

Regulation Proposals

2022-23 and 2023-24 Hunting Seasons



Maryland Department of Natural Resources

Wildlife and Heritage Service

Regulation Cycle

- ✓ The Game Program meets and develops Management Concepts-
- September 2021.
- ✓ Presents Concepts to Wildlife Advisory Committee.
- October 20, 2021
- ✓ Presents Concepts to a meeting of Internal Stakeholders.
- December 13, 2021
- ✓ Presents Concepts to a meeting of External Stakeholders.
- January 11, 2022
- ✓ Concepts are refined further and developed into Proposals and are placed online for public comment.
- February 2022
- ✓ Comment period closes and Proposals are finalized and presented to the Wildlife Advisory Commission.
- March 16, 2022
- ✓ Final Proposals are forwarded to the Maryland Register for additional comment and regulations become final.

REVIEW INPUT AND ADD/DROP/MODIFY AT EVERY STEP

Proposal: Allow hunters on public lands to leave their tree stands in place throughout the hunting season.

- Proposal advanced by the Wildlife Advisory Commission.
- Allow placement of tree stands two weeks prior to, thru two weeks following the deer hunting season.
- State Forests and Wildlife Management Areas only.
- Portable stands only (including ladders) that are not permanently affixed and that do not injure the tree.

Leaving tree stands in place throughout the hunting season.

RATIONALE:

- Requiring aging hunters to remove tree stands from public lands at the end of each hunt is burdensome and discourages hunting on these properties. The change would promote hunter recruitment efforts.
- Many states and refuges around Maryland allow tree stands to remain in place during the hunting season (including Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Virginia).

Leaving tree stands in place throughout the hunting season.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Limit the number of stands one person can leave in place to one stand per public hunting area.
- Limit the practice to larger public properties or certain geographical areas.
- Placing a stand does not give the hunter sole use of the area. First come first served.
- Stands left after the removal date will be removed and reported to Natural Resource Police.
- Require tagging of stands with DNRid.

Whitetail & Sika Deer

Proposal: Extend the time period to use a Deer Cooperator Permit (non-safety permit) from February 1 – March 31 to January 15 – April 15.

RATIONALE:

- Individuals/areas using Deer Cooperator Permits continue to deal with elevated deer numbers and resulting damage.
- Deer damage to agricultural crops continues to be a significant concern for farmers.
- Deer Cooperator Permit holders sometimes do not have enough time in February-March to address all areas they need to remove deer from.
- Additional information about the Deer Cooperator Permit can be found on the following slide and at https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/pages/hunt_trap/ddmtdcc.aspx

Deer Cooperator Permits – Background Information

Deer Cooperator Permits are used by individuals or organizations to conduct lethal or non-lethal (immunocontraception or “spaying”) deer management. Permits for Deer Cooperators can be issued for year-round lethal control if the purpose is to address a human safety concern (e.g. airports, driver training tracks, etc.). Permits are also issued for agricultural or other open space areas where human safety concerns with deer are not an issue. Current regulations specify that these agricultural-oriented permits can only be used in February and March.

Deer cooperators must follow an approved operational plan. Lethal control plans allow deer to be taken at night with spotlights and night-vision equipment. Permittees may operate in any county using any caliber centerfire rifle, including counties that currently limit deer hunting to shotguns or straight-walled cartridge rifles. Suppressors or “silencers” are often used on firearms during these operations.

Most deer harvested under authority of Deer Cooperator Permits are removed outside of the hunting season, and none of the deer count against the hunting season bag limit. Deer Cooperator Permits should not be confused with Deer Management Permits (DMP) or “crop damage permits”, which are limited to day-time shooting only and available year round including Sundays.

Approximately 2,000 deer are taken under the authority of DCP’s on forty permits issued every year. Nearly 10,000 deer are taken on approximately 1,800 “Crop Damage Permits/DMPs” annually. Hunters take an average of 75,000 deer during the annual hunting seasons.

Proposal: Require crossbows to be un-cocked when transported in a licensed vehicle.

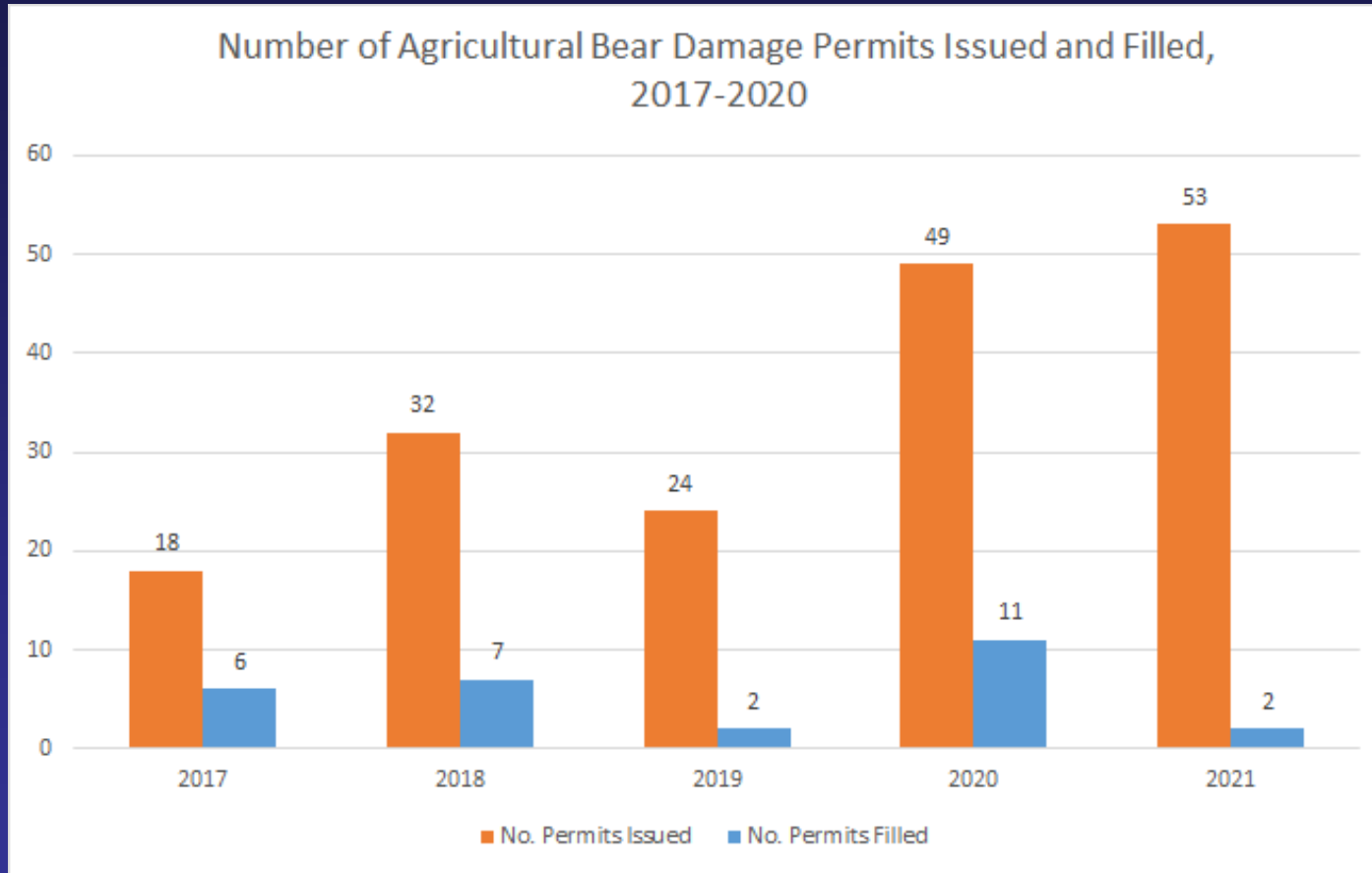
- Proposal advanced by external stakeholders.
- Crossbows store a significant amount of energy when cocked. An accidental discharge without a bolt loaded can cause the weapon to explode, possibly causing injury.
- This risk is most pronounced in vehicles where passengers in close proximity may not recognize the danger associated with a cocked crossbow.
- Advancements in crossbow technology allow de-cocking much easier than traditional crossbows.

Proposal: Add a third bear management option for farmers experiencing bear damage so that they could receive an Agricultural Bear Crop Damage Permit to use when they are experiencing damage (often outside of the bear hunting season).

RATIONALE:

- Currently farmers experiencing agricultural damage due to black bears may choose to either receive compensation under the Black Bear Compensation Program or receive an Agricultural Bear Hunting Permit which is valid during the established bear hunting season.
- A third option would make available a permit which would be valid for two weeks from the time they report the damage.
- Permits would be offered from September through December.
- Farmers would only be eligible for one of the three options in a given year.
- Farmers would keep and use any bears harvested.

Black Bear



The number of bears removed under agricultural damage permits is low.

Bobwhite Quail

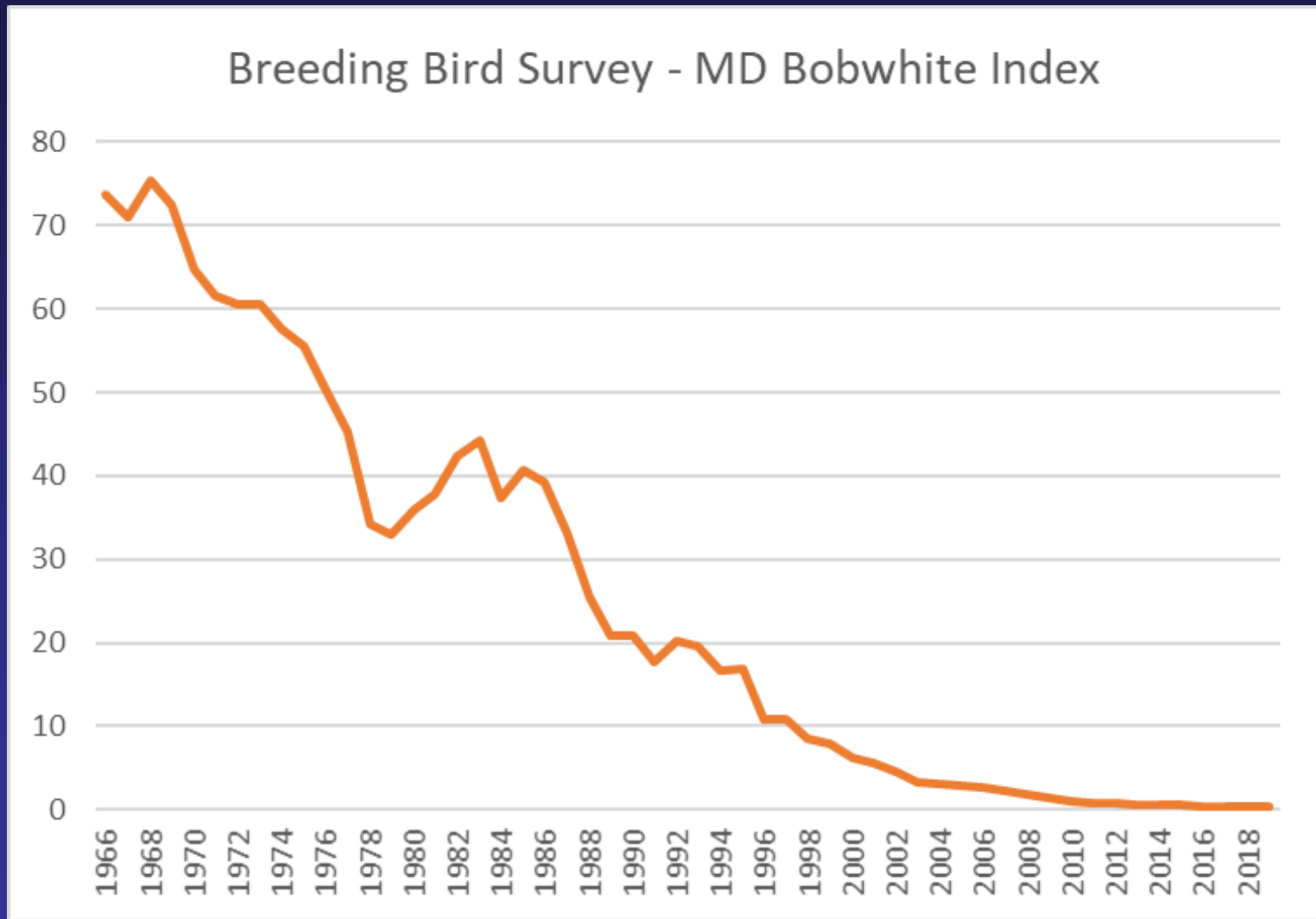
Proposal: Shorten the season in the Eastern zone (private lands) by one month so that the season would end on January 15.

RATIONALE:

- Quail populations have declined more than any other bird in MD (since mid-1960s according to the USGS Breeding Bird Survey)
- Hunting is not thought to be a primary factor, but excessive harvest may limit populations.
- This change will:
 1. Minimize the possibility that hunting is impacting declining populations, and
 2. Simplify regulations by merging regions (Eastern and Western zones will end on same day)



Bobwhite Quail



Bobwhite quail populations have declined an average of 9.7% per year

Bobwhite Quail

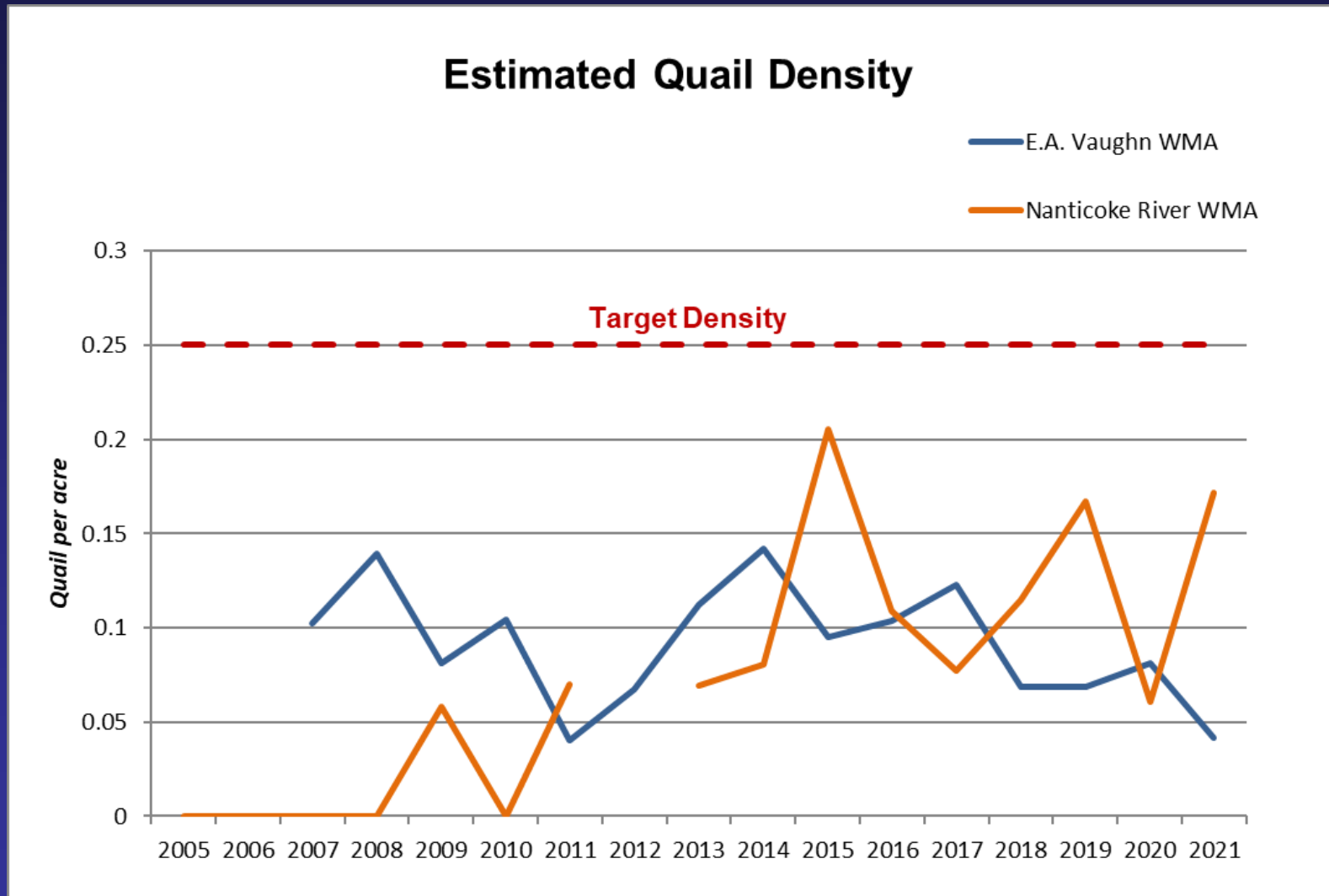
Proposal: Close the season on public hunting lands east of the Susquehanna River until populations improve.

RATIONALE:

- Intensive habitat management is being conducted on some WMAs with varying levels of success.
- But even on these well-managed areas, populations are below target levels.
- These changes will conserve quail on public lands where restoration efforts are being conducted.
- If populations recover, these areas can be used as a source to translocate to other properties.
- Limited hunting consistent with the population status would be retained as an option.



Bobwhite Quail



Populations remain below target levels on WMAs with good habitat

Special Sea Duck Season Closure



- A special season is no longer appropriate for sea ducks as these seasons can only be applied to species that are overabundant or lightly utilized.
- Given the increase in popularity of sea duck hunting and accessibility to improved technology (boats, motors, gps, decoys, safety gear, etc.) this season no longer meets the above mandate.
- 5 years ago the season was reduced from 107 days to 60 along with a bag limit reduction from 7 to 5 per day and despite those reductions, harvest has remained stable or increased for most species over that time.
- The daily bag limit in the regular duck season will be reduced to 4 sea ducks per day with no more than 3 scoters, 3 long-tailed ducks, or 3 eiders.
- Hunters may pursue sea ducks during the 60 day regular duck season, however sea ducks will always count towards the regular daily bag limit regardless of where they are harvested.

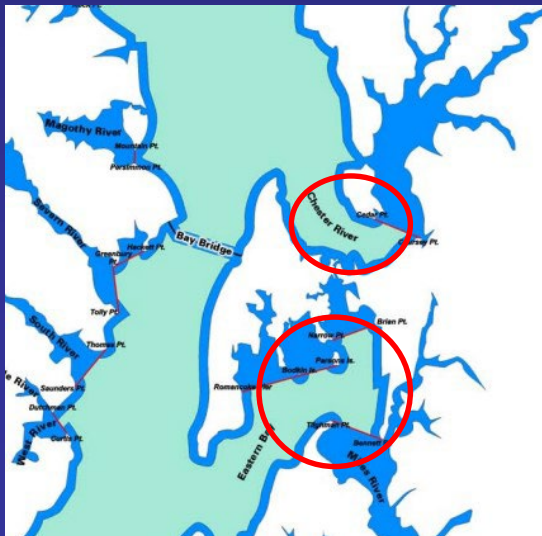


Sea Duck Zone Concept

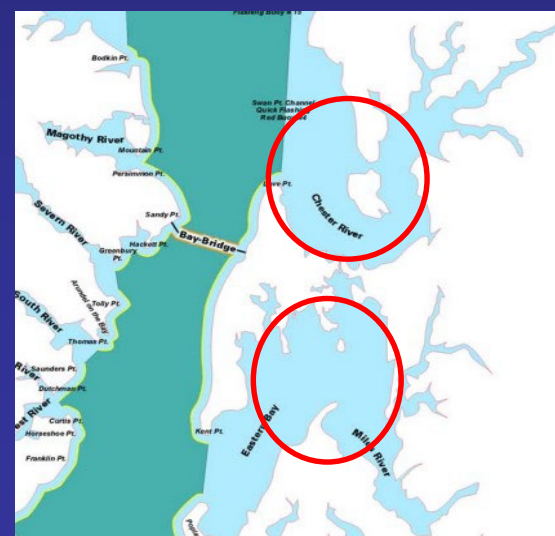
Proposal: That the geographic extent of the Sea Duck Zone remain unchanged to maintain waterfowl hunting opportunity in those areas.

- Maintaining the Sea Duck Zone will require a minor amendment to Natural Resources Regulation 08.03.07.04.
- Retaining the Sea Duck Zone will continue to allow hunters to pursue cripples under power which is only permitted within the SDZ boundaries.
- As in the past, some areas of public water will be open only to sea duck (scoters, eiders, long-tailed ducks) harvest. Notable locations include the mouth of the Chester River, Eastern Bay, lower Choptank River and Atlantic Ocean.

Sea Duck Zone



Offshore Waterfowl Zone



Proposal: Increase black bear hunting opportunity by extending the existing season.

The days being considered for this expansion will be finalized after all input is received. The options being considered are:

- The Saturday and Sunday prior to the current Monday opener in October; or
- The Saturday at the end of the current Monday-Friday October season; or
- The 2nd week of the two-week firearm season (Monday-Saturday); or
- Possibly some combination of these options.

Adding additional days to the black bear season

RATIONALE:

- Hunters request weekend days to hunt black bears, and week days-only limit many hunters to when they can hunt.
- Bear damage to agricultural crops continues to be a concern for local farmers.
- The bear population remains healthy and can sustain the added opportunity (December season would be largely boars).
- Adding days reduces the likelihood a weather event will prevent hunters from pursuing bears during the season.
- Note: The bag limit and who may hunt will not change with the added opportunity.

Hunt By The Numbers (2014 – 2021)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
No. Permits	450	500	750	750	800	800	950	950
No. Applicants	3,631	4,300	5,547	5,453	5,491	5,204	5,716	5,328
Total Bear Harvest	69	95	167	131	135	145	117	54
GA CO Harvest	57	80	126	104	93	95	83	33
AL CO Harvest	12	15	30	23	31	31	23	6
WA CO Harvest	N/A	N/A	8	2	9	11	8	10
FR CO Harvest	N/A	N/A	3	2	2	8	3	5
Hunter Success	6.50%	8.10%	9.80%	7.80%	6.50%	7.80%	4.40%	2.70%

Harvest numbers can suffer appreciably when seasons are short and weather or other events limit hunter effort and/or bear movement

Ruffed Grouse

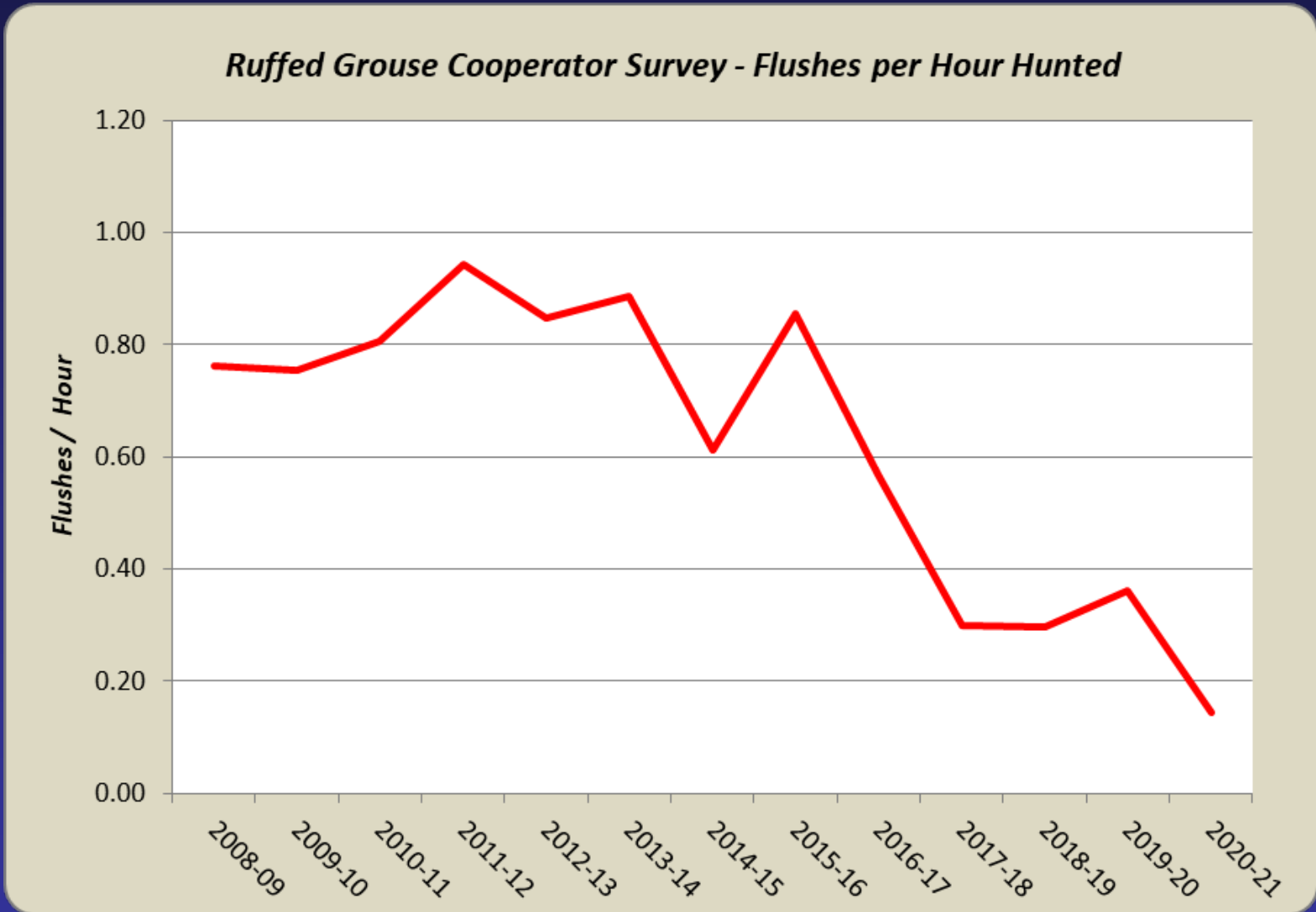
Proposal: Shorten the season by one month so that the season would end December 31.

RATIONALE:

- Grouse populations have declined significantly, primarily due to loss of young forest habitat and West Nile Virus.
- Hunting is not thought to be a primary factor, but late season hunting may be detrimental to breeding populations.
- This change would minimize the possibility that hunting is negatively impacting declining populations.
- Pennsylvania eliminated late season grouse hunting in 2017 and preliminary data suggest that grouse numbers may have increased in response to that change.



Ruffed Grouse



Grouse populations have declined significantly

White-tailed Deer

Proposal: Add an additional day to the established antlerless white-tailed deer firearm season in Region A on private and public lands.

Two options are proposed for consideration. The actual day for this expansion will be finalized after all input is received. The options being considered are:

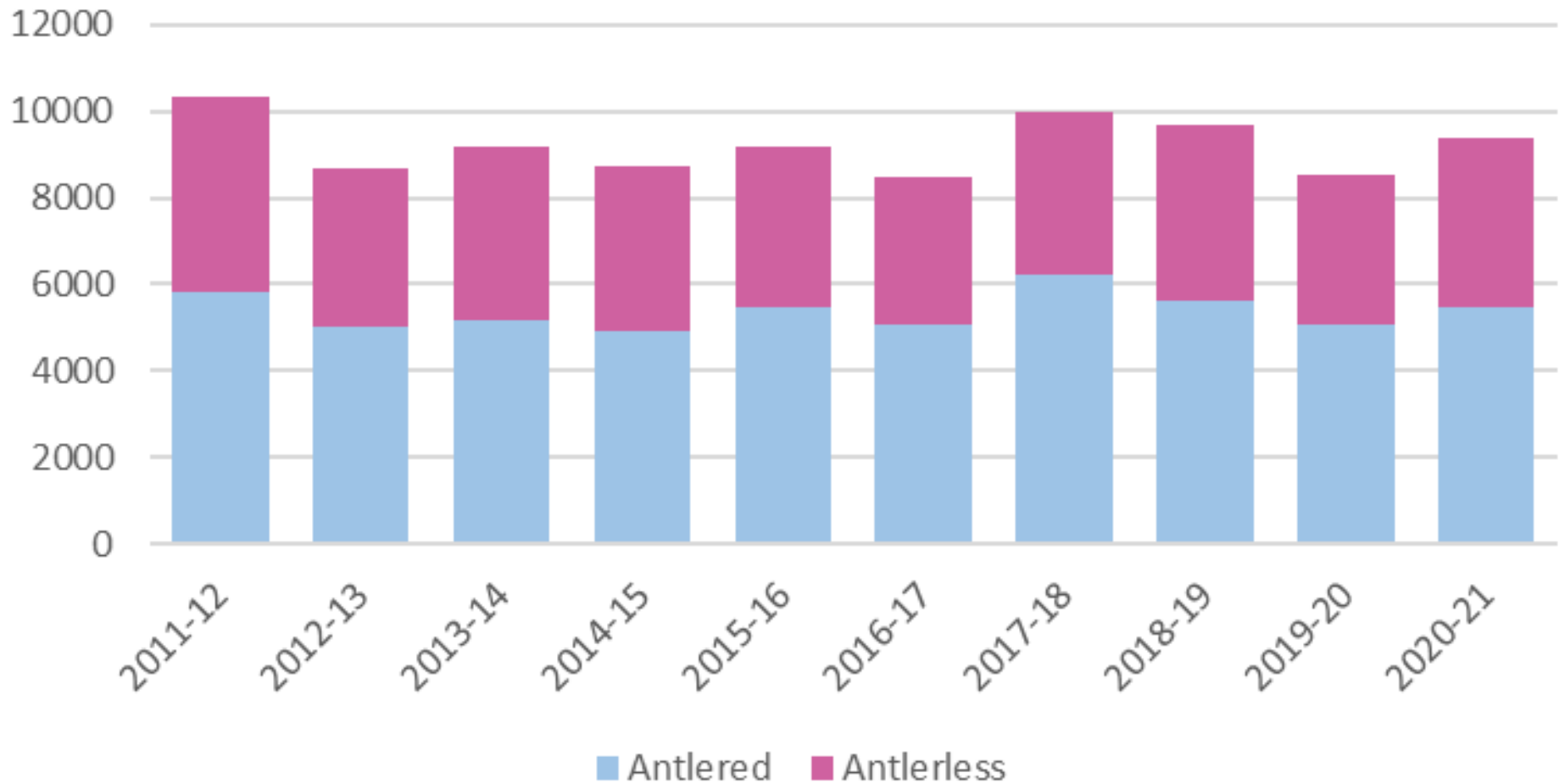
- The second Saturday of the two-week season on private and public lands; or
- The last Thursday of the two-week season on private land and the last Friday of the two-week season on public land.

Adding an additional antlerless day in Region A

RATIONALE:

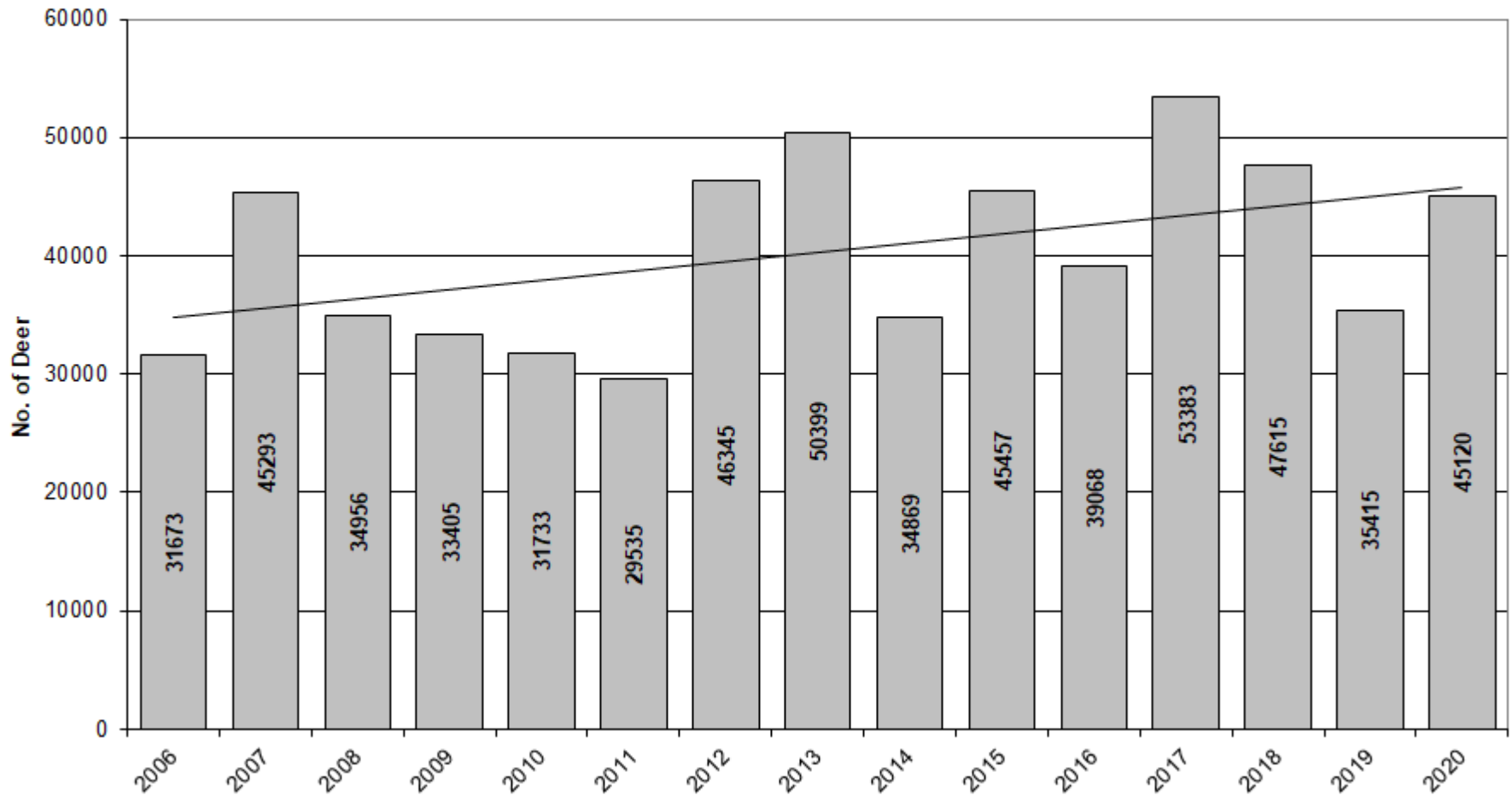
- Hunters commonly request additional antlerless hunting opportunities in Region A.
- Deer damage to agricultural crops continues to be a concern for local farmers.
- The Region A deer population remains healthy and can sustain the added opportunity.
- Adding a day reduces the likelihood a weather event will prevent hunters from pursuing antlerless deer during the firearm season.
- Note: The bag limit will not change.

Region A Deer Harvest



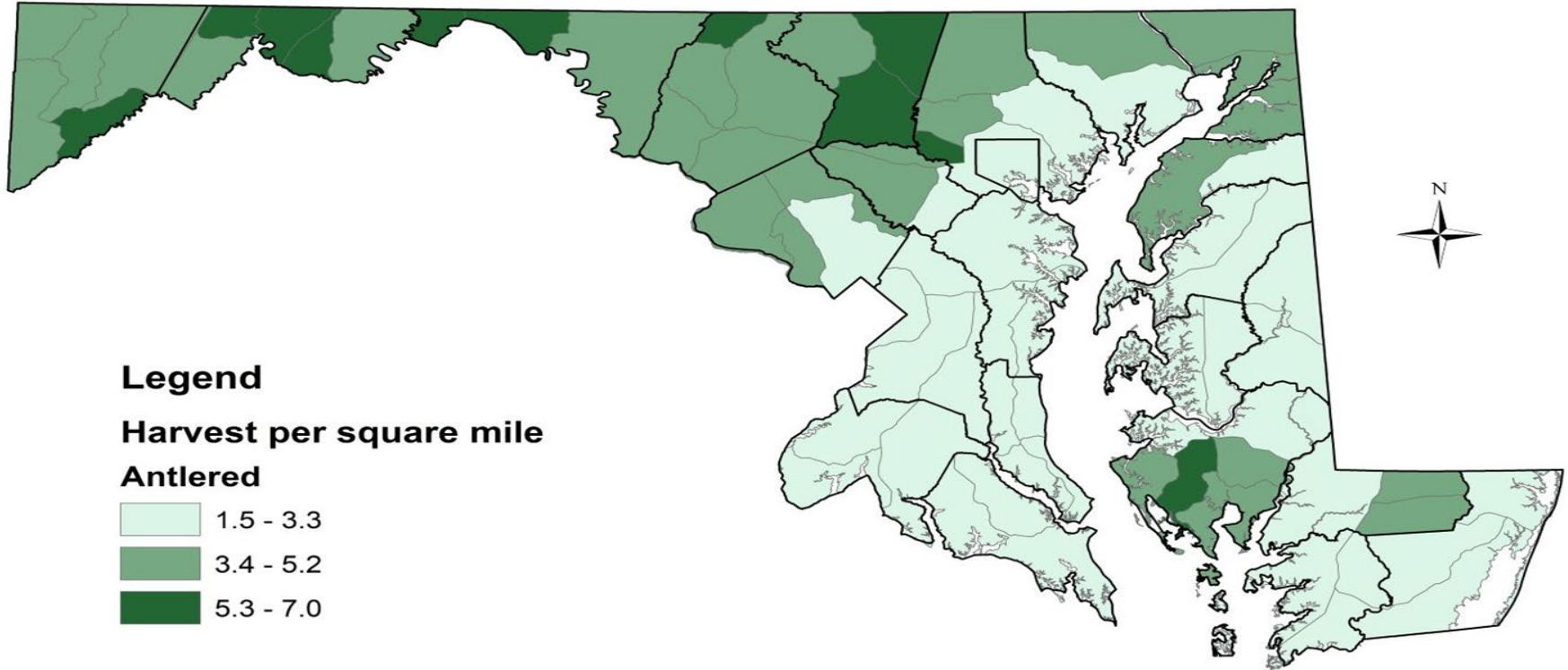
The Region A deer harvest remains stable

Garrett & Allegany County White-tailed Deer Population Estimate, 2006 - 2020



The Region A deer population has been stable to slightly increasing

2020-2021 Antlered Deer Harvest Per Square Mile of Deer Habitat



0 10 20 40 60 80 Miles



Buck harvest in Region A is equal to or higher than elsewhere in the state

Thank you