

Fish and Wildlife Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 15, 2025

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board held an in-person meeting at 5:00 pm on Wednesday, January 15, 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 (December 18, 2024)
2. Public Comments (Limited to 2-minutes per speaker)
3. Review of Proposed 2026 Revisions to the Fishing Regs (10 V.S.A. App §§ 122, 123, 124, and 141) – First Vote
4. Review of 2024 Deer Hunting Season
5. Review of 2020 Deer Hunting Regulation Changes
6. Commissioner's Update

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

Virtual: David Deen, Brad Ferland, Linda Hook

Department Staff Present: Interim Commissioner Andrea Shortsleeve, General Counsel Hannah Smith, Wildlife Division Director John Austin, Wildlife Management Program Manager David Sausville, Fish Division Director Eric Palmer, Fisheries Program Manager Margaret Murphy, Fish Program Manager James Brady, Fisheries Specialist Levi Bown, Fisheries Biologist Jud Kratzer, Game Warden Matthew Thiel, Game Warden Dana Joyal, Deer and Moose Project Leader Nick Fortin, Game Warden Major Sean Fowler, Game Warden Asa Sargent, Game Warden Colonel Justin Stedman, Principal Assistant Abigail Connolly

Virtual: Director of Outreach Alison Thomas

Members of the Public Present: J.P. Theberge, Jordan Schroeder, Fred Schroeder, Bob Galvin, Chris Pritchard, Rod Coronado, Brian Dunkling, Paul Dunkling

Virtual: Dennis Thomson, Jessica Steele, Robert Steele, Jacob Nichols, Jim Knox, Bill Currier, Zach, Karen, Gabriel Tempesta, Dennis, Jason Stevens, Andrew, Jim, A, Tyler, Vanessa Spaulding

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Board Member Patterson moved to approve the December 18, 2024 meeting minutes. Board Member Sweeny seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve the minutes (14-0).

Public Comment Period

Rod Coronado, Orange, regarding brook trout catch limits
Representative Chris Pritchard, Pawlet
Brian Dunkling, Hinesburg, regarding panfish and commercial fishing
Paul Dunkling, Burlington, regarding commercial fishing
Jordan Schroeder, Bristol, regarding commercial fishing
Fred Schroeder, Bristol, regarding commercial fishing
Robert Steele, regarding panfish and commercial fishing
Bill Currier, regarding commercial fishing
Dennis Thomson, regarding commercial fishing
Zach, Rutland, regarding commercial fishing
Vanessa Spaulding, regarding fishing derbies

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

Review of Proposed 2026 Revisions to the Fishing Regs (10 V.S.A. App §§ 122, 123, 124, and 141) – First Vote

Margaret Murphy reviewed the baitfish regulations (§141). The presentation and the regulation language can be seen below. The Board Members asked questions regarding the baitfish zones, why some waters are restricted for baitfish, where the larger minnow trap can be used, bycatch of trout, and the receipts for baitfish. Jud Kratzer reviewed the fishing regulations § 122, 123, 124. The presentation and regulation language can be seen below. Matthew Thiel shared his experience as a game warden with law enforcement issues related to commercial fishing. The Board Members asked questions and discussed commercial fishing seller data, what neighboring states do regarding commercial fishing, public angler survey results, the health of fisheries, scientific names of fish being included in the regulation language, bag limits, the value of commercially sold fish, the difference between invasive and non-native fish, and the definition of commercial fishing.

Board Member Bailey moved to approve the department recommended changes to 10 V.S.A. App §§ 122. Board Member Van Buren seconded the motion. The Board voted by roll call to approve the motion (14-0).

Board Member Sweeny moved to approve the department recommended changes to 10 V.S.A. App §§ 124. Board Member Burnham seconded the motion. The Board voted by roll call to approve the motion (14-0).

Board Member Deen asked a question about what shelf stable means in the regulation. Board Member Van Buren moved to approve the department recommended changes to 10 V.S.A. App

§§ 141. Board Member Bailey seconded the motion. The Board voted by roll call to approve the motion (14-0).

The Board Members discussed and asked questions regarding the North American Model, commercial fishing on Lake Champlain, the proposal for crappie sale, and the data from buyers of fish. Board Member Sweeny moved to approve the department recommended changes to 10 V.S.A. App §§ 123 with two amendments. The first amendment was to add a requirement for a “seller’s license endorsement” and a reporting requirement for fish sellers that mirrors the requirement of fish buyers. The second amendment was to remove section 6.0 that prohibits the sale of crappie. Board Member Patterson seconded the motion. The Board discussed the prohibition of the sale of crappie, the need for more data, and that including the banning of the sale of crappie would allow for public input in the rulemaking process. Board Member Sweeney amended the motion to add back in the prohibition of the sale of crappie to allow for input from the public. Board Member Patterson agreed to the amendment. The Board voted by roll call to approve the motion (14-0).

Jud Kratzer reviewed the next steps in the rulemaking process.

The Board recessed for 20 minutes.

Review of 2024 Deer Hunting Season Review of 2020 Deer Hunting Regulation Changes

Nick Fortin presented the 2024 deer harvest results. Nick Fortin reviewed the deer rule changes that were made in 2020. The presentation can be seen below. The Board Members asked questions regarding muzzleloader permits, lifetime licenses, and the population objectives.

Commissioner’s Update

Commissioner Shortsleeve announced that the Yankee Sportsman’s Classic is January 17-19, 2025 and the department’s ice fishing festival will be held on Silver Lake in Barnard on January 25, 2025.

Motion To Adjourn:

The Board voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 pm.



Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department

Fishing Regulations – Proposed
Changes for 2026

F&W Board Meeting 1/15/2025



Overview

- We are proposing changes to take effect January 1, 2026
 - Fishing General Regulations 10 App. V.S.A. §122
 - Commercial Fishing 10 App. V.S.A. §123
 - Valley Brook—Spawning waters 10 App. V.S.A. §124
 - Baitfish 10 App. V.S.A. §141



Introduction

Baitfish Regulations 10 App. V.S.A. § 141

- Intended to provide fishing opportunities while reducing the risk of moving invasive species or pathogens (e.g., alewives, round goby, or VHS)
- Significant changes were made by the Department and F&W Board in 2019 which took effect January 1, 2020.
 - very few complaints since they went into effect
 - anglers seem to be happy with the regulations
- We are proposing minor changes to take effect January 1, 2026



Introduction

- Baitfish Regulations Review Team
 - Fisheries Staff
- Charge: re-evaluate proposed changes from 2022 that did not get fish division support and see if team can agree on revised changes
- Met several times Feb-Sept 2024
 - Law Enforcement attended most meetings
- Identified potential changes that were reviewed by Fisheries teams and Districts for biological consideration



Proposed Changes

Section 4.2 Personal Baitfish harvest

- Recommendation
 - Clarify transport of baitfish alive or dead from which they were collected
 - Clarify need for Baitfish Endorsement when transporting personally harvested baitfish off any non-Restricted waterbody
- Justification
 - Allows for transport of live bait for use another day with some restrictions based on the waterbody (Restricted or non-Restricted)



Proposed Changes

Section 4.4 Personal Baitfish Harvest Methods

- Recommendation
 - Allow for larger minnow traps for collecting baitfish
 - No longer than 24 inches with opening no larger than 2.5 inches diameter
- Justification
 - Currently, most bait shops in the state do not offer the large baits that anglers would like to use for large Northern Pike, for example.
 - Our current regulations on trap size (18 inches with a 1 inch opening) make it difficult to catch large baits.
 - As with other gears, if the bait trapper accidentally catches a non-target species, they can simply release it.
 - Sizes vary among states, with sizes ranging from 18 inches to 50 inches long and openings 1 inch to 3.5 inches.



Proposed Changes

Section 4.5 Personal Baitfish Harvest

- Recommendation
 - Allow people to harvest bait from seasonally closed waters for trout, even when the trout harvest season is closed.
- Justification
 - Rivers and beaver ponds are some of the best places to catch minnows and some want to catch bait from these waters in the winter for ice fishing.
 - There really isn't a reason for not letting people try to catch bait when the trout harvest season is closed.



Proposed Changes

Section 4.6 Personal Baitfish Harvest

- Recommendation
 - Add subsection that minnow traps to be checked once per week at a minimum
- Justification
 - Checking minnow traps frequently helps reduce iced-in traps and potential mortalities



Proposed Changes

Sections 4.7/4.8 Personal Baitfish Harvest

- Recommendation
 - Section 4.7 Baitfish harvested from a non-Restricted Water and used on Restricted Water may not be transported away from that waterbody, but can be stored in a baitbox for later use on that waterbody only
 - Part of 4.8 strikeout now covered in 4.2. Combined remaining 4.8 with 4.7 to make language more clear
- Justification
 - Allows for storage of baitfish for multiple days use but restricts any movement of baitfish off of Restricted Waters



Proposed Changes

Section 4.10 Fish Eggs Recommendation

- Simplified language for use of fish eggs
- Justification
 - VHS spread was the major reason for the creation of the strict VT baitfish regulations. Studies since the initial VHS outbreaks indicate VHS is not known to be transferred through fish eggs.
 - Overall, the Baitfish Rules Review Team deemed the current restrictions on the use of fish eggs was unnecessarily restrictive to anglers.



Proposed Changes

Sections 5.2 and 7.8 Commercial Baitfish Purchase and Sales

- Recommendation
 - Modify transportation receipts to get rid of carbon copy and modify information provided on the receipt
 - redesign the receipts; signature not critical; date and zone and species more important, make so not easily reproduced; unique number, printed name
- Justification
 - Carbon copies are rarely collected and used and is an added expense to the Fish Division
 - Receipt provides an opportunity for law enforcement and education
 - Law enforcement like the receipts and find them helpful



Proposed Changes

Section 6.0 Wild Baitfish Endorsement

- Recommendation
 - Add option for angler to accompany and fish with someone who has a baitfish endorsement
- Justification
 - Allows for guided trips or first time anglers to learn from someone else



Next Steps

- Presentation to Board (Jan 2025)
- FW Board 1st Vote
 - Initiate rulemaking process
- Rulemaking Process (Jan – June 2025)
 - File with ICAR
 - File with SOS
 - Post Online and Publish in Newspapers
 - Hold Public Hearings (virtual and in-person)
 - 2nd FW Board Vote
 - File with LCAR
 - 3rd FW Board Vote
 - Final Rule filed with SOS
 - Regulation takes effect Jan 1, 2026





Questions or Comments?

Margaret H. Murphy, Ph.D Fish Program Manager

Margaret.Murphy@vermont.gov



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Proposed Revisions for 2026

TITLE 10 Conservation and Development APPENDIX

CHAPTER 2. FISH

Subchapter 2. Seasons, Waters, and Limits

§ 141. Baitfish Regulation

1.0 Authority

This regulation is adopted pursuant to 10 V.S.A. §4081(b). In adopting this regulation, the Fish and Wildlife Board is implementing the policy 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.

In accordance with 10 V.S.A. §4082, this regulation is designed to maintain the best health, population and utilization levels of Vermont's fisheries.

In accordance with 10 V.S.A. §4083, this regulation establishes open seasons; establishes daily, season, possession limits and size limits; prescribes the manner and means of taking fish; and prescribes the purchase, sale, and use of baitfish.

2.0 Purpose

2.1 This regulation applies to fish used as bait. This regulation shall apply to all persons who take, possess, transport, use, purchase, or sell baitfish.

2.2 The purpose of this regulation is to: a) conserve and protect the fish, and fisheries in the state, b) maintain the best health of species and natural ecological systems in the state, c) prevent the introduction or spread of diseases or parasites harmful to humans and wild species, and d) prevent the escape or release of non-native species or species that injure or compete with natural ecological systems and processes.

3.0 Definitions

3.1 "Application" means a specific form provided by the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

3.2 "Baitbox" means a receptacle used for holding or keeping baitfish alive for personal use. A legal baitbox shall not exceed 25 cubic feet in volume.

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- 3.3 "Baitfish" means fish species and parts thereof, living or dead, used for the purpose of attracting and catching fish.
- 3.4 "Baitfish zone" means a specific geographic area, where it is permissible to use baitfish in accordance with this regulation, and the area is described and depicted on a map by the Commissioner and posted on the Department website.
- 3.5 "Restricted Water" means a specific ~~W~~Waterbody and any listed tributaries where the use of baitfish is restricted in accordance with this regulation, and the ~~W~~Waterbody is described and depicted on a map by the Commissioner and posted on the Department website.
- 3.6 "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- 3.7 "Department" means the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- 3.8 "Fish hatchery" refers to any fish culture station, hatchery, or artificial rearing pond which grows or maintains baitfish for sale in Vermont.
- 3.9 "Ice fishing" means a manner of fishing as described in 10 V.S.A App. §122 Subsection 4.0.
- 3.10 "Open-water fishing" means a manner of fishing as described in 10 V.S.A. App. § 122 Subsection 3.0.
- 3.11 "Permit" is a document from the Commissioner granting a Commercial Bait Dealers Permit.
- 3.12 "Waterbody" means any lake, pond, river, or stream including all tributaries upstream to the first barrier impassable to upstream fish movement.
- 3.13 "Commercially preserved baitfish" means baitfish that are shelf stable and ~~which are~~ chemically treated in a manner approved by the Department, and then packaged for retail sale.
- 3.14 "Personal baitfish harvest" and "Personally harvested baitfish" means baitfish taken for non-commercial use.
- 3.15 "Non-Restricted Water" means any ~~W~~Waterbody not included in the list of Restricted Waters

4.0 Personal Baitfish Harvest

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- 4.1 Personally harvested baitfish from Restricted Waters shall not be used on any other ~~w~~Waterbodies or transported away from the Restricted Water from which they were harvested.
- 4.2 Personally harvested baitfish may be used on multiple ~~w~~Waterbodies and may be transported away alive or dead from the ~~w~~Waterbody from which they were collected and retained for later use, provided that all of the following criteria are met:
- 4.2.1 The personally harvested baitfish shall not be harvested from or have been previously used on a Restricted Water;
- 4.2.2 Personally harvested baitfish shall only be used in the same baitfish zone they were harvested in; and
- 4.2.3 A person using transporting personally harvested baitfish ~~on~~off of any non-Restricted Wwaterbody ~~that is different from the waterbody where the baitfish was harvested~~ shall possess a wild baitfish endorsement in accordance with Subsection 6.0 of this regulation.
- 4.3 A person shall only harvest for use as bait those fish species listed under Subsection 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, and 8.4 of this regulation.
- 4.4 Personally harvested baitfish of approved species listed in subsection 8.1 shall only be taken by the following methods: a) minnow traps no longer than ~~eighteen~~twenty four inches with an entrance for fish not exceeding ~~one~~two and one half inches in diameter, b) dip nets, cast nets, and umbrella nets not exceeding a total of 51 square feet of mesh, or a seine net not exceeding 25 feet in length, c) Open-water/ice fishing by hook and line.
- 4.5 ~~No person shall personally harvest baitfish in seasonally closed waters for trout as listed in 10 V.S.A. App. § 122, Subsection 6.0, except during the open season for trout. Personal baitfish harvest in seasonally closed~~ ~~w~~Waterbodies (see 10 V.S.A App. 122, section 6.0) ~~during open seasons for trout shall only~~may only be conducted by ~~open water/ice fishing or~~ the use of minnow traps no longer than ~~eighteen~~twenty four inches with an entrance for fish not exceeding ~~one~~two and one half inches in diameter.
- 4.6 All traps, nets, baitboxes or other holding receptacles capable of taking, holding or keeping live baitfish in public ~~w~~Waterbodies shall be marked with the name, address, and telephone number of the owner and user.

4.6.1 Minnow traps shall be checked at a minimum of once per week

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4.7 Baitfish may be held on the ~~w~~Waterbody where they were harvested, or if harvested from a non-Restricted Water, anywhere in the zone where they were harvested ~~provided it is not a Restricted Water~~, in a baitbox as defined in Subsection 3.2 of this regulation. Any baitfish harvested on a non-Restricted Water and used on a Restricted Water may not be transported away from the Restricted Water but can be stored on the Restricted Water in a baitbox for later use on the same Restricted Water. Baitfish cannot be held or used on waterbodies described in Section 12.0.

4.8 Only a person with a valid wild baitfish endorsement (Subsection 6.0) may transport unused personally harvested baitfish, collected in non-Restricted Water, away from waters of the state for later use. Baitfish may be held in wWaterbodies of the baitfish zone where they were harvested provided the wWaterbody is not a Restricted Water or wWaterbodies described in Subsection 12.0. Outside of the baitfish zone where harvested, the baitfish shall be kept in a closed container isolated from any inflow of lake, pond, or stream water, or outflows to such wWaterbodies of the state.

4.94.8 No person shall personally harvest baitfish from any ~~w~~Waterbody of the state that is defined as closed to baitfish harvest. The Department will maintain and make available a list of ~~closed waters~~Wwaterbodies closed to baitfish harvest.

4.104.9 Fish eggs may only be collected from legally harvested fish from a Vermont ~~w~~Water~~s~~,body and its tributaries upstream to the first impassable barrier for use in the same ~~w~~Waterbody and its tributaries up to the first impassable barrier, and used immediately as bait on the same water where taken unless that waterbody has been closed to baitfish collection. ~~Personally harvested fish eggs shall not be transported and used in any waterbody other than the waterbody where the fish eggs were harvested. No person shall transport fish eggs away from a waterbody and return them to the same waterbody for use as bait unless they have been processed in a manner approved by the Department as described on the Department website.~~

5.0 Commercially Purchased Baitfish

5.1 No person shall import baitfish into the State of Vermont without a fish importation permit, except as provided for in subsections 5.8 and 5.9 of this regulation.

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- 5.2 A person purchasing commercial baitfish shall retain a transportation receipt issued by a state-approved commercial bait dealer, authorizing transportation of baitfish overland. The receipt shall contain the following information: 1) A unique receipt identification number, 2) The name and telephone number of the bait dealer, 3) ~~time and~~ date of sale, 4) species purchased, 5) quantity purchased, and 6) baitfish zone or Restricted Water (limited to one) in which the baitfish will be used, ~~and 7) the signature of purchaser.~~
- 5.3 A person in possession of commercially purchased baitfish shall only use those baitfish in the baitfish zone or Restricted Water recorded on the transportation receipt and shall retain and exhibit the receipt upon request of the Commissioner or the Commissioner's designee(s). A person shall not transport unused zone-specific commercially purchased baitfish away from a Restricted Water for use on any other Waterbody.
- 5.4 A transportation receipt shall be valid for 10 days from ~~the~~time and date of sale.
- 5.5 A person may transport unused commercially purchased baitfish away from ~~w~~Waterbodies of the state, and retain for later use in the same baitfish zone or Restricted Water as indicated on the baitfish transportation receipt, with the following prohibitions.
- 5.5.1 A person shall not transport unused commercially purchased baitfish away from a Restricted Water if the baitfish transportation receipt does not specify that Restricted Water.
- 5.5.2 A person shall not transport unused commercially purchased smelt for the use as baitfish away from a Restricted Water.
- 5.6 A person transporting unused commercially purchased baitfish away from ~~waters of the state~~ Waterbody for later use may hold them in ~~waters a~~ Waterbody of the baitfish zone listed on the transportation receipt provided that they are not transported away from the water is not a Restricted Water and the holding waters are not listed in subsection 12.0 of this regulation. Outside of the baitfish zone or Restricted Water listed on the transportation receipt, the commercially purchased baitfish shall be kept in a closed container isolated from any inflow of lake, pond, or stream water, or outflow to ~~such waters of the state~~ any Waterbody.
- 5.7 Baitfish may be held beyond the 10 days period in a baitfish zone or Restricted Water provided they remain in the same ~~w~~Waterbody in a baitbox in accordance with Subsection 3.2 of this regulation.

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5.8 A person may purchase baitfish from a New York baitshop for use in the Lake Champlain Restricted Water, provided the baitshop is Vermont-licensed, and the baitfish are accompanied by a Vermont-issued baitfish transportation receipt. For the purposes of this regulation, the Lake Champlain Restricted Water ~~are~~ is defined in 10 V.S.A. Appendix § 122 Subsection 5.

5.9 A person may purchase baitfish from a New Hampshire baitshop for use in the Connecticut River Restricted Water, provided the baitshop is Vermont-licensed, and the baitfish are accompanied by a Vermont-issued baitfish transportation receipt. For the purposes of this regulation, the Connecticut River is defined as all waters of the river including the bays, setbacks, and tributaries, but only to the first highway bridge crossing said tributaries on the Vermont side.

5.10 Commercially ~~prepared and~~ preserved baitfish and fish eggs available from retail stores may be ~~purchased and~~ used as bait, taken home, and kept for later use provided they are retained in the original packaging at all times.

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6.0 Wild Baitfish Endorsement

6.1 Any person who wishes to use, sell, or transport personally harvested baitfish outside of the ~~waterbody~~ waterbody in which they were harvested must possess and exhibit upon request of the Commissioner or the Commissioner's designee(s) a wild baitfish endorsement as developed and administered by the Department, or be accompanied by someone who possesses the endorsement for those baitfish in use.

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6.2 A person who wishes to obtain a wild baitfish endorsement shall satisfactorily complete a wild baitfish certification course.

6.3 The wild baitfish certification course shall instruct participants regarding the requirements of the baitfish regulations and the vectors and risks associated with aquatic nuisance species and pathogens.

7.0 Commercial Bait Dealers

7.1 Any person who buys baitfish for resale or sells baitfish shall obtain a commercial bait dealers permit from the Commissioner except as provided for in subsection 7.2. Only persons operating a place of business and offering baitfish for sale to the public may apply for and hold a commercial bait dealers permit.

7.2 A commercial bait dealers permit is not required when:

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- 7.2.1 A person only sells commercially preserved baitfish as defined in Subsection 3.13 of this regulation.
- 7.2.2 A person sells baitfish as specified by subsections 8.1 and 8.2 to another angler while on the same ~~W~~Waterbody where the baitfish were personally harvested.
- 7.2.3 A person sells personally harvested rainbow smelt and meets the following criteria:
- 7.2.3.1 The personally harvested rainbow smelt shall be harvested, transported, and possessed in accordance with subsection 4.0 of this regulation.
 - 7.2.3.2 The buyer shall possess a valid zone-specific commercial ~~b~~bait dealers permit.
 - 7.2.3.3 The commercial bait dealer's zone designation shall be the same zone from which the personally harvested rainbow smelt were harvested.
 - 7.2.3.4 The seller shall possess a valid wild baitfish endorsement in accordance with subsection 6.0 of this regulation.
 - 7.2.3.5 The seller shall complete and sign an affidavit, as specified by subsection 7.11.1 of this regulation, attesting the ~~W~~Waterbody of origin for any personally harvested rainbow smelt that are sold.
- 7.3 Commercial bait dealers shall only purchase and sell the baitfish species listed under subsection 8.1 of this regulation. Commercial bait dealers may also sell rainbow smelt as bait, provided one of the following criteria are met:
- 7.3.1 Rainbow smelt are obtained from a fish hatchery approved by the Commissioner as set forth in subsection 7.5 of this regulation and its subsections; or
 - 7.3.2 Rainbow smelt are harvested by open-water/ice fishing and sold for use on the same ~~W~~Waterbody on which the bait dealer is located in accordance with subsection 7.6 of this regulation and its subsections; or
 - 7.3.3 Rainbow smelt are commercially purchased or harvested in accordance with subsection 7.7 and its subsections.

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- 7.4 Commercial bait dealers must declare in their permit application if they will be a statewide baitfish dealer, ~~w~~Waterbody-specific baitfish dealer, or a zone-specific baitfish dealer (limited to one).
- 7.5 Statewide baitfish dealers are prohibited from possessing, buying or selling wild-caught baitfish.
- 7.5.1 Baitfish sold by statewide baitfish dealers shall originate from a fish hatchery approved by the Commissioner.
- 7.5.2 Statewide baitfish dealers shall hold or keep baitfish in ~~w~~Waterbodies drawn from a secure well, a municipal water source, or other water source approved by the Department.
- 7.5.3 Baitfish sold by statewide baitfish dealers may be used in ~~w~~Waterbodies throughout the state, though one Baitfish zone or Restricted Water must be designated at purchase except those ~~w~~Waterbodies listed in subsection 12.0 of this regulation.
- 7.6 Waterbody specific baitfish dealers shall declare on their permit application the ~~w~~Waterbody on which they are located.
- 7.6.1 Waterbody-specific baitfish dealers may harvest wild baitfish only from the declared ~~w~~Waterbody and offer them for sale and use only on the declared ~~w~~Waterbody.
- 7.6.2 The baitfish facilities of ~~w~~Waterbody specific bait-fish dealers shall discharge to their declared ~~w~~Waterbody. The discharge treatment infrastructure shall adequately filter and disinfect water to the satisfaction of the Department. Note that this does not relieve the baitfish dealer from compliance with all other applicable requirements.
- 7.6.3 No ~~w~~Waterbody-specific baitfish dealer shall harvest baitfish by netting in or on seasonally closed ~~w~~Waterbodies ~~for trout~~ as listed in 10 V.S.A. Appendix § 122 Subsection ~~67.0~~ unless otherwise permitted by their commercial bait dealers permit. Waterbody specific baitfish dealers shall not operate dip nets, cast nets, or umbrella nets exceeding 51 square feet of mesh, or a seine net exceeding 125 feet in length, for the purposes of taking fish for bait, unless otherwise permitted by their commercial bait dealers permit.
- 7.6.4 All traps, nets, baitboxes or other holding receptacles capable of taking, holding or keeping live baitfish in public waters shall be

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marked with the name, address, and telephone number of the owner and user.

- 7.6.5 No person shall commercially harvest baitfish on any ~~w~~Waterbody of the state that is listed as closed to baitfish harvest. The Department will maintain and make available a list of closed ~~w~~Waterbodies.
- 7.7 Zone-specific baitfish dealers shall declare on their permit application the ~~w~~Waterbody on which they are located, the baitfish zone in which they are located, the baitfish zone from which they intend to harvest, and purchase wild baitfish (limited to one) and the baitfish zone where the baitfish they sell may be used (limited to one).
- 7.7.1 Zone-specific baitfish dealers shall be located in the baitfish zone which they intend to harvest, purchase, hold, and sell baitfish in, with the following exceptions:
- 7.7.1.1 Baitfish may be purchased from a fish hatchery approved by the Commissioner outside of the zone-specific dealer's baitfish zone and sold as zone-specific baitfish.
- 7.7.1.2 A Zone-specific baitfish dealer can be physically located outside of the baitfish zone in which they intend to sell baitfish ~~for~~ provided they hold or keep baitfish in water drawn from a secure water source as approved by the Department.
- 7.7.2 Zone-specific baitfish dealers shall harvest and purchase wild baitfish only from the declared baitfish zone where the baitfish they sell may be used, and such baitfish shall be offered for sale and use only in the declared baitfish zone ~~or~~ Restricted Water within the declared baitfish zone.
- 7.7.3 Zone-specific baitfish dealers may purchase wild rainbow smelt provided they meet the provisions of subsections 7.2.3 and 7.11.1 of this regulation.
- 7.7.4 Zone-specific baitfish dealers shall not harvest or purchase wild baitfish which are from or have been used previously on a Restricted Water nor shall they hold or keep baitfish in waters drawn from a Restricted Water.
- 7.7.5 The baitfish holding facilities of zone-specific baitfish dealers shall discharge to the declared baitfish zone or to a water treatment infrastructure which adequately filters and disinfects water to the

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satisfaction of the Department. Note that this does not relieve the baitfish dealer from compliance with all other applicable requirements.

- 7.7.6 No zone-specific baitfish dealer shall harvest baitfish by netting in seasonally closed waters as listed in 10 V.S.A App § 122 subsection 6.0, unless otherwise permitted by their commercial bait fish dealers permit. No zone-specific baitfish dealer shall operate dip nets, cast nets, or umbrella nets that exceed 51 square feet of mesh, or a seine net that exceeds 125 feet in length, for the purposes of taking fish for bait, unless otherwise permitted by their commercial bait dealers permit.
- 7.7.7 All traps, nets, baitboxes, or other holding receptacles capable of taking, holding, or keeping live baitfish in public waters shall be marked with the name, address, and telephone number of the owner and user.
- 7.7.8 No person shall commercially harvest baitfish on any ~~w~~Waterbody of the state that is defined as closed to baitfish harvest. The Department will maintain and make available a list of closed waters.
- 7.8 A commercial bait dealer shall provide to each customer at the point of sale a ~~copy of a~~ transportation receipt containing the following information: 1) A unique receipt identification number, 2) The name and telephone number of the bait dealer, 3) ~~time and~~ date of sale, 4) species purchased, 5) quantity purchased, ~~and~~ 6) baitfish zone or Restricted Water (limited to one) in which the baitfish will be used, ~~and 7) the signature of purchaser.~~
- 7.9 A transportation receipt shall be valid for 10 days from time and date of sale.
- 7.10 Receipt books shall be provided to commercial bait dealers by the Department.
- 7.11 Any holder of a commercial bait dealers permit shall maintain ~~receipts or~~ records for each lot of wholesaled hatchery-raised or wild-caught baitfish introduced into their shop. The ~~receipts or~~ records shall include: name, address and telephone number of seller (for wholesaled baitfish), and date received, species identification, and quantity purchased or harvested, for wholesaled and wild-caught baitfish. The permit holder shall retain the ~~receipts and~~ records for at least one year after the date of sale or harvest. ~~Receipts or~~ records shall be provided to the Department immediately upon request.

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7.11.1 Any holder of a commercial bait dealers permit that purchases personally harvested wild rainbow smelt from a person shall maintain a list of purchases which includes: name, address, telephone number, and signature of the seller, date of sale, quantity of fish purchased, and ~~w~~Waterbody of origin. Such form will be provided by the Department to the commercial bait dealer.

8.0 Approved Species of Fish for use as Bait

8.1 Approved species of baitfish:

Banded killifish *Fundulus diaphanus*
Blacknose dace *Rhinichthys atratulus*
Bluntnose minnow *Pimephales notatus*
Common shiner *Luxilus cornutus*
Creek chub *Semotilus atromaculatus*
Eastern silvery minnow *Hybognathus regius*
Emerald shiner *Notropis atherinoides*
Fallfish *Semotilus corporalis*
Fathead minnow *Pimephales promelas*
Golden shiner *Notemigonus crysoleucas*
Longnose dace *Rhinichthys cataractae*
Longnose sucker *Catostomus catostomus*
Mimic shiner *Notropis volucellus*
Northern redbelly dace *Chrosomus eos*
Spottail shiner *Notropis hudsonius*
White sucker *Catostomus commersoni*

8.2 Rainbow Smelt

Rainbow smelt *Osmerus mordax* may be taken only by open-water/ice fishing by hook and line and may be commercially sold as bait.

8.3 Additional Species

The following additional fish species, or parts thereof, may be taken only by open-water/ice fishing by hook and line and used for bait only in those waters where taken and shall not be transported alive from those waters.

Bluegill *Lepomis macrochirus*
Pumpkinseed *Lepomis gibbosus*
Rock bass *Ambloplites rupestris*
Yellow perch *Perca flavescens*

8.4 Lake Champlain –

In addition to subsections 8.1, 8.2, and 8.3, the following fish species, or parts thereof, may be taken only by open-water/ice fishing by hook and

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line in Lake Champlain and used as bait in Lake Champlain, as described in 10 V.S.A. App §122 subsection 5.0, and may not be commercially harvested or sold as bait; Alewife may only be used/possessed if dead:

Alewife *Alosa pseudoharengus*
White perch *Morone americana*

8.5 All other species of fish are prohibited for use as bait.

9.0 Commercial Bait Dealer Application Process

- 9.1 A person who wishes to obtain a commercial bait dealers permit shall apply to the Commissioner in writing on a form provided by the Department. The Department may require the applicant to submit such additional information as is necessary to determine that the permitted activities comply with the purposes of this regulation, including but not limited to fish health testing, and an analysis of the impact of the sale of baitfish on Vermont's fish species, fisheries, and natural ecosystems and processes.
- 9.2 If the application is deficient, the Department shall inform the applicant of the deficiencies and return the application within 30 days of receipt, along with any associated fee, to the applicant for revision and re-submission.
- 9.3 If the application is denied, the Commissioner shall, within 30 days of receipt of application, send the applicant a written denial setting forth the reasons for the denial.

10.0 Permit Compliance

- 10.1 The Permittee shall make the permit available upon request by Commissioner or Commissioner's designee. Premises and equipment used by persons to take, harvest, purchase, store, or sell in baitfish shall be accessible for inspection by the Commissioner and his or her designee. Samples for species determination or disease examination shall be provided immediately upon request.
- 10.2 Permittees shall provide the Department with additional information as requested on an annual basis or prior to the re-issuance of a new permit.

11.0 Permit Revocation

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- 11.1 The Commissioner may revoke any permit for: any violation of a permit; failure to comply with this regulation; a violation of any regulations of the Board; a violation of the provisions of Part 4, Title 10, Vermont Statutes Annotated; or if the Commissioner determines that the revocation is necessary to protect fish or fisheries of Vermont.
- 11.2 The Commissioner shall comply with all applicable requirements of 3 V.S.A. Chapter 25, related to any permit revocation.
- 11.3 Appeals of the decisions of the Commissioner are subject to the Vermont Regulations of Civil Procedure.

12.0 Waterbodies where the use of fish as bait is prohibited

The use of fish in any form whether alive or dead for bait in fishing is prohibited in:

Adams Reservoir, Woodford;
Beaver Pond, Holland;
Beck Pond, Newark;
Beebe Pond, Sunderland;
Big Mud Pond, Mt. Tabor;
Blake Pond, Sutton;
Bourn Pond, Sunderland;
Branch Pond, Sunderland;
Cary Pond, Walden;
Cow Mountain Pond, Granby;
Griffith Lake, Mt. Tabor;
Jobs Pond, Westmore;
Lake Pleiad, Hancock;
Lewis Pond, Lewis;
Little Rock Pond, Wallingford;
Martins Pond, Peacham;
Mud Pond, Hyde Park;
North Pond, Chittenden;
Notch Pond, Ferdinand;
Red Mill Pond, Woodford;
Sterling Pond, Cambridge;
South America Pond, Ferdinand;
Stratton Pond, Stratton;
Unknown Pond, Averys Gore;
Unknown Pond, Ferdinand;
West Mountain Pond, Maidstone

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and any additional waters created or reclaimed by the Department. This regulation shall be posted at all waters affected.

Proposed Rule Changes in §122, §123, and §124



Jud Kratzer
Fisheries Biologist
January 15, 2025



Overview

- §122

- Trout
- Closed seasons on certain waters
- Panfish bag limits

- §123

- Commercial angling

- §124

- Valley Brook (Morgan)

§122 Trout

- 6.1 Add Mud Pond, Hyde Park to list of seasonally closed waters
 - Only open to fishing from 2nd Saturday in April to October 31
- Justification
 - Newly discovered wild brook trout pond
 - Brook trout are very susceptible to ice fishing



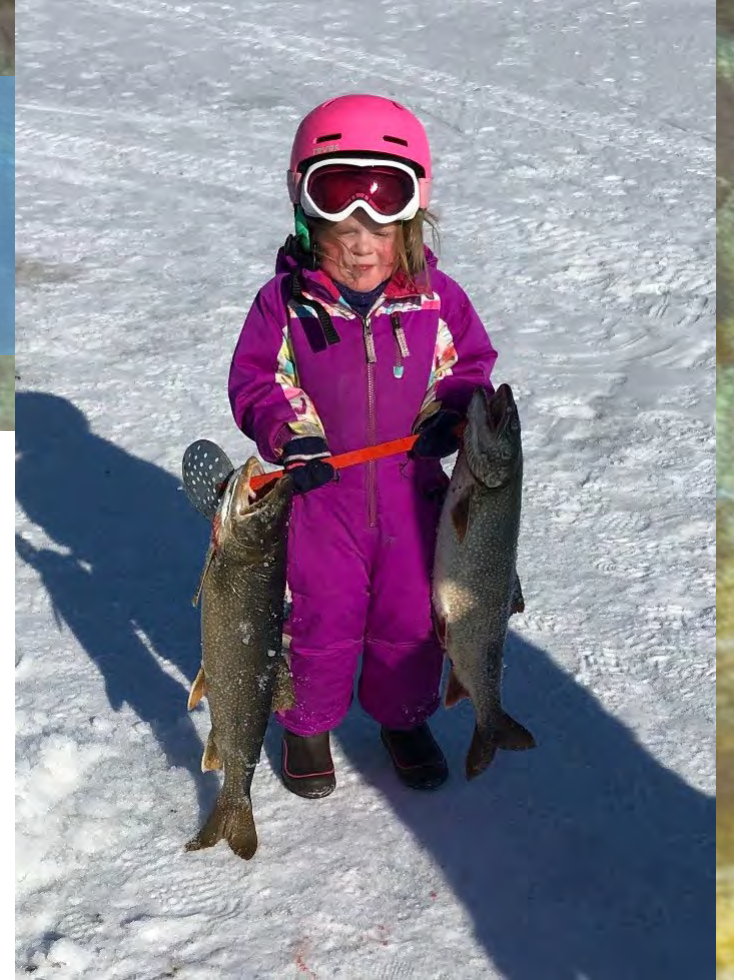
§122 Trout



- 7.6(c) Add a portion of the Deerfield River to Trophy Trout stream rules
 - Daily bag limit = 2
 - Former test waters designation
- Justification
 - We are stocking two-year-old trophy trout here

§122 Trout

- 7.6(f) Lake Memphremagog lake trout
 - Increase minimum length from 18" to 24"
 - Decrease daily bag limit from 2 to 1
- Justification
 - We are working closely with Quebec to manage the fisheries of this lake
 - This rule will match Quebec's rules for lake trout on Lake Memphremagog



§122 Closed seasons

- 7.7 Bring (a) into (b)
 - (a) Closed 2nd Saturday in April through May 31
 - (b) Closed March 16 through May 31
 - Add Blodgett/Tarbox Brook (existing commissioner's rule)
- Justification
 - Rule simplification
 - Necessary now that fishing is legal year-round in most rivers



§124 Valley Brook

- Delete §124
 - Rule currently prohibits fishing on Valley Brook (Morgan) during the month of October
- Justification
 - Rule simplification
 - Rule not needed to protect spawning fish

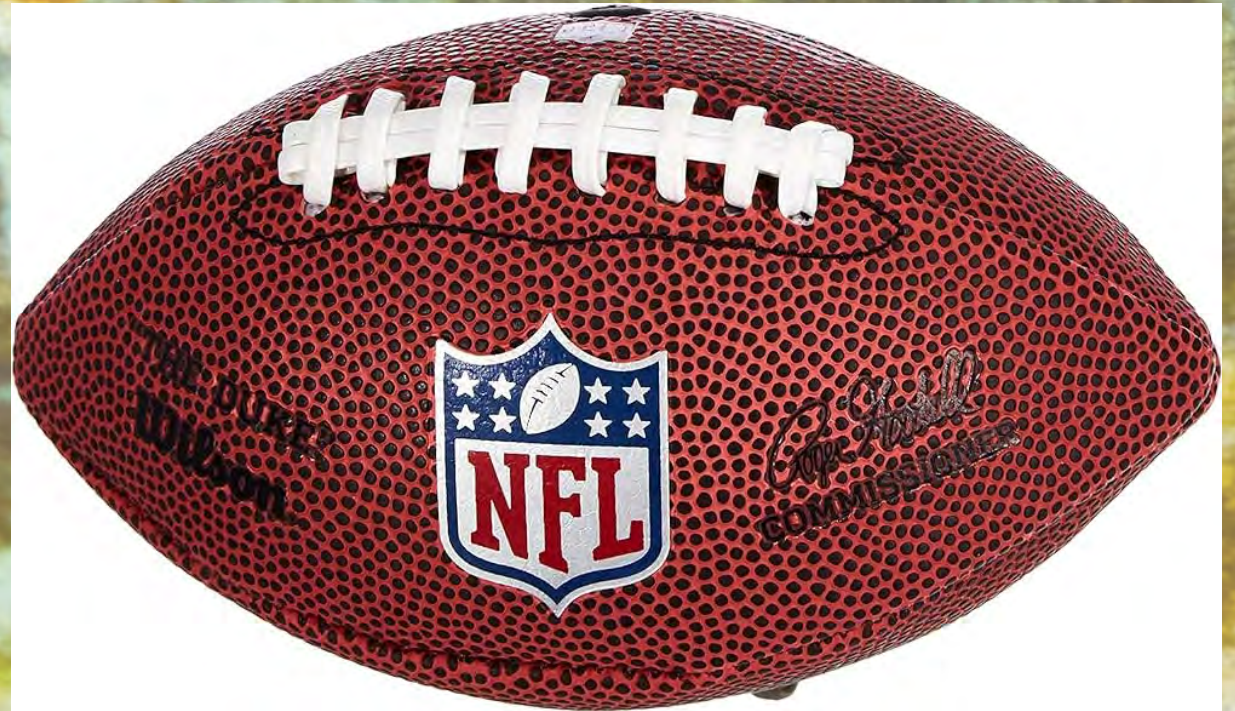
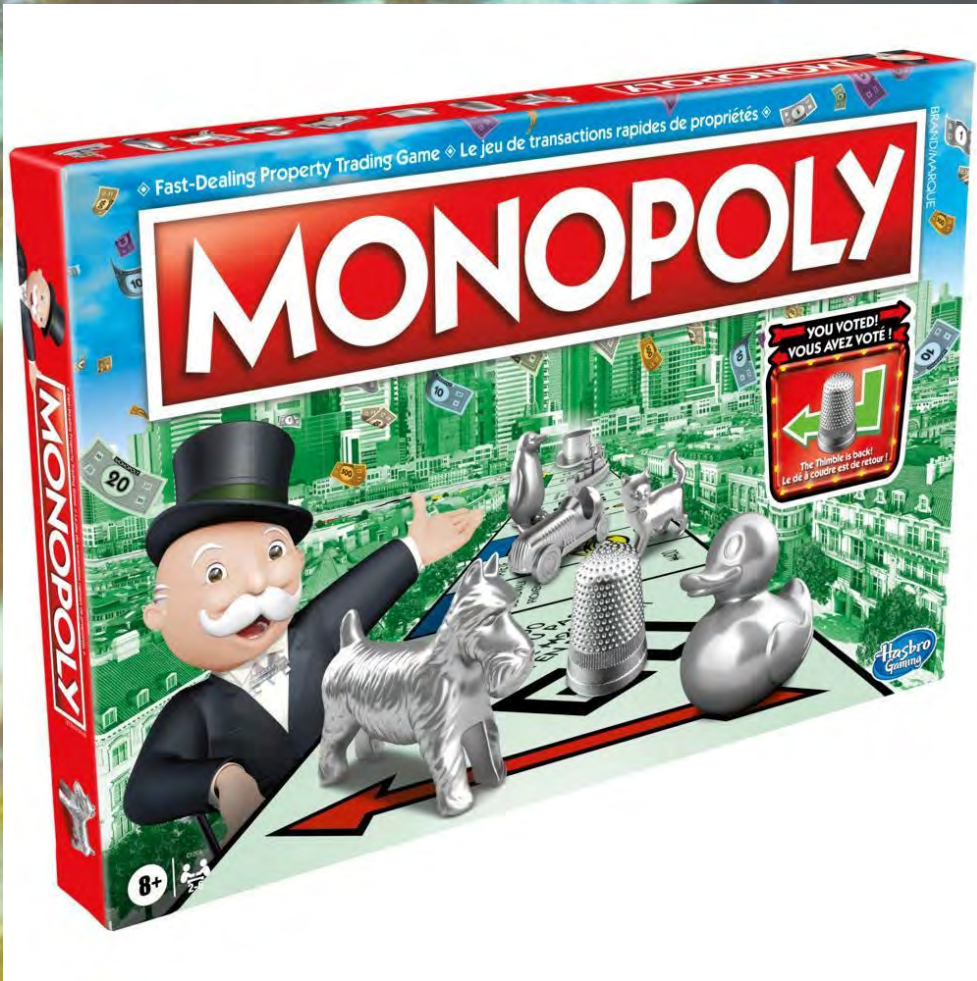


Petition received by FW Board



- February 27, 2024
- 242 signatures
- Three main requests:
 - “end commercial fishing”
 - “put limits on panfish”
 - “take crappie off of the panfish list and put on the game fish list”

Rules of the game



Three Perspectives

- Group #1: Anglers opposed to commercial angling
- Group #2: Commercial anglers
- Group #3: Other anglers

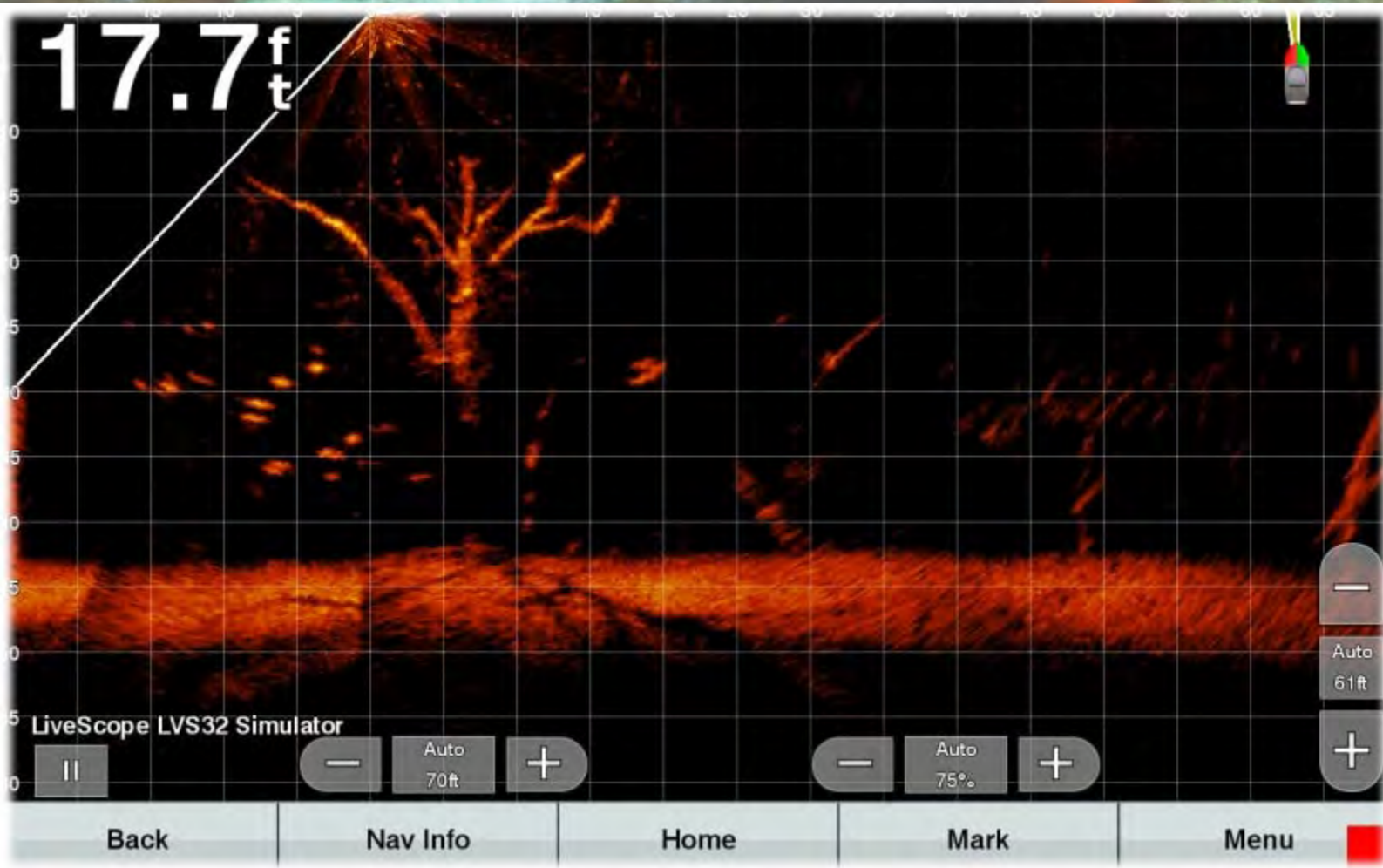


Group #1 - Concerns

- Lowers quality and quantity of fish
- Decreased enjoyment of fishing
- Selling contaminated fish
- Inadequate data collection
- Tax fraud
- Taking fish over the limit
- Fish harvested in NH and NY sold in Vermont



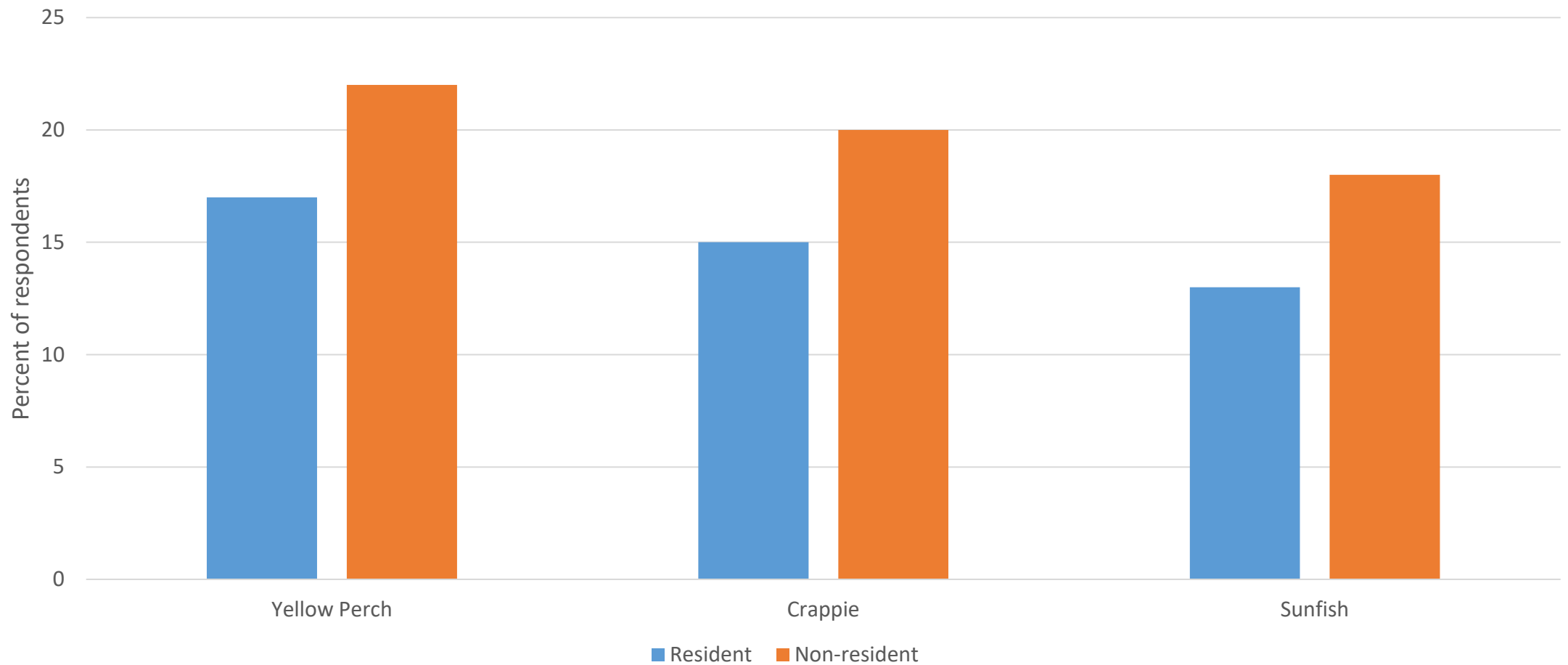
Developing Concerns



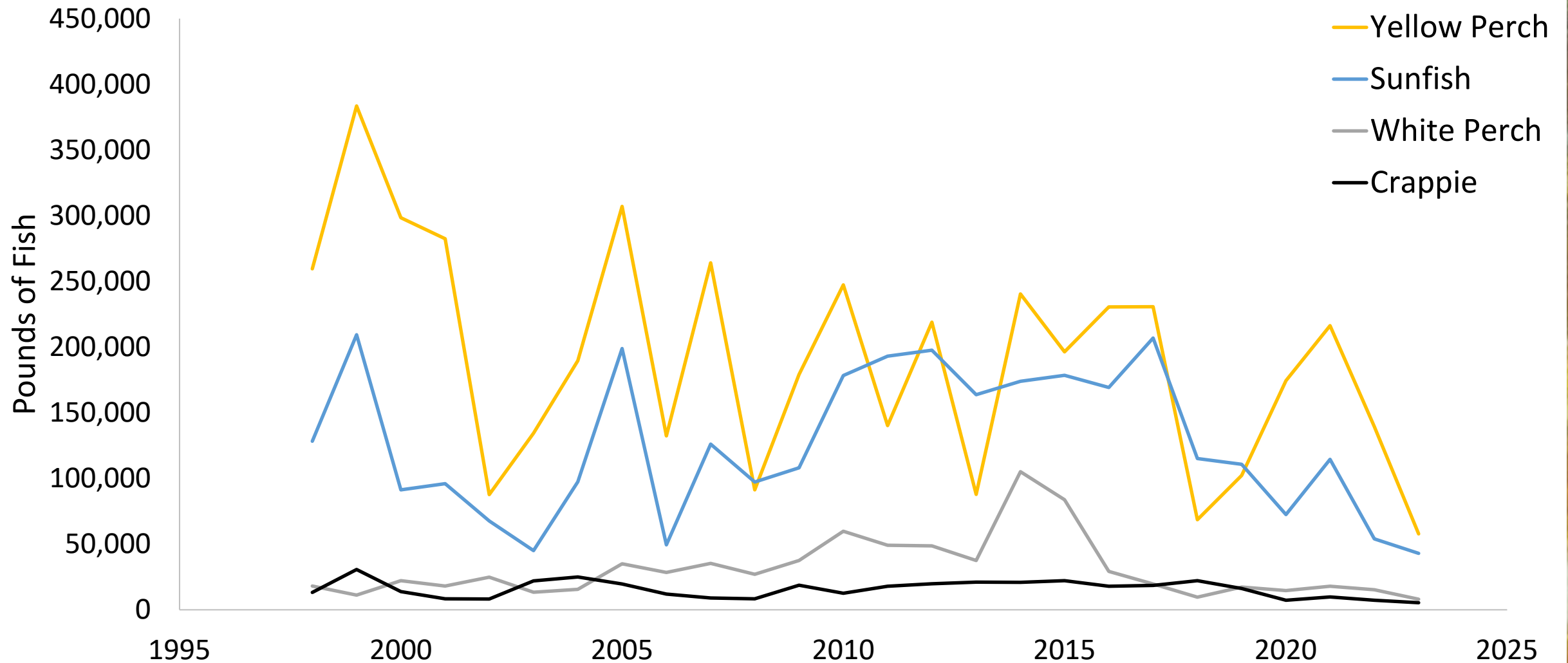
- Technology
- Future of ice conditions on Champlain

2020 VT Angler Survey

Is commercial fishing a severe or moderate problem?



Group #2 - Commercial Panfish Harvest



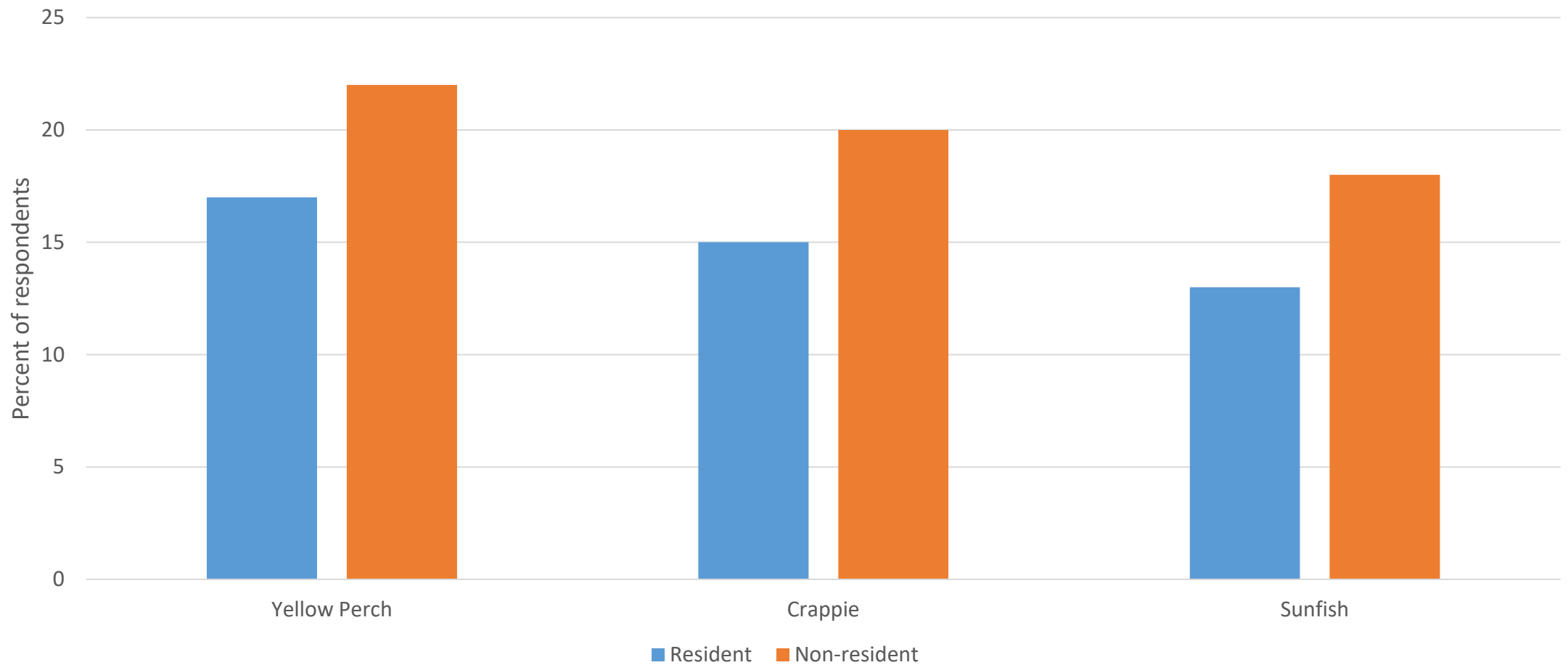
What we do know about Group #2

- Commercial anglers and fish buyers are making money
- Number of fish buyers = 12 to 18
- Some commercial anglers are dishonest



Group #3 - 2020 VT Angler Survey

Is commercial fishing a severe or moderate problem?



2020 VT Angler Survey - Crappies

Table 55. Agreement with the current daily creel limit for crappie, and if they disagreed their recommended limit, by Vermont residents and nonresidents.

Agreement with current daily creel limit for crappie of 25 fish	Vermont residents (%)	Nonresidents (%)
Agree	50.5	45.1
Disagree	9.1	17.5
No opinion	40.5	37.3
<i>Recommended limit for those who disagreed</i>		
<i>Higher</i>	12.5	14.4
<i>Lower</i>	87.5	85.6
<i>Mean recommended limit</i>	16.3	16.4

2020 VT Angler Survey – Yellow Perch

Table 54. Agreement with the current daily creel limit for yellow perch, and if they disagreed their recommended limit, by Vermont residents and nonresidents.

Agreement with current daily creel limit for yellow perch of 50 fish	Vermont residents (%)	Nonresidents (%)
Agree	55.9	46.5
Disagree	17.3	24.7
No opinion	26.8	28.8
<i>Recommended limit for those who disagreed</i>		
<i>Higher</i>	9.0	0.0
<i>Lower</i>	91.0	100.0
<i>Mean recommended limit</i>	28.2	20.4

2020 VT Angler Survey - Sunfish

Table 56. Agreement with the current daily creel limit for sunfish, and if they disagreed their recommended limit, by Vermont residents and nonresidents.

Agreement with current daily creel limit for sunfish, which is no limit	Vermont residents (%)	Nonresidents (%)
Agree	57.6	54.1
Disagree	4.9	9.2
No opinion	37.5	36.7
<i>Recommended limit for those who disagreed</i>		
<i>Higher</i>	0.0	0.0
<i>Lower</i>	100.0	100.0
<i>Mean recommended limit</i>	25.1	17.3

2022 Online Survey - Sunfish

MULTIPLE CHOICE

What would you prefer as a DAILY limit per angler for bluegill and pumpkinseed combined?

Answer Choice	0%	100%	Number of Responses	Responses Ratio
No limit			285	23%
100 per day			27	2%
50 per day			101	8%
40 per day			19	1%
30 per day			105	8%
20 per day			252	20%
10 per day			247	19%
Less than 10 per day			155	12%
Other			45	3%
Total Responses			1236	100%

Current regulations – inland waters

Species	Minimum Length	Daily Limit
Crappie	8"	25
Yellow Perch	None	50
White Perch	None	No limit
Sunfish (bluegill, pumpkinseed)	None	No limit
Rock Bass	None	No limit
Bullhead	None	No limit

Current regulations – Lake Champlain

Species	Minimum Length	Daily Limit
Crappie	8"	25
Yellow Perch	None	No limit
White Perch	None	No limit
Sunfish (bluegill, pumpkinseed)	None	No limit
Rock Bass	None	No limit
Bullhead	None	No limit (and you can shoot and spear them)

Game Warden testimonies



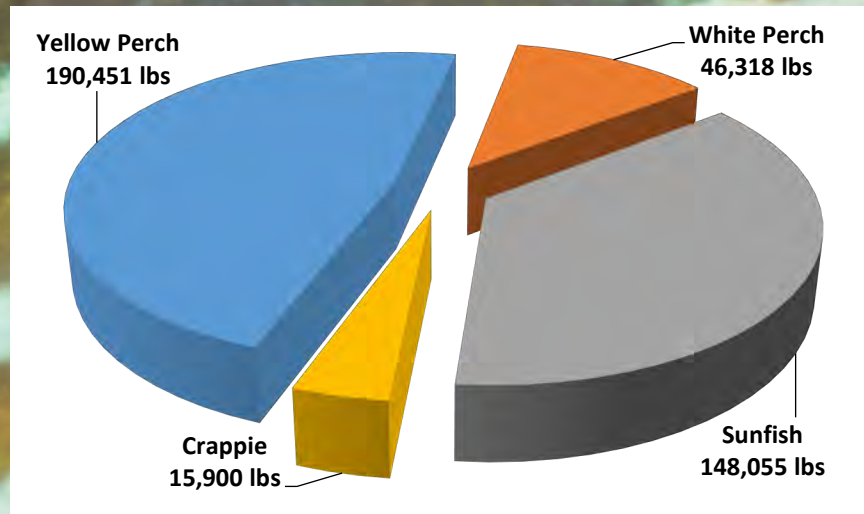
Proposal #1: prohibit sale of crappie (§123)

- Requested in petition
- High value incentivizes bad behavior
- High value incentivizes introduction of crappies to new waters

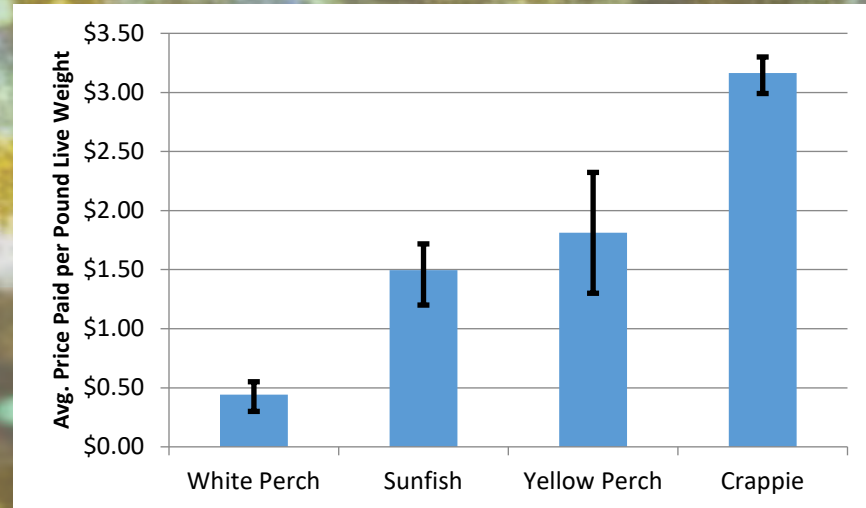


Context for Commercial Crappie Angling

Average Pounds Bought by Species 2005-2014



Average Price per Pound by Species 2005-2014



- Although the weight of crappie purchased by Vermont buyers is 4th behind yellow perch, sunfish and white perch, the price paid to anglers per pound “live weight” is considerably higher than the next most valuable species

Proposal # 2: panfish limits (§122)

- Inland waters regulations:

Species	Open Seasons for Harvest	Type of Waterbody	Minimum Length	Daily Limit	Legal Methods
Panfish, defined as: Bluegill, Bullhead, Crappie, Pumpkinseed, Rock Bass, White Perch, Yellow Perch	All year	All	Crappie = 8" Other species = none	50 fish total, no more than 25 of each: Bluegill, Bullhead, Crappie, Pumpkinseed, Rock Bass, White Perch, or Yellow Perch	Open-water fishing, ice fishing

Why the changes to panfish bag limits in inland waters?

- Petitioners requested limits on panfish
- 2022 sunfish survey suggests that the proposed limit will be accepted by most anglers
- Matches New Hampshire regulations
- Will discourage large scale commercial angling activity on inland waters

Why not include Champlain in the changes to panfish bag limits?

- The proposed limits will have major effects on the commercial angling business model.
 - The limits could end commercial angling if applied to Champlain.
- Social concerns of commercial angling are less problematic on Lake Champlain
 - More room for anglers
 - Large panfish populations

Panfish special regulations (§122)

- Berlin Pond (Berlin) and Stiles Pond (Waterford):

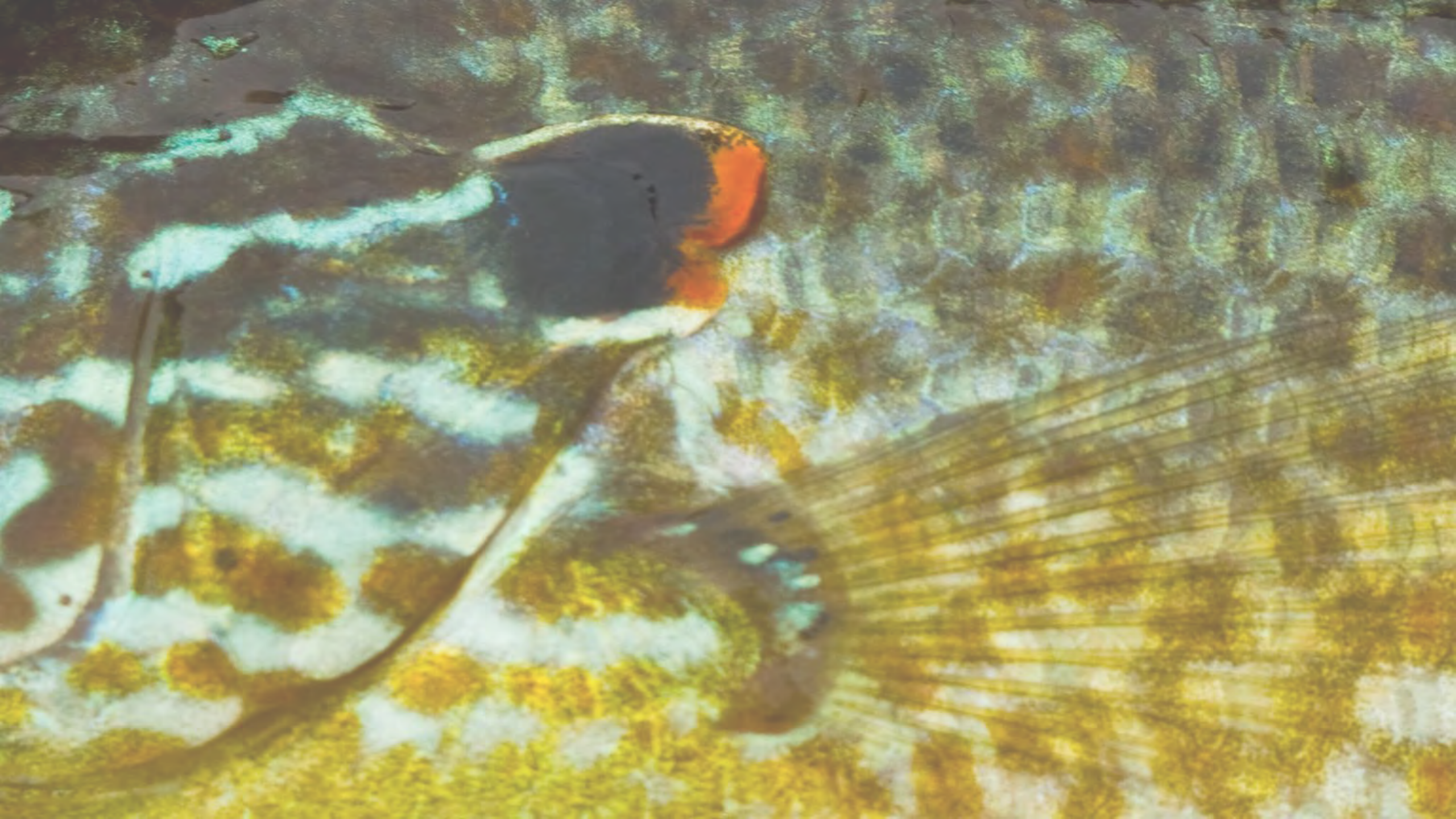
Species	Open Seasons for Harvest	Type of Waterbody	Minimum Length	Daily Limit	Legal Methods
Panfish, defined as: Bluegill, Bullhead, Crappie, Pumpkinseed, Rock Bass, White Perch, Yellow Perch	All year	All	Crappie = 8" Other species = none	50 fish total, no more than 10 Yellow Perch and no more than 25 of each: Bluegill, Bullhead, Crappie, Pumpkinseed, Rock Bass, White Perch	Open-water fishing, ice fishing

More proposed changes in §123

- 4.3 No angler may sell fish in the state of Vermont without first obtaining a valid Vermont fishing license.
- 5.7 Failure to comply with these rules, including submission of complete quarterly reports or falsifying reports, may result in the revocation of a Fish Buyer Permit.

Questions?





Goals for general regulations

- Assign value to a species
- Set an accomplishment goal for anglers (target for satisfaction)
- Spread harvest across anglers
- Protect from overharvest (loss of large individuals from a population)



Why are white perch included in the panfish bag limit?

- Why do we have bag limits on rainbow trout, brown trout, bass, northern pike, etc.?
- New Hampshire includes white perch in their panfish limit.
- If white perch were the last remaining panfish species with no limit, it could incentivize their spread for commercial angling purposes.

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TITLE 10 Conservation and Development APPENDIX CHAPTER 2. FISH Subchapter 2. Seasons, Waters, and Limits

§ 122. Fish Management Regulation.

1.0 Authority

- (a) 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 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.
- (b) In accordance with 10 V.S.A. §4082, this rule is designed to maintain the best health, population and utilization levels of Vermont's fisheries.
- (c) In accordance with 10 V.S.A. §4083, this rule establishes open seasons; establishes daily, season, possession limits and size limits; prescribes the manner and means of taking fish; and prescribes the manner of transportation and exportation of fish.

2.0 Purpose

It is the policy of the state 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 safeguarding of this valuable resource for the people of the state requires a constant and continual vigilance.

3.0 Open-Water Fishing, legal methods of taking fish

3.1 Definitions

- (a) Department – Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- (b) Commissioner –Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife Commissioner.
- (c) Open-water fishing –Fishing by means of hook and line in hand or attached to a rod or other device in open water. Fishing by casting or trolling baited hooks, artificial flies or lures is considered open-water fishing.
- (d) Baited Hook – A single shank hook with 1, 2 or 3 points which may be baited with natural or artificial bait or both.
- (e) Lure – A man-made device designed to catch only 1 fish at a time, to include a spoon, plug, spinner, bait harness, tandem hook streamer or lead head jig.

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- (f) Fly – A single pointed hook dressed with feathers, hair, thread, tinsel, or any similar material wound on or about the hook to which no hooks, spinners, spoons, or similar devices have been added.
 - (g) Handheld Spear – A manually powered spear used from above the water’s surface.
 - (h) Speargun – A pneumatic or rubber band powered device, with a line not to exceed 20 feet attached to a spear, used from below the water’s surface.
 - (i) Cull Fish – Carp, tench, rudd, shad (alewife and gizzard shad), and goldfish. Additional invasive/exotic fish species may be designated by the Commissioner as “cull fish.”
 - (j) Immediate Control – Such constant control as would enable the angler to respond forthwith to a fish taking their bait, lure or fly promptly and without any delay.
 - (k) Snagging – Snagging shall mean the intentional hooking of a fish in a place other than the inside of the fish's mouth. No person shall pull, jerk or otherwise purposefully and/or repeatedly manipulate a hook, or hooks and line to snag or hook a fish in any method other than to entice a fish into taking, by mouth, a hook, lure or fly. Repeated and/or exaggerated jerking or pulling of the fishing line and/or hooks in any attempt to snag fish, whether it results in physically snagging a fish or not, shall be prima facie evidence that snagging has taken place. This shall not apply to the use of a gaff to land a fish that has been legally hooked.
- 3.2 Whether still fishing, casting, or trolling in Vermont waters, a person may take fish only by using not more than two lines over which he or she has immediate control and to each of which lines is attached not more than two baited hooks, or more than three artificial flies, or more than two lures with or without bait.
- 3.3 A person shall not take any fish pursuant to subsection (3.2) unless it is hooked in the mouth. Any fish taken under subsection (3.2) that is not hooked in the mouth shall be immediately released pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 4602. A fish hooked in any part of the body other than in the mouth shall be considered to be foul hooked, and shall be prima facie evidence of foul hooking.
- 3.4 Taking or attempting to take fish by snagging is prohibited in all Vermont Waters.
- 3.5 Catch and Release: For species with defined harvest seasons, targeted C&R angling with immediate release can occur outside of harvest season, using artificial lures and flies.

4.0 Ice Fishing

- 4.1 Definitions - The definitions of section 3 are applicable to this section.
- (a) Ice Fishing – Ice fishing is defined as fishing by means of hook and line in hand or attached to a rod, tip-up, jack or bob, where the angler is

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- fishing through a hole in the ice, from the ice or on an object supported by the ice. Fishing by casting or trolling baited hooks, artificial flies or lures shall not be considered ice fishing.
- 4.2 Fish may be taken through the ice with not more than eight lines, except on Lake Champlain where no more than fifteen lines may be operated. Each line shall not have more than two baited hooks, or more than three artificial flies, or more than two lures with or without bait.
 - 4.3 A person ice fishing shall have at all times, immediate control over all lines they operate. A person ice fishing shall be able to visually observe lines they operate. Any line that indicates a fish shall be tended within 30 minutes.
 - 4.4 A person shall not take any fish pursuant to subsection (4.2) unless it is hooked in the mouth. Any fish taken under subsection (4.2) that is not hooked in the mouth shall be immediately released pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 4602. A fish hooked in any part of the body other than in the mouth shall be considered to be foul hooked, and shall be prima facie evidence of foul hooking.
 - 4.5 Taking or attempting to take fish by snagging is prohibited in all Vermont Waters.
 - 4.6 Catch and Release (C&R): For species with defined harvest seasons, targeted C&R angling with immediate release can occur outside of harvest season, using artificial lures and flies.

5.0 Lake Champlain Boundaries

Lake Champlain proper shall be considered to include the setback at the same level and the major tributaries to the lake to the following boundaries:

Dead Creek to Panton Road bridge in Panton;
East Creek to the falls in Orwell (downstream of Mount Independence Road);
Lamoille River to the top of first dam (Peterson Dam) in Milton;
LaPlatte River to the falls in Shelburne (under Falls Road bridge);
Lewis Creek to falls in North Ferrisburgh (just upstream of Old Hollow Road);
Little Otter Creek to falls in Ferrisburgh Center (downstream of Little Chicago Road);
Malletts Creek to the first falls upstream of Roosevelt Highway (US 2 and US 7) in Colchester;
Mill River in Georgia to the falls in Georgia (just upstream of Georgia Shore Road bridge);
Missisquoi River to the top of Swanton Dam in the Village of Swanton;
Mud Creek to the dam in Alburg (just upstream of Route 78 bridge);
Otter Creek to the top of the dam in the city of Vergennes;
Poultney River to Central Vermont Power Dam at Carver Falls in West Haven.

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Rock River to first Canadian border crossing;
Winooski River to the Winooski One hydropower dam west of Main Street
(US 7) in Winooski and Burlington;

6.0 Seasonally Closed Waters

- 6.1 Lakes and Ponds – The following lakes and ponds or portions thereof are hereby designated seasonally closed waters and shall be closed to all fishing except between Second Saturday in April through October 31

Bald Hill Pond, Westmore
Beaver Pond, Holland
Beck Pond, Newark
Beebe Pond, Sunderland
Big Mud Pond, Mt. Tabor
Bourn Pond, Sunderland
Branch Pond, Sunderland
Cary Pond, Walden
Cow Mountain Pond, Granby
Duck Pond, Sutton
Forest Lake, Averill
Griffith Lake, Mt. Tabor
Holland Pond, Holland
Jobs Pond, Westmore
Lake Pleiad, Hancock
Levi Pond, Groton
Lewis Pond, Lewis
Little Rock Pond, Wallingford
Long Pond, Westmore
Marl Pond, Sutton
Martins Pond, Peacham
Mud Pond, Hyde Park
North Pond, Chittenden
Notch Pond, Ferdinand
Noyes (Seyon) Pond, Groton
Perch Pond (Zack Woods Pond), Hyde Park
Pigeon Pond, Groton
Red Mill Pond, Woodford
Silver Lake, Leicester
South America Pond, Ferdinand
South Pond, Marlboro
Spring Lake, Shrewsbury
Stannard Pond, Stannard
Sterling Pond, Cambridge
Stoughton Pond, Weathersfield
Stratton Pond, Stratton

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Unknown Pond, Averys Gore
Unknown Pond, Ferdinand
Vail Pond, Sutton
Vernon Hatchery Pond, Vernon
West Mountain Pond, Maidstone
Wheeler Pond, Barton and Sutton
Zack Woods (Perch Pond), Hyde Park

- 6.2 Rivers and Streams - All rivers and streams are hereby designated seasonally closed waters except as listed in all the sections below. For species with defined harvest seasons, targeted C&R angling with immediate release can occur outside of harvest season, using artificial lures and flies.

7.0 Fish – Open Seasons, Size Restrictions and Daily Bag Limits.

7.1 Fish of the species named or described in the tables set forth below may be taken:

- (a) In the waters specified in column 1, by the method specified in column 2, during the open season specified in column 3.
- (b) Provided they meet any size restrictions specified in column 4., and only in numbers listed under daily bag limits specified in column 5., under no circumstances may a person take in one day, more than the daily bag or weight limit from a listed body of water. No person may take in aggregate more than the daily State-wide aggregate limit for any species listed.
- (c) Businesses may buy lawfully taken fish, with the approval of Commissioner, pursuant to the Commercial angling rules set forth in 10 V.S.A. App 123.

- 7.2 Possession limits are equal to twice the daily bag limits. Fish species with limit restrictions may not be possessed in excess of the possession limits at any time.

- (a) No person shall have live fish in their possession that are transported in a manner which attempts to keep them alive when leaving waters of the state (10 V.S.A. §1251(13)), except as follows:
 - (1) a person may transport approved baitfish species pursuant to the baitfish rules set forth in 10 V.S.A App. §141,
 - (2) the person has been issued a scientific collection permit by the Commissioner which specifically approves of the activity,
 - (3) the person has been issued a fish transportation permit by the Commissioner which specifically approves of the activity,

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- (4) the person has been issued a fish breeders permit or fish importation permit by the Commissioner which specifically approves of the activity.
- 7.3 The daily bag limit for a fish species on a water body with a closed season for that fish species is zero during the closed season.
- 7.4 "General waters" restrictions are the provisions applicable to all waters of the state, except the waters specifically named or described.
- 7.5 Unless otherwise specifically provided, fish not listed in this regulation may be taken at any time and without size or catch limit, in waters not listed as seasonally closed waters in Section 7 6 of these regulations.
- 7.6 Open Seasons, Size Restrictions and Daily Bag Limits Tables
- (a) STATEWIDE AGGREGATE DAILY BAG LIMITS (*Maximum number of a fish species that may be taken in one day*)

FISH SPECIES	DAILY AGGREGATE LIMITS
Brook and Brown and Rainbow Trout - Streams/Rivers	Maximum Combination of 6 -8 fish
Brook and Brown and Rainbow Trout – lakes and ponds	Maximum Combination of 6 fish
Lake Trout	2 fish, (3 if taken from Lake Champlain)
Salmon	2 fish
Largemouth and Smallmouth Bass	Maximum combination of 5 fish
Northern Pike	5 fish
Chain Pickerel	10 fish
Muskellunge	0 fish
Walleye	3 fish
Black and White Crappie	25 fish
American Shad	0 fish
Yellow Perch	50 fish
Yellow Perch exception	Lake Champlain – no daily limit
Sauger	0 fish
Sturgeon	0 fish
<u>Panfish, defined as: Bluegill, Bullhead, Black and White Crappie, Pumpkinseed, Rock Bass, White Perch, Yellow Perch</u>	<u>50 fish total, no more than 25 of each: Bluegill, Bullhead, Crappie, Pumpkinseed, Rock Bass, White Perch, Yellow Perch</u>
<u>Exception for Bluegill, Bullhead, Pumpkinseed, Rock Bass, White Perch, Yellow Perch</u>	<u>Lake Champlain – no daily limit</u>

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(b) BROOK, BROWN AND RAINBOW TROUT

1. Waters	2. Methods	3. Season	4. Size Restrictions	5. Daily Bag Limit
Lakes and Ponds	Open-water and ice fishing	Second Saturday in April through October 31 January 1 through March 15	No restriction	6 trout
Lake Champlain	Open-water and ice fishing	No closed season	Minimum length of 12 inches	3 trout
Rivers and Streams	Open-water fishing	Second Saturday in April through October 31	No restriction	8 trout
Sherman Reservoir, Whitingham	Open-water fishing	Second Saturday in April through October 31	No restriction	6 trout

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(c) TROPHY TROUT STREAMS

1. Waters	2. Methods	3. Season	4. Size Restrictions	5. Daily Bag Limit
Listed Below:	Open-water fishing	Second Saturday in April through October 31	No restriction	2 trout in aggregate
<p>Black River along Rt. 131 in Weathersfield and Cavendish, - from Downers covered bridge upstream (approximately 4 miles) to the next bridge across the river, the Howard Hill Bridge.</p> <p><u>Deerfield River in Searsburg and Somerset – from the downstream edge of the East Branch Trailhead bridge upstream 4 miles to the downstream edge of the bridge on Somerset Rd. near junction with Forest Rd. 71.</u></p> <p>East Creek in Rutland City -- From the confluence with Otter Creek upstream (approximately 2.7 miles) to the top of the Patch Dam in Rutland City</p> <p>Lamoille River – From the downstream edge of the bridge on Route 104 in the Village of Fairfax upstream (approximately 1.6 miles) to the top of the Fairfax Falls Dam in Fairfax.</p> <p>Little River – From the confluence with Winooski River in Waterbury upstream to the top of the Waterbury Reservoir Dam in Waterbury.</p> <p>Missisquoi River in Enosburg and Sheldon -- From the downstream edge of Kane Road (TH-3) bridge upstream (approximately 5.7 miles) to the top of the Enosburg Falls Dam in Enosburg Falls.</p> <p>Otter Creek in Danby and Mt. Tabor - From the Vermont Railway Bridge north of the fishing access upstream (approximately 2 miles) to the Danby- Mt. Tabor Forest Rd. Bridge (Forest Road # 10).</p> <p>Passumpsic River in the Village of St. Johnsbury – From the top of the Gage Dam in St., Johnsbury upstream (approximately 2.4 miles) to the top of the Arnold Falls Dam.</p> <p>Moose River-- From the confluence with the Passumpsic River upstream (approximately 350 feet) to the downstream edge of the Concord Avenue bridge in the Village of St. Johnsbury</p> <p>Walloomsac River in Shaftsbury and Bennington – From the Vermont/New York border in Shaftsbury upstream to the top of the former Vermont Tissue Plant Dam (downstream of Murphy Road) in Bennington.</p> <p>Winooski River in Duxbury and Waterbury, - From the top of the Bolton Dam in Duxbury and Waterbury upstream to the Route 2 Bridge (east side of Waterbury Village).</p>				

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(d) RAINBOW TROUT (Including STEELHEAD) / BROWN TROUT

1. WATERS	2. Methods	3. Season	4. Size Restrictions	5. Daily Bag Limit
Listed Below:	Open-water fishing	Second Saturday in April through October 31	Minimum length of 10 inches	2 trout
<p>Rivers and Streams: Orleans County: Barton River - From Lake Memphremagog upstream to the downstream side of the US Route 5 bridge southernmost and closest to the Village of Barton in Barton. Black River - From Lake Memphremagog upstream to the downstream side of the VT Route 14 / 58 bridge in Irasburg. Brownington Branch of the Willoughby River - From its confluence at the Willoughby River extending upstream to the second road crossing on Brownington Chilafox Road (TH #15). Crossing is located approximately 2.4 miles from Brownington Center on Chilafox Road (TH #15). Johns River - From the downstream edge of the first bridge (culvert) upstream of Lake Memphremagog on North Derby Road (TH #6) upstream to U.S. 5, in Derby. Willoughby River - The entire Willoughby River, from confluence with Barton River in Barton upstream to the Willoughby Lake outlet in Westmore.</p>				

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(e) BROOK, BROWN, RAINBOW, LAKE TROUT AND SALMON – 2 FISH AGGREGATE LIMITS

1. Waters	2. Methods	3. Season	4. Size Restrictions	5. Daily Bag Limit
Listed below:	Open-water and Ice fishing	Second Saturday in April through October 31 January 1 through March 15	See regulations for specific bodies of water	Two fish in aggregate
Big Averill Lake, Norton and Averill Caspian Lake, Greensboro Crystal Lake, Barton East Long Pond, Woodbury Echo Lake, Charleston Elligo Lake, Craftsbury and Greensboro Forest Lake (Nelson Pond), Calais and Woodbury Harveys Lake, Barnet Jobs Pond, Westmore (Seasonally Closed) Lake Dunmore, Salisbury Lake Memphremagog (including South Bay), Coventry, Derby, Newport City and Newport; Little Averill Lake, Averill Maidstone Lake, Maidstone Martins Pond, Peacham (Seasonally Closed) Nelson Pond (Forest Lake), Calais and Woodbury Nichols Pond, Woodbury Seymour Lake, Morgan Shadow Lake, Glover Spring Lake, Shrewsbury Sunset Lake, Benson Willoughby Lake, Westmore				

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(f) LAKE TROUT AND SALMON

1. Waters	2. Methods	3. Season	4. Size Restrictions	5. Daily Bag Limit
General Waters <i>(except as listed below)</i>	Open-water and ice fishing	Second Saturday in April through October 31 January 1 through March 15	Salmon- Minimum length of 17 inches Lake Trout- Minimum length of 18 inches	2 Lake Trout or 2 Salmon or 1 of each
Lake Champlain	Open-water and ice fishing	No closed season	Lake Trout and Salmon – Minimum length of 15 inches	3 Lake Trout and 2 Salmon
Clyde Pond, Derby Little Salem Lake, Derby Salem Lake, Derby Clyde River from Lake Memphremagog upstream to Citizen's Charleston Dam (Lubber Lake), West Charleston	Open-water fishing	Second Saturday in April through August 31	Lake Trout- Minimum length of 18 inches Salmon- Minimum length of 17 inches	2 Lake Trout or 2 Salmon or 1 of each
Lake Memphremagog (including South Bay)	Open-water and ice fishing	Second Saturday in April through October 31 January 1 through March 15	Lake Trout- Minimum length of 18 ²⁴ inches Salmon- Minimum length of 17 inches	2 ¹ Lake Trout or 2 Salmon or 1 of each
Listed Below:	Open-water fishing	Second Saturday in	Lake Trout- Minimum	2 Lake Trout or 2 Salmon or 1 of each

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		April through October 31	length of 18 inches Salmon- Minimum length of 17 inches	
<p>Orleans County:</p> <p>Barton River - From Lake Memphremagog upstream to the downstream side of the US Route 5 bridge southernmost and closest to the Village of Barton in Barton.</p> <p>Black River - From Lake Memphremagog upstream to the downstream side of the VT Route 14 / 58 bridge in Irasburg.</p> <p>Johns River - From the downstream edge of the first bridge (culvert) upstream of Lake Memphremagog on North Derby Road (TH #6) upstream to U.S. 5, in Derby.</p> <p>Willoughby River - The entire Willoughby River, from confluence with Barton River in Barton upstream to the Willoughby Lake outlet in Westmore.</p>				

(g) SPECIAL REGULATION TROUT STREAMS

1. Waters	2. Method	3. Season	4. Size Restrictions	5. Daily Bag Limit
<p>White River From the confluence with Lilliesville Brook in Stockbridge downstream 3.3 miles to 220 ft. downstream of the confluence with Cleveland Brook in Bethel.</p>	Open-water fishing, with artificial lures and flies only.	Second Saturday in April through October 31.	Minimum length of 18 inches	1 trout
<p>Winooski River Tributaries – Listed Below</p>	Open-water fishing	June 1 through October 31	10 to 16 inches protected slot: <i>(all fish 10 to 16 inches must be released)</i>	2 trout, only 1 greater than 16 inches
<p>Winooski River Tributaries:</p> <p>Joiner Brook, Bolton - From the confluence of the Winooski River upstream approximately 1900 feet to the first falls.</p> <p>Pinneo Brook, Bolton – From the confluence of the Winooski River upstream approximately 100 feet to the railroad crossing.</p> <p>Preston Brook, Bolton - From the confluence of the Winooski River upstream approximately 2600 feet to</p>				

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<p>the first falls. Ridley Brook, Duxbury – From the confluence of the Winooski River upstream approximately 1700 feet to the first falls.</p>				
Listed Below:	Open-water fishing	Second Saturday in April through October 31	10 to 16 inches protected slot: <i>(all fish 10 to 16 inches must be released)</i>	2 trout, only 1 greater than 16 inches
<p>New Haven River – From Munger Street Bridge in New Haven upstream (approximately 4.1 miles) to the South Street bridge in Bristol. Mettawee River – From the downstream edge of the Route 153 bridge in Pawlet upstream (approximately 16 miles) to the downstream edge of first bridge on Dorset Hollow Road and including tributary: Flower Brook upstream (approximately 1000ft) to the downstream edge of the Route 30 bridge in Pawlet. Winooski River – From Preston Brook mouth upstream (approximately 4.4 miles) to the Ridley Brook mouth.</p>				
Listed below:	Open-water fishing	Second Saturday in April through September 30	No size restriction.	8 trout Zero, all trout must be immediately released.
	Open-water fishing	October 1 through October 31	All trout must be immediately released.	
<p>Batten Kill (East Branch) – In towns of Manchester and Dorset from the downstream side of Depot Street Bridge (Route 11/30) in Manchester upstream (approximately 5.0 miles) to the downstream side of the US Route 7 Bridge south of East Dorset. Green River – In the towns of Arlington and Sandgate from its confluence with Batten Kill upstream (approximately 8.5 miles) to the confluence with Moffitt Hollow Brook in Beartown. Roaring Branch – In the towns of Arlington and Sunderland from its confluence with the Batten Kill upstream (approximately 3.0 miles) to the downstream side of the Bridge #14 on Sunderland TH# 3 in East Kansas. Warm Brook – In the town of Arlington from its Confluence with the Roaring Branch upstream (approximately 0.8 miles) to the base of the so-called Hale Company Dam in East Arlington.</p>				

(h) ANADROMOUS ATLANTIC SALMON

1. Waters	2. Method	3. Season	4. Size Restrictions	5. Daily Bag Limit
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Connecticut River and tributaries	No person shall take or attempt to take an anadromous Atlantic salmon, any salmon unintentionally taken shall be immediately released in accordance with section 4602	No open season	All fish must be immediately released	Zero - All Anadromous Atlantic salmon must be immediately released
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(i) AMERICAN SHAD

1. Waters	2. Methods	3. Season	4. Size Restrictions	5. Daily Bag limits
Connecticut River, including Vermont river tributaries	Open-water fishing	No closed season	All shad must be released	Zero – All shad must be immediately released.

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(j) BOWFIN, REDHORSE SUCKER (MULLET), LONGNOSE GAR.

1. Waters	2. Methods	3. Season	4. Size Restrictions	5. Daily Bag limits
General Waters <i>and as listed below)</i>	Open-water and ice fishing	No closed season	No restriction	No more than 5 fish of any one species
General Waters <i>(Except seasonally closed waters and as listed below)</i>	Speargun, bow and crossbow all with line attached to arrow	No Closed Season	No restriction	No more than 5 fish of any one species
Lake Champlain, not to include tributaries	Open-water and ice fishing, speargun, bow and crossbow all with line attached to arrow	No closed season	No restriction	No more than 5 fish of any one species
Lake Champlain, not to include tributaries	Shooting and Handheld Spear	March 25 through May 25, Title 10 (4606e)	No restriction	No more than 5 fish of any one species

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(k) SUCKER (LONGNOSE AND WHITE), and CULL FISH

1. Waters	2. Methods	3. Season	4. Size Restrictions	5. Daily Bag limits
General Waters <i>(and as listed below)</i>	Open-water and ice fishing	No closed season	No restriction	No Limit
General Waters <i>(Except seasonally closed waters and as listed below)</i>	Speargun, and bow and crossbow all with line attached to arrow	No Closed Season	No restriction	No Limit
Lake Champlain, not to include tributaries	Open-water and ice fishing, speargun, and bow and crossbow all with line attached to arrow	No closed season	No restriction	No Limit
Lake Champlain, not to include tributaries	Shooting and Handheld Spear	March 25 through May 25, Title 10 (4606e)	No restriction	No Limit

(l) PANFISH, defined as Bluegill, Bullhead, Black and White Crappie, Pumpkinseed, Rock Bass, White Perch, Yellow Perch

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<u>1. Waters</u>	<u>2. Methods</u>	<u>3. Season</u>	<u>4. Size Restrictions</u>	<u>5. Daily Bag Limit</u>
<u>General Waters</u> <u><i>(except as listed below)</i></u>	<u>Open-water and ice fishing</u>	<u>No closed season</u>	<u>Minimum length of 8" for Black and White Crappie;</u> <u>No restriction for other species</u>	<u>50 fish total, no more than 25 of each:</u> <u>Bluegill,</u> <u>Bullhead, Crappie,</u> <u>Pumpkinseed, Rock Bass, White Perch, or Yellow Perch</u>
<u>Lake Champlain</u>	<u>Open-water and ice fishing</u>	<u>No closed season</u>	<u>Minimum length of 8" for Black and White Crappie;</u> <u>No restriction</u>	<u>25 Black and White Crappie Combined;</u> <u>No limit for other species</u>

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			for other species	
<u>Lake Champlain, not to include tributaries</u>	<u>Bullhead only: Shooting and handheld Spear</u>	<u>March 25 through May 25, Title 10 (4606e)</u>	<u>Bullhead only: No restriction</u>	<u>Bullhead only: 25</u>
<u>Businesses may buy lawfully taken fish, with the approval of the Commissioner, pursuant to the Commercial angling rule set forth in 10 V.S.A. APP § 123.</u>				

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(l) ~~BULLHEAD~~

1. Waters	2. Methods	3. Season	4. Size Restrictions	5. Daily Bag limits
General Waters <i>(and as listed below)</i>	Open-water and ice fishing	No closed season	No restriction	No Limit
Lake Champlain, not to include tributaries	Open-water and ice fishing	No closed season	No restriction	No Limit
Lake Champlain, not to include tributaries	Shooting and handheld Spear	March 25 through May 25, Title 10 (4606e)	No restriction	No Limit

(m) NORTHERN PIKE

1. Waters	2. Methods	3. Season	4. Size Restrictions	5. Daily Bag limits
General Waters <i>(except as listed below)</i>	Open-water and ice fishing	No closed season	Minimum length of 20 inches	5 Fish
Lake Champlain	Open-water and ice fishing,	No closed season	Minimum length of 20 inches	5 Fish
	Shooting and handheld spearing	March 25 through May 25, 10 VSA 4606)	Minimum length of 20 inches	5 Fish

(n) CHAIN AND REDFIN PICKEREL

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1. Waters	2. Methods	3. Season	4. Size Restrictions	5. Daily Bag limits
General Waters <i>(except as listed below)</i>	Open-water and ice fishing	No closed season	No restriction	No limit
Lake Champlain	Open-water and ice fishing	No closed season	No restriction	10 fish
	Shooting and handheld spearing	March 25 through May 25	No restriction	10 fish

(o) MUSKELLUNGE

1. Waters	2. Methods	3. Season	4. Size Restrictions	5. Daily Bag limits
General Waters <i>(except as listed below)</i>	Open-water and ice fishing; Catch and release with artificial lures and flies only	No closed season	All muskellunge must be released	Zero - All muskellunge must be immediately released
Lake Champlain	Open-water and ice fishing; Catch and release with artificial lures and flies only	No closed season	All muskellunge must be released	Zero - All muskellunge must be immediately released
	Shooting and handheld spearing	March 25 through May 25, 10 VSA 4606)		Zero Fish

(p) SMELT

1. Waters	2. Methods	3. Season	4. Size Restrictions	5. Daily Bag Limit
All waters	Open-water and ice fishing	No closed season	No restriction	No limit

~~(q) — BLACK AND WHITE CRAPPIE~~

1. Waters	2. Methods	3. Season	4. Size Restrictions	5. Daily Bag limits
All waters	Open water and ice fishing	No closed season	Minimum length of 8 inches	25 fish, Combined

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~~(†)~~ — ~~YELLOW PERCH~~

1. Waters	2. Methods	3. Season	4. Size Restrictions	5. Daily Bag Limit
General Waters (except as listed below)	Open water and ice fishing	No closed season	No restriction	50 fish,
Lake Champlain	Open water and ice fishing	No closed season	No restriction	No Limit
Businesses may buy lawfully taken fish, with the approval of the Commissioner, pursuant to the Commercial angling rule set forth in 10 V.S.A. APP § 123.				

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(s)(g) LARGEMOUTH AND SMALLMOUTH BASS

1. Waters	2. Methods	3. Season	4. Size Restrictions	5. Daily Bag limits
General Waters <i>(except as listed below)</i>	Open-water and ice fishing	Second Saturday in June through March 15.	Minimum length of 10 inches	5 fish
Lake Champlain	Open-water fishing	Second Saturday in June through Nov. 30.	Minimum length of 12 inches	5 fish
Lakes, Ponds and reservoirs (seasonally closed)	Open-water fishing	Second Saturday in June through October 31.	Minimum length of 10 inches	5 fish
Lakes, Ponds and reservoirs (seasonally closed)	Open-water fishing: Catch and release with artificial lures and flies only	Second Saturday in April through the Friday before the Second Saturday in June, both dates inclusive.	All bass must be released	Zero - All bass must be immediately released
Lake Morey, Fairlee	Open-water and ice fishing	Second Saturday in June through March 15	Minimum length of 14 inches	5 Fish
Listed below:	Open-water fishing	Second Saturday in June through Nov. 30.	Minimum length of 10 inches	5 fish
	Catch and release with artificial lures and flies only	Dec. 1 through the Friday before the second Saturday in June, both dates inclusive	All bass must be released	Zero – All bass must be immediately released.
Austin Pond, Hubberton Black Pond, Hubberton Blueberry Lake (Warren Lake), Warren Breese Pond, Hubberton Bullhead Pond, Manchester Gale Meadows, Londonderry				

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Half Moon Pond, Hubberton
Lily Pond, Vernon
Lowell Lake, Londonderry
Mill Pond, Windsor
Raponda Lake, Wilmington
Retreat Meadows, Brattleboro
Roach Pond, Hubberton
Runnemed Lake, Windsor
Sadawga, Whitingham
Weatherhead Hollow, Guilford

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(+) (r) WALLEYE

1. Waters	2. Methods	3. Season	4. Size Restrictions	5. Daily Bag limits
General Waters and Lake Champlain <i>(except as listed below)</i>	Open-water and ice fishing	First Saturday in May through March 15.	Minimum length of 18 inches	3 Fish
Lake Carmi, Franklin	Open-water and ice fishing	First Saturday in May through March 15	Minimum length of 15 inches Protected lengths- 17 to 19 inches (all fish between 17 & 19 inches must be released)	5 fish, provided only 1 is over 19 inches
Chittenden Reservoir, Chittenden including all tributaries upstream to the first barrier impassable to upstream fish movement	Open-water and ice fishing	June 1 through March 15	Minimum length of 22 inches	2 fish

(+) (s) SAUGER

1. Waters	2. Methods	3. Season	4. Size Restrictions	5. Daily Bag limits
General Waters and Lake Champlain	Open-water and ice fishing	No open season	Any fish taken must be immediately released	Zero – All Sauger taken must be immediately released

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7.7 Spawning grounds for game fish generally

- (a) The below listed waters are declared spawning grounds for game fish and are hereby closed to the taking of fish from ~~second Saturday in April~~ **March 16** through May 31 annually.

Chittenden County

Joiner Brook, Bolton - From the confluence of the Winooski River upstream approximately 1900 feet to the first falls.

Pinneo Brook, Bolton - From the confluence of the Winooski River upstream approximately 100 feet to the railroad crossing.

Preston Brook, Bolton - From the confluence of the Winooski River upstream approximately 2600 feet to the first falls.

Lamoille River, Milton - From the downstream edge of the bridge on Bear Trap Road in Milton (referred to as the West Milton Bridge upstream to the top of first dam (Peterson Dam) in Milton.

Winooski River, Winooski and Burlington - From the Winooski One Hydro dam west of Main Street (US 7) in Winooski and Burlington and extending downstream to the downstream side of the first railroad bridge.

Franklin County

Missisquoi River, Swanton - From the top of the Swanton dam in the Village of Swanton downstream approximately 850 feet to the water treatment plant on the west side of the river, and downstream approximately 850 feet to the upstream end of the cement breakwater on the east side of the river. (1988, Fish and Wildlife Board Reg. No. 975, eff. April 7, 1988.)

Orleans County

Black River, Coventry - From 600 feet below the falls at Old Harman Mill in Coventry upstream to the top of falls at Old Harman Mill in Coventry.

Blodgett/Tarbox Brook - from the confluence with Willoughby River upstream 1,300' to bridge on Tarbox Hill Road.

Willoughby River, Orleans - From the downstream edge of bridge on Tarbox Hill Road in Orleans Village upstream to the top of the natural falls upstream of the bridge on Tarbox Hill Road in Orleans Village.

Dorin, Wells, Myers, Schoolhouse and Mill Brooks, all in Westmore - From mouth of brooks at Lake Willoughby upstream approximately 3/4 mile in Dorin Brook, all of Wells Brook, 1/2 mile in Myers Brook, 1/4 mile in the Schoolhouse Brook and, and 1/4 mile in Mill Brook and tributaries, all in Westmore. For identification purpose these brooks are arranged in order from

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north to south, and flow through Vermont Agency of Transportation structures on Route 5A number 10, 9, 8, 7 and 6, respectively.

Porter Brook, Greensboro – From Caspian Lake upstream to its headwaters. (1987, Fish and Wildlife Commissioner's Reg. No. 970, eff. April 1, 1987.)

Washington County

Chase Brook, Berlin – From its confluence with the Dog River upstream approximately ½ mile to the top of the natural falls in Berlin.

Ridley Brook, Duxbury – From the confluence of the Winooski River upstream approximately 1700 feet to the first falls.

Windsor County

Lilliesville Brook, Stockbridge - From its confluence with the White River upstream to the 2nd bridge on the Lilliesville Brook Road.

Locust Creek, Bethel - From its confluence with the White River upstream to the 2nd bridge on Rt. 12.

~~(b) The below named waters are closed from March 16 through May 31.~~

~~Chittenden County~~

~~Lamoille River, Milton – From the downstream edge of the bridge on Bear Trap Road in Milton (referred to as the West Milton Bridge) upstream to the top of first dam (Peterson Dam) in Milton.~~

~~Winooski River, Winooski and Burlington – From the Winooski One Hydro dam west of Main Street (US 7) in Winooski and Burlington and extending downstream to the downstream side of the first railroad bridge.~~

~~Franklin County~~

~~Missisquoi River, Swanton – From the top of the Swanton dam in the Village of Swanton downstream approximately 850 feet to the water treatment plant on the west side of the river, and downstream approximately 850 feet to the upstream end of the cement breakwater on the east side of the river. (1988, Fish and Wildlife Board Reg. No. 975, eff. April 7, 1988.)~~

~~(e)(b)~~ The below named waters are closed from March 16 to the Friday before the 1st Saturday in May, both dates inclusive:

Franklin County

Missisquoi River, Swanton - From the top of the Swanton Dam in the Village of Swanton extending downstream 5,120 feet to the

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Northwest corner (downstream) of the Riverside Cemetery and across the river to a pole on the Northeast bank.

- (d) The below named waters are closed to fishing year-round:

Orleans County

Clyde River, Newport City - From 260 feet below the top of the abandoned Mill Dam immediately upstream of the Number 1, 2, 3 hydroelectric powerhouse in Newport City, upstream to the top of the abandoned Mill Dam immediately upstream of the Number 1, 2, 3 hydroelectric powerhouse in Newport City.

- (e) The below named water is only open to fishing using artificial flies and lures from September 1 to October 31. All salmon caught must be released. Lake Trout may be harvest during this period. The daily limit is 2 lake trout with a minimum length of 18 inches

Clyde River - From Lake Memphremagog upstream to Charleston Dam (Lubber Lake), West Charleston

- (f) The below named water is catch and release for trout from Second Saturday in April to October 31. All trout must be immediately released.

Batten Kill River - From the New York State line upstream (approximately 20.6 miles) to downstream side of Depot Street Bridge (Route 11/30) in Manchester

- (g) The below named water is catch and release for trout with artificial lures and flies only, anglers less than 15 years old may use live bait from Second Saturday in April to October 31. All trout must be immediately released.

Dog River - From the downstream edge of the Junction Road Bridge in Berlin/Montpelier upstream to the top of the Northfield Falls Dam in Northfield.

- (h) The below named waters are closed to fishing from November 1 to the Friday before the second Saturday in April.

Batten Kill River – From the New York State line upstream (approximately 20.6 miles) to downstream side of Depot Street Bridge (Route 11/30) in Manchester.

Clyde River - From Lake Memphremagog upstream to Charleston Dam (Lubber Lake), West Charleston

Dog River – From the downstream edge of the Junction Road Bridge in Berlin/Montpelier upstream to the top of the Northfield Falls Dam in Northfield.

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12 010 086. COMMERCIAL ANGLING RULE (10 V.S.A. APP. § 123)

Section 1.0 Authority.

1.1 This rule is adopted pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 4083 and 10 V.S.A. § 4611 . This rule implements 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. § 4083 and 10 V.S.A. § 4611 this rule establishes requirements related to purchase and sale of fish including, but not limited to, prohibiting fish species, seasons, limits, reporting requirements and possible permit requirements.

Section 2.0 Purpose.

The purpose of this rule is to:

2.1 Establish the conditions for anglers to sell legally harvested approved fish species.

2.2 Establish the process and requirements for businesses and/or individuals to purchase fish legally harvested by anglers.

2.3 Establish a list of fish species in addition to those listed in 10 V.S.A. § 4611 that are prohibited for sale by anglers.

Section 3.0 Definitions.

3.1 Angler - Any person engaged in the take or attempted take of fish, by any method.

3.2 Buyer - Any person engaged in the purchase of fish harvested within this state.

3.3 Legally Harvested - Any fish species harvested by any lawful methods approved under the provisions of this part.

3.4 Seller - Any person engaged in the sale of fish harvested within this state.

Section 4.0 Selling Fish.

4.1 No angler shall sell fish species which are not legally harvestable or are listed in 10 V.S.A. § 4611 or in Section 6.0 of this rule.

4.2 Anglers shall provide information about their commercial fishing activity to the Department as required by the Commissioner.

4.3 *No angler may sell fish in the state of Vermont without first obtaining a valid Vermont fishing license.*

Section 5.0 Buying Fish.

5.1 No person or business shall buy fish for resale without a Fish Buyer Permit issued by the Commissioner.

5.2 No person or business shall buy fish species which are not legally harvestable or are listed in 10 V.S.A. § 4611 or in Section 6.0 of this rule.

5.3 A Fish Buyer Permit shall be effective from January 1 through December 31.

5.4 A holder of Fish Buyer Permit must submit quarterly reports as required by the Commissioner. Reports shall include but not limited to pounds purchased for each size group by species (Jan-Mar; April-June; July-Sep; Oct-Dec). The reports will include information from all species purchased. Additionally, the percentage of purchased amount from Lake Champlain shall be broken out and reported separately.

5.5 The Fish Buyer's reports shall be submitted within 30 days of the last day of the quarter (March 31, June 30, September 30, December 31).

5.6 The Fish Buyer Permit provides Fish Buyer an exemption from specific creel/possession limits. This exemption to creel and possession limits is restricted to the address specified above under "Business Location", which is defined as an established immobile place of business (not directly on the ice or on any public waters or public access areas), and the transport of legally bought and/or sold fish within the State of Vermont, from the Permitted Fish Buyer's Business Location.

5.7 Failure to comply with these rules, including submission of *complete quarterly reports or falsifying reports*, may result in the revocation of a Fish Buyer Permit.

Section 6.0 List of Species Prohibited for Sale and Purchase.

6.1 *Black Crappie Pomoxis nigromaculatus*

6.2 *White Crappie Pomoxis annularis*

Species listed in 10 V.S.A. § 4611

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Statutory Authority

STATUTORY AUTHORITY:

10 V.S.A. §§4081 to 4083 ; 4605

History

EFFECTIVE DATE:

January 1, 2018 Secretary of State Rule Log #17-040

CODE OF VERMONT RULES

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10VSA App. § 124. Valley Brook—Spawning waters

~~Pursuant to the provisions of 10 V.S.A. § 4140, the below named waters are declared spawning grounds for game fish and are hereby closed to the taking of fish from October 1 to October 31.~~

~~Orleans County~~

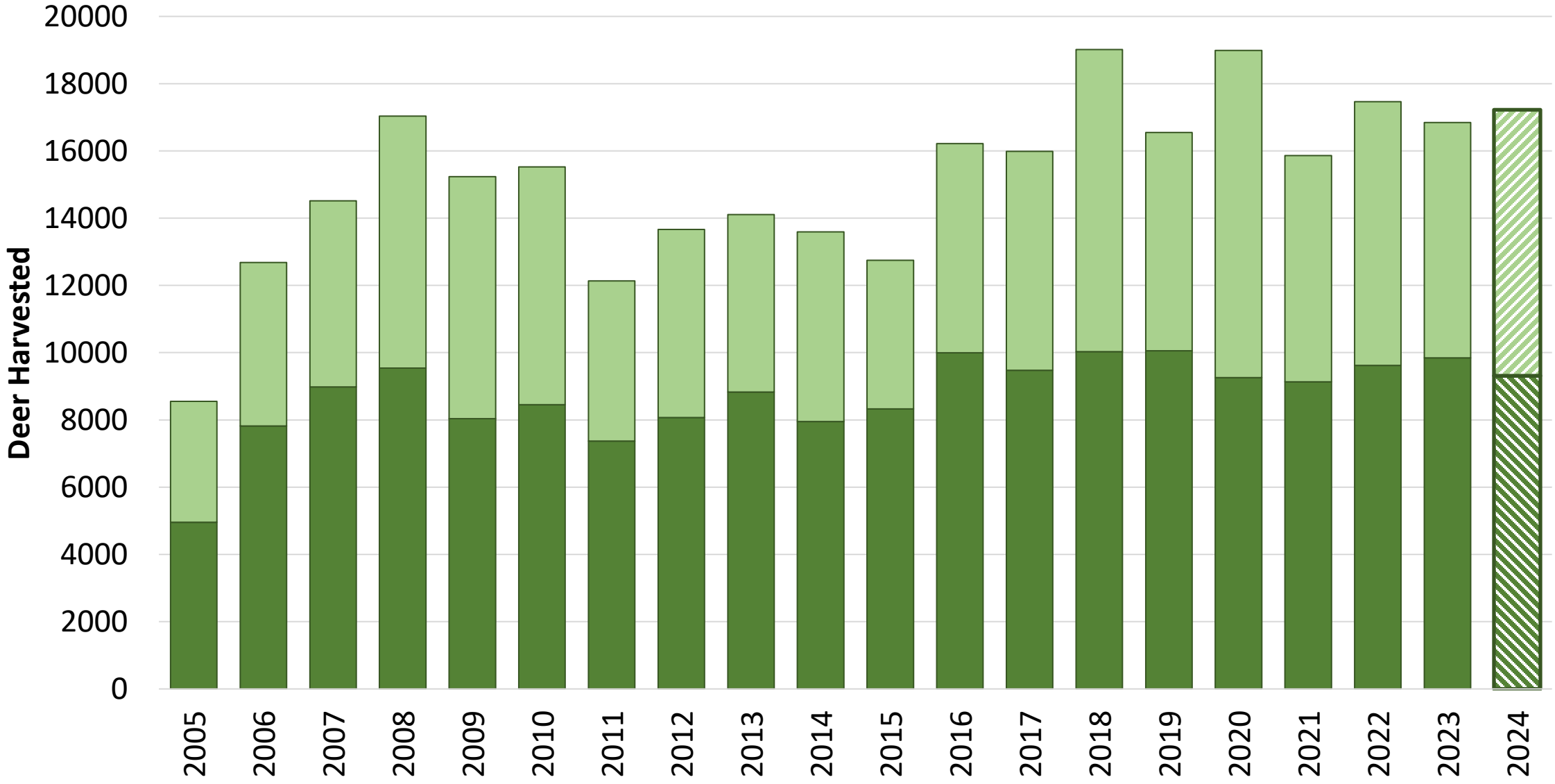
~~Valley Brook—Tributary to Seymour Lake is to be closed in its entirety. (Added 1986, Fish and Wildlife Commissioner's Reg. No. —, eff. Oct. 1, 1986.)~~

Review of 2020 Deer Rule Changes



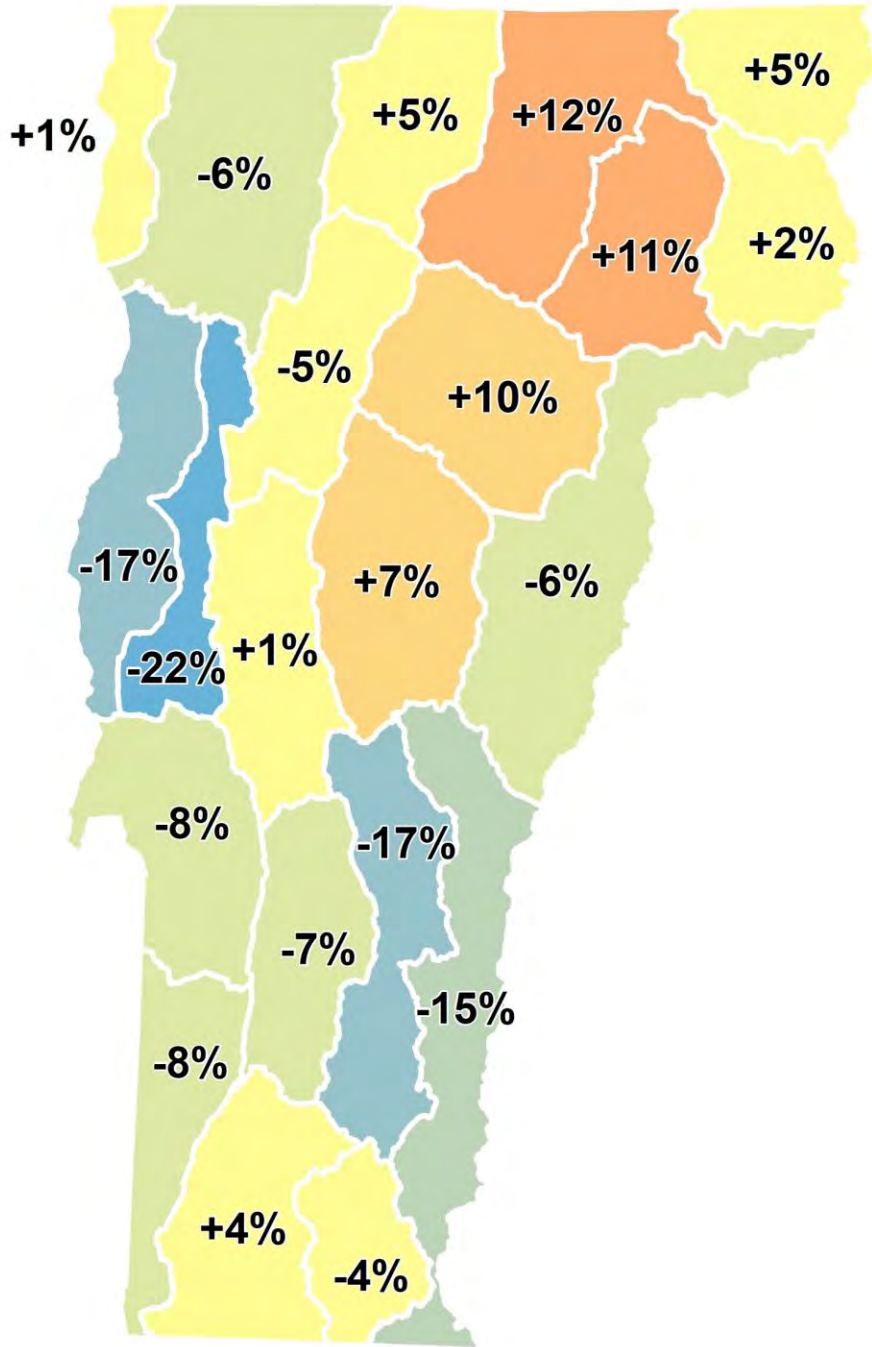
2024 Deer Harvest Update

■ Bucks ■ Antlerless



2024 Deer Harvest Update

Change in buck harvest
from 2021-2023 average



Review of 2020 Deer Rule Changes

2020 Deer Rule Change Goals

Maximize Hunter Satisfaction

Increase Hunting Opportunity

Increase Opportunity to See and Harvest Older Bucks

Increase Opportunity to Harvest Any Deer

Improve Management of the Deer Herd

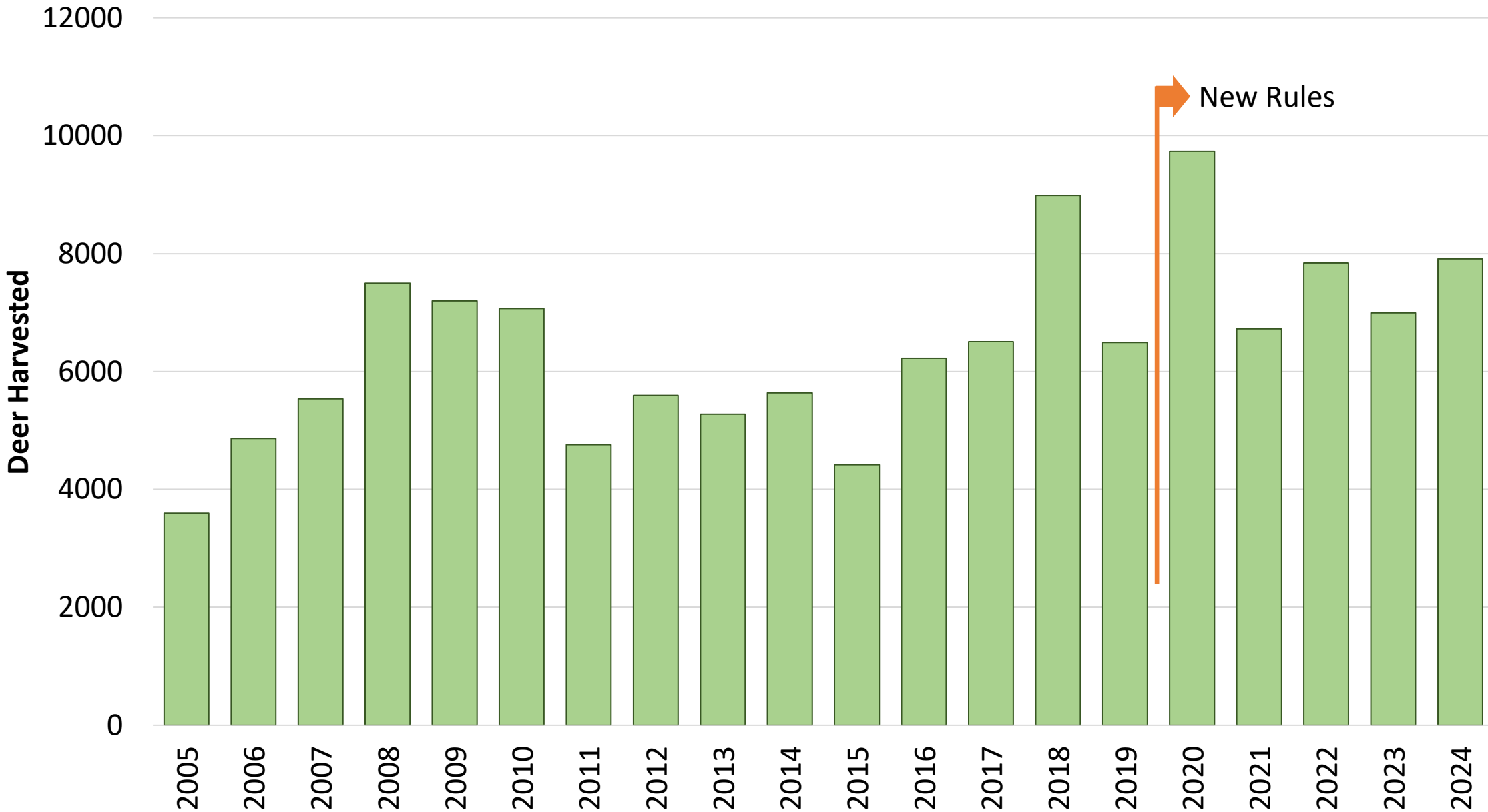
Increase Ability to Achieve Antlerless Deer Harvest Objectives

More Effectively Manage for Older Bucks

2020 Deer Rule Changes

- Regional antler restriction (removed APR in ½ of state)
- One buck annual limit
- Extended archery season
- Allowed crossbows during archery season
- Established 4-day antlerless-only muzzleloader season
- Moved youth weekend 2 weeks earlier
- Created a novice season
- Increased annual bag limit from 3 to 4

Antlerless Deer Harvest, 2005-2024



Increase annual bag limit

From 3 deer to 4 deer

Bag Limits

	2016–2019	2020–2023	Change
1 deer	11227 (81%)	11365 (81%)	1%
2 deer	2184 (16%)	2090 (15%)	-4%
3 deer	424 (3%)	446 (3%)	5%
4 deer		102 (1%)	
Total Successful Hunters	13835	14003	1%
Deer Harvested	16941	17289	2%
2 or more deer	2608 (19%)	2638 (19%)	1%
3 or more deer	424 (3%)	548 (4%)	29%

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Bag Limits

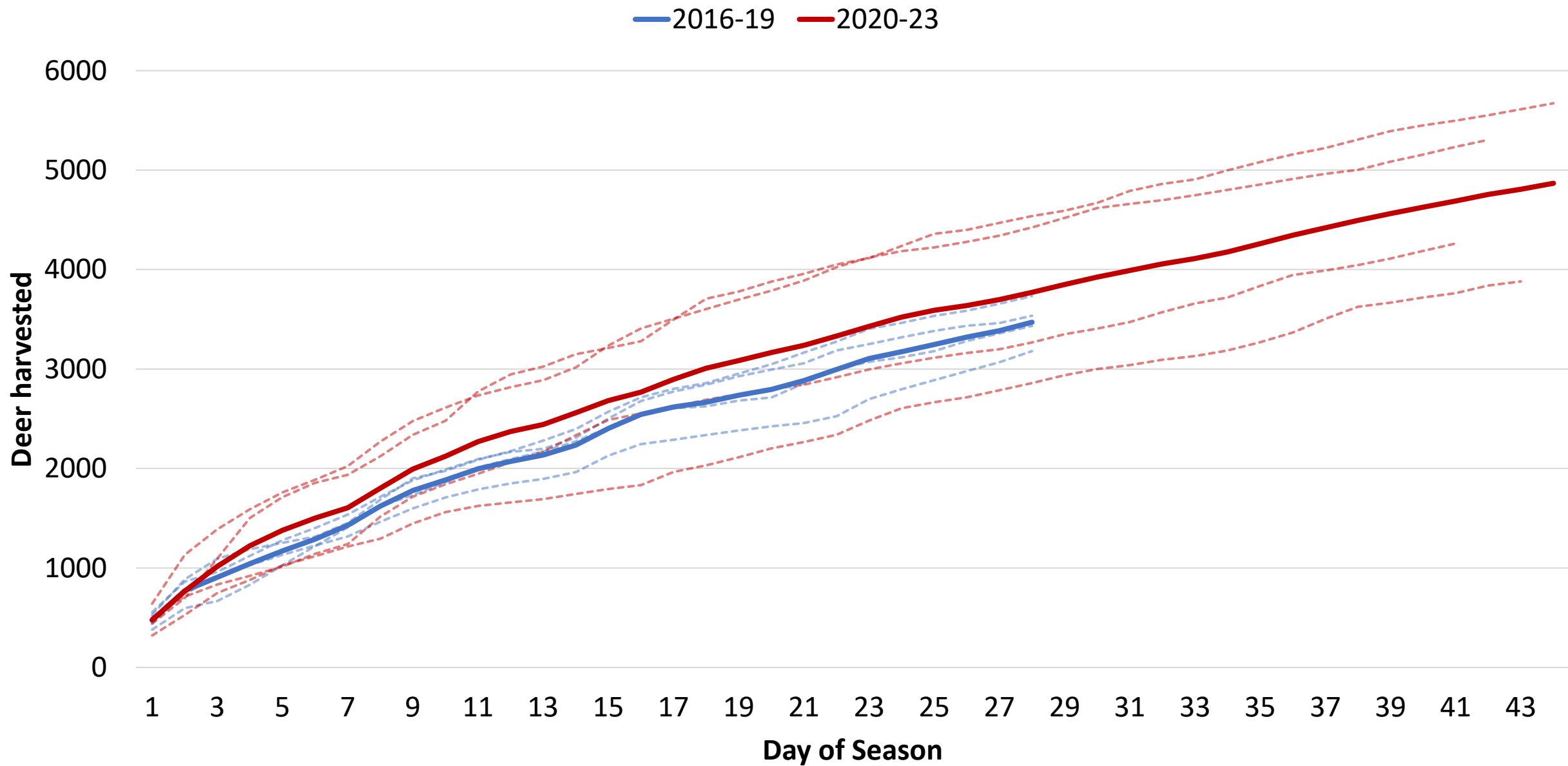
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How Many Deer Did You Want to Harvest in 2023?	
0	2%
1	50%
2	36%
3+	10%
Don't Know	2%

Extend archery season

From 37 days to 60 days

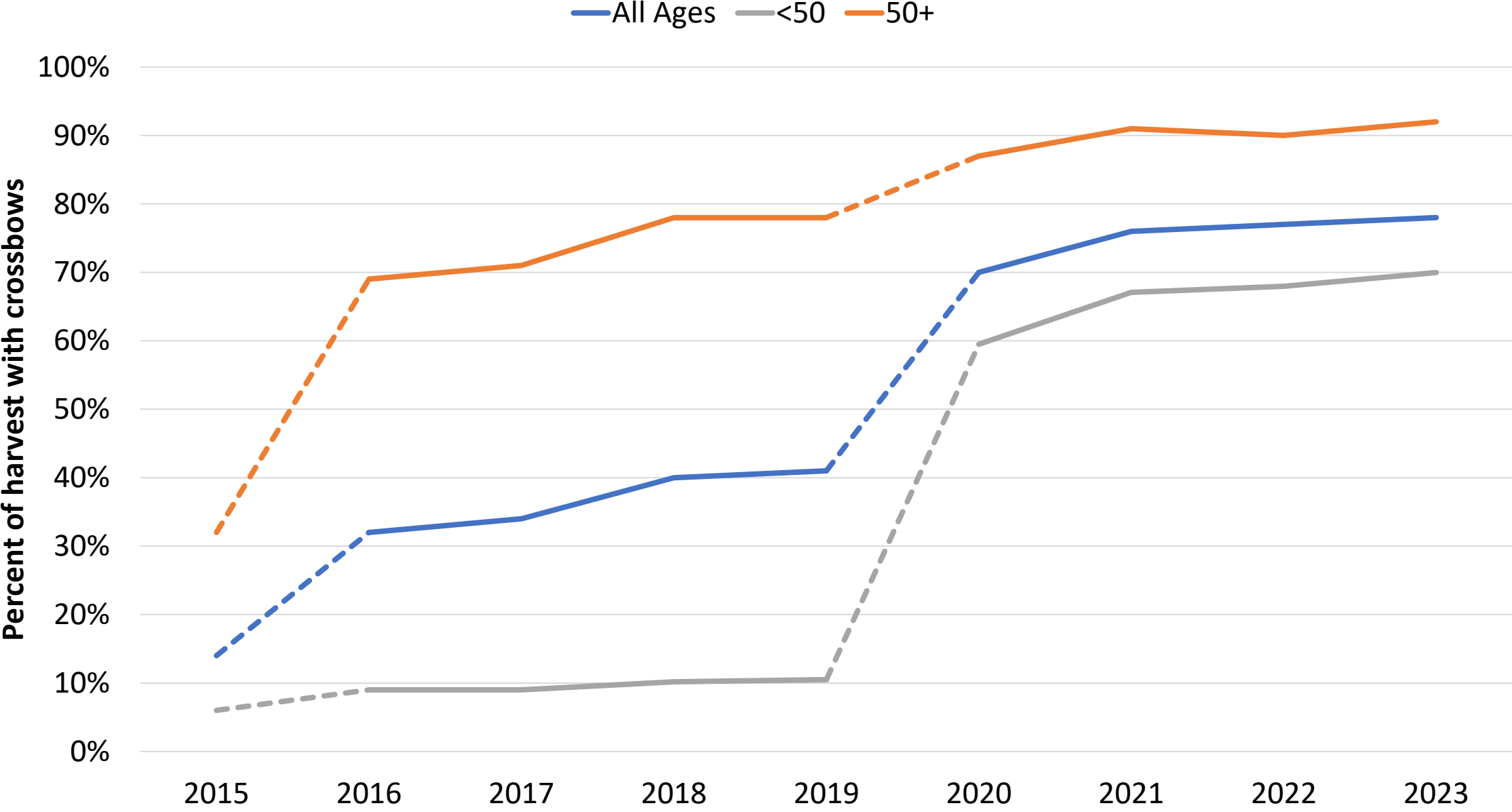
Cumulative Archery Harvest, by Day of Season



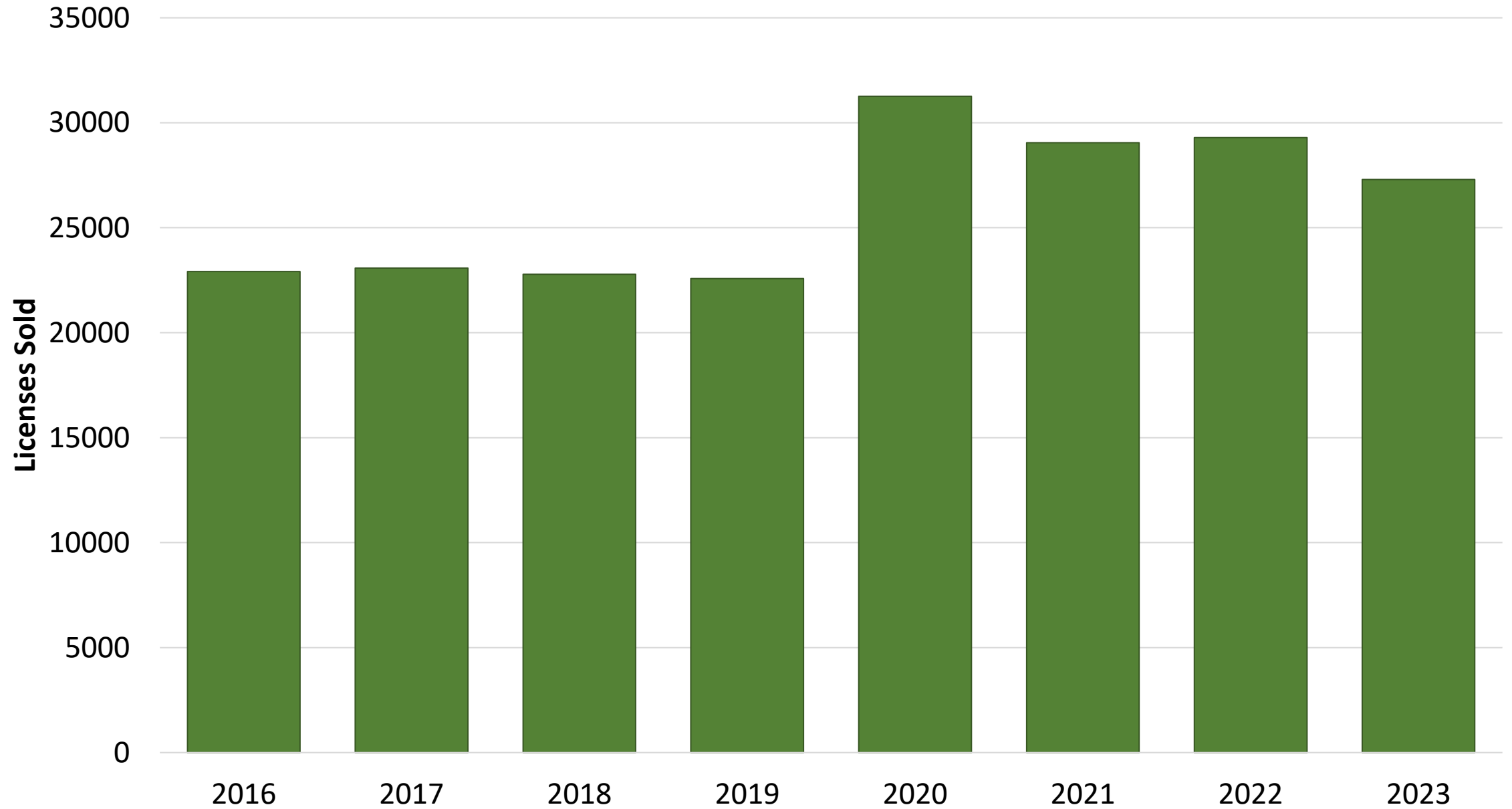
Allow crossbows for all hunters

Previously only hunters age 50 or older

Percent of Archery Harvest with Crossbows



Archery License Sales



Establish 4-day antlerless-only muzzleloader season

In late October

October Muzzleloader Participation

In 2023...

25% of active hunters hunted this season (~14,000 hunters)

39% of active hunters received an antlerless permit

63% of permit holders hunted this season

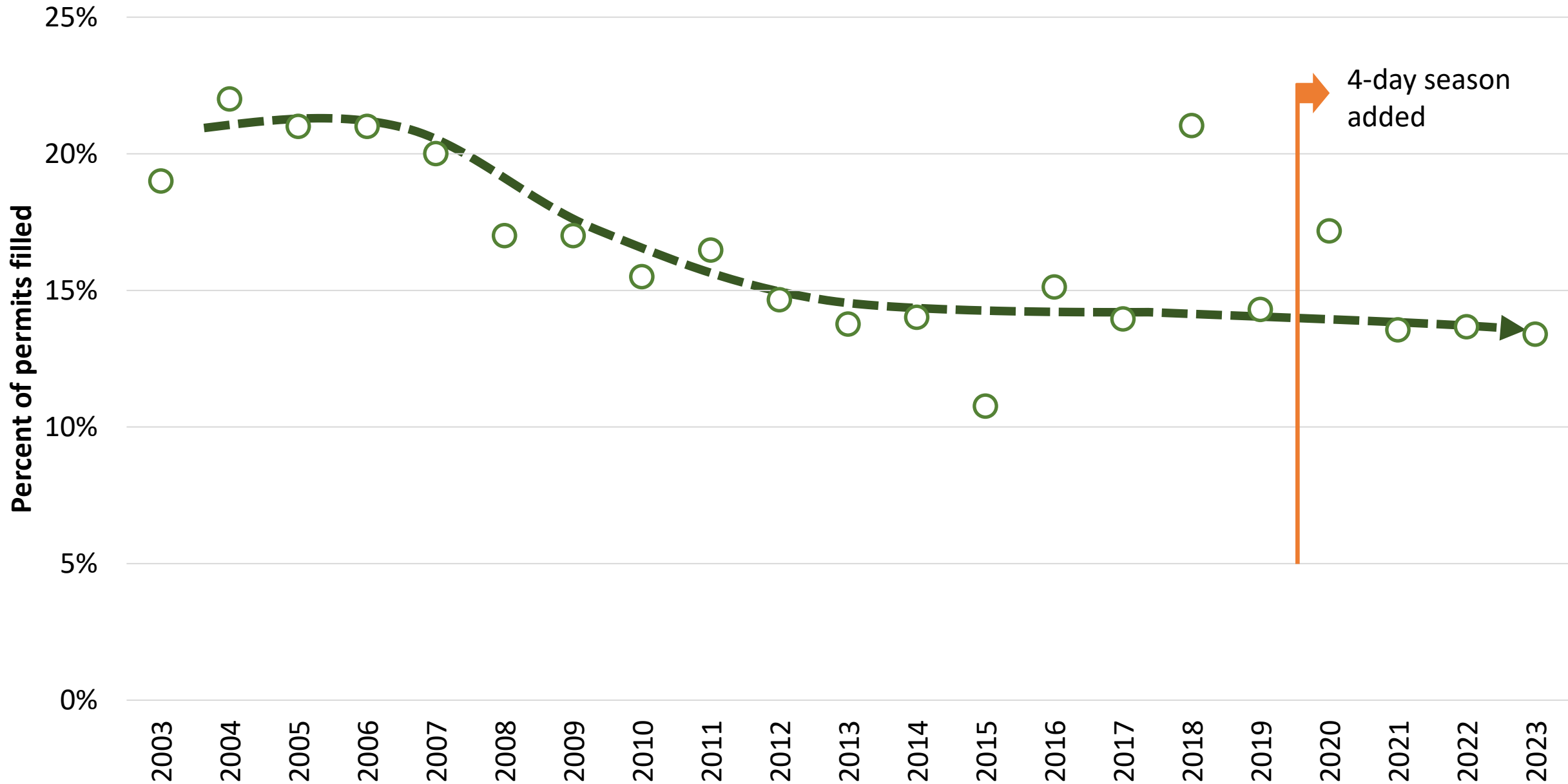
78% of active hunters attempted to fill their antlerless permit

82% hunted this season

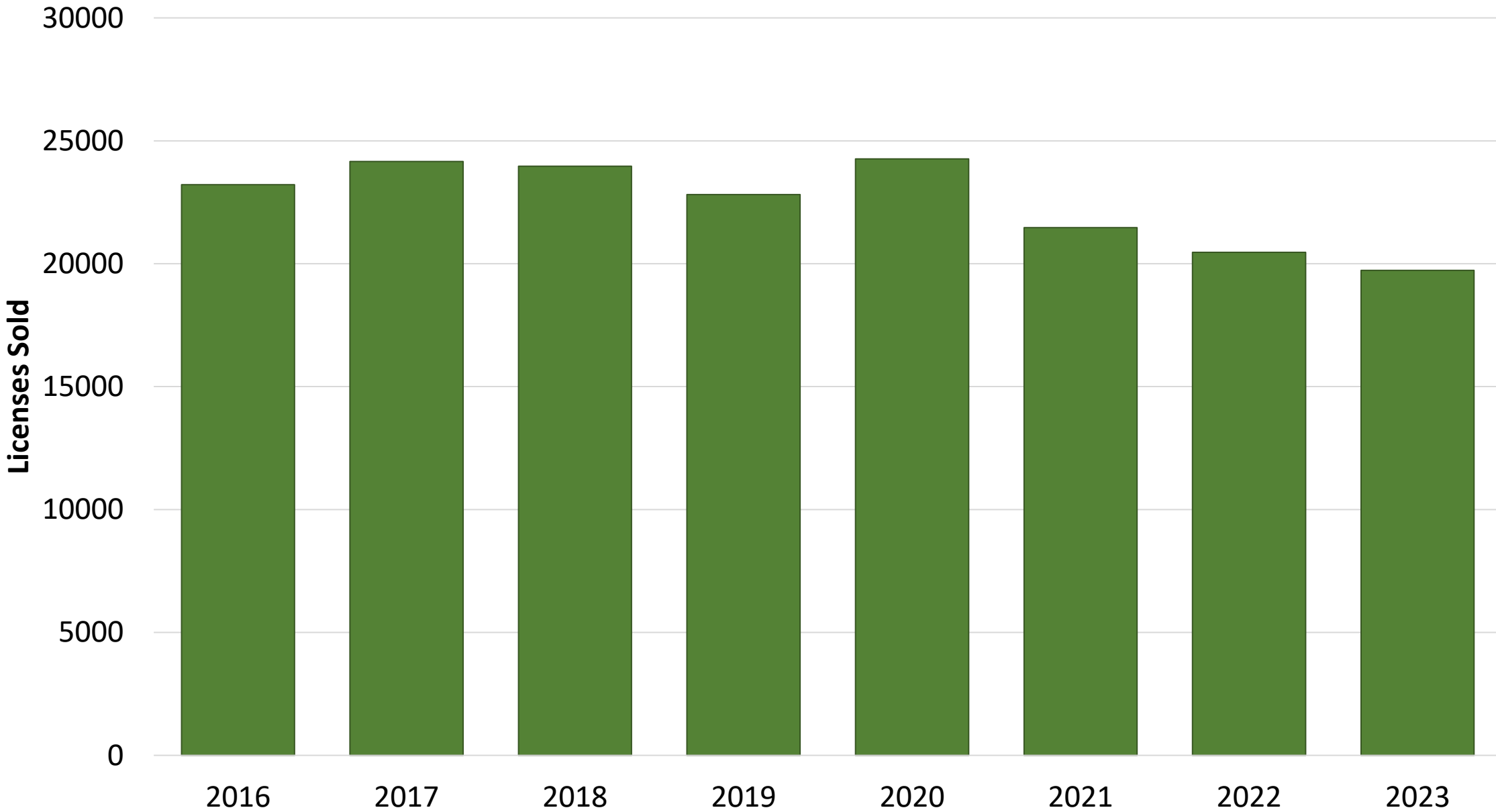
October Muzzleloader Harvest

	Harvest	Antlerless Permit Fill Rate	Percent of Total Muzzleloader Antlerless Harvest
2020	1933	9%	49%
2021	861	5%	32%
2022	1114	6%	42%
2023	818	4%	30%

Antlerless Permit Fill Rates



Muzzleloader License Sales

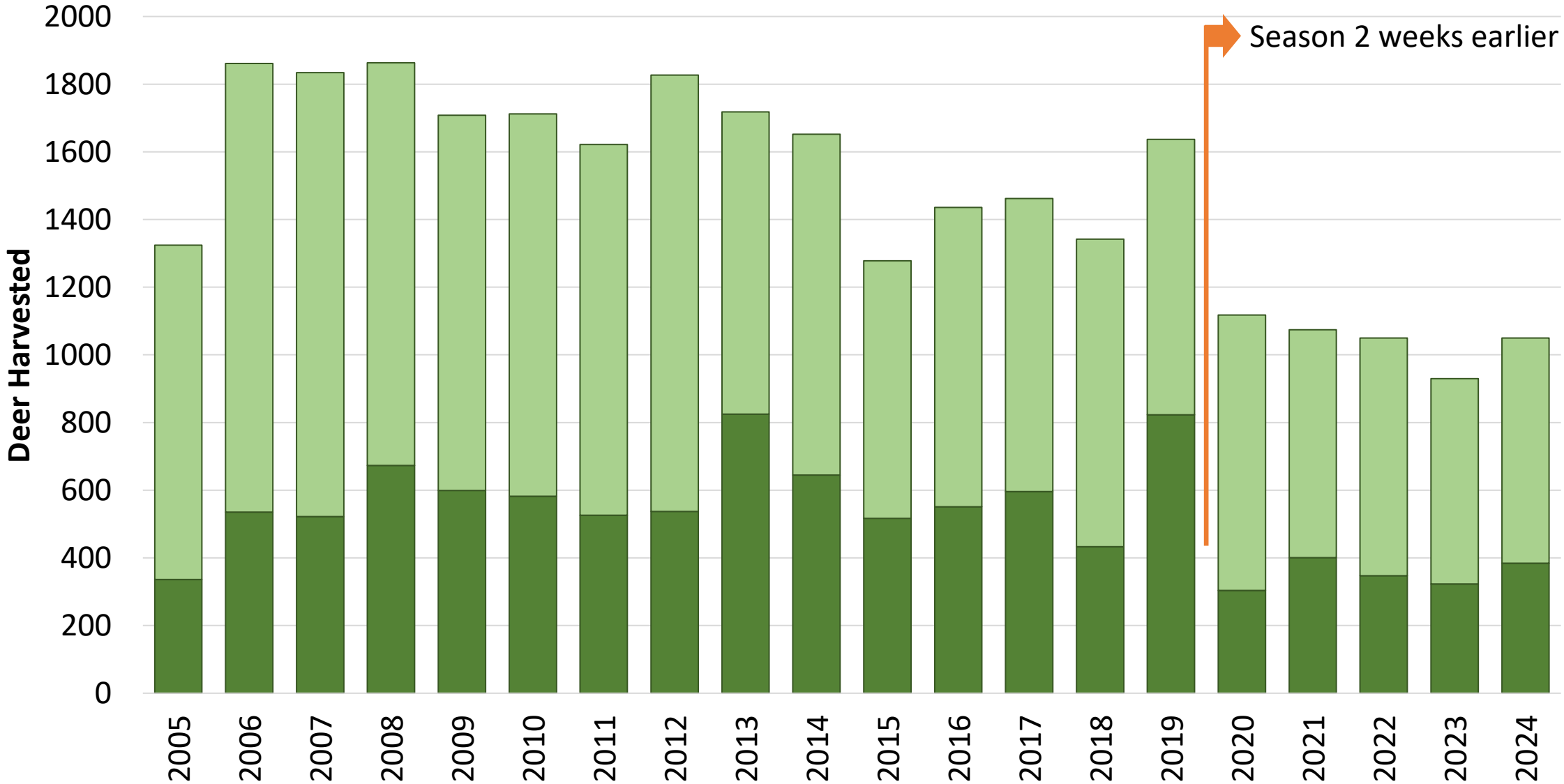


Move youth weekend 2 weeks earlier

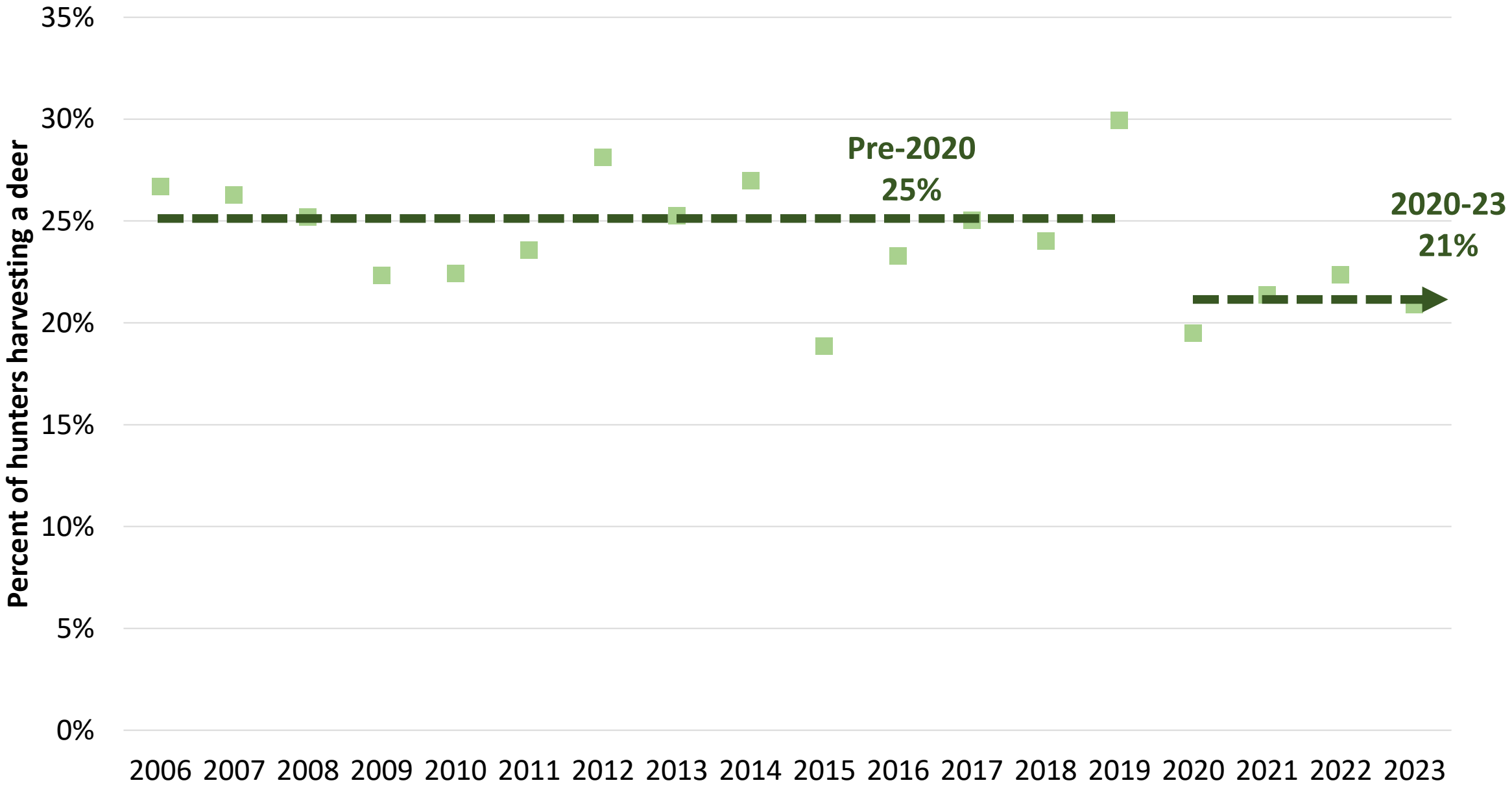
From early November to late October

Youth Weekend Deer Harvest, 2005-2024

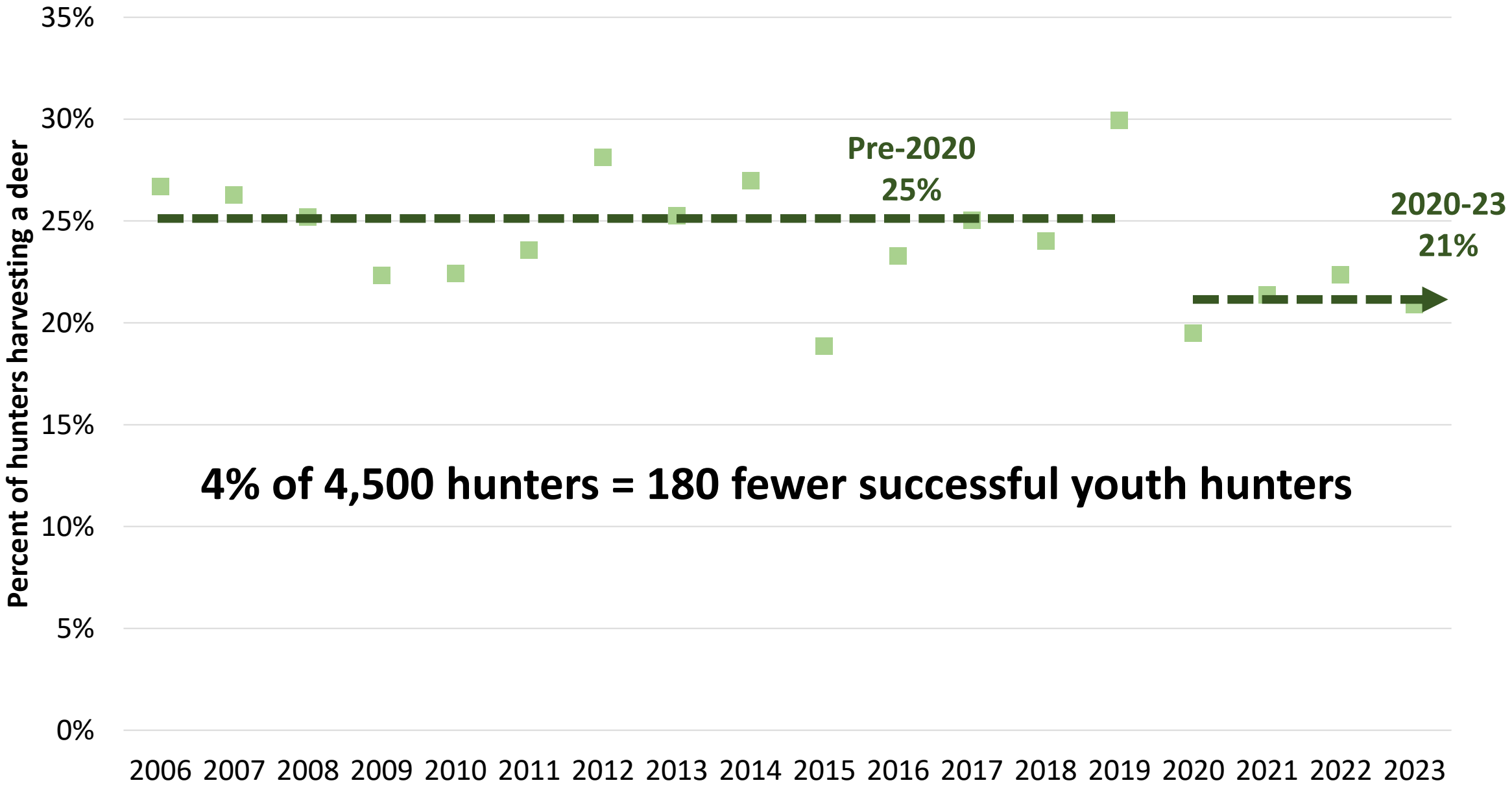
■ Bucks ■ Antlerless



Youth Weekend Success Rates



Youth Weekend Success Rates



Establish a Novice Season

Concurrent with Youth Weekend

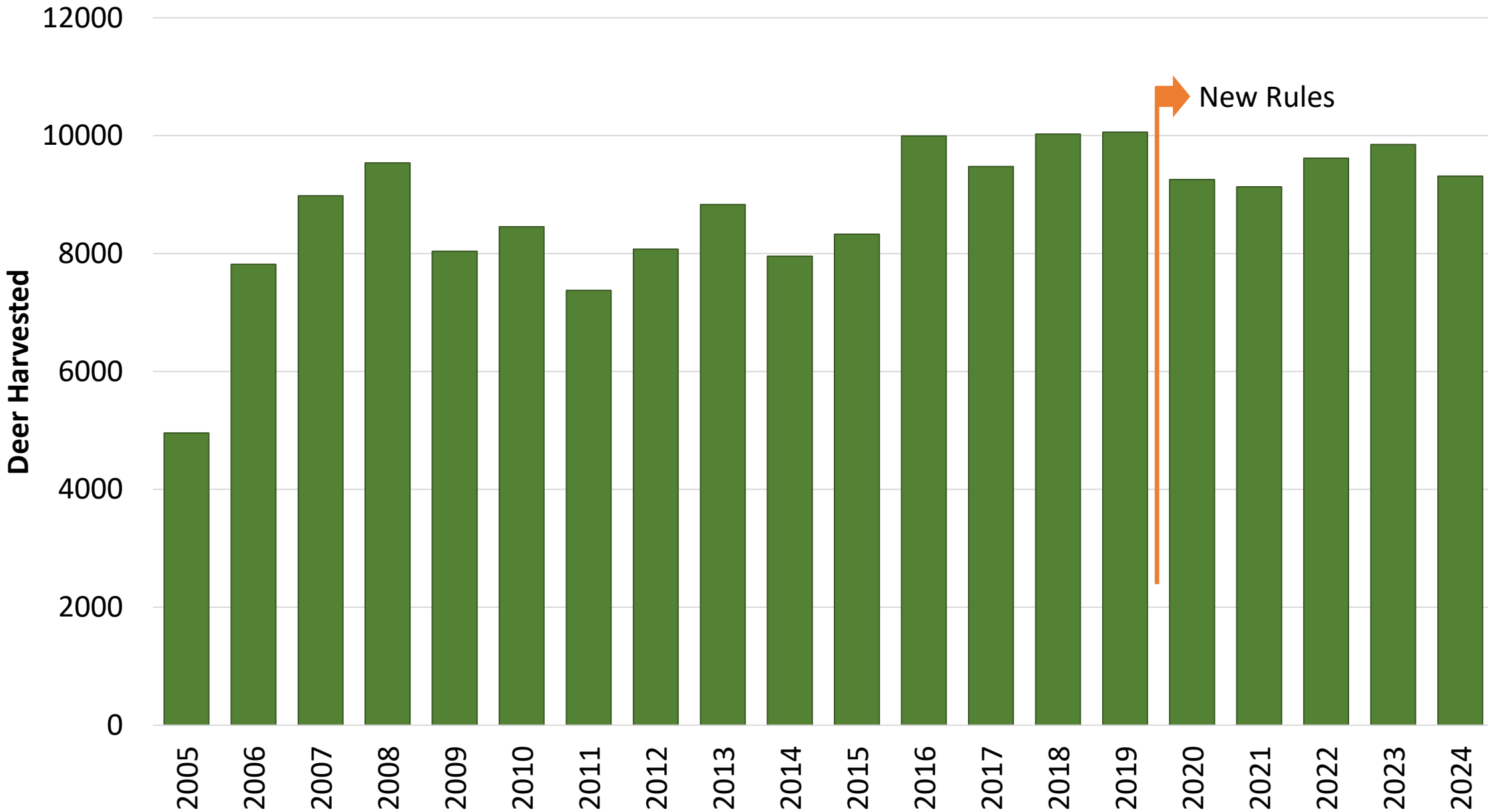
Novice Season

	HE grads	Novice Tags	Harvest	Success
2020	4827	1119	125	11%
2021	1634	530	54	10%
2022	1485	410	55	13%
2023	1486	390	42	11%

One buck annual limit & Regional antler restriction

2-point APR remains in ½ of state

Buck Harvest, 2005-2024

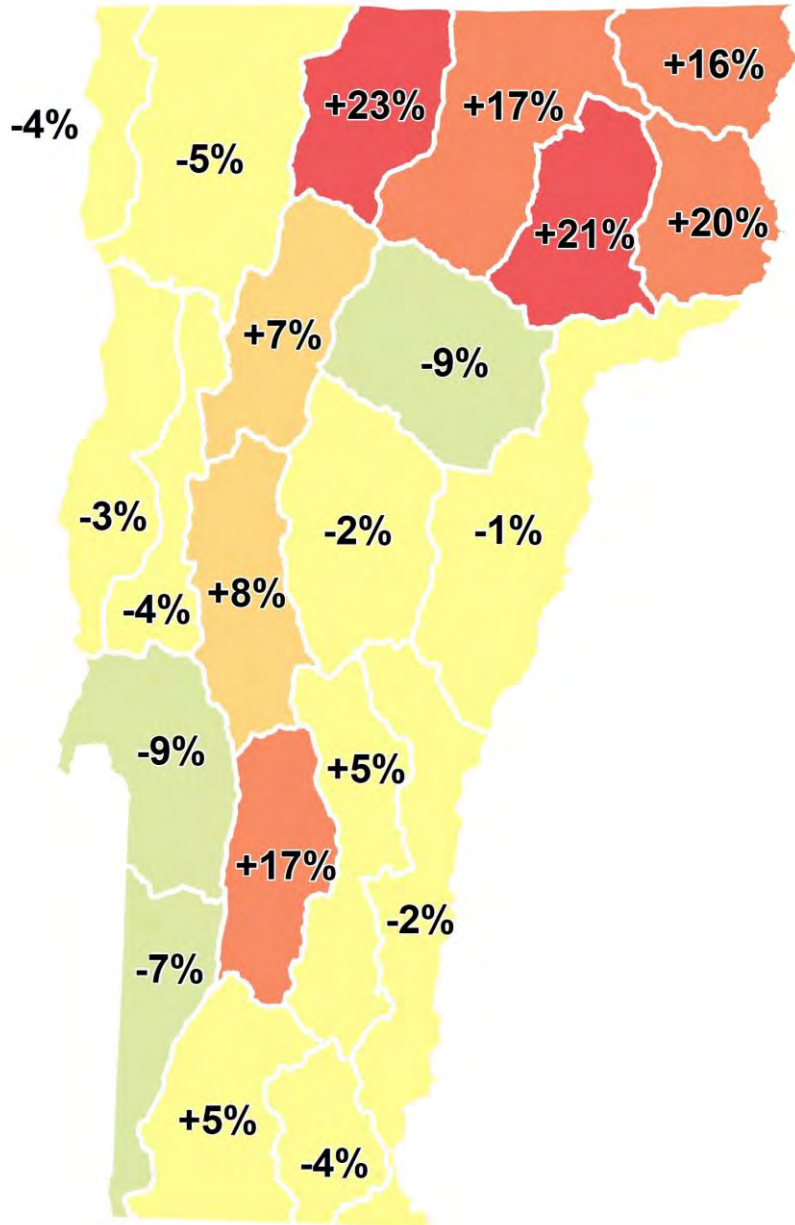


Change in buck harvest (2016-2019 vs 2020-2023)

Adjusted for change in population size

WMUs with Antler Restriction
-4% (range: -1% to -9%)

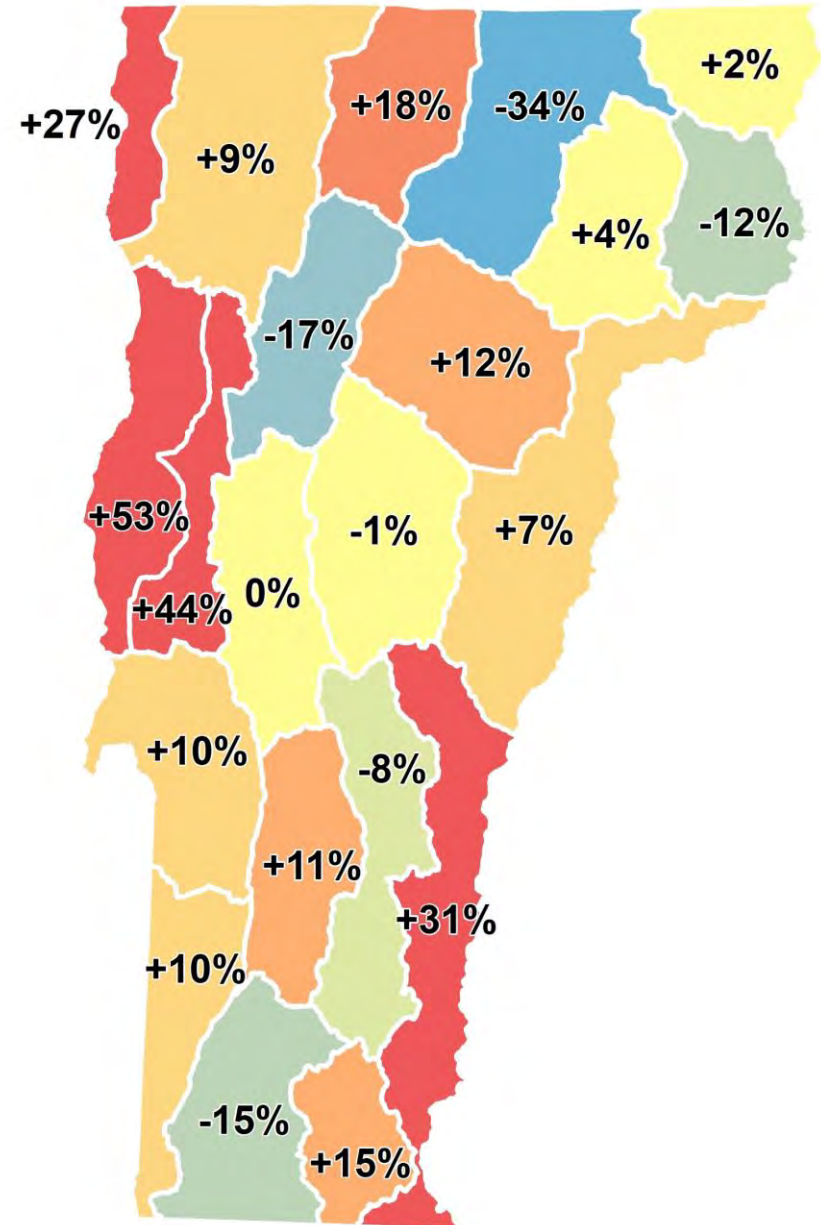
WMUs without Antler Restriction
+14% (range: -4% to +23%)



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

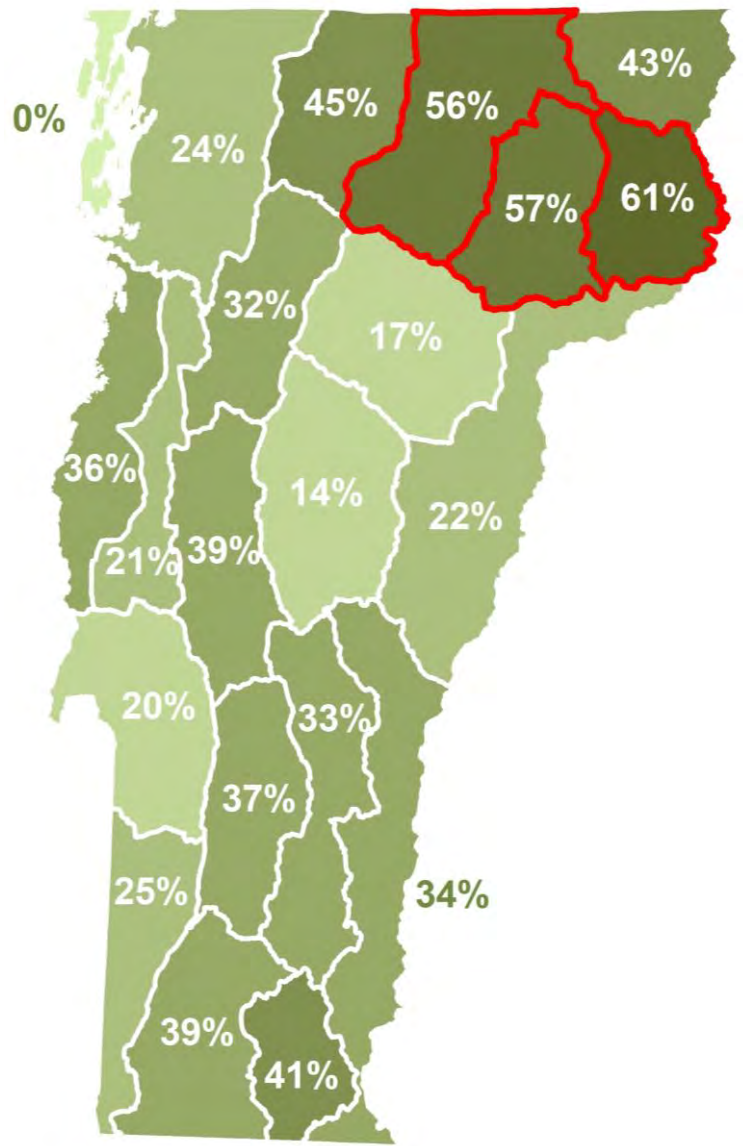
WMUs with Antler Restriction
+14% (range: -1% to +53%)

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

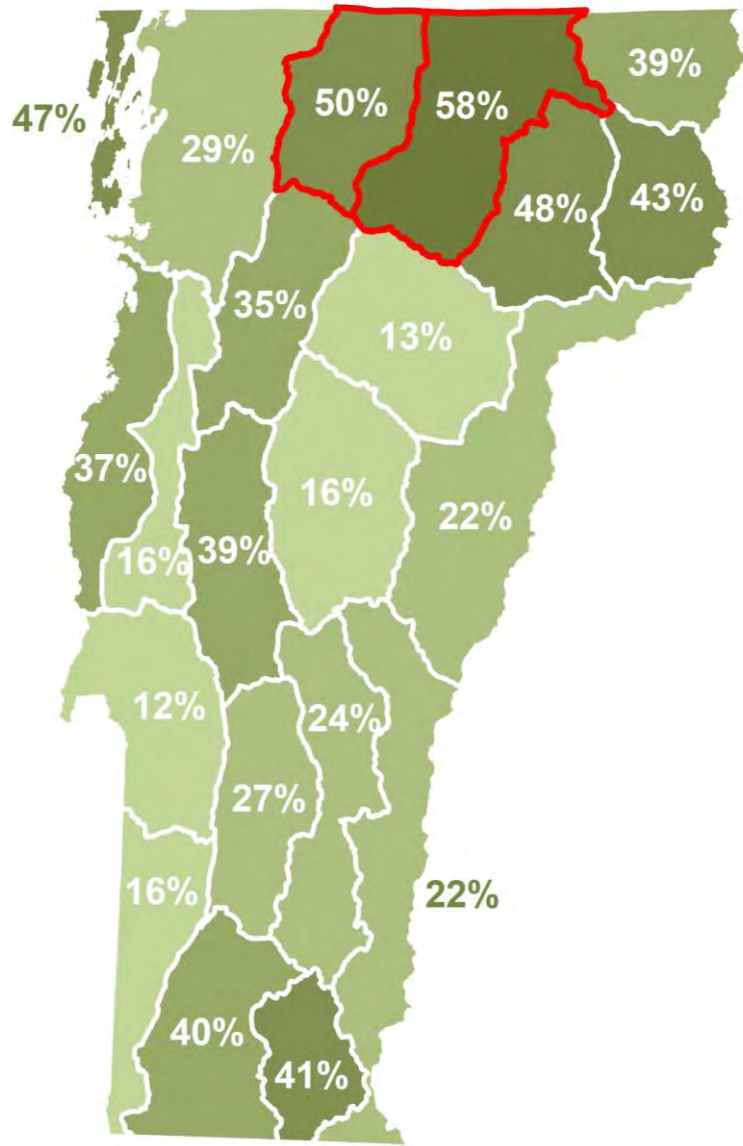


Percent Yearlings in the Buck Harvest

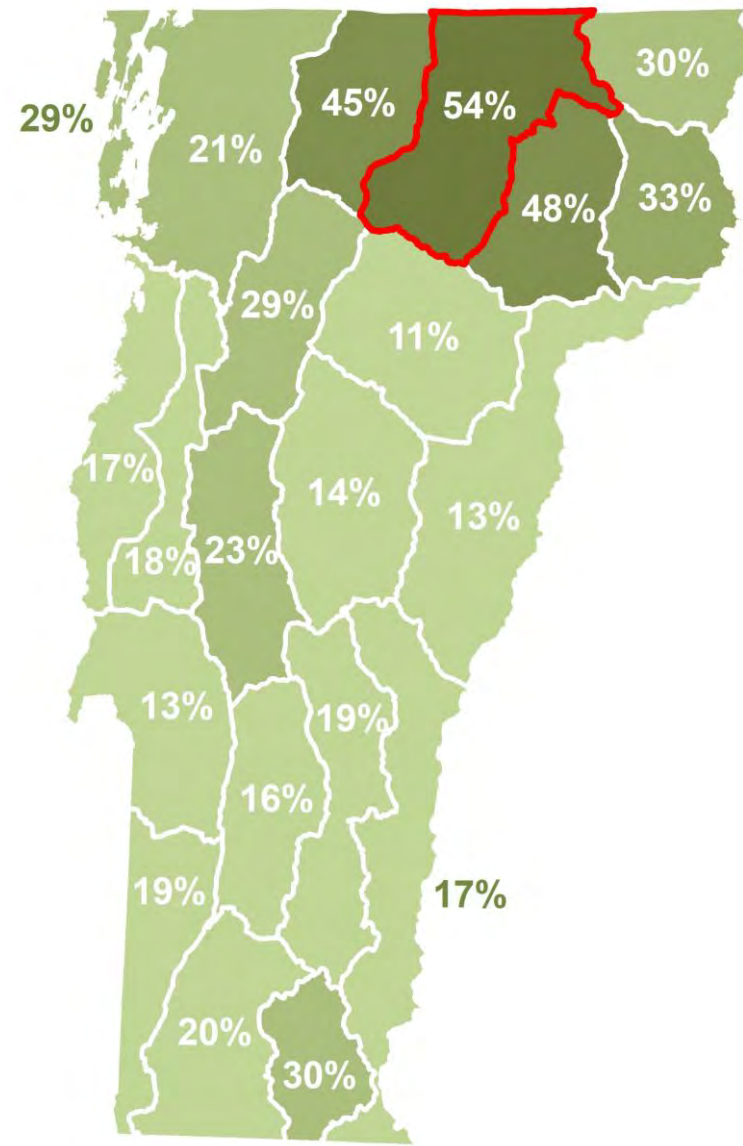
2021



2022



2023



Did We Achieve Our Goals?

Maximize Hunter Satisfaction

Increase Hunting Opportunity

Increase Opportunity to See and Harvest Older Bucks

Increase Opportunity to Harvest Any Deer




Improve Management of the Deer Herd

Increase Ability to Achieve Antlerless Deer Harvest Objectives



More Effectively Manage for Older Bucks

Did We Achieve Our Goals?

Maximize Hunter Satisfaction

-  Increase Hunting Opportunity
-  Increase Opportunity to See and Harvest Older Bucks
-  Increase Opportunity to Harvest Any Deer

Improve Management of the Deer Herd

-  Increase Ability to Achieve Antlerless Deer Harvest Objectives
-  More Effectively Manage for Older Bucks



Next Steps

February

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

Public Comment

- Public Hearings
 - 3 Hearings March 17-21
 - 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

Questions?

2024 Deer Seasons Summary

(preliminary numbers through 1/15/25 – likely to change)

TOTAL: 17,223

Bucks: 9,313

Down 5% from 9,848 in 2023

Down 2% from 2021-23 average (9,533)

Antlerless: 7,910

Up 13% from 6,997 in 2023

Up 10% from 2021-23 average (7,188)

Archery: 5,190

Up 5% from 4,963 in 2023

Up 2% from 2021-23 average (5,089)

Youth: 1,050

Up 13% from 930 in 2023

Up 3% from 2021-23 average (1,018)

Novice: 49

Up 17% from 42 in 2023

Down 2% from 2021-23 average (50)

October Muzzleloader: 1,104

Up 35% from 818 in 2022

Up 18% from 2021-23 average (934)

Regular: 6,830

Down 9% from 7,546 in 2023

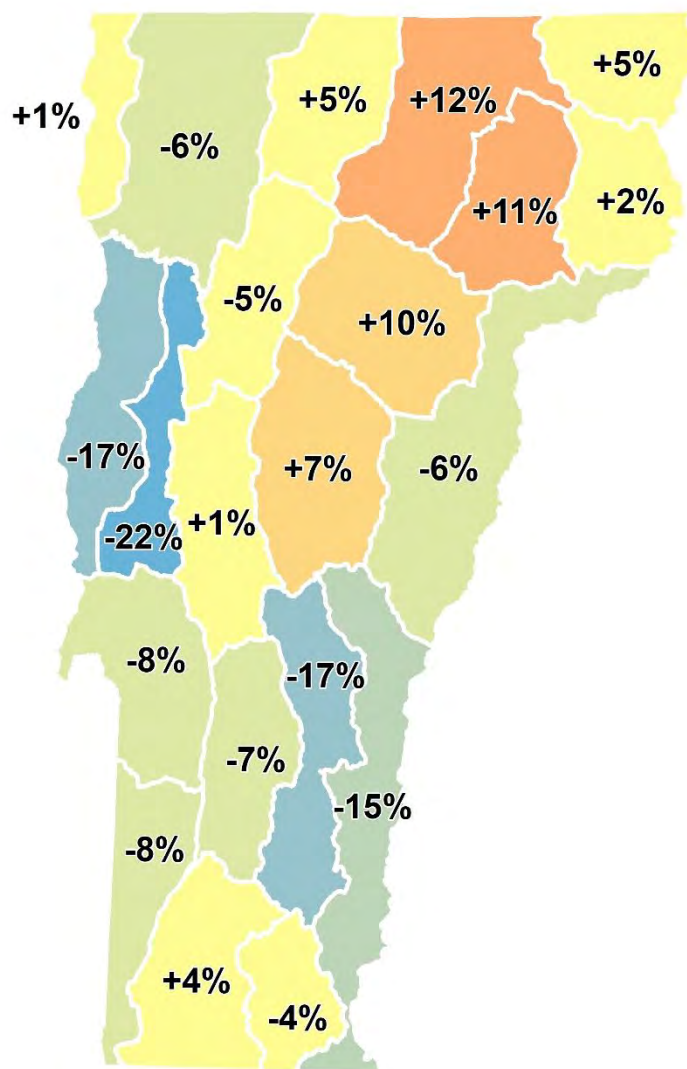
Down 6% from 2021-23 average (7,293)

December Muzzleloader: 3,000

Up 18% from 2,546 in 2023

Up 28% from 2021-23 average (2,338)

Change in Buck Harvest from 2021-2023 Average



Changes to Deer Harvests and Hunter Participation Following the 2020 Deer Hunting Regulation Changes

Final Report
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

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Summary

This report covers changes to deer harvest and hunter participation between 2016-2019 (before regulation changes) and 2020-2023 (after regulation changes). While many changes can be attributed to new hunting regulations, other factors including deer abundance, management objectives, demographic trends, and the Covid 19 pandemic must also be considered. Many hunting regulations are integrally related, making it often not possible to determine the effect of a specific regulation change.

The 2020 deer hunting regulation changes resulted in modest and expected changes to deer harvest and hunter participation, with some notable exceptions. After accounting for changes in deer abundance, the total buck harvest was 2% higher following the regulation changes. However, it was 4% lower in wildlife management units (WMUs) where the antler point restriction (APR) remained in place, and 14% higher in WMUs where the APR was removed. Antlerless deer harvests were considerably higher during 2020-2023. While higher harvests were facilitated by new regulations, they were largely a result of annual harvest prescriptions attempting to achieve new, lower population objectives established in the *2020-2030 Big Game Management Plan*.

The deer harvest during the archery season was notably higher following the regulation changes. This was largely a result of the season from 37 days to 60 days, and the legalization of crossbows for all archery hunters. Participation in archery season also increased substantially, as indicated by a 28% increase in archery license sales. Adoption of crossbows was almost immediate, accounting for 70-78% of the archery harvest during 2020-2023.

Deer harvest and participation in the youth season was lower after the season was moved two weeks earlier. The lower harvest was a result of both lower participation and lower success rates. These changes were neither expected nor desirable, particularly given the importance of this season for both hunter recruitment and biological data collection.

Many hunters took advantage of new seasons. Participation in the novice season was higher than expected in 2020, presumably driven by a spike in hunter education graduates related to the Covid-19 pandemic. From 2021-2023, roughly 400-500 new adult hunters obtained a novice deer tag each year.

Many muzzleloader antlerless permit holders hunted during the new, antlerless-only October muzzleloader season. However, this new season did not have the intended effect of increasing antlerless permit fill rates. Instead, fill rates were slightly lower during 2020-2023.

Background

In 2019, the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department (Department) and Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board made significant changes to Vermont's deer hunting regulations, which took effect in 2020. Prior to recommending these changes, the Department spent several years conducting a comprehensive evaluation of deer management approaches and the entire deer hunting regulation and season structure. The changes were intended to provide a quality hunting experience for as many hunters as possible while also allowing for more effective deer management.

The *2020-2030 Big Game Management* plan was developed and adopted concurrently with the hunting regulation changes. It established new deer population objectives for many WMUs. Resulting changes to annual antlerless harvest recommendations to achieve these new objectives coincided with new hunting regulations and complicated some evaluations of changes in antlerless harvest.

The Covid-19 pandemic had significant effects on deer hunting participation and deer harvests in 2020. This was a major consideration throughout this evaluation. It resulted in hunters immediately taking advantage of new opportunities provided by the regulation changes, which may have allowed for a better assessment of the ultimate effects of the changes. Rather than harvests or other measures slowly changing through the 2020–2023 period, they changed immediately and mostly stabilized. This gives greater confidence that values observed during 2020–2023 are what can be expected going forward under the existing regulations.

2020 Deer Hunting Regulation Changes

One Buck Annual Limit

The annual limit for antlered bucks across all seasons was reduced from two to one. This was intended to reduce the buck harvest rate and to help maintain existing buck age structure in WMUs where the antler point restriction was removed.

Regional Antler Point Restriction

The antler point restriction was removed in 11 WMUs. This allowed regulations to better reflect regional differences in deer density, hunting pressure, habitat, winter severity, and other factors.

Longer Archery Season

The archery season was extended from 37 days to 60 days, with fixed season dates of October 1st through December 15th, except closed during the regular season. This was intended to provide additional opportunity for archery hunters to harvest antlerless deer, and it recognized the potential impact of the one buck limit on archery hunters.

Crossbows Allowed for All Ages

Crossbows became a legal implement for all hunters any time archery equipment could be used. Previously, only hunters aged 50 or older, or those with a disability permit, were allowed to use crossbows. This change was intended to increase recruitment of new archery hunters and increase participation among existing archery hunters.

New Antlerless Muzzleloader Season

A new 4-day antlerless-only muzzleloader season was established. The season occurred two weeks before the regular season and was limited to antlerless deer only by hunters with a muzzleloader antlerless permit. This new season was intended to increase fill rates on muzzleloader antlerless permits to help achieve antlerless harvest objectives.

New Novice Season

A novice season was created for new adult hunters, essentially allowing them to hunt during the youth weekend for one year. This season was intended to help recruit new adult hunters by offering a new mentored hunting opportunity with more opportunities for success since any deer could be harvested.

Moved Youth Season to Late October

The youth weekend was moved two weeks earlier to late October. This was intended to continue to provide youth hunters with the first opportunity to take deer with a gun, and provide more favorable weather conditions to encourage greater participation.

Changed the Annual Bag Limit

The annual bag limit was increased from 3 deer to 4 deer. This was intended to facilitate increased antlerless harvest in the areas where it was most needed. It was particularly relevant to the creation of expanded archery zones, which were not established during 2020–2023.

Overall Changes

Changes in Deer Abundance

Evaluating any changes that may have resulted from the 2020 regulation changes requires understanding what may have occurred in the absence of those regulation changes. This would primarily be changes in harvest caused by changes in deer abundance. For example, if the deer population in a given WMU increased, the buck harvest would also be expected to increase by a similar amount. Changes in antlerless harvest are more complicated, as they are controlled, in part, by the number of antlerless permits allocated each year.

Estimating deer abundance at the scale of a WMU is challenging, particularly in smaller WMUs with limited harvests. The population models used by the Department do not provide a straightforward means of calculating confidence intervals. However, based on years of monitoring and tracking deer abundance, the Department believes abundance estimates at the WMU level are typically within 10-20% of actual deer abundance in a given year. There is some improvement in accuracy when combining estimates across WMUs and/or years. For the purposes of this evaluation, small changes in abundance (less than ~10%), or other measures derived from abundance, should be considered with caution as they may or may not be real.

Statewide deer abundance was 7% lower during 2020–2023 than during 2016–2019. However, changes in abundance varied considerably among WMUs, ranging from a 20% decrease in WMU N to a 23% increase in WMU A (**Table 1**). Declines in deer abundance were primarily a result of management actions (e.g., greater antlerless permit allocations) to achieve new, lower deer population objectives established in the *2020-2030 Big Game Management Plan*, as well as lingering effects from the severe winter of 2018-2019. Changes in abundance were not a direct result of new hunting regulations. They are presented here to provide context for observed changes in deer harvests.

Changes in the Buck Harvest

Total buck harvest was 4% lower during 2020–2023 than during 2016–2019. Buck harvest was 11% lower in WMUs where the APR remained in place, but 9% higher in WMUs where the APR was removed. After adjusting for changes in deer abundance, the total buck harvest was similar between the two periods. It was 4% lower in WMUs where the APR remained in place, and 14% higher in WMUs where the APR was removed. This pattern was consistent among WMUs, with slightly lower adjusted buck harvest observed in all WMUs where the APR remained in place, and higher adjusted buck harvest in all but one WMU where the APR was removed.

These changes indicate that removing the APR resulted in a higher buck harvest in most areas. The lower adjusted buck harvest in WMUs where the APR remained in place may be a result of the one buck annual limit.

Table 1. Change in adult buck and antlerless deer harvests and change in estimated deer abundance, by WMU, between 2016–2019 and 2020–2023. Adjusted change in harvest accounts for changes in deer abundance.

WMU	Change in Harvest		Population Change	Adjusted Change in Harvest	
	Bucks	Antlerless		Bucks	Antlerless
A	19%	42%	23%	-4%	19%
B	-3%	6%	2%	-5%	4%
C	27%	19%	4%	23%	15%
D1	10%	16%	-8%	17%	24%
D2	5%	6%	-17%	21%	22%
E1	10%	49%	-6%	16%	55%
E2	16%	35%	-5%	20%	39%
F1	10%	60%	14%	-3%	46%
F2	-5%	7%	-1%	-4%	8%
G	9%	36%	2%	7%	35%
H	-9%	11%	0%	-9%	10%
I	0%	35%	-8%	8%	43%
J1	-21%	22%	-19%	-2%	42%
J2	-20%	6%	-19%	-1%	26%
K	-15%	-8%	-6%	-9%	-2%
L	0%	-3%	-17%	17%	14%
M	2%	18%	-3%	5%	22%
N	-28%	-5%	-20%	-7%	15%
O	-12%	-3%	-10%	-2%	7%
P	3%	58%	-2%	5%	60%
Q	8%	9%	11%	-4%	-2%
Total	-4%	11%	-7%	2%	18%
APR	-11%	8%	-8%	-4%	15%
No APR	9%	19%	-5%	14%	24%

Buck Harvest by Season

Buck harvest during the archery season was greater during 2020–2023 than during 2016–2019, and it made up a greater proportion of the total buck harvest (13% vs. 10%). This was countered by lower buck harvests during the youth and muzzleloader seasons. The regular season accounted for 76% of the total buck harvest during both periods (**Table 2**). The higher buck harvest during the archery season was expected, given the expansion of the season from 37 to 60 days and the legalization of crossbows for all hunters.

The lower buck harvest during the December Muzzleloader season during 2020–2023 may have been a result of the one buck limit. Any hunter who harvested a buck during the archery or regular season would not have been able to harvest a buck during the December Muzzleloader season in 2020–2023. Assuming these successful archery and regular season hunters participated in the December Muzzleloader season at the normal rate (39%; *Responsive Management 2024*), there would have been roughly 3,400 fewer muzzleloader hunters who could harvest a buck during 2020–2023. Only 4% of these hunters would have needed to harvest a buck to account for the difference in buck harvest between 2016–2019 and 2020–2023, which is close to the 3% estimated buck harvest success rate during this season.

Muzzleloader license sales were 9% lower during 2020–2023 than during 2016–2019. It is likely that the one buck limit resulted in many hunters waiting to purchase this license until after the regular season, when they knew if they could still harvest a buck during the December muzzleloader season. Many hunters who had already harvested a buck may have chosen not to purchase a muzzleloader license. Interestingly, nonresident muzzleloader license sales were 12% higher during 2020–2023.

Table 2. Adult buck and antlerless deer harvest by season, and each season’s proportion of the total harvest, during 2016–2019 and 2020–2023.

	Buck Harvest		Antlerless Harvest	
	2016–2019	2020–2023	2016–2019	2020–2023
Archery	952 (10%)	1276 (13%)	2743 (39%)	4082 (52%)
Youth	601 (6%)	344 (4%)	869 (12%)	700 (9%)
Novice		19 (0%)		51 (1%)
Oct Muzzleloader		4* (0%)		1175 (15%)
Dec Muzzleloader	835 (8%)	596 (6%)	3441 (49%)	1817 (23%)
Combined Muzzleloader	835 (8%)	600 (6%)	3441 (49%)	2992 (38%)
Regular	7502 (76%)	7226 (76%)		
TOTAL	9890	9464	7052	7825

*These were legally “antlerless” adult bucks with antlers less than 3 inches long.

Buck age structure

Hunters have consistently expressed interest in managing for more older, larger-antlered bucks. To that end, an objective in the *2020-2030 Big Game Management Plan* is to ensure that there are enough older bucks on the landscape to provide hunters a reasonable chance of seeing one. However, accurately estimating buck population age structure is difficult and typically requires looking back through multiple years of data to reconstruct the population. Therefore, it was not possible to reliably estimate population age structure for the 2020–2023 period, or to determine any changes in population age structure between 2016–2019 and 2020–2023.

An alternative measure of buck age structure is the number of older bucks in the harvest. While it is not a direct measure of the number of older bucks on the landscape, it provides a reasonable index. The mean number of bucks harvested annually that were 3 years old or older increased from 2,503 during 2016–2019 to 2,674 during 2020–2023 (**Table 3**). These older bucks also represented a larger portion of the total buck harvest in 2020–2023 (28%) than in 2016–2019 (25%). Most WMUs saw an increase in the harvest of bucks ≥ 3 years old, including all WMUs where the APR remained in place and 5 of 11 WMUs where the APR was removed.

Evaluating changes in the number of older bucks is complicated by the short time period covered in this evaluation. The effects of hunting regulations on the number of 3-year-old deer should not be expected until at least the 3rd year under new regulations. Changes in older age classes would take even longer. Further, cohort effects cause annual variation in age structure that are often unrelated to hunting regulations. A cohort is all the deer born in a given year. The number of deer in a cohort can vary considerably for a range of reasons, and an unusually large or small cohort can affect population age structure for at least 4 years. This necessitates evaluating age structure over longer periods of time than considered here.

The *2020-2030 Big Game Management Plan* established buck age structure objectives to help meet hunters' interest in seeing and harvesting older, larger-antlered bucks. Specifically, the objective was to maintain at least the percentage of mature bucks in the population in 2018. Because reliably measuring population age structure requires multiple years of data, another measure was needed to assess the effectiveness of management strategies on an annual basis.

Buck age structure, and particularly the proportion of mature bucks in the population, is controlled by the proportion of bucks that survive from one year to the next. This, in turn, is primarily controlled by the harvest rate, or the proportion of the buck population taken by hunters each year. An index of harvest rate that is relatively simple to measure is the proportion of yearling bucks in the buck harvest. Therefore, as a means of achieving buck age structure objectives, the *2020-2030 Big Game Plan* includes a strategy to “ensure that the proportion of yearlings in the total buck harvest not exceed 50% in any WMU.” Greater proportions of yearlings in the harvest indicate higher harvest rates which may not allow enough bucks to survive to older age classes to meet objectives.

Since 2020, 4 WMUs in northern Vermont have exceeded 50% yearlings in the buck harvest at least once, with WMU D1 exceeding 50% for 3 consecutive years (**Table 4**). Relatedly, the number of mature bucks harvested annually in WMU D1 declined 34% from 2016–2019 to 2020–2023, more than double the decline observed in any other WMU (Table 3). Collectively, this indicates that new regulations were not achieving buck age structure objectives in WMU D1.

Table 3. Mean number of bucks ≥ 3 years old harvested annually and their proportion of the total buck harvest, by WMU, during 2016–2019 and 2020–2023.

WMU	2016–2019		2020–2023	
A	22	(11%)	28	(12%)
B	236	(18%)	257	(20%)
C	89	(20%)	105	(19%)
D1	176	(23%)	117	(14%)
D2	84	(23%)	87	(23%)
E1	47	(39%)	48	(36%)
E2	34	(36%)	30	(30%)
F1	57	(17%)	87	(24%)
F2	70	(18%)	101	(29%)
G	127	(36%)	105	(28%)
H	160	(31%)	179	(39%)
I	111	(36%)	111	(35%)
J1	176	(27%)	175	(35%)
J2	244	(25%)	260	(34%)
K	193	(24%)	213	(31%)
L	89	(35%)	99	(39%)
M	109	(37%)	100	(34%)
N	133	(23%)	146	(34%)
O	144	(23%)	189	(34%)
P	95	(33%)	81	(27%)
Q	60	(28%)	69	(29%)
Total	2503	(25%)	2674	(28%)
APR	1436	(22%)	1636	(29%)
No APR	1020	(29%)	951	(25%)

Table 4. Proportion of yearlings in the total buck harvest, by WMU, 2020–2023.

WMU	2020	2021	2022	2023
A	18%	0%	47%	29%
B	15%	24%	29%	21%
C	31%	45%	50%	45%
D1	34%	56%	58%	54%
D2	27%	57%	48%	48%
E1	31%	43%	39%	30%
E2	15%	61%	43%	33%
F1	29%	36%	37%	17%
F2	16%	21%	16%	18%
G	22%	32%	35%	29%
H	9%	17%	13%	11%
I	14%	39%	39%	23%
J1	11%	14%	16%	14%
J2	12%	22%	22%	13%
K	10%	20%	12%	13%
L	29%	37%	27%	16%
M	27%	33%	24%	19%
N	17%	25%	16%	19%
O	22%	34%	22%	17%
P	27%	39%	40%	20%
Q	25%	41%	41%	30%
Total	21%	35%	32%	26%
APR	14%	22%	20%	16%
No APR	27%	46%	44%	37%

Changes in the Antlerless Harvest

Some of the 2020 deer hunting regulation changes were intended to facilitate increased antlerless harvests. However, antlerless harvest remained largely controlled by annual antlerless permit allocations. Attempts to achieve new, lower deer population objectives established in the *2020-2030 Big Game Management Plan* generally resulted in higher annual antlerless deer harvest recommendations, which affected antlerless permit allocations and, ultimately, antlerless deer harvests.

Statewide antlerless deer harvest was 18% higher during 2020–2023 than during 2016–2019. Antlerless harvest increased in all WMUs except K and Q, but the degree of change varied considerably among WMUs (**Table 1**).

Antlerless harvest during the archery season increased from 2,743 during 2016–2019 to 4,082 during 2020–2023, and represented a larger portion of the total antlerless harvest (39% in 2016–2019 and 52% in 2020–2023). Conversely, antlerless harvest during the combined muzzleloader seasons declined from 3,441 during 2016–2019 to 2,992 during 2020–2023 (**Table 2**). This was due in part to 2% fewer antlerless permits being distributed during 2020–2023, and in part to the antlerless permit fill rate declining from 16% during 2016–2019 to 14% during 2020–2023.

Increased antlerless harvest during the archery season, earlier timing of the youth season, and the new October muzzleloader season resulted in a shift in the timing of the antlerless harvest. Antlerless harvest during October nearly doubled, from 2,453 during 2016–2019 to 4,873 during 2020–2023. Conversely, antlerless harvest during December declined from 3,643 during 2016–2019 to 2,234 during 2020–2023. On average, antlerless deer were harvested 11 days earlier during 2020–2023.

Bag Limits and Hunter Success

The number of hunters harvesting at least one deer was slightly higher during 2020–2023 than during 2016–2019, but this appears to be mostly due to the slightly higher annual deer harvest during 2020–2023. The number of hunters taking 2 or more deer was similar between the two periods, while 124 more hunters each year took 3 or more deer during 2020–2023, an increase of 29%. Just over 100 hunters reached the 4 deer bag limit each year during 2020–2023 (**Table 5**).

Table 5. Mean number of hunters taking 1, 2, 3, or 4 deer annually, and their proportion of all successful hunters, during 2016–2019 and 2020–2023.

	2016–2019		2020–2023		Change
1 deer	11227	(81%)	11365	(81%)	1%
2 deer	2184	(16%)	2090	(15%)	-4%
3 deer	424	(3%)	446	(3%)	5%
4 deer			102	(1%)	
Total Successful Hunters	13835		14003		1%
Deer Harvested	16941		17289		2%
2 or more deer	2608	(19%)	2638	(19%)	1%
3 or more deer	424	(3%)	548	(4%)	29%

The 2024 deer hunter survey indicated that 50% of hunters were only interested in harvesting one deer annually, while 36% were interested in harvesting 2 deer annually. Only 10% were interested in harvesting 3 or more deer (*Responsive Management 2024*). Given an estimated 55,000 active deer hunters each year, approximately 25% harvested at least one deer annually during 2020–2023. Only 4% of active hunters harvested two deer annually, and 1% harvested 3 or more deer annually during 2020–2023.

Changes by Season

Youth Season

The youth weekend harvest was 29% lower during 2020–2023 than during 2016–2019. This can be attributed to both reduced participation and lower success rates. The percentage of youth hunting license holders obtaining a youth weekend deer tag was 86% during 2016–2019 and 80% during 2020–2023. Harvest success rate was 26% during 2016–2019 and 21% during 2020–2023 (**Table 6**). Combined, these factors account for more than 20% of the decline in the harvest.

The youth weekend harvest declined steadily after peaking in 2008. For several years, most of this decline could be attributed to declining participation, which was directly related to declining numbers of youth in Vermont. Youth numbers have been fairly stable since the late 2010s, and youth hunter numbers have declined only slightly. Therefore, most of the decline in harvest between 2016–2019 and 2020–2023 can be attributed to the earlier season timing.

The buck harvest declined 43% from 2016–2019 (601 annually) to 2020–2023 (344), while the antlerless harvest declined 19% (from 868 to 699). The larger decline in the buck harvest may be related to the earlier season timing during 2020–2023, which missed the greater buck activity associated with the rut.

Table 6. Youth hunting license holders and youth weekend deer harvest during 2016–2019 and 2020–2023.

	2016–2019	2020–2023	Change
6-10th grade enrollment*	29915	29332	-2%
15 & under hunting licenses	6068	5947	-2%
youth weekend deer tags	5764	4977	-14%
% non-resident	5.1%	4.1%	-18%
%15 & under with a tag	86.3%	80.2%	-7%
youth weekend harvest	1469	1043	-29%
success rate	26%	21%	-18%

*School enrollment from Vermont Agency of Education, 2023.

Novice Season

Participation in the novice season in 2020 was heavily influenced by the covid pandemic and the availability of online-only hunter education. This resulted in an initial spike in participation, but participation then declined to lower levels.

Deer harvest during the novice season ranged from 42 to 125, but did not exceed 55 after 2020. Observed success rates were fairly consistent, ranging from 10-13% (**Table 7**). The number of novice tag holders that hunted during the novice season each year was not known, so success was estimated from tag sales.

Table 7. Participation and harvest during the novice season, 2020–2023.

Year	Novice		
	Tags	Harvest	Success
2020	1119	125	11%
2021	530	54	10%
2022	410	55	13%
2023	390	42	11%

Antlerless (October Muzzleloader) Season

The number of deer harvested during the October muzzleloader season during 2020–2023 ranged from 818 to 1,933. This was 4-9% of antlerless permits that had been distributed at the time of the season. It accounted for 30-49% of the total muzzleloader antlerless harvest, including the December muzzleloader season (**Table 8**).

Table 8. Deer harvest, proportion of permits that were filled, and proportion of total muzzleloader antlerless harvest during the October muzzleloader season during 2020–2023.

Year	October	Antlerless	Percent of Total
	Antlerless Harvest	Permit Fill Rate	Muzzleloader Antlerless Harvest
2020	1933	9%	49%
2021	861	5%	32%
2022	1114	6%	42%
2023	818	4%	30%

The harvest was evenly distributed across all 4 days of the season, with 24% of deer taken on Thursday, 26% on Friday, 26% on Saturday, and 24% on Sunday. For comparison, during the last 4 days of the December muzzleloader season 18% of the harvest occurred on Thursday, 22% on Friday, 31% on Saturday, and 29% on Sunday. The weekday start of the October muzzleloader season more evenly distributed the harvest and, presumably, hunter effort.

The proportion of antlerless permits that were filled during the October muzzleloader season averaged 6%, and the harvest accounted for 38% of the combined October and December muzzleloader antlerless harvest. This was slightly higher than would be expected based on total available muzzleloader hunting days, as the October season accounted for 31% (4 of 13) of available days.

Results of the deer hunter survey indicated that 25% of 2023 deer hunters hunted during the October muzzleloader season. Given that 39% of 2023 hunters received an antlerless permit, only 63% of permit holders hunted during this season. Further, only 82% of those who attempted to fill their antlerless permit hunted during this season (*Responsive Management 2024*).

Archery

The mean annual archery season harvest during 2020–2023 (5,358) was 45% higher than during 2016–2019 (3,695). Harvest was higher in all WMUs during 2020–2023, although there was substantial variation among WMUs (**Table 9**). The harvest was comprised of 74% antlerless deer during 2016–2019, and 76% antlerless deer during 2020–2023.

Extending the length of hunting seasons often results in hunting effort simply being spread out over the longer time period. Most hunters aren't able to spend significantly more time afield, so increases in total harvest are often minimal, and daily harvests often decline.

Daily harvests during 2020–2023 were generally equal to or greater than those observed during 2016–2019, although there was substantial variation among years (**Figure 1**). This indicates an increase in daily hunting effort, particularly early in the season. Indeed, archery license sales were 28% higher during 2020–2023 than during 2016–2019 (**Table 10**). Further, survey results show that 40% of deer hunters hunted the archery season in 2018, while 43% hunted the archery season in 2023 (Responsive Management 2019, 2024).

In addition to increasing the number of hunters participating in archery season, the legalization of crossbows for all hunters may have also allowed many existing archery hunters to spend additional days afield during 2020–2023. Crossbows offer several advantages that may allow hunters to get afield when they would not have been able to with a vertical bow. Unfortunately, it was not possible to assess this aspect of archery hunting participation.

The proportion of archery deer taken with crossbows increased from 32-41% during 2016–2019 to 70-78% during 2020–2023 (**Figure 2**). Based on this measure, it appears that most hunters switched to crossbows as soon as they could legally use them.

Table 9. Archery season deer harvest by wildlife management unit during 2016–2019 and 2020–2023.

WMU	2016–2019	2020–2023	Change
A	117	230	97%
B	675	981	45%
C	158	328	107%
D1	366	491	34%
D2	129	198	54%
E1	17	36	116%
E2	13	24	90%
F1	132	211	60%
F2	140	193	38%
G	135	196	45%
H	241	372	54%
I	108	135	25%
J1	262	363	38%
J2	336	485	44%
K	245	265	8%
L	73	81	11%
M	44	73	67%
N	153	167	9%
O	209	290	38%
P	75	130	73%
Q	69	111	60%
Total	3695	5358	45%

Table 10. Mean annual resident and nonresident archery license sales during 2016–2019 and 2020–2023.

	2016–2019	2020–2023	Change
Resident	20867	26737	+28%
Nonresident	1971	2488	+26%
Total	22838	29225	+28%

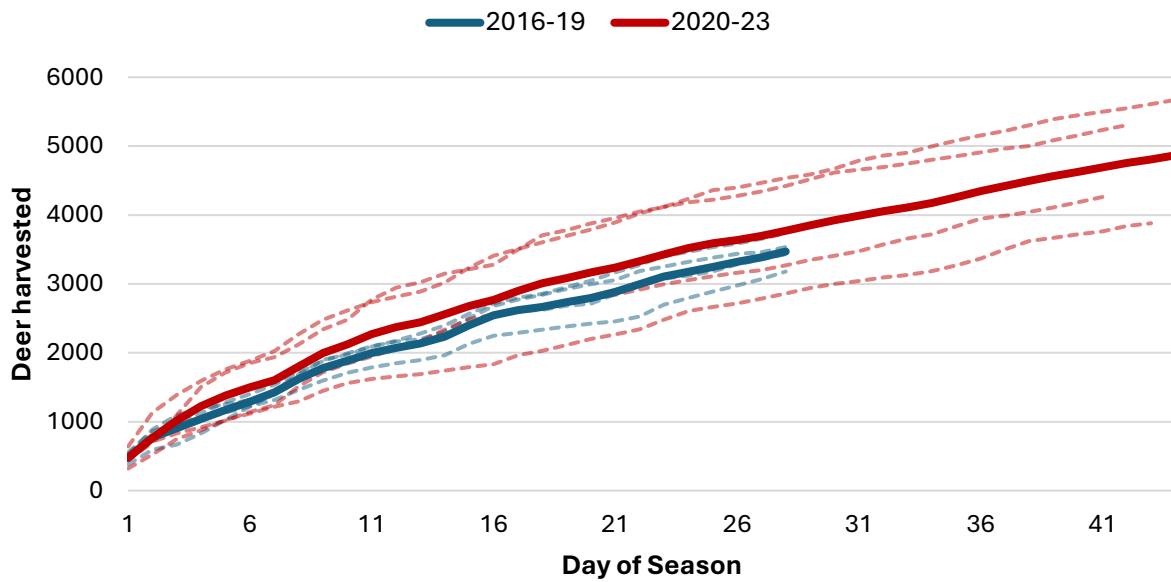


Figure 1. Daily cumulative archery harvest prior to the regular season, during 2016–2019 and 2020–2023. Dotted lines show data for individual years.

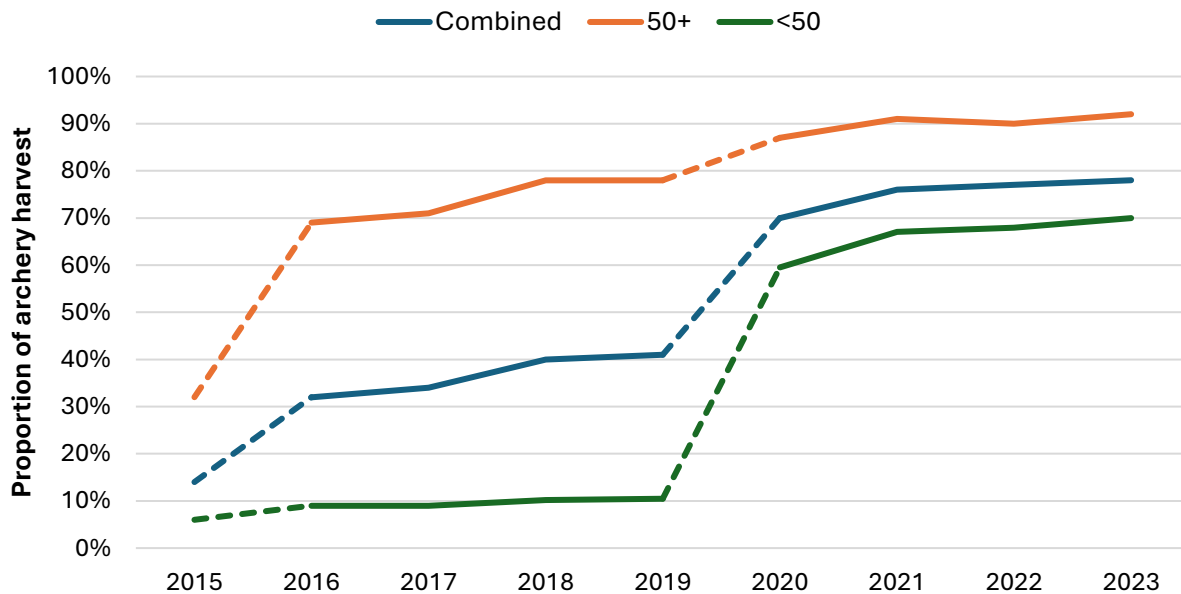


Figure 2. Proportion of the archery harvest taken with crossbows, by hunter age group, 2015–2023. Crossbows became legal for hunters age 50 or older in 2016, and for all hunters in 2020.

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