarded to the highest bidders.

1.5 In accordance with 10 V.S.A. § 4254(i)(2), this rule establishes a separate drawing for eligible Vermont veterans through a special priority drawing through the permit lottery system.

2.0 Purpose

The purpose of this regulation is to establish two annual moose seasons, to establish the procedures to be used in applying for and issuing moose permits, and to establish the administrative framework for regulating the taking of moose.

3.0 Definitions.

3.1 “Antlered moose” means a moose which has at least one antler 6 inches or more in length measured from the tip of the main beam along the distal edge of the antler to the base of the antler burr at the skull.

3.2 “Antlerless” means those moose without antlers or antlers less than six inches in length.

3.3 “Applicant” means a person who has submitted a completed legal application to the lottery.

3.4 “Application” means the form provided by the Department that allows a person to be entered into the lottery.

3.5 “Board” means the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board.

3.6 [Repealed.]

3.7 “Commissioner” means the Commissioner of the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department.

3.8 “Crossbow” means a device consisting of a bow mounted to a rigid stock for discharging bolts or arrows and having a mechanical means to hold and release the drawn string, which must be fired from the shoulder. A bolt means a short projectile for a crossbow that resembles an arrow and has a head that measures no less than 7/8 inch at its widest point. A crossbow shall have a minimum pull of 125 pounds, a working mechanical safety and a stock no less than 23 inches in length.

3.9 “Department” means the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department.

3.10 “Either sex” means a moose of any sex.

3.11 “Guide” means a person authorized to accompany, direct, aid, assist, and/or instruct a Permittee during a moose hunt.

3.12 “Guide Permit” means a document, provided by the Department to the Permittee, to allow for a guide to assist in a moose hunt.

3.13 “Legal means” means the taking of a moose by muzzleloader, rifle, handgun, shotgun, a crossbow, or bow and arrow in conformance with this rule.

3.14 “Permit” means a document issued by the Department authorizing the taking of a moose.

3.15 “Permittee” means a person who has successfully acquired a legal permit through the lottery or auction as described in this rule.

3.16 “Subpermittee” means an individual designated by a Permittee, whose name has been provided to the Department in conformance with this rule, who may be permitted to take a moose.

3.17 “Wildlife Management Unit” (WMU) means ~~one of twenty-five~~ a geographical areas in Vermont established for managing wildlife through regulation ~~and defined in 10 App. V.S.A § 2b.~~

4.0 Moose Seasons

There shall be ~~two~~ **three** moose seasons annually.

4.1 Archery. ~~The first moose season shall be by archery only.~~

(a) This season shall be open for seven consecutive days, beginning the first day of October.

(b) To take an animal during this season a person must possess a valid archery moose permit as prescribed in Section 9 of this rule.

4.2 Regular. ~~The second moose season shall be for any legal means of take.~~

(a) This season shall be open for ~~six~~ **nine** consecutive days beginning the third Saturday in October.

(b) To take an animal during this season a person must possess a valid regular season moose permit as prescribed in Section 9 of this rule.

4.3 Special Opportunity

(a) This season shall be open for seven consecutive days, beginning the first day of October.

(b) To take an animal during this season a person must possess a valid special opportunity moose permit as prescribed in Section 18 of this rule.

5.0 Possession Limit.

5.1 The bag limit for moose shall be one moose per moose hunting permit.

5.2 The possession limit for moose shall be one moose per moose hunting permit.

6.0 Permit Application Process

6.1 Applications must be made on an official moose hunting application form provided by the Department.

6.2 Only applications received by the Department's central office during the official application period will be considered. Applications must be received prior to the deadline established by the Department.

6.3 The Department will consider only complete applications. For an application to be complete it must be legible, must contain all the information requested by the Department, must bear the applicant's original signature, or, in the case of electronic or facsimile applications, attestation under the pains and penalties of perjury. To be considered complete the form must be accompanied by any required application fee, or means of payment, such as a valid credit card payment.

6.4 The Department will consider no more than one complete application from any applicant per year for each of the two separate lotteries held. A lottery will be held for both the regular and archery seasons. Only one permit may be issued per person per calendar year.

6.5 Ten (10) percent of the moose hunting permits may be issued to non-resident hunters.

6.6 No person who has held a valid Vermont moose hunting permit in any of the previous five (5) years may apply for a moose hunting permit or a bonus point in the current calendar year. ~~The application of the five (5) year waiting period shall only be effective for persons who hold a moose hunting permit after January 1, 2016.~~

7.0 [Repeated.]

8.0 Permit Selection Process.

8.1 All those who have submitted completed applications and who wish to be entered into the lottery will be entered into the lottery. The Department will hold, or cause to be held, a transparent, random drawing to include all persons who have submitted a complete application.

8.2 Selected regular season applicants will receive a permit for their WMU of preference until the permit quota for their preferred WMU is filled at which time a permit will be awarded for their second choice WMU, and so on.

8.3 Selected regular season applicants will be notified by mail, and will receive a permit form to complete. Successful applicants have 15 calendar days to return the completed forms with the appropriate fee, and their Subpermittee's name, if any.

8.4 Selected archery season applicants will be notified by mail, and will receive a permit form to complete. Successful applicants have 15 calendar days to return the completed forms with the appropriate fee and indicate the name of their Subpermittee, if any.

9.0 Moose Hunting Permits

9.1 An applicant who is chosen by lottery, or is ~~the a~~ successful auction bidder may purchase a moose hunting permit from the Department.

9.2 At the time of issuance, ~~all~~ moose ~~season-hunting~~ permit recipients and designated Subpermittees must hold a valid Vermont big game hunting license.

9.3 At the time of issuance, archery season permit recipients and designated Subpermittees must show proof of having held an archery deer license and/or a certificate of satisfactory completion of a bowhunter education course from Vermont or another state or province of Canada which is approved by the Commissioner. ~~Archery season permit recipients and designated Subpermittees must hold a valid Vermont big game hunting license:~~

9.4 Moose hunting permits are valid only within the WMU or WMUs designated on the permit, for the specified season, and for the type (either sex, antlered, or antlerless) specified on the permit.

10.0 Deferments

10.1 The Commissioner may grant a ~~one-time~~, one-year deferment to successful applicants for reasons of personal or family illness, temporary disability, or military deployment.

10.2 Requests for deferment shall be made on the Department-issued form to the Commissioner and received no later than ~~three days prior to the start of the first day of~~ the moose season for which a permit has been issued. Requests shall contain information required by the Commissioner to substantiate the request.

10.3 Deferred permits shall be issued for the same WMU and permit type (either sex, antlered, antlerless, archery or regular) as the originally issued permit.

11.0 Subpermittees

11.1 A person holding a valid moose hunting permit may designate one (1) Subpermittee who shall be permitted to hunt moose pursuant to the permit.

11.2 The Subpermittee must always be accompanied by the permit holder. For these purposes, "accompanied," means being able to communicate without the aid of artificial devices except medically-prescribed eyeglasses or hearing aids.

11.3 Once the applicant has provided the name of their selected Subpermittee to the Department, no change to this selection will be allowed except for personal or family illness, temporary physical disability, or military deployment.

11.4 Any request for change of Subpermittee must be made in writing to the Commissioner and received no later than three (3) days prior to the start of the moose season for which a permit has been issued.

11.5 Subpermittee Ineligibility

(a) No person who has held a Vermont moose hunting permit in any of the previous five (5) years may be designated as a Subpermittee in the current calendar year.

(b) No person who holds a valid moose hunting permit in one year may be designated as a Subpermittee in the same year.

(c) No person may be named as a Subpermittee on more than one permit during the same year.

12.0 Guides and Guide Permits.

12.1 The Guide shall be allowed to direct, aid, assist and instruct the Permittee and Subpermittee during the hunt.

12.2 A Guide may not carry any other firearm, muzzleloader, or archery equipment.

12.3 Each Permittee shall be issued a Guide Permit by the Department. The Guide Permit must be carried by the guide at all times while accompanying the Permittee while hunting moose.

12.4 A person serving as a Guide must hold a current valid Vermont big game hunting license.

12.5 A Guide Permit may be carried by different persons at any time during the moose hunt, but only one person at a time may serve as a Guide for each moose hunting party.

12.6 A person may simultaneously serve as a Guide for more than one moose Permittee but must be carrying the proper Guide Permit for each guided party.

13.0 Control Measures

13.1 In addition to all relevant laws and regulations pertaining to the hunting and taking of big game in Vermont, the following additional restrictions apply:

- (a) No persons other than the Permittee, Subpermittee and Guide shall participate in a hunt to take moose.
- (b) Portable radio transceivers, GPS, and/or cell phones shall not be used to communicate during the hunting or taking of moose. Such devices may be used, however, after the moose is legally tagged.
- (c) No electronic devices such as radio telemetry equipment shall be used to take moose.
- (d) No electronic devices may be used to attract moose.
- (e) No person shall shoot or attempt to shoot a moose when the moose is within 100 yards of any town, state, or federal highway as defined in 10 V.S.A. § 4705(f).
- (f) Pursuant to 10 V.S.A. App. § 12, notwithstanding 10 V.S.A. App. § 12, Section 1(g), a person may employ the licensed handler of an authorized leashed tracking dog to track a moose wounded while lawfully hunting under this rule.

~~(g) Unless it is uncocked, a person shall not possess or transport a crossbow in or on a motor vehicle, motorboat, airplane, snowmobile, or other motor-propelled vehicle except as permitted in accordance with 10 V.S.A. § 4705.~~

13.2 [Means of take](#), Regular Season **and Special Opportunity Season**: Moose may be taken only with the following implements and restrictions:

- (a) Centerfire rifles or handguns not less than .25 caliber.
- (b) A muzzleloading firearm of not less than .45 caliber, with a minimum barrel length of 20 inches and designed to be fired from the shoulder, or a muzzleloading handgun of not less than .45 caliber and with a minimum barrel length of 10 inches.
- (c) Bows of not less than 50 pound draw weight, based on the archer's normal draw length for traditional bows, and using arrowheads with a minimum of 7/8 of an inch in width with two or more cutting edges. A person taking moose may use a crossbow as a means of take during any season that permits the use of a bow and arrow-only; and the crossbow is used in accordance with this subsection.
- (d) Shotguns not less than 20 gauge and utilizing slugs only.

13.3 [Means of take](#), Archery Season: Moose may be taken only with the following implements and restrictions:

(a) Bows of not less than 50 pound draw weight, based on the archer's normal draw length for traditional bows, and using arrowheads with a minimum of 7/8 of an inch in width with no fewer than two or more cutting edges.

(b) Crossbow bolts shall have arrowheads with a minimum of 7/8 of an inch in width with two or more cutting edges.

(c) No person ~~taking moose~~ may possess a firearm or muzzleloader while hunting moose during the archery season, except for a handgun in accordance with 10 V.S.A. § 4252(b). No person taking moose may do so by means of firearms or muzzleloader in the archery season.

14.0 Tagging and Reporting

14.1 The transporting of moose shall be in accordance with current regulations and statutes pertaining to big game.

14.2 Once a moose is legally tagged, pursuant to 10 V.S.A. Appendix § 2a., there is no limit to the number of persons that can assist with the field dressing and removal of the moose from the kill site.

14.3 Moose taken under this rule must be reported, pursuant to 10 V.S.A. Appendix § 2, by exhibiting the eviscerated carcass, or parts thereof, to a Department official at a Department-authorized moose check station during its scheduled days and hours of operation within 48 hours of tagging.

14.4 ~~A moose carcass may be quartered or deboned in the field prior to reporting provided all requirements of 10 V.S.A. App. § 2 and 10 V.S.A. §§ 4921 through 4925 are met. The viscera, hide, upper and lower leg bones, backbone, pelvis, and ribs may be left in the field. Evidence of sex (genitalia, antlers of moose,) must be retained for reporting. All other required biological samples must also be retained for reporting. The moose head hide, lower legs, and boned-out ribcage and/or bones need not be reported, however, both complete central incisors must be presented.~~

14.5 The permittee shall bring the following to the biological check station:

(a) The lower jaw, including incisors, one of which shall be taken for aging purposes;

(b) The intact antler rack on an antlered moose;

(c) The portion of the skull on a male antlerless moose where antlers would be attached;

(d) The female reproductive tract including both of the ovaries;

(e) The udder; and

~~(f) All edible portions of the moose not including organs.~~

14.6 No moose shall be transported out of the State without first being reported as required herein.

14.7 The Permittee and/or Subpermittee must identify the exact kill site on a Department map, and if requested, shall be required to take Department personnel to the kill site and/or the site of carcass evisceration for purposes such as, but not limited to, verification of the cause of death and site of kill, or to obtain ovaries or other biological samples left behind.

15.0 Permit Allocation

15.1 The number ~~of either sex and/or antlerless permits or bull only~~ and type (either sex, antlered, or antlerless) of permits to hunt and take moose during both the regular and archery seasons will be set by the Board.

16.0 Special Priority for Eligible Vermont Veterans.

16.1 Pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 4254(i), eligible ~~for~~ Vermont veterans will receive special priority drawing in the regular moose season lottery drawing.

16.2 ~~If the Board establishes a moose hunting season, the Commissioner shall set aside not more than 10 percent of the total number of annual moose permits authorized by the Board for Vermont residents who have served on active duty in any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces provided that he or she has they have not received a dishonorable discharge. The total number of annual moose permits set aside for Vermont veterans shall not exceed six. A total of five (5) regular season permits will be allocated for this special priority drawing. These five permits will be included in the total permits authorized by separate Board Rule.~~

16.3 Vermont residents who qualify for the special priority drawing must submit a complete application approved by the Department. A person applying for the special priority drawing permits must have marked the appropriate box on the application indicating that they comply with the provisions of this section.

16.4 Vermont residents who qualify for the special priority drawing and who are not drawn for a moose permit in that special priority drawing shall be entered into the subsequent regular drawing.

16.5 Vermont residents who qualify for the special priority drawing and who do not receive a moose permit shall be awarded preference points for the subsequent special priority drawing.

17.0 Moose Permit Auction

17.1 Pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 4254(j), ~~if the Board establishes a moose hunting season, not more than 10 percent of the total number of annual moose permits authorized by the Board shall be set aside to be auctioned. The total number of annual moose permits set aside to be auctioned shall not exceed six. The moose permits, if any, set aside for auction shall be included in the total number of annual moose permits authorized by the Board. five moose permits shall be set aside to be issued by auction. These permits are in addition to the permits authorized by separate Board rule.~~

17.2 Complete bids must be received by the Department's central office prior to the deadline established by the Department.

17.3 Permits will be awarded to individuals that submit the ~~five (5)~~ highest bids. Individuals submitting the next ~~five (5)~~ highest bids will be eligible, in order of declining bid value, to receive a permit if higher-ranked bidders do not submit payment within 15 calendar days following notification.

17.4 An individual may submit more than one bid; however he/she may only receive one moose permit. If an individual submits multiple bids, only the highest value bid will be included in the auction as an official bid.

17.5 Once notified of winning a moose permit, successful bidders have 15 calendar days to submit their bid payment, and to indicate: the season they will hunt in, the Wildlife Management Unit they will hunt in; and their Subpermittee, if any.

17.6 If an individual receives a moose permit from the regular moose lottery or archery moose lottery, and is also a successful auction bidder, the person may choose either permit. Should a person choose the regular moose lottery permit or the archery moose lottery permit, the bid amount will be refunded and the next highest unsuccessful bidder will be offered the auction permit.

17.7 Individuals who have held a valid moose permit acquired by the regular or archery moose lottery or auction are ineligible from participating in the moose permit auction for five years.

18.0 Special Opportunity Moose Permits

18.1 Pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 4255(j), if the Board determines that a moose season will be held in accordance with the rules adopted under sections 4082 and 4084 of this title, the Commissioner annually may issue three no-cost moose licenses to a person who has a life-threatening disease or illness and who is sponsored by a qualified charitable organization, provided that at least one of the no-cost annual moose licenses awarded each year shall be awarded to a child or young adult 21 years of age or under who has a life-threatening illness.

18.2 Special Opportunity permit holders may choose to hunt during the Regular season or the Special Opportunity Season

Changes Included in this Document

1. Move Youth Weekend back to the weekend before the regular season.

See *section 11*

2. Establish Expanded Archery Zones

See *section 10.6*

3. Allow antlerless permits to be used during the regular season.

See *sections 4.1 and 7.2*

Currently only allowed during the Antlerless Season (October Muzzleloader) and (December) Muzzleloader Season.

4. Allow hunters to hold two antlerless permits at a time.

See *section 4.3*

Only one acquired through the lottery, and only one per WMU at a time.

5. Remove the closure of archery season during the regular season.

See *section 10.1*

This was an enforcement concern that no longer applies if antlerless permits can be used during the regular season.

6. Reinstate the antler restriction in WMU D1.

See *section 3.8*

7. Allow hunters to take a second buck if certain conditions are met.

See *section 6.1(b)*

Hunters must first harvest an antlerless deer and their first buck must have 3+ points on one antler.

~~98~~. Miscellaneous changes for consistency and clarity.

§ 37. Deer Management Rule

1.0 Authority

1.1 This rule is adopted pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 4081(b). In adopting this rule, the Fish and Wildlife Board is following the policy established by the General Assembly that the protection, propagation, control, management, and conservation of fish, wildlife and furbearing animals in this State is in the interest of the public welfare and that the safeguarding of this valuable resource for the people of the State requires a constant and continual vigilance.

1.2 In accordance with 10 V.S.A. § 4082, this rule is designed to maintain the best health, population and utilization levels of the deer herd.

1.3 In accordance with 10 V.S.A. § 4084, this rule establishes open seasons; establishes daily, season and possession limits; prescribes the manner and means of taking white-tailed deer and establishes restrictions on taking based on sex and antler characteristics.

2.0 Purpose.

The purpose of this rule is to manage the white-tailed deer herd, implementing will of the General Assembly to design rules to maintain the best health, population and utilization levels of the deer herd.

3.0 Definitions

3.1 “Antlerless Deer” are defined as those deer without antlers or antlers less than three (3”) inches in length.

~~3.2 An “Antlerless Deer Permit” is a permit issued pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 4081(g) that allows a person to take one antlerless deer during the antlerless or muzzleloader seasons.~~

~~3.3~~ “Antler Point”: A “point” is an antler projection of at least 1” measured from the base of the point at the main beam to the tip of the point. A broken main beam shall count as a point regardless of length.

~~3.4~~ “Bait”: For the purposes of this regulation, ‘bait’ is defined as any animal, vegetable, fruit or mineral matter placed with the intention of attracting wildlife. Natural and artificial scents and lures that are not prohibited under Section 14 of this regulation and are not designed to be consumed by eating or licking shall not be bait for the purposes of this rule.

~~3.5~~ “Baiting” is the use of any animal, vegetable or mineral matter, including scents and lures prohibited under section 14 of this regulation that has the effect of enticing wildlife to a certain location.

~~3.6~~ “Board”: The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board.

3.7-6 “Bona fide agricultural practices”: Practices that have been employed to plant, grow and harvest an agricultural product conducted in the usual manner.

3.8-7 “Crossbows”: A crossbow means a device consisting of a bow mounted to a rigid stock for discharging bolts or arrows and having a mechanical means to hold and release the drawn string, which must be fired from the shoulder. A bolt means a short projectile, designed for a crossbow, that resembles an arrow. No person shall hunt wild animals or game with a crossbow if the bolt has an arrowhead less than seven-eighths of an inch at its widest point and has less than two sharp cutting edges. A crossbow shall have a minimum pull of 125 pounds, a working mechanical safety and a stock no less than 23 inches in length.

3.9-8 “Legal Buck”: In Wildlife Management Units C, ~~D1~~, D2 E1, E2, G, I, L, M, P, and Q a legal buck shall be any white-tail deer with at least one antler three (3") inches or more in length; and in Wildlife Management Units A, B, ~~D1~~, F1, F2, H, J1, J2, K, N, and O a legal buck shall be any white-tailed deer with at least one antler with two or more antler points one inch in length or longer.

3.10-9 “Novice”: A person who purchased their first hunting license within the past 12 months and is 16 years of age or older.

3.11-10 “Youth”: A person who is 15 years of age or younger.

4.0 Antlerless Deer Permits

4.1 An Antlerless Deer Permit is a permit issued pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 4081(g) and provisions of this section that allows a person to take one antlerless deer in the wildlife management unit listed on the permit during the regular season, antlerless season, or muzzleloader season.

4.2 Annually, the Board shall determine how many antlerless permits to issue in each wildlife management unit. For a nonrefundable fee, a person may apply for an Antlerless Deer Permit permit. The Department shall allocate the permits in the following manner:

(a) A Vermont landowner, as defined in 10 V.S.A. § 4253, who owns 25 or more contiguous acres and who applies shall receive an antlerless deer permit in the wildlife management unit on which the land is located before any are given to people eligible under subdivision (b) of this subsection. If the land is owned by more than one individual, corporation, or other entity, only one permit shall be issued. Landowners applying for antlerless deer permits under this subdivision shall not, at the time of application or thereafter during the deer hunting seasons, post their lands except under the provisions of 10 V.S.A. § 4710. As used in this section, “post” means any signage that would lead a reasonable person to believe that hunting is restricted on the land. If the number of landowners who apply exceeds the number of permits for that wildlife management unit, the Department shall award all permits in that wildlife management unit to landowners by lottery.

(b) Permits remaining after allocation pursuant to subdivision (a) of this subsection shall be issued by lottery. Not more than ten percent of permits may be issued to nonresident applicants.

(c) Any permits remaining after permits have been allocated pursuant to subdivisions (a) and (b) of this subsection shall be issued by the Department on a first-come, first-served basis. Ten percent of the remaining permits may be issued to nonresident applicants.

4.3 No person may purchase or possess more than two antlerless deer permits at one time, only one of which may be acquired pursuant to subsection 4.2(a) or (b) of this section. No person may purchase or possess more than one antlerless deer permit for an individual wildlife management unit at one time. A person may purchase additional antlerless deer permits after the person has harvested an antlerless deer.

45.0 Annual Deer Limit

45.1 A person shall not take more than four white-tailed deer in a ~~calendar~~ calendar year, only one of which may be a legal buck, with the following exceptions.

4-2(a) Youth and novice hunters shall be allowed to take two legal bucks, provided that one is taken during the youth or novice season, not to exceed the annual limit of four white-tailed deer.

(b) A person shall be allowed to take one additional buck, not to exceed the annual limit of four white-tailed deer, provided they have:

(1) Purchased a second buck tag, and

(2) Previously taken and reported an antlerless deer in the current year, and

(3) Previously taken and reported an antlered buck in the current year that had at least one antler with 3 or more antler points.

5.2 No person shall take deer in a WMU unless they are licensed, permitted or explicitly authorized to do so by the Board rules, or procedures adopted in accordance with 10 V.S.A § 4082 (c).

6.0 Regular Season

6.1 Season Dates: Pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 4084 for 16 consecutive days commencing 12 days prior to Thanksgiving Day.

6.2 Limit:

(a) One legal buck, not to exceed the annual limit as prescribed in Section 6.1 of this rule, and

(b) One antlerless deer per antlerless deer permit, not to exceed the annual limit as prescribed in section 6.1 of this rule.

57.0 Antlerless October Muzzleloader Deer Season.

~~57.1 Season Dates:~~ For four consecutive days, commencing on the Thursday 16 days prior to the opening day of the regular rifle season ~~shall be the antlerless deer season.~~

~~57.3-2 Limit:~~ A person may take one antlerless deer per antlerless deer permit. ~~A person may take additional antlerless deer if they obtain additional antlerless deer permits,~~ not to exceed the annual limit as prescribed in section 46.1 of this rule. ~~No person may purchase or possess more than one antlerless deer permit at a time, or purchase a subsequent antlerless deer permit until the person has harvested an antlerless deer. If a person possesses a permit to take an antlerless deer, then the person may take an antlerless deer.~~

~~57.23~~ A person hunting under this section shall obtain a muzzleloader license as provided in 10 V.S.A. § 4252 and must possess an antlerless deer permit.

~~57.4~~ A person ~~hunting with a muzzleloading firearm pursuant to this rule~~ shall not carry any firearms other than one single-barreled muzzleloading firearm as defined in 10 V.S.A. § 4001(33) while hunting deer during this season.

~~57.5~~ No person taking deer by means of muzzleloader may possess archery equipment or crossbow while hunting.

~~5.6~~ No person shall take a deer in a WMU unless they are licensed, permitted or explicitly authorized to do so by the Board rules, or procedures adopted in accordance with 10 V.S.A. § 4082 (e).

68.0 Muzzleloading December Muzzleloader Season.

~~68.1 Muzzleloader Season Dates:~~ For the nine consecutive calendar days commencing on the first Saturday after the completion of the regular rifle deer hunting season, ~~a person may take one legal buck by muzzleloading firearm.~~

8.2 Limit:

(a) One legal buck, ~~not to exceed the annual limit by muzzleloading firearm, provided that they have not yet taken a buck~~ as prescribed in Section 46.1 of this rule, and

(b) ~~If the Board has authorized the taking of antlerless deer, and if a person possesses an antlerless deer permit, then the person may take an antlerless deer. No person may purchase or possess more than one antlerless deer permit and a person can only purchase a subsequent antlerless deer permit after the person has harvested an antlerless deer~~ One antlerless deer per antlerless deer permit, not to exceed the annual limit as prescribed in section 46.1 of this rule.

~~68.2-3~~ A person hunting ~~with a muzzleloading firearm~~ under this section shall obtain a muzzleloader license as provided in 10 V.S.A. § 4252.

~~68.34~~ A person ~~hunting with a muzzleloading firearm pursuant to this rule~~ shall not carry any firearms other than one single-barreled muzzleloading firearm as defined in 10 V.S.A. § 4001(33) while hunting deer during this season.

~~68.45~~ No person taking deer by means of muzzleloader may possess archery equipment or crossbow while hunting.

~~6.5~~ No person shall take a deer in a WMU unless they are licensed, permitted or explicitly authorized to do so by the Board rules, or procedures adopted in accordance with 10 V.S.A. § 4082(c).

79.0 Archery Season

~~79.1~~ Archery Season Dates: October 1 through December 15, ~~except during the regular rifle deer hunting season:~~

9.2 Limit:

(a) One legal buck, ~~may be taken by bow and arrow or crossbow, during the archery season anywhere in the state;~~ not to exceed the annual limit as prescribed in Section ~~46.1~~ of this rule, and

(b) In Wildlife Management Units declared open by the Board to the taking of antlerless deer, a person may take one antlerless deer per archery antlerless deer tag, not to exceed the annual limit as prescribed in Section 6.1 of this rule.

~~79.23~~ A person hunting ~~with a bow and arrow or crossbow~~ under this section shall obtain an archery license as provided in 10 V.S.A. § 4252. An archery license will be valid for one deer; additional archery licenses are required for the taking of additional deer.

~~7.4~~ Crossbows may be used as a means of take during any season that permits the use of a bow and arrow.

~~9.4~~ A person shall use only a bow and arrow or a crossbow to take deer during this season.

~~79.5~~ The holder of an archery license or a super sport license, hunting with a bow and arrow or a crossbow, may possess a handgun while archery hunting, in accordance with 10 V.S.A. § 4252(b), provided that the license holder shall not take game by firearm while hunting.

~~7.6~~ Unless it is uncocked, a person shall not possess or transport a crossbow in or on a motor vehicle, motorboat, airplane, snowmobile, or other motor-propelled vehicle except as permitted in accordance with 10 V.S.A. § 4705.

~~7.3~~ The Board may establish 9.6 Expanded Archery Zones

(a) Within these zones, the archery season shall begin September 15. From September 15 to September 30, only antlerless deer may be taken.

(b) {Zone Boundaries}

Wildlife Management Unit A

All of Wildlife Management Unit A as described in 10 App. V.S.A. § 2b.

Newport

All lands within the city of Newport.

Burlington Area

Beginning on the shore of Lake Champlain at the end of Beach Road (Shelburn T.H. #22) in Shelburne proceed south along Beach Road to Bostwick Road (Shelburn T.H. #3); then northeast along Bostwick Road to Marsett Road (Shelburn T.H. #11); then east along Marsett Road to Falls Road (Shelburn T.H. #2); then east along Falls Road to Irish Hill Road (Shelburn T.H. #2); then east along Irish Hill Road to Spear Street (Shelburn T.H. #6); then north along Spear Street to Barstow Road (Shelburn T.H. #8); then east along Barstow Road to Cheesefactory Road (Shelburn T.H. #8); then east along Cheesefactory Road to State Route 116; then south along Route 116 to South Brownell Road (Williston T.H. #5); then north along South Brownell Road to Walker Hill Road (Williston T.H. #18); then east along Walker Hill Road to State Route 2A (Saint George Road); then north along Route 2A to Interstate Highway 89; then east along Interstate Highway 89 to Oak Hill Road (Williston T.H. #1); then north along Oak Hill Road to North Williston Road (Williston T.H. #1); then north along North Williston Road to State Route 117 (River Road); then west along Route 117 to State Route 289; then north and west along Route 289 to Susie Wilson Bypass (Essex T.H. #3); then southwest along Susie Wilson Bypass to Kellogg Road (Essex T.H. #5); then west along Kellogg Road which becomes Severance Road (Colchester T.H. #7); then west along Severance Road to Blakely Road (Colchester T.H. #9); then west along Blakely Road to East Lakeshore Drive; then in a straight line north to the shore of Lake Champlain; then west and south along the shore of Lake Champlain to the point of beginning.

Montpelier

All lands within the city of Montpelier.

Saint Johnsbury Area

Beginning at the junction of Hospital Drive (St. Johnsbury State Highway) and Interstate Highway 91 proceed east along Hospital Drive to Depot Hill Road (St. Johnsbury T.H. #85); then east along Depot Hill Road to U.S. Route 5 (Memorial Drive); then north along US Route 5 to Breezy Hill Road (St. Johnsbury T.H. #6); then east along Breezy Hill Road to Lackey Hill Road (St. Johnsbury T.H. #20); then east along Lackey Hill Road approximately 300 feet to the power line; then south along the power line to the electric substation off Higgins Hill Road (St. Johnsbury T.H. #80); then south along the power line to Interstate Highway 93; then west along Interstate Highway 93 to Interstate Highway 91; then north along Interstate Highway 91 to the point of beginning.

Rutland Area

Beginning at the junction of State Route 4A and U.S. Route 4 in West Rutland proceed east along U.S. Route 4 to U.S. Route 7; then south along U.S. Route 7 to North Shrewsbury Road (Clarendon T.H. #4); then east along North Shrewsbury Road to East Clarendon Road (Clarendon T.H. #8); then north along East Clarendon Road to Cold River Road (Clarendon T.H. #8); then north along Cold River Road to the Rutland Town/Clarendon town line; then east along the Rutland Town/Clarendon town line to the Mendon town line; then north along the Rutland Town/Mendon town line to U.S. Route 4; then west along U.S. Route 4 to Post Road (Rutland Town T.H. #30); then north and west

along Post Road to U.S. Route 7; then south along U.S. Route 7 approximately 0.1 miles to the triple power line; then west and southwest along the triple power line to the junction west of Grove Street (Rutland City T.H. #6); then south along the double power line to the junction near the end of Evergreen Avenue (Rutland City T.H. #174); then west along the power line to the junction west of West Proctor Road (Rutland Town T.H. #6); then north along the power line to the junction north of Durgy Hill Road (West Rutland Town T.H. #12); then west along the power line to Marble Street (West Rutland Town T.H. #3); then south along Marble Street to Water Street (West Rutland Town T.H. #19); then west along Water Street to Whipple Hollow Road (West Rutland Town T.H. #4); then south along Whipple Hollow Road to Route 4A; the west along Route 4A to the point of beginning.

Bennington Area

Beginning at the junction of U.S. Route 7 and State Route 313 in Arlington proceed west along Route 313 to State Route 7A; then south along Route 7A to West Mountain Road (Shaftsbury T.H. #54); then west along West Mountain Road to Laclair Road (Shaftsbury T.H. #64); then west along Laclair Road to Murphy Hill Road (Shaftsbury T.H. #9); then west along Murphy Hill Road to Sally Gannon Road (Shaftsbury T.H. #13), then west along Sally Gannon Road to the New York state border; then south along the New York state border to State Route 346; then east along Route 346 to North Pownal Road (Pownal T.H. #2); then east along North Pownal Road to U.S. Route 7; then south along U.S. Route 7 to Barber Pond Road (Pownal T.H. #3); then east along Barber Pond Road to South Stream Road (Pownal T.H. #3); then east and north along South Stream Road to Gore Road (Bennington T.H. #54); then east along Gore Road to Burgess Road (Bennington T.H. #53); then north along Burgess Road to Barney Road (Bennington T.H. #52); then north along Barney Road to State Route 9, then west along Route 9 to State Route 279; then north along Route 279 to Chapel Road (Bennington T.H. #16); then north along Chapel Road to East Road (Shaftsbury T.H. #5); then north along East Road to U.S. Route 7; then north along U.S. Route 7 to the point of beginning.

Brattleboro Area

Beginning at the Interstate Highway 91 bridge over the West River in Brattleboro proceed southeast along the north shore of the West River to the New Hampshire state border; then south along the New Hampshire state border to Broad Brook; then west along Broad Brook to State Route 142; then north along Route 142 to Broad Brook Road (Vernon T.H. #6); then west along Broad Brook Road to U.S. Route 5; then north along U.S. Route 5 to Guilford Center Road (Guilford T.H. #1); then southwest along Guilford Center Road to Tater Lane (Guilford T.H. #23); then north along Tater Lane which becomes South Street (Brattleboro T.H. #72); then north along South Street to State Route 9; then northwest along Route 9 to Meadowbrook Road (Brattleboro T.H. #26); then north along Meadowbrook Road to upper Dummerston Road (Brattleboro T.H. #5); then southeast along Upper Dummerston Road to Interstate Highway 91; then north along Interstate Highway 91 to the point of beginning.

8.0 Regular Rifle Season

8.1 Pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 4084 for the 16 consecutive calendar days commencing 12 days prior to Thanksgiving day, a person may take by lawful means one legal buck. No person shall take a deer in a WMU unless they are licensed, permitted or explicitly authorized to do so by the Board rules, or procedures adopted in accordance with 10 V.S.A. § 4082(c).

910.0 Youth Deer Hunting Weekend

910.1 Season Dates: Pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 4742a, the Saturday and Sunday ~~three-one~~ weeks prior to the opening day of the regular ~~rifle deer hunting~~ season shall be youth deer hunting weekend.

910.2 Limit: One white-tailed deer. One legal buck may be taken during the youth deer hunting weekend, or any deer if the Board has authorized the taking of antlerless deer during youth hunting weekend.

910.3 To participate in the youth deer hunt, a qualified youth must be 15 years of age or younger and have a valid Vermont hunting license and a youth deer hunting weekend license.

910.4 The youth must be accompanied by an unarmed adult who holds a valid Vermont hunting license and who is 18 years of age or older. An adult accompanying a youth under this section shall accompany no more than two young people at one time. As used in this section, “accompany,” “accompanied,” or “accompanying” means direct control and supervision, including the ability to see and communicate with the youth hunter without the aid of artificial devices such as radios or binoculars, except for medically necessary devices such as hearing aids or eyeglasses.

910.5 No youth shall hunt under this section on privately owned land without first obtaining the permission of the owner or occupant.

1011.0 Novice Season

1011.1 Novice-Season Dates: This season shall be concurrent with the Youth Deer Hunting Weekend as prescribed in 10 V.S.A. § 4742a and section **911.1** of this rule.

1011.2 Limit: One white-tailed deer. One legal buck may be taken during this season, or any deer if the Board has authorized the taking of antlerless deer during youth hunting weekend.

1011.3 To participate in the novice season, a qualified person must have a valid Vermont hunting license, and follow the requirements of youth hunting week-end.

1011.4 The novice hunter must be accompanied by an unarmed adult who holds a valid Vermont hunting license and who is 18 years of age or older. An adult accompanying a novice under this section shall accompany no more than two novice hunters at one time. As used in this section, “accompany,” “accompanied,” or “accompanying” means direct control and supervision, including the ability to see and communicate with the novice hunter without the aid of artificial devices such as radios or binoculars, except for medically necessary devices such as hearing aids or eyeglasses.

1011.5 No Novice hunter shall hunt under this section on privately owned land without first obtaining the permission of the owner or occupant.

1112.0 Reporting.

1112.1 A deer carcass shall be field dressed prior to reporting in accordance with 10 V.S.A. App. § 2.

1112.2 Upon request, the person harvesting a deer shall show and return to the kill site with a Game Warden.

12.3 A deer carcass may be quartered or deboned in the field prior to reporting provided all requirements of 10 V.S.A. App. § 2 and 10 V.S.A. §§ 4921 through 4925 are met. The viscera, hide, upper and lower leg bones, backbone, pelvis, and ribs may be left in the field. Evidence of sex (genitalia, antlers of deer,) must be retained for reporting. All other required biological samples must also be retained for reporting, including both central incisors of deer, during the November firearm season and novice weekend

1213.0 Feeding of Deer.

1213.1 No person shall feed white-tailed deer at any time in Vermont except:

- (a) Under a license or permit issued pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 4152 by the Department for bona fide scientific research, mitigation of wildlife damage or nuisance problems, or wildlife population reduction programs only; or
- (b) By planting, cultivating or harvesting of crops directly associated with bona fide agricultural practices, including planted wildlife food plots; or
- (c) By distribution of food material for livestock directly associated with bona fide agricultural practices; or
- (d) By cutting of trees or brush; or
- (e) By incidental feeding by an elevated bird/squirrel feeders (feeders must be at least five feet above the ground) providing seed, grain, fruit, worms, or suet for birds or squirrels, located within 100 feet of an occupied dwelling.

1314.0 Baiting

1314.1 No person shall take deer by using bait. Exempted from this prohibition are:

- (a) Incidental feeding of wildlife within active livestock operations;
- (b) Standing crops planted and left standing as food plots for wildlife;
- (c) Grain or other feed scattered or distributed solely as a result of normal agricultural, gardening, or soil stabilization, and logging practices;
- (d) Vegetation or food/seed naturally deposited.

1314.2 No person shall take any game or wild animal by using bait during deer seasons established under Part 4 of Title 10 or by rules of the Board, except that persons taking furbearers as authorized under 10 V.S.A. § 4252(3) may use bait in conjunction with traps being set to take furbearers.

1415.0 The Ban of urine and other natural lures.

~~14~~15.1 Authority. The Fish & Wildlife Board finds that, in order to protect the health of white-tailed deer in Vermont, it is necessary to prohibit the use of cervid urine, blood, glands, gland oil, feces, or other bodily fluids for the purpose of taking or attempting to take deer.

~~14~~15.2 Restricted and Permitted Uses of cervid urine, blood, glands, gland oil, feces, or other bodily fluids.

(a) No person shall possess while hunting or use, for the purposes of taking or attempting to take, attracting, surveillance or scouting deer; any product that contains or purports to contain any cervid urine, blood, gland oil, feces, or other bodily fluids.

(b) A person may utilize the body parts of a wild Vermont white-tailed deer legally taken or acquired by that person for coyote hunting.

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