## 2025 GAME CODE Game Committee Recommendations

#### May 14, 2024 Fish & Game Council Meeting

## 2025 GAME CODE

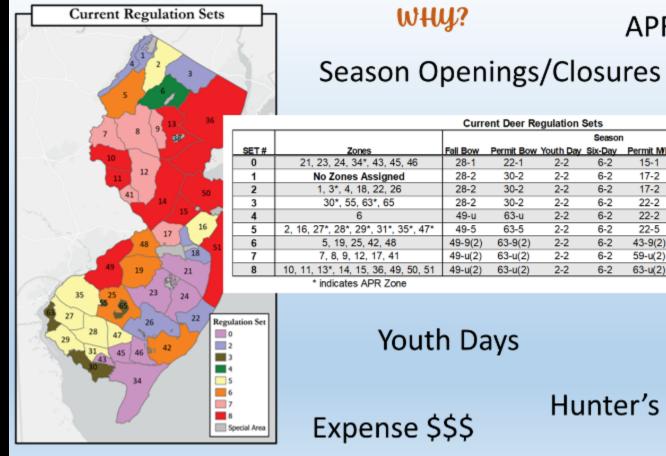
2

**Regulation Simplification** 

Recodification



3



#### **Current Deer Regulation Sets** Season Permit Bow Youth Day Six-Day Permit ML Permit S/G Winter Bow Total Days 15-1 31-1 107 22-1 2-2 6-2 3-1 30-2 2-2 6-2 17-2 3-1 31-2 117 30-2 2-2 6-2 17-2 3-1 31-2 117 3-2 30-2 2-2 6-2 22-2 31-2 122

6-2

6-2

6-2

6-2

6-2

22-2

22-5

43-9(2)

59-u(2)

63-u(2)

3-2

10-5

24-9(2)

40-u(2)

44-u(2)

Hunter's Choice Buck

31-u

31-5

31-9(2)

49-u(2)

49-u(2)

176

183

218

268

276

2-2

2-2

2-2

2-2

2-2

**APR vs Non-APR** 

#### DEER

- Simplify Regulations
  - Eliminate and combine regulation sets
  - Align season date structure
  - Reinstate 7 buck bag limit
- Multi-Zone Permit
  - Possible expansion to other regulations sets
- Antler Point Restrictions (APR)
  - Remove APR regulations



## DEER

#### **Council Meeting**

#### County Federation Meetings 19 Meetings Attended

#### **Hunter Forums**

North Central South

#### Deer Hunter Regulation Survey April 8 to May 2 81,198 Hunters (last 5-years)

Farm Bureau

**Stakeholder Meeting** 

## STAKEHOLDERING



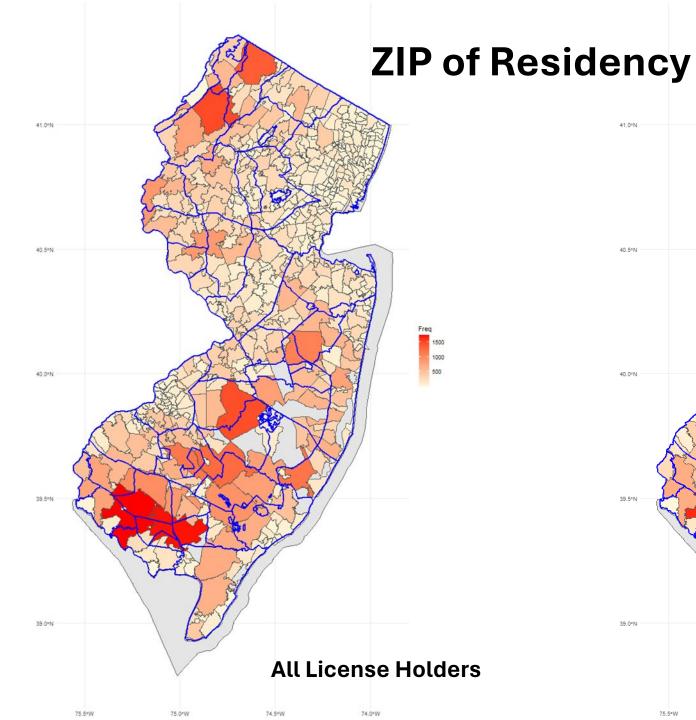
9,876 Respondents (12% response rate)

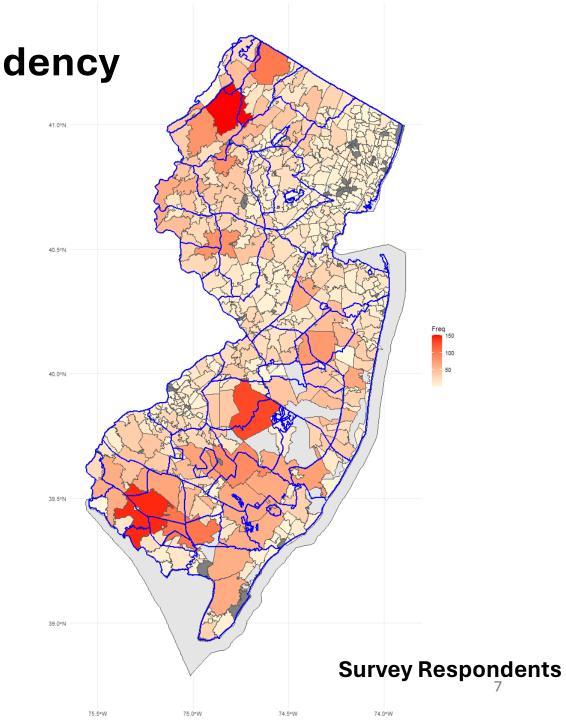
Data clean-up - Duplicate survey responses, invalid CID #s, incomplete surveys removed

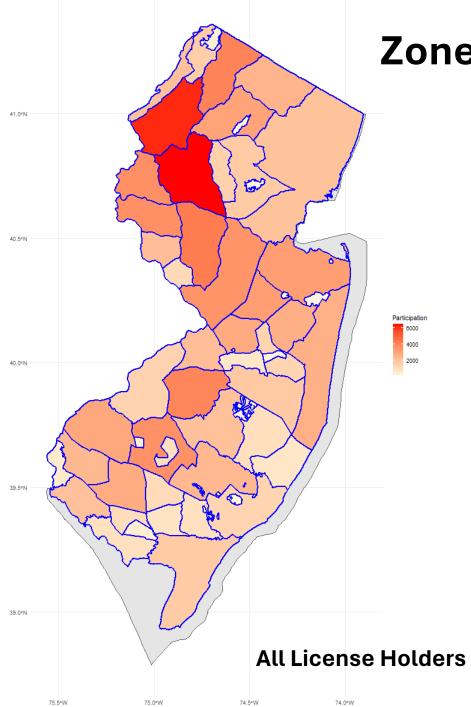
7,887 Valid and Complete responses (9.7% response rate)

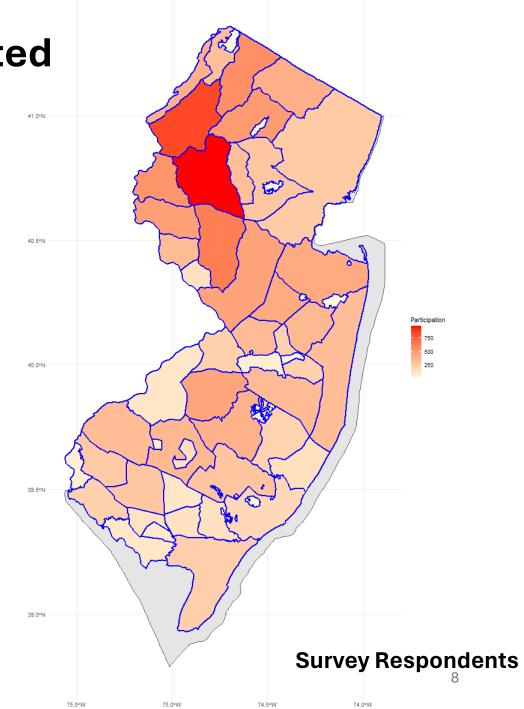
Avg. Time to Complete – 23 min.

#### **DEER HUNTER REGULATION SURVEY**



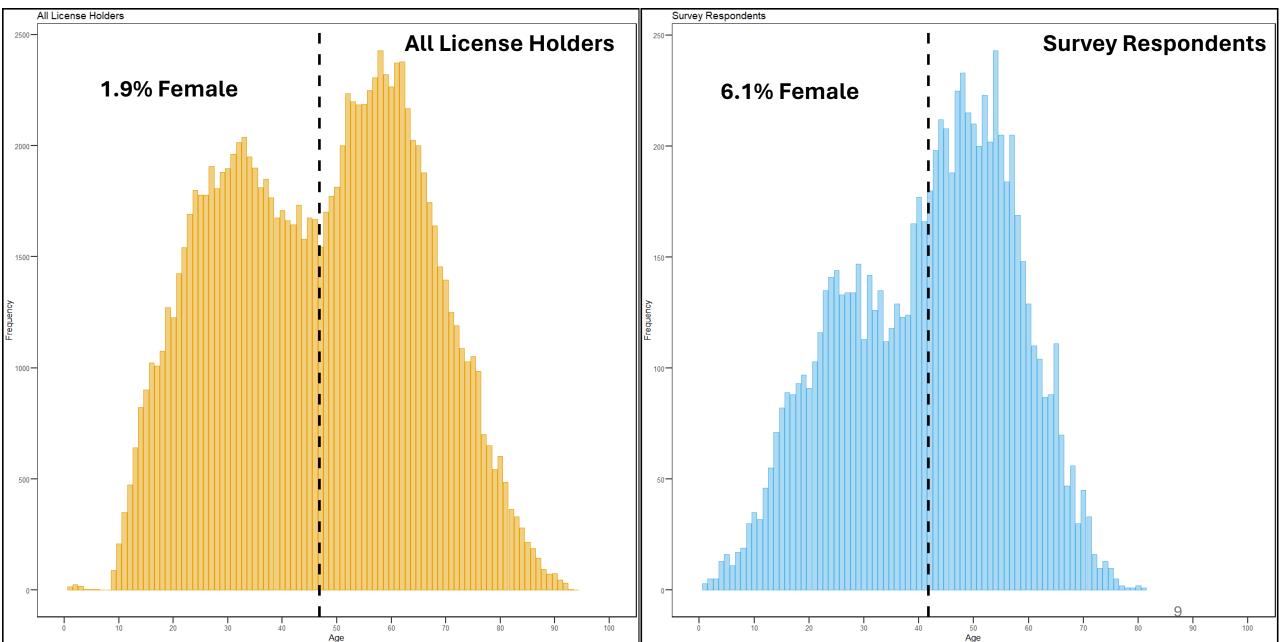




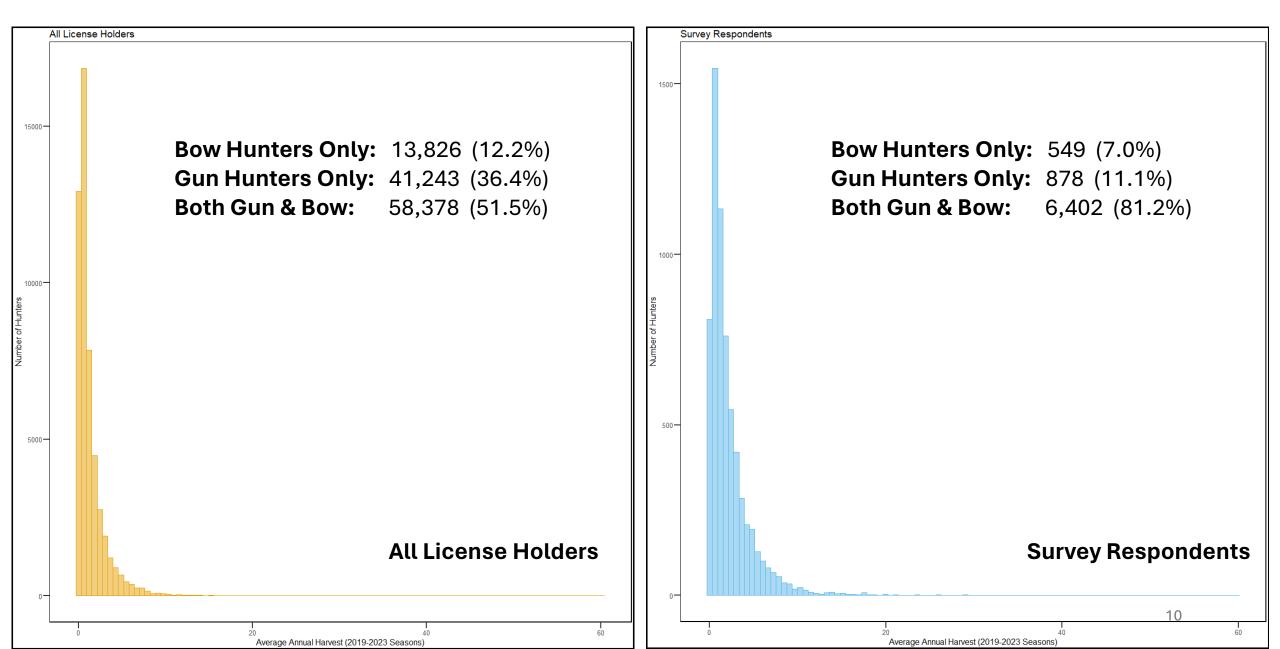


**Zones Hunted** 

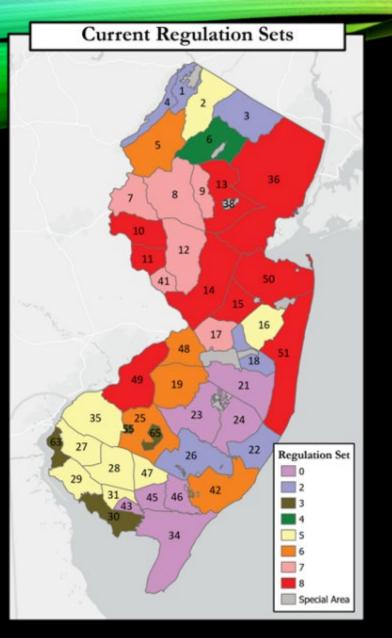
#### **Age Distribution**

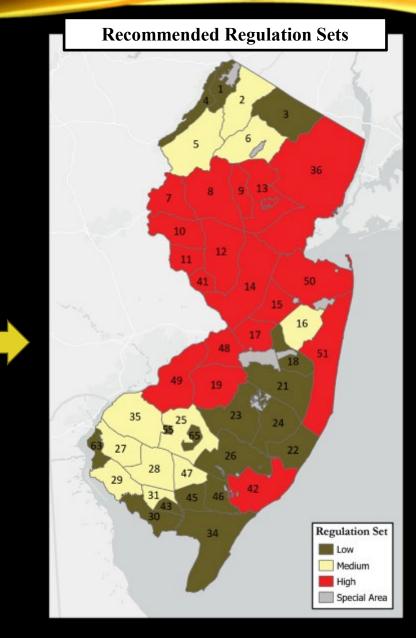


#### Number of Hunters with x Average Annual Harvest



## **COMBINE REGULATION SETS**





11

#### **EXISTING REGULATION SET STRUCTURE**

Current Deer Regulation Sets									
			Season						
SET #	Zones	Fall Bow	Permit Bow	Youth Day	Six-Day	Permit M/L	Permit S/G	Winter Bow	Total Days
0	21, 23, 24, 34*, 43, 45, 46	28-1	22-1	2-2	6-2	15-1	3-1	31-1	107
1	No Zones Assigned	28-2	30-2	2-2	6-2	17-2	3-1	31-2	117
2	1, 3*, 4, 18, 22, 26	28-2	30-2	2-2	6-2	17-2	3-1	31-2	117
3	30*, 55, 63*, 65	28-2	30-2	2-2	6-2	22-2	3-2	31-2	122
4	6	49-u	63-u	2-2	6-2	22-2	3-2	31-u	176
5	2, 16, 27*, 28*, 29*, 31*, 35*, 47*	49-5	63-5	2-2	6-2	22-5	10-5	31-5	183
6	5, 19, 25, 42, 48	49-9(2)	63-9(2)	2-2	6-2	43-9(2)	24-9(2)	31-9(2)	218
7	7, 8, 9, 12, 17, 41	49-u(2)	63-u(2)	2-2	6-2	59-u(2)	40-u(2)	49-u(2)	268
8	10, 11, 13*, 14, 15, 36, 49, 50, 51	49-u(2)	63-u(2)	2-2	6-2	63-u(2)	44-u(2)	49-u(2)	276
-						/		· · /	

\* indicates APR Zone

#### **Recommended New Season Structure**

Old	New					Season	1			
Set	Set	Zones	Fall Bow	Permit Bow	Youth Day	Six-Day	Permit M/L	Permit S/G	Winter Bow	Total Days
3	Low	1, 3, 4, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 30, 34, 43, 45, 46, 55, 63, 65	28-2	30-2	2-2	6-2	22-2	3-2	31-2	122
5	Medium	2, 5, 6, 16, 25, 27, 28, 29, 31, 35, 47	49-5	63-5	2-2	6-2	25-5	23-5	31-5	199
8	High	7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 36, 41, 42, 48, 49, 50, 51	49-u(2)	63-u(2)	2-2	6-2	72-u(2)	57-u(2)	49-u(2)	298
Red indicates the zone moving up in the reg sets										
Green indicates the zone moving down in the reg sets										
Black indicates the zone didn't change reg sets										

Set	Fall Bow	Permit Bow	Youth Days	Six-Day	Permit Muzzleloader	Permit Shotgun	Winter Bow
1 Safety	Oct 4 - Oct 31	Nov 1 - Nov 22	Sept 27 Nov 22	Dec 8 - 13	Dec 1, 2, 15, 16, 20 - 30	Dec 17 - 19	Jan 1-31
3 (Low)	Oct 4 - Oct 31	Nov 1 - Nov 30	Sept 27 Nov 22	Dec 8 - 13	Dec 1, 2, 15, 16, 20 -31, Jan 1 - 10	Dec 17 - 19	Jan 1-31
5 (Medium)	Sept 13 - Oct 3 (EAB) Oct 4 - 31	Nov 1 - Dec 31	Sept 27 Nov 22	Dec 8 - 13	Dec 1, 2, 15-31, Jan 1 - 10	Dec 15 - 19, Jan 1-17	Jan 1-31
8 (High)	Sept 13 - Oct 3 (EAB) Oct 4 - 31	Nov 1 - Dec 31	Sept 27 Nov 22	Dec 8 - 13	Nov 24-26, 28 , 8-13 (Antlerless Only) Dec 1, 2, 15-31, Jan 1 - Feb 21	Nov 24-26, 28 Dec 8-13 (Antlerless Only) Dec 15-19, Jan 1 - Feb 21	Jan 1 - Feb 21

 Eliminate and combine regulation sets

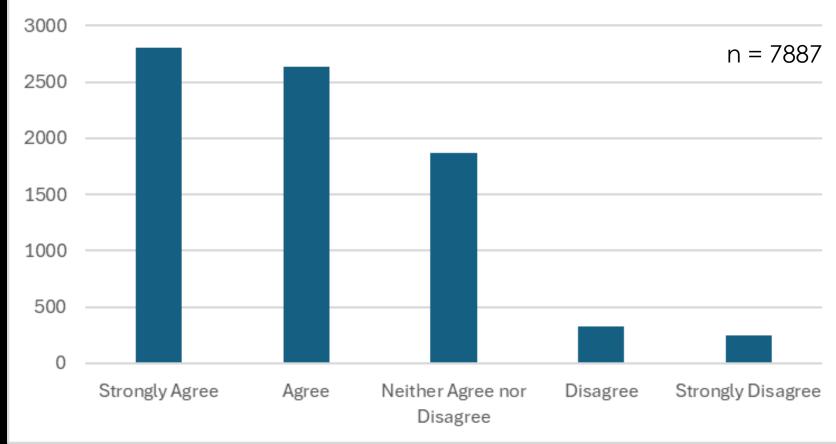
 Align season date structure

\* These dates are based off of the 2025-26 Deer Season

#### FORUMS

North – Positive Central – Positive South - Positive

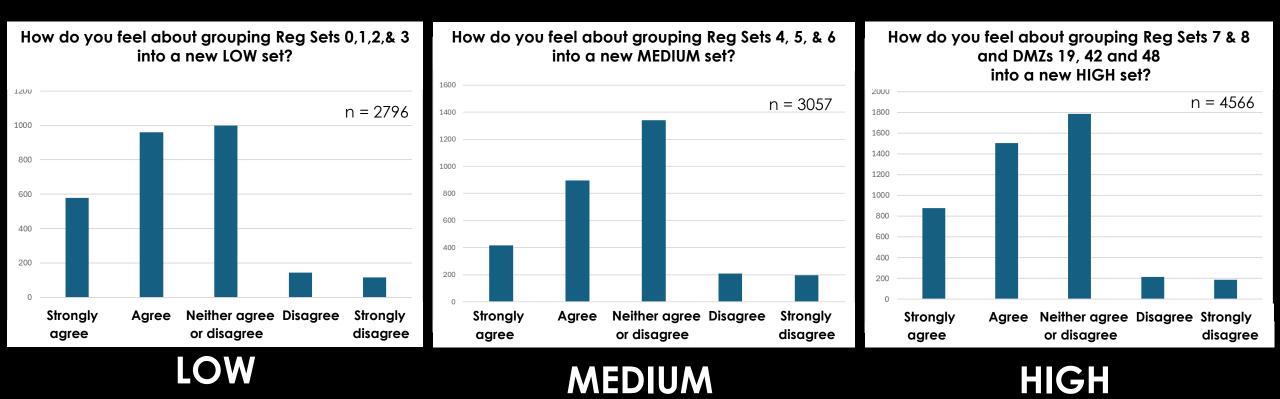
Would you support having fewer Regulation Sets?



## **COMBINE REGULATION SETS**

#### FORUMS

#### North – Positive Central – Positive South - Positive



**SURVEY RESULTS** 

Set	Fall Bow	Permit Bow	Youth Days	Six-Day	Permit Muzzleloader	Permit Shotgun	Winter Bow
1 Safety	Oct 4 - Oct 31	Nov 1 - Nov 22	Sept 27 Nov 22	Dec 8 - 13	Dec 1, 2, 15, 16, 20 - 30	Dec 17 - 19	Jan 1-31
3 (Low)	Oct 4 - Oct 31	Nov 1 - Nov 30	Sept 27 Nov 22	Dec 8 - 13	Dec 1, 2, 15, 16, 20 -31, Jan 1 - 10	Dec 17 - 19	Jan 1-31
5 (Medium)	Sept 13 - Oct 3 (EAB) Oct 4 - 31	Nov 1 - Dec 31	Sept 27 Nov 22	Dec 8 - 13	Dec 1, 2, 15-31, Jan 1 - 10	Dec 15 - 19, Jan 1-17	Jan 1-31
8 (High)	Sept 13 - Oct 3 (EAB) Oct 4 - 31	Nov 1 - Dec 31	Sept 27 Nov 22	Dec 8 - 13	Nov 24-26, 28 ,  8-13 (Antlerless Only) Dec 1, 2, <mark>15-31,</mark> Jan 1 - Feb 21	Nov 24-26, 28 Dec. 8-13 (Antlerless Only) Dec 15-19, Jan 1 - Feb 21	Jan 1 - Feb 21
* These dates are based off of the 2025-26 Deer Season							

• Align Permit Muzzleloader and Permit Shotgun seasons to run concurrently after Six-day Firearm through the end of the season. Looking in to impacts.

#### **SEASON ALIGNMENT – HIGH SET**

## **MULTI-ZONE PERMIT EXPANSION**

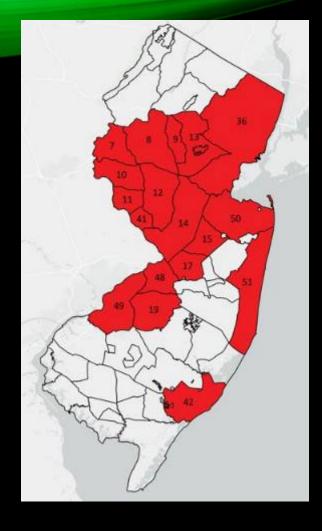
P

E R

M

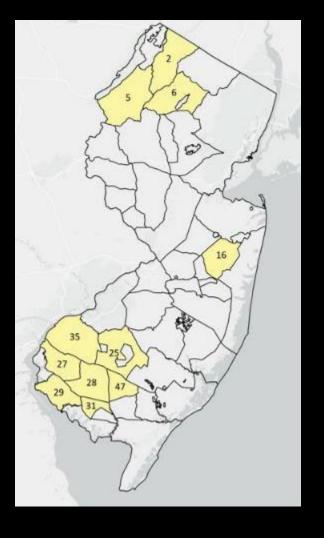
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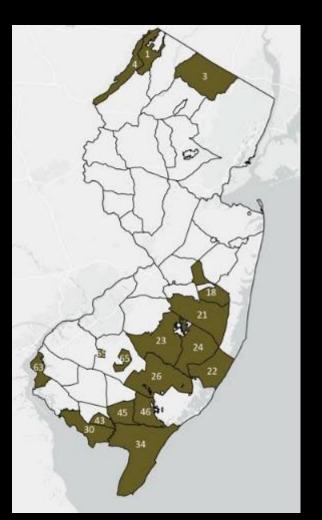


HIGH

MEDIUM



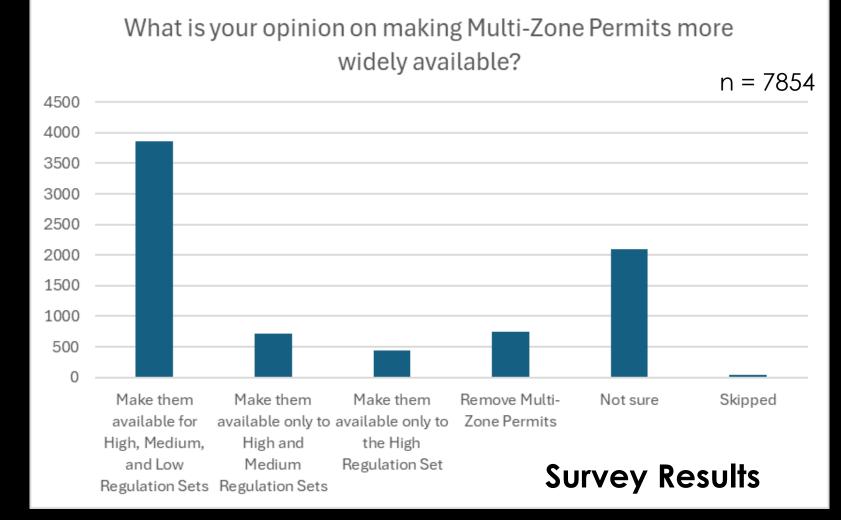
S E A S O Z S



LOW

#### FORUMS

North – Positive Central – Positive South - Positive



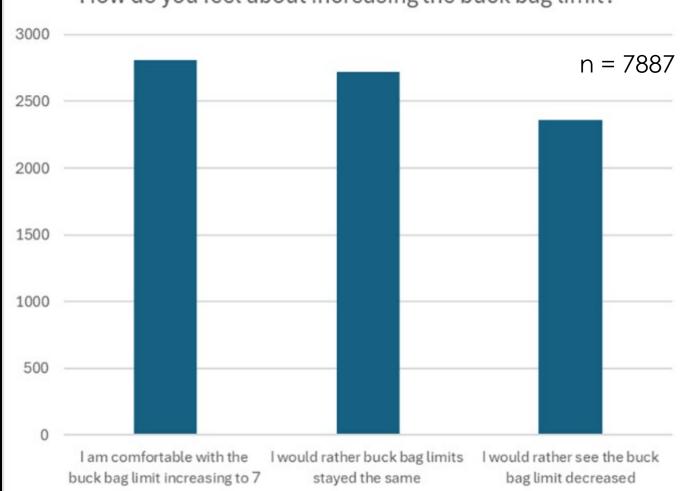
#### **MULTI-ZONE PERMIT EXPANSION**

- Hunters would no longer need to forfeit their Permit Shotgun buck tag if they harvest 2 bucks during the Six-Day Firearm season.
- Maintains an equal opportunity for hunters to harvest a buck across each of the six seasons.
- Despite having the opportunity to harvest more bucks, most successful hunters (99.2%) harvest 3 bucks or fewer.
- Less than 5% of deer hunters in New Jersey participate in every deer season. So less than 5% of deer hunters possess the maximum number of buck tags.

## **REINSTATE BUCK LIMIT TO 7 FROM 6**

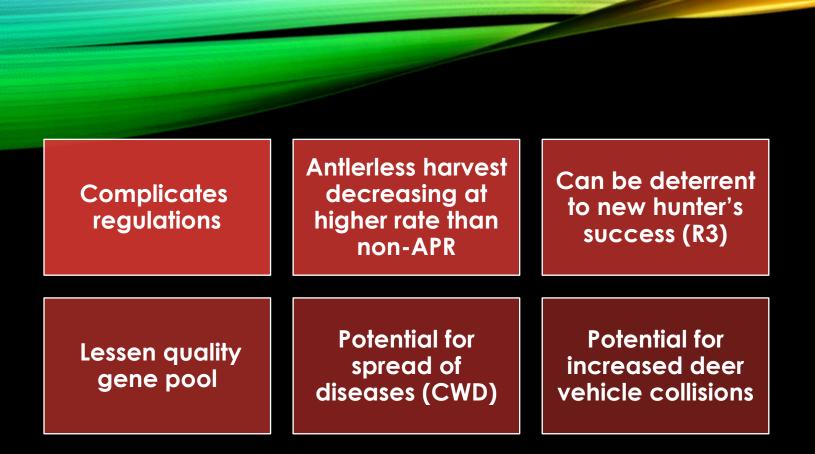
#### FORUMS

North – Negative Central – Positive South - Negative

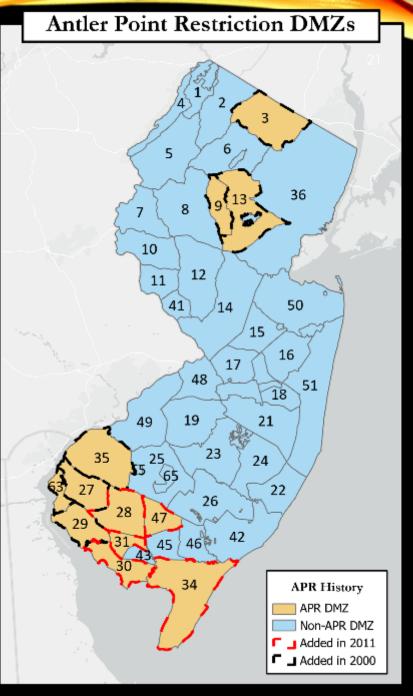


#### How do you feel about increasing the buck bag limit?

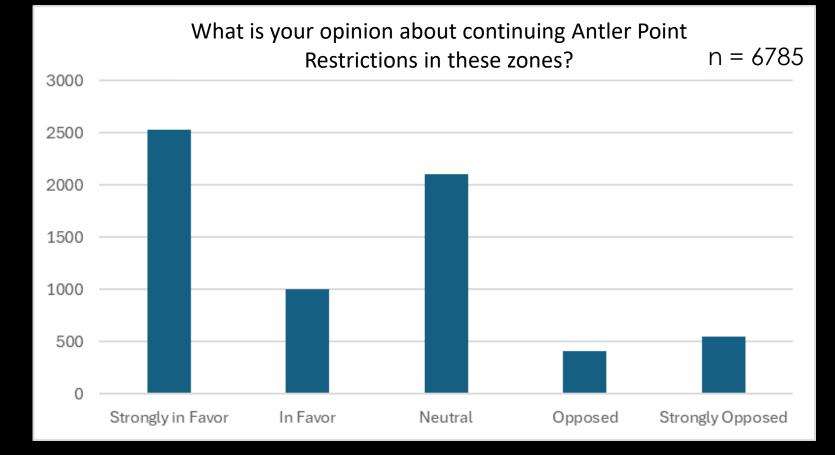
### **REINSTATE BUCK LIMIT TO 7 FROM 6**



Currently applies to youths outside of the designated youth days.

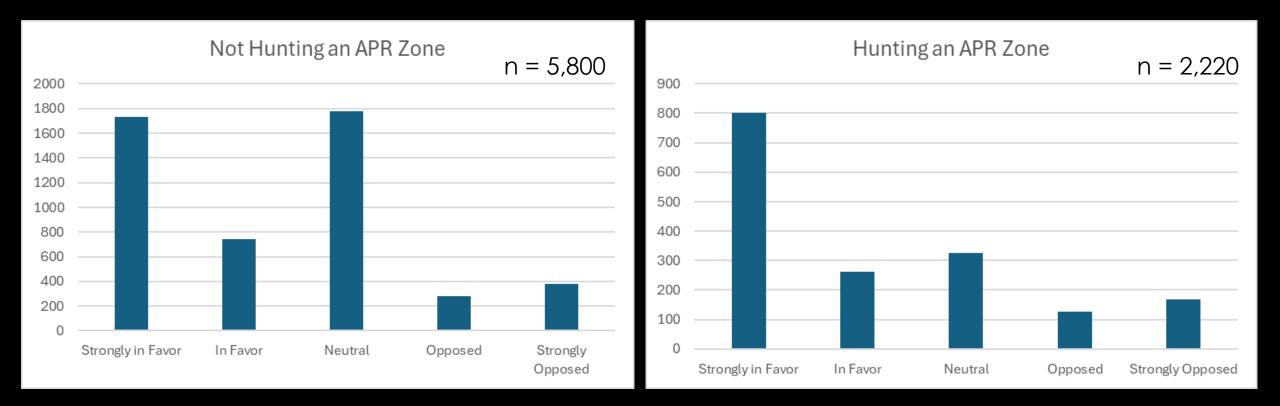


#### FORUMS Eliminating APR North – Negative Central – Positive South - Negative

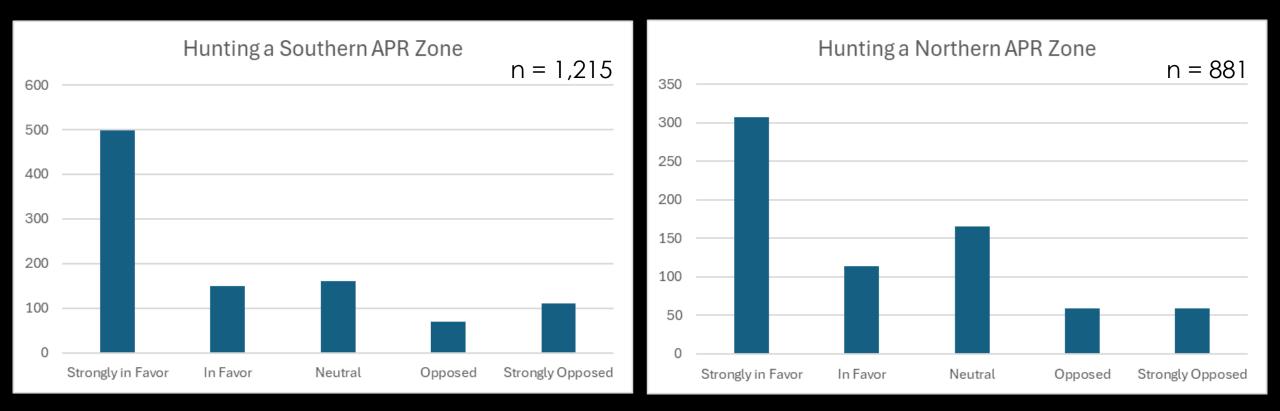


SURVEY RESULTS - Statewide

#### SURVEY RESULTS – By APR Participation



#### SURVEY RESULTS – By APR Region



## DISCUSSION

- Simplify Regulations
  - Eliminate and combine regulation sets
  - Align season date structure
  - Reinstate 7 buck bag limit
- Multi-Zone Permit
  - Possible expansion to other regulations sets
- Antler Point Restrictions (APR)
  - APR regulations
    - North
    - South

## **ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- Exempt Youth Hunters from APR Restrictions throughout ALL seasons within APR designated zones
- Change Boundaries of Zone 13 to exclude Union County
  - Request from Union County Federation
  - Removes APR from Union County properties

#### ZONE 13 – UNION COUNTY



## **SIX-DAY FIREARM SEASON**

• Require bow hunters to wear Hunter orange during Six-Day Firearm Season



## GREAT SWAMP (DMZ 38)

- Incorporate Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge into Zone 13
  - Eliminates DMZ 38
  - Hunters would still be required to obtain a special access permit issued by Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge
  - Great Swamp liberalizing current regulations but still different from Reg Set
     8
  - Requested by Great Swamp Managers

## DISCUSSION

## JOINT BASE MDL (DMZS 37 & 53)

- Both DMZs to be aligned in season structure and bag limits
  - Requested by Biological Scientist managing hunts on both DMZ 37 and 53
  - Will need letters from Commanding Officers from each base to confirm any regulations changes

## DISCUSSION

## TURKEY

#### **Close Fall Either-Sex Season**

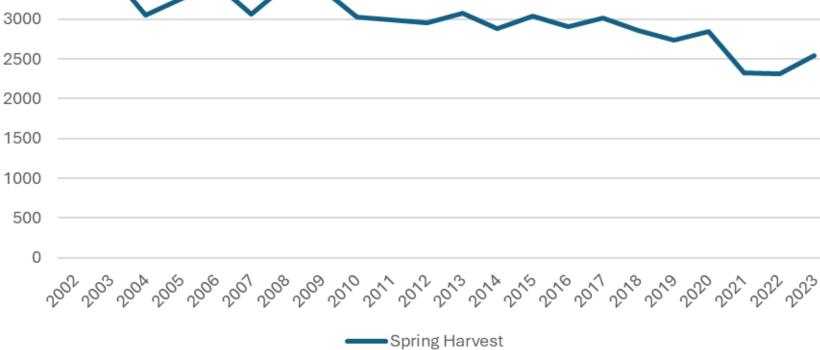
- Declining Spring Harvest
- Declining Fall Either Sex Harvest
- Other states similar concerns
- Protect hens



# Spring Harvest

4000

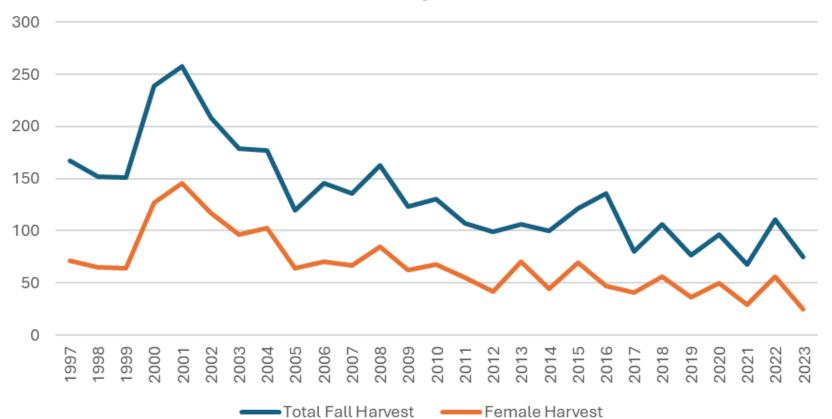
3500



## TURKEY

- Spring harvest has gradually declined since 2002
- Spring harvest data gauges population trends

#### Fall Either-Sex Turkey Harvest 1997-2023



## TURKEY

- 1997-2016 Hen Turkeys made
   up ~50% of the total harvest
- 2016-2023 Hen Turkeys made
   up ~30% of the total harvest

- 2,254 individual turkey hunters participated in 2023 Fall Either-Sex Turkey Season
- 2,948 Fall Either-Sex Turkey Season permits were sold in 2023
  - 50 Youth, 879 Farmer, 2,019 General
  - \$42,999 in permit sales
- 349 individual hunters purchased 2 or more permits
- Permits are Turkey Hunting Area (THA) specific
  - only one bird may be harvested per day no matter number of permits

## TURKEY

Permits Purchased	# of Individual Hunter
1	1905
2	195
3	95
4	22
5	6
6	16
7	4
8	3
9	4
12	1
15	1
18	1
22	1



#### Ammunition Changes

- Allow .410 and 28 gauge
- Require shot with a minimum density of 18 grams per cubic centimeter(ex. TSS) for .410 and 28 gauge
- Remove Turkey blinds from any WMA at the end of legal hunting hours each day
- Turkey blinds must be labeled with CID number



#### DISCUSSION

- Close Fall Either-Sex Season
- Ammunition Changes
  - Allow .410 and 28 gauge
  - Require minimum density of 18 grams per cubic centimeter shot for .410 and 28 gauge
- Remove turkey blinds from any WMA at the end of legal hunting hours each day
- Turkey blinds must be labeled with CID number

## PHEASANTS/QUAIL

- Opening Day change start time from 8 am to sunrise
- Extend season on Semi-Wilds by 16 days to end on March 31 and eliminate option to extend season by 20 days, as no longer necessary.
- Remove restriction of stocking pen-reared quail in south Jersey WMAs near previous quail focal areas

# PHEASANTS/QUAIL

 Prohibit dog training on WMAs stocked for Youth Day hunt during the youth week of pheasant hunting.

- Assunpink Black River
  Clinton Colliers Mills
  Flatbrook Glassboro
  Millville Peaslee
- Whittingham
   Winslow

• Remove list of specific WMAs and reference Fish & Wildlife website

- Opening Day change start time from 8 am to sunrise
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## SMALL GAME

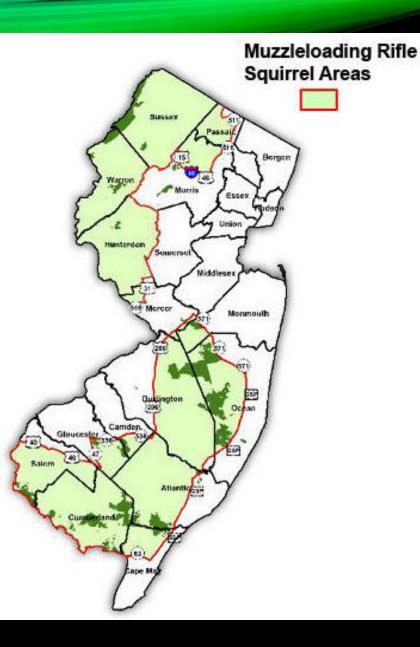


Require harvest reporting

#### • Air Guns

 Allow .25 caliber air guns for rabbit, squirrel, raccoon, opossum, and coyote hunting





# **GRAY SQUIRREL**

- Eliminate the Special Squirrel Muzzleloader Rifle Season and associated zones
  - Allow the use of muzzleloader rifles no larger than .36 caliber during regular season

### • Gray Fox

Mandatory harvest reporting

### • Air Guns

• Allow .25 caliber air guns for rabbit, squirrel, raccoon, opossum, and coyote hunting

### Gray Squirrel Muzzleloader

• Eliminate season/zones, allow up to .36 cal. during small game season

# TRAPPING

#### General

• Replace "durable and legible" tags to require "metal tags" for trap identification

### Body Gripping Traps

• Add beaver, mink, and river otter to the species for which gripping traps can be set exposed above the water surface in tidal areas.

#### • Dispatch

• Allow .25 caliber rifle for dispatching animals

#### General

• Replace "durable and legible" tags to require "metal tags" for trap identification

#### Body Gripping Traps

• Add beaver, mink, and river otter to the species for which gripping traps can be set exposed above the water surface in tidal areas.

#### • Dispatch

• Allow .25 caliber rifle for dispatching animals

#### • Lengthen season - December 15 to March 15

- Current Statewide Season Dec. 26 Feb. 9
- Jan. 1 Feb. 9 on stocked WMAs
- Increase bag limit
  - From 8 to 10 beaver/permit
- Increase trap limit
  - From 5 to 6 traps per day per zone
  - Keeps ratio of traps to bag limit
  - Very little incidental take of otter
- Eliminate check station requirement
  - Require harvest reporting through AHRS

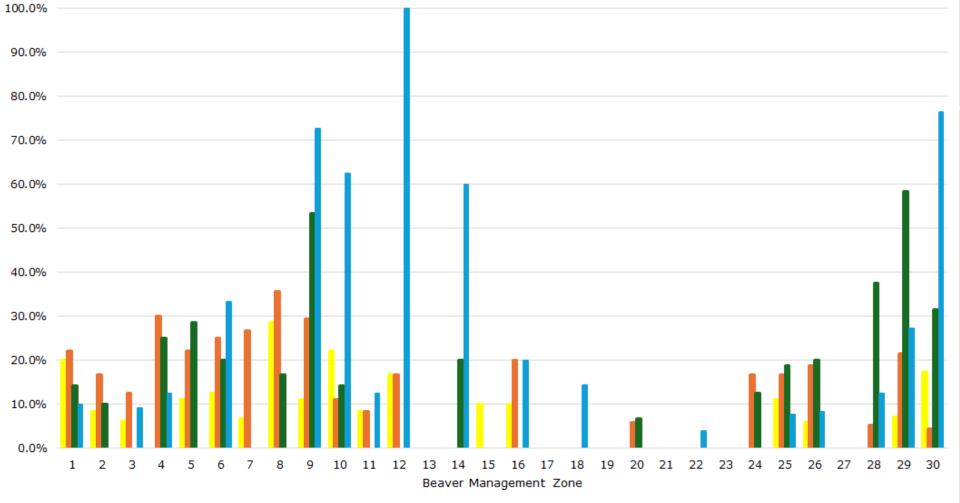


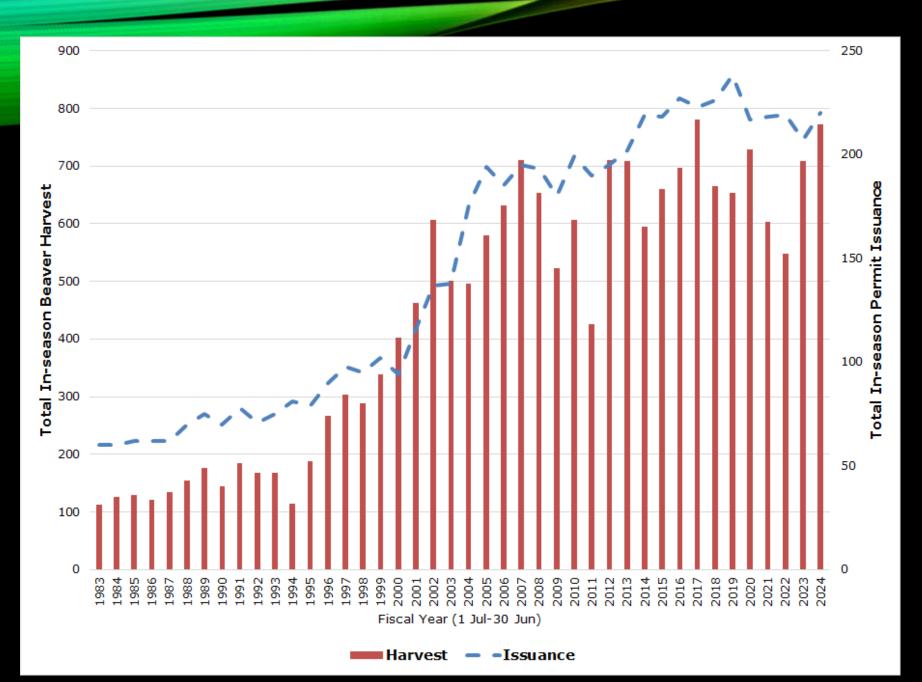


- 200 permit quota set by statute (NJSA 23:4-55)
- Only 50% of trappers successfully harvest 1 beaver
- Avg. harvest 5 beavers/trapper
- Maximum removal rate is ~15% annually
- Current harvest rates around 5% annually

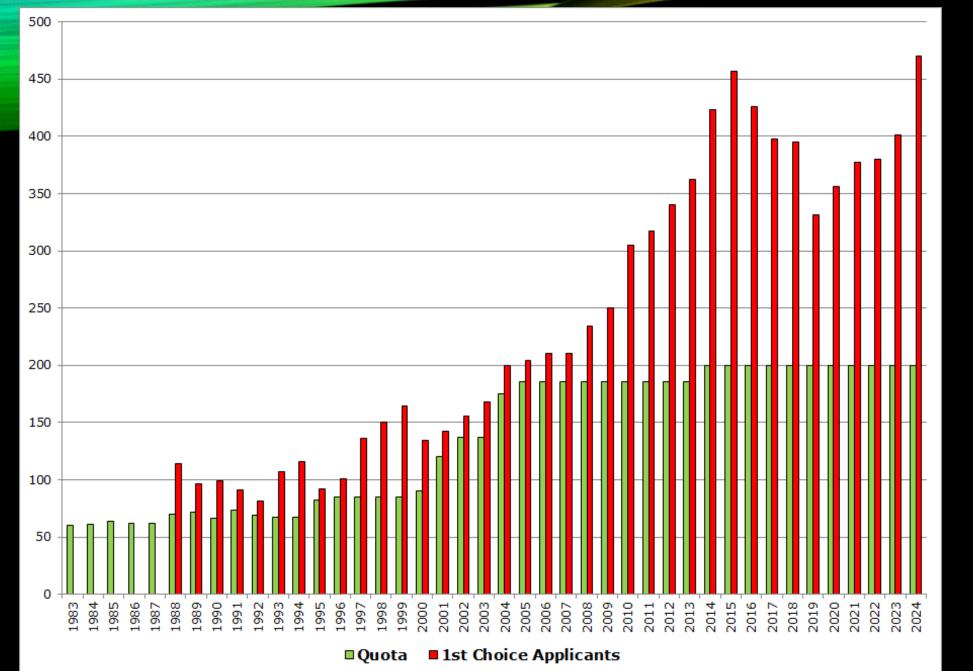
Stream survey – higher detection rates through time





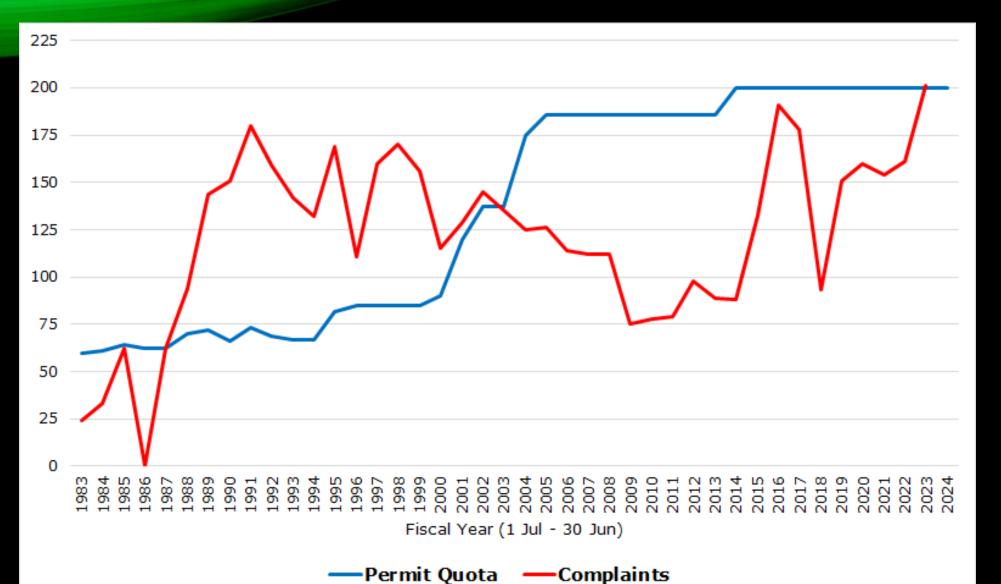


 Increasing harvest over time 48



 Higher level of interest than current 200 permit quota can accommodate

<u>49</u>



 Overall increase in complaints, particularly in southern NJ

#### • Lengthen season - December 15 to March 15

- Current Statewide Season Dec. 26 Feb. 9
- Jan. 1 Feb. 9 on stocked WMAs
- 10 beaver bag limit
- 6 traps/day/zone

### Eliminate check station requirement

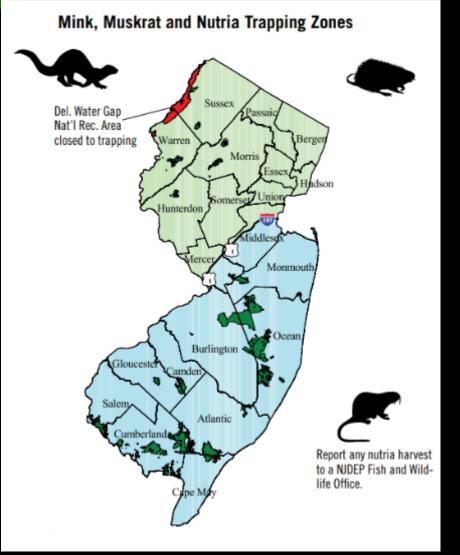
• Require harvest reporting through AHRS



• Eliminate requirement to surrender otter carcass







# MINK, MUSKRAT & NUTRIA

### Eliminate North/South Zones

- North Nov. 15 March 15
- South Dec. 1 March 15

#### Statewide Season

• November 15 – March 15

## **SNAP TRAPS**

- Allow use of snap traps on dry land (away from buildings) for the trapping of weasels
  - Provided trap is recessed inside a box (cubby set)
    - Minimizes capture of non-targets
    - AFWA approved BMP device for weasels
  - Provides an additional tool besides cable restraints for trappers targeting weasels

#### • Allow use of snap traps on dry land (away from buildings)

• Provided trap is recessed inside a box (cubby set)

### • Mink, Muskrat, and Nutria

- Eliminate North/South Zone
- Open Season Statewide November 15

# **COYOTE/FOX HUNTING**

#### Regular Season

- End of Sept. Mar. 15
- Bow, shotgun
- Dogs allowed

### Special permit season

- Jan. 1 Mar. 15
- Separate day and night regs
- Day Bow, shotgun, muzzleloader, rimfire, centerfire (.17-.25 cal.)
- Night Shotgun only (shot size #4 T)
- No dogs

### Incidental harvest

- Firearm deer hunting
- Spring turkey



# **COYOTE/FOX HUNTING**

- Allow incidental harvest during Early Fall Bow
- Add .25 caliber air guns
- Eliminate permit requirement for "Special Permit Season"

# **COYOTE/FOX HUNTING**

- Divide Regular Season into Day and Night
  - Day
    - Aug. 1 Mar. 15
    - Bow, shotgun, muzzleloader, rimfire, centerfire, .25 cal. air gun
    - No centerfire rifles on WMAs and Parks Aug. 1 Dec. 31 (align with woodchuck)
    - Allow fine shot up to #3 buck
    - Dogs allowed
  - Night
    - Jan. 1 Mar. 15
    - 10-12 ga. shotgun only
    - Allow BB to #3 buck

- Allow incidental harvest during Early Fall Bow
- Allow .25 caliber air guns
- Eliminate permit requirement for "Special Permit Season"
- Divide Regular Season into Day and Night
  - Day
    - Aug. 1 Mar. 15
    - Bow, shotgun, muzzleloader, rimfire, centerfire, .25 cal. air gun
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    - Allow fine shot up to #3 buck
    - Dogs allowed
  - Night
    - Jan. 1 Mar. 15
    - 10-12 ga. shotgun only
    - Allow BB to #3 buck

# WILDLIFE DAMAGE

- Add nutria, rabbit, muskrat, and mink to list of species allowed for take in response to damage
  - Damage to crops, livestock or property
  - Other special management problems (airports, waterways, golf courses, etc.)



## HARVEST REPORTING DEADLINE

Harvest Reporting Deadline for ALL Species (except bear) 10 pm



# RECODIFICATON

- Main SUBSECTIONS
  - General Provisions
  - Closed Seasons
  - Hunting
  - Trapping
  - Special Permits
  - Wildlife Disease Surveillance and Management

Regulations for Individual Species listed alphabetically under Hunting & Trapping

# **SPECIES SECTIONS LAYOUT**

- 7:25-5.XX Species
- WHAT'S NEEDED
- WHEN
- HOW MANY
- HOW
- MEANS
- PERMITS
- TAGGING/REPORTING
- WHERE
- PERMIT QUOTAS
- AUTHORITY

- (a) Licensing and permit requirement
- (b) season dates, hunting hours
- (c) bag limits
- (d) manner
- (e) method and ammo
- (f) permits (if applicable): application process (regular and farmer) and issuance etc.
- (g) tagging, AHRS, etc.
- (h) management zones or areas, as applicable
- (i) quota tables
- (j) Statutes that support provide authority for rules within subsection

## ELIMINATING

- 7:25-5.3 Dogs
- 7:25-5.14 Special regulation limiting use of shotguns and shotgun shells containing lead pellets
- 7:25-5.22 Wild animals; possession, killing
- 7:25-5.23 Firearms and missiles, etc
- 7:25-5.24 Bow and arrow, general provisions
- 7:25 5.31 Permit shotgun and muzzleloader seasons for Great Swamp Nat. Refuge
- 7:25-5.33 Pheasants and quail stamp designated areas
- 7:25-5.34 Controlled hunting--hunting restrictions on wildlife management areas
- 7:25-5.38 Fish and Game Law Enforcement Region Headquarters
- 7:25-5.39 Severability

### Rules being incorporated into Other Sections

## **NEW SECTIONS**

- 7:25-5.2 Definitions
- 7:25-5.3 Closed seasons, game species
- 7:25-5.28 Community Based Deer Management Permits
- 7:25-5.29 Provisions for Hunters with Disabilities
- 7:25-5.35 Wildlife Disease surveillance and management

## **CLOSED SEASONS**

It shall be illegal to take, kill, or attempt to take or kill any of the game species

identified below in the State of New Jersey at any time:

- 1. Bobcat (Felis rufus);
- 2. Bobwhite quail (wild) (Colinus virginianus);
- 3. Fisher (Pekania pennanti);
- 4. Mourning dove (Zenaida macroura)
- 5. Ruffed grouse (Bonasa umbellus); and
- 6. Sandhill crane (Grus canadensis).

## A HUGE THANKYOU & WELL DONE TO THE WILDLIFE MGMT. STAFF

TO THE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT STAFF WHO DID AN EXTRAORDINARY JOB OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS CRUNCHING ALL THE DATA, ATTENDING ALL THE MEETINGS, AND TAKING A HARD LOOK AT WAYS OF SIMPLIFYING OUR REGULATIONS!

# SCHEDULE

- June 2024 First Draft proposal to OLA/DAG for review
- July 2024 OLA/DAG Review
- August 2024 OLA/DAG Review
- September 2024 OLA/DAG Review
- October 2024 File proposal w/OAL
- November 2024 NJ Register publication (start 60 day)
- November 2024 Public Hearing (no sooner than 15 days after publication)
- **Dec/Jan 2025** Public Comment Ends
- January 2025 Review, log, and categorize public comment
- February 2025 Review, log, and categorize public comment, begin draft Adoption
- March 2025 Draft Adoption Document (public comment summary/response)
- April 2025 OLA/DAG Review Adoption Document
- May 2025 Council Review Public Comment/Approve Adoption/OLA/DAG Review
- June 2025 File Adoption with OAL (LATEST IT CAN BE FILED)
- July 2025 Adoption Published in the NJ Register

#### **EFFECTIVE 5 days after publication**