



New Jersey

Department of Environmental Protection

Fish & Wildlife



Dave Golden, Assistant Commissioner
Lisa Barno, Assistant Director
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DEER REGULATION SIMPLIFICATION

For Consideration for 2025 Game Code



Bureau of Wildlife Management
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Deer Research Project
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Megan McCafferty, Southern Region
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Current Regulation Sets

why?

APR vs Non-APR

Season Openings/Closures

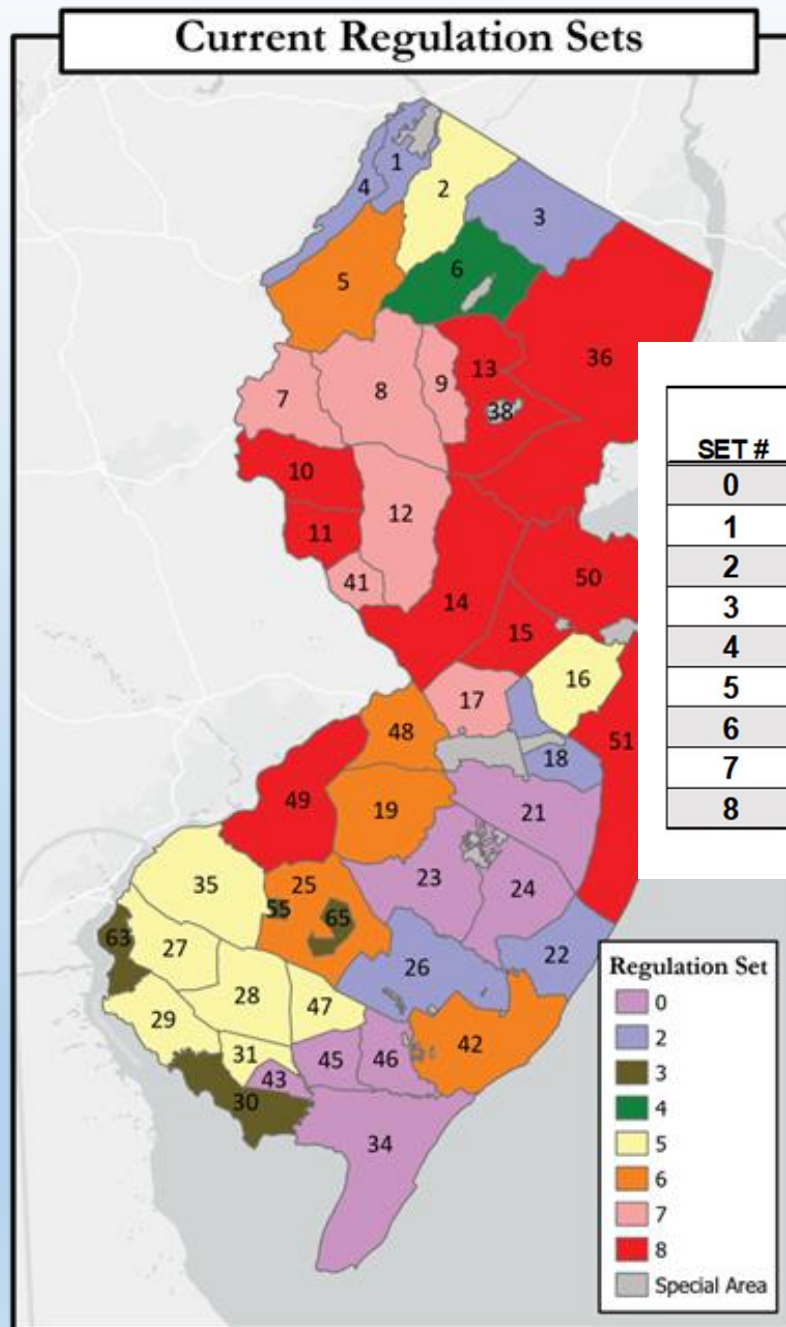
SET #	Zones	Season							Total Days
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1	No Zones Assigned	28-2	30-2	2-2	6-2	17-2	3-1	31-2	117
2	1, 3*, 4, 18, 22, 26	28-2	30-2	2-2	6-2	17-2	3-1	31-2	117
3	30*, 55, 63*, 65	28-2	30-2	2-2	6-2	22-2	3-2	31-2	122
4	6	49-u	63-u	2-2	6-2	22-2	3-2	31-u	176
5	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

Youth Days

Hunter's Choice Buck

Expense \$\$\$



Common Concerns Amongst Hunters

- **Complicated to understand**
 - Agency receives complaints about complexity of regulations
 - Current regulations intimidate hunters, which impacts our R3 (Recruitment, Retention, Reactivation) objectives
 - Deters out-of-state hunters
- **Too many nuances**
 - APR is only in certain zones
 - APR applies to youths, except for youth days
 - If you take 2 bucks during Six-Day firearm, you can't pursue a buck during Permit Shotgun



Suggested Changes to Deer Regulations

2025 Game Code

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

Statewide Harvest Trends

- The deer harvest has been declining since the 1990s.
- Bow license sales have increased since 2009 due to the addition of crossbows, Sunday hunting, and reduced bow safety zone.
- Firearm license sales have decreased.
- Antlerless permit sales have decreased.
- Buck permit sales have remained relatively stable.

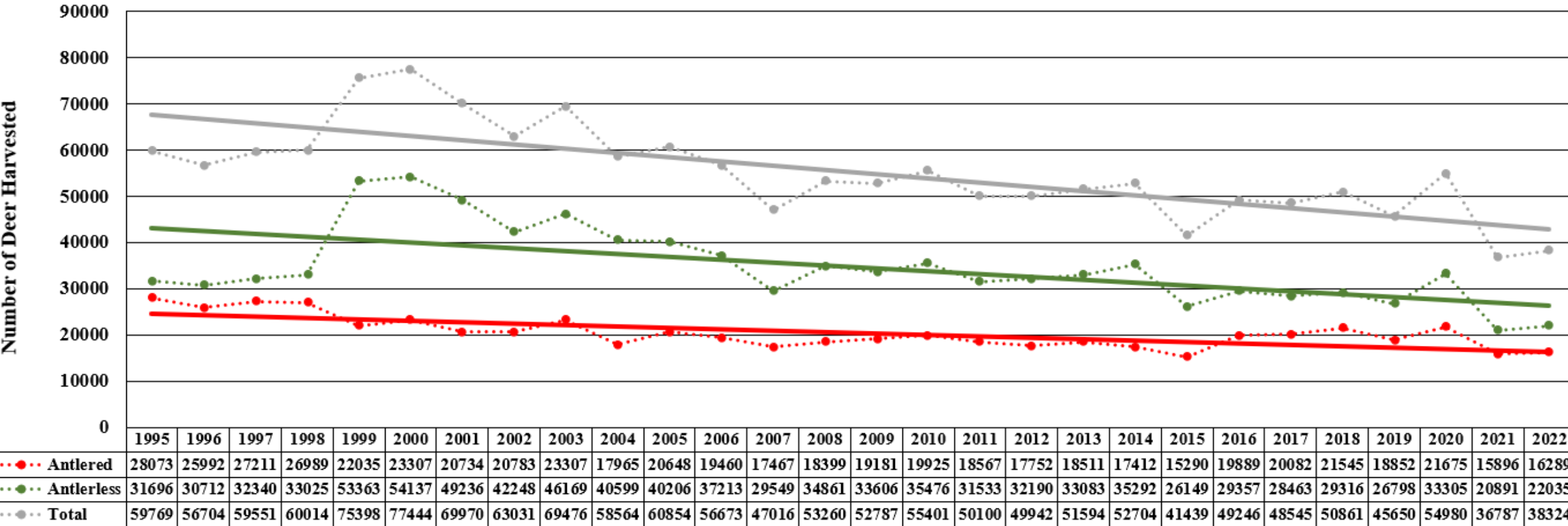
Notable Recent Events

The 'COVID bump' increased participation (2020-21); then 'Covid correction'

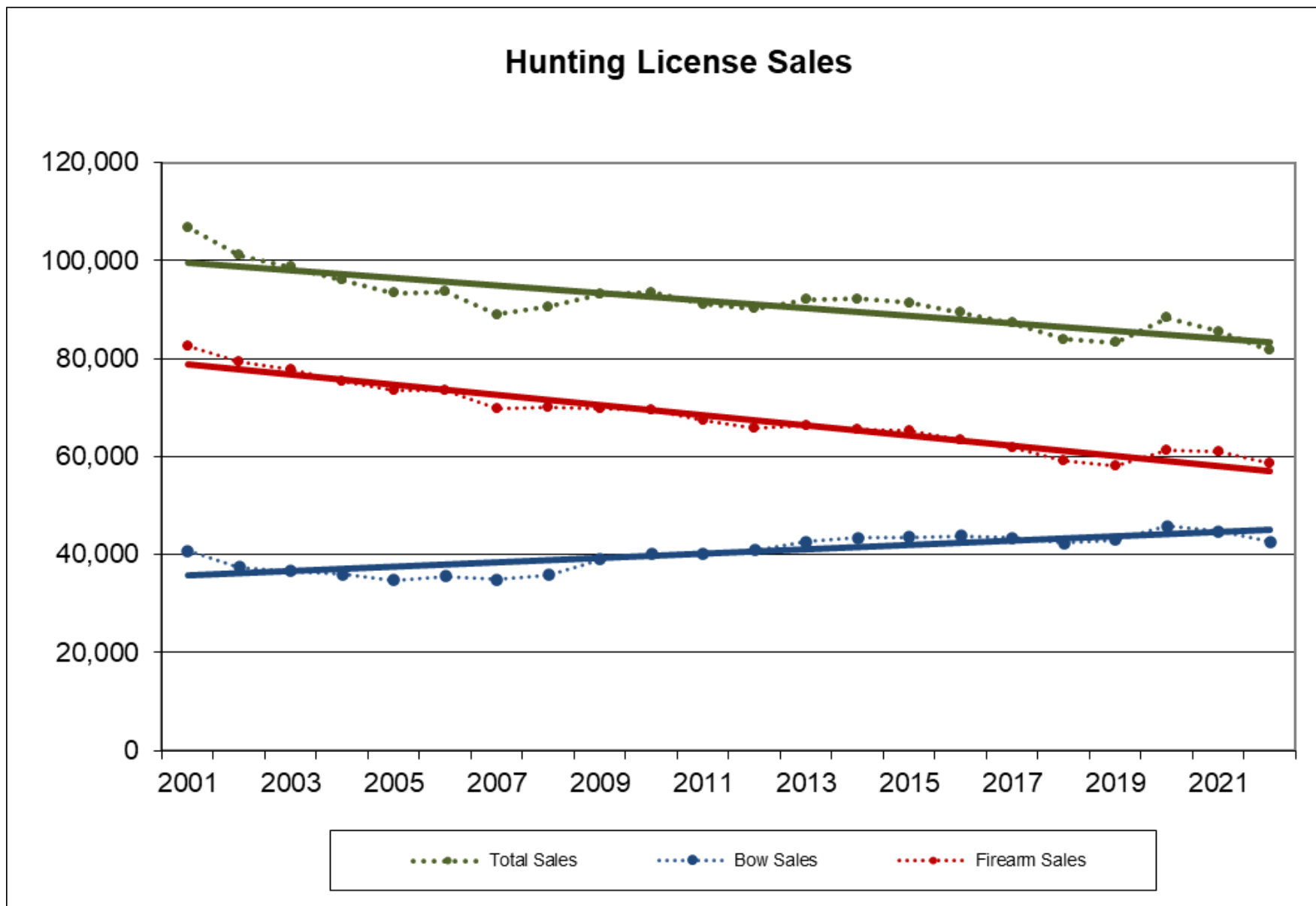
Back-to-back EHD outbreaks (2021 and 2022)

Warmer winters

Statewide Harvest Trends



Hunting License Sales



Suggested Changes to Deer Regulations

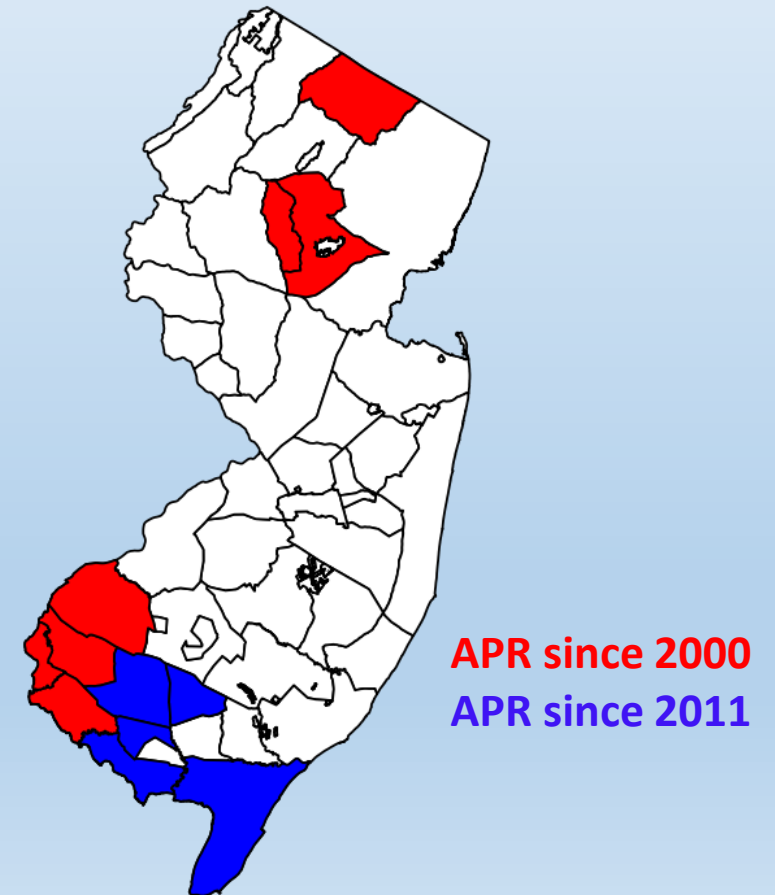
2025 Game Code

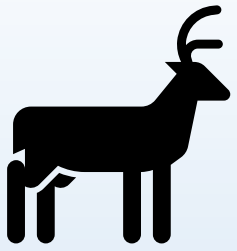
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- **Multi-Zone Permits**
 - Proposed expansion

Antler Point Restrictions

QUALITY DEER MANAGEMENT: “The approach under which young bucks are protected from harvest, combined with an adequate harvest of female deer to produce healthy deer herds in balance with existing habitat conditions.” **NDA**

- **NJ Regulations**
 - Bucks must have 3 points on one side
 - Original zones - 2000
 - Additional zones – 2011
- **Goals of QDM**
 - Give young bucks more time to mature
 - Harvest older bucks with larger racks
 - Increase the antlerless harvest





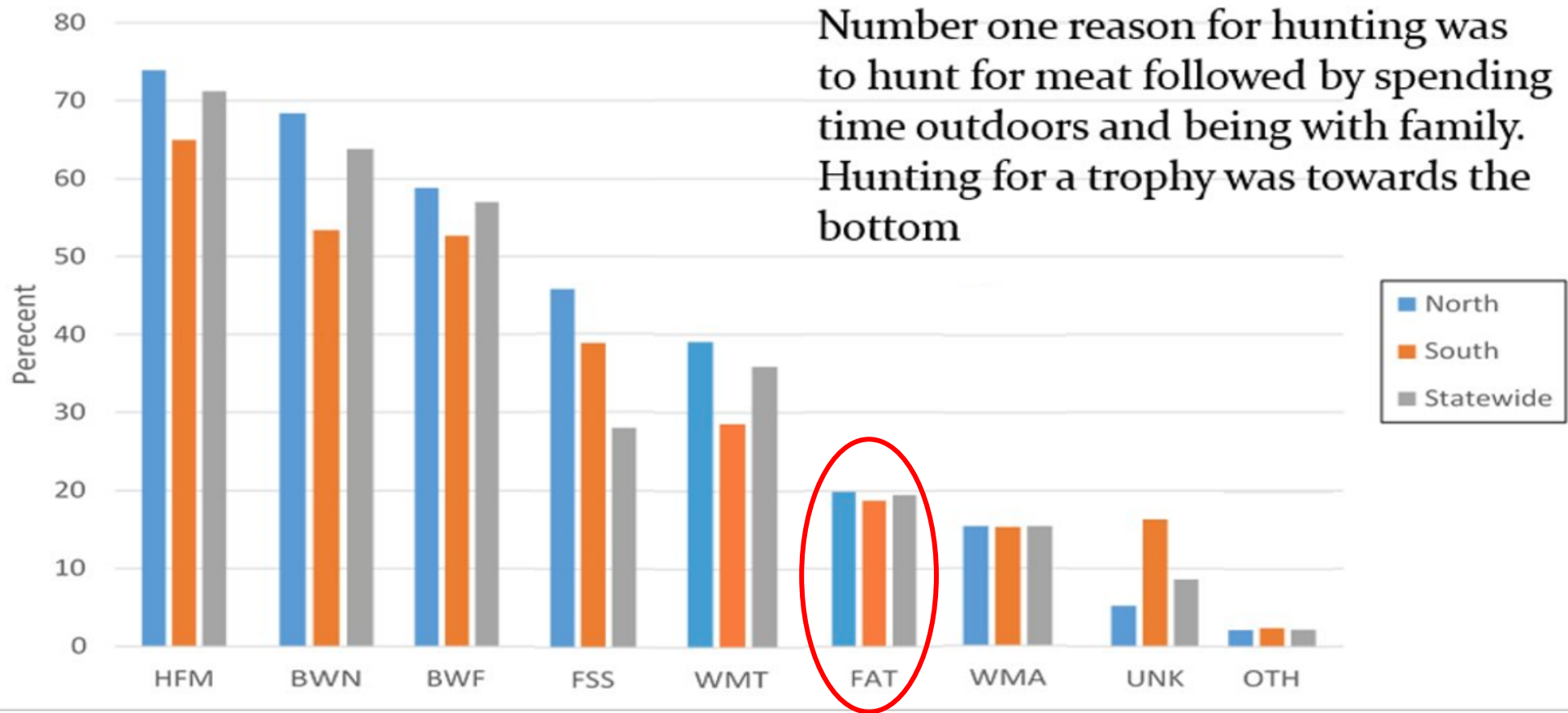
Why are we looking at APR?

- Complicates regulations
 - Applies to only a few zones within each regulation set
- R3 – limiting success of new hunters
- Impractical in small zones/New Jersey
- No positive biological role
 - Negative results: high grading, potential spread of disease
 - Loss of opportunity for sustenance hunters/ new hunters
 - Mixed message (management today vs future trophy)
 - Cultural / Social program

Antler Point Restriction Analysis

- **Tracked changes in the number antler points of bucks harvested**
 - Compared APR zones vs. non-APR zones
 - Compared 2008-2010 avg. vs. 2016-2022 avg.
 - Tracked annual changes
- **Analyzed harvest trends in APR zones**
 - Hunter success rates
 - Antlered and Antlerless harvest before and after APR regulations
 - Harvest trends from hunters harvesting one deer
- **Analyzed permit issuance in APR zones**
 - Antlerless permit sales before and after APR regulations

New Hunter Motivation, from a 2018 Hunter Education Survey



HFM- hunt for meat

BWN- be close to nature/spend more time outdoors

BWF- be with friends/family

FSS- learn additional firearms/ archery safety and skills

WMT- active participant in wildlife management

FAT – for a trophy

WMA- to use WMA ranges

OTH- other **UNK**- unknown

Justification for Suggested Removal of APR

Considered a social/cultural program for these reasons:

- Antlerless harvest is decreasing at higher rate than non-APR.
- DMZs with high deer densities should not limit deer available for harvest.
- Risk of high-grading deer.
- Removing APR will simplify regulations; increase opportunity for sustenance hunters.
- Deterring new hunters (R3) - encourage new hunter success.
 - Currently applies to youths outside of the designated youth days.
- Young bucks have a higher dispersal rate.
 - Potential for spread of diseases (CWD).
 - Potential for increased deer vehicle collisions.

Suggested Changes to Deer Regulations

2025 Game Code

- **Antler Point Restrictions (APR)**
 - Eliminate APR regulations
- **Simplify Regulations**
 - Eliminate / combine regulation sets
 - Align season date structure
 - Reinstate 7 buck bag limit
- **Multi-Zone Permits**
 - Proposed expansion

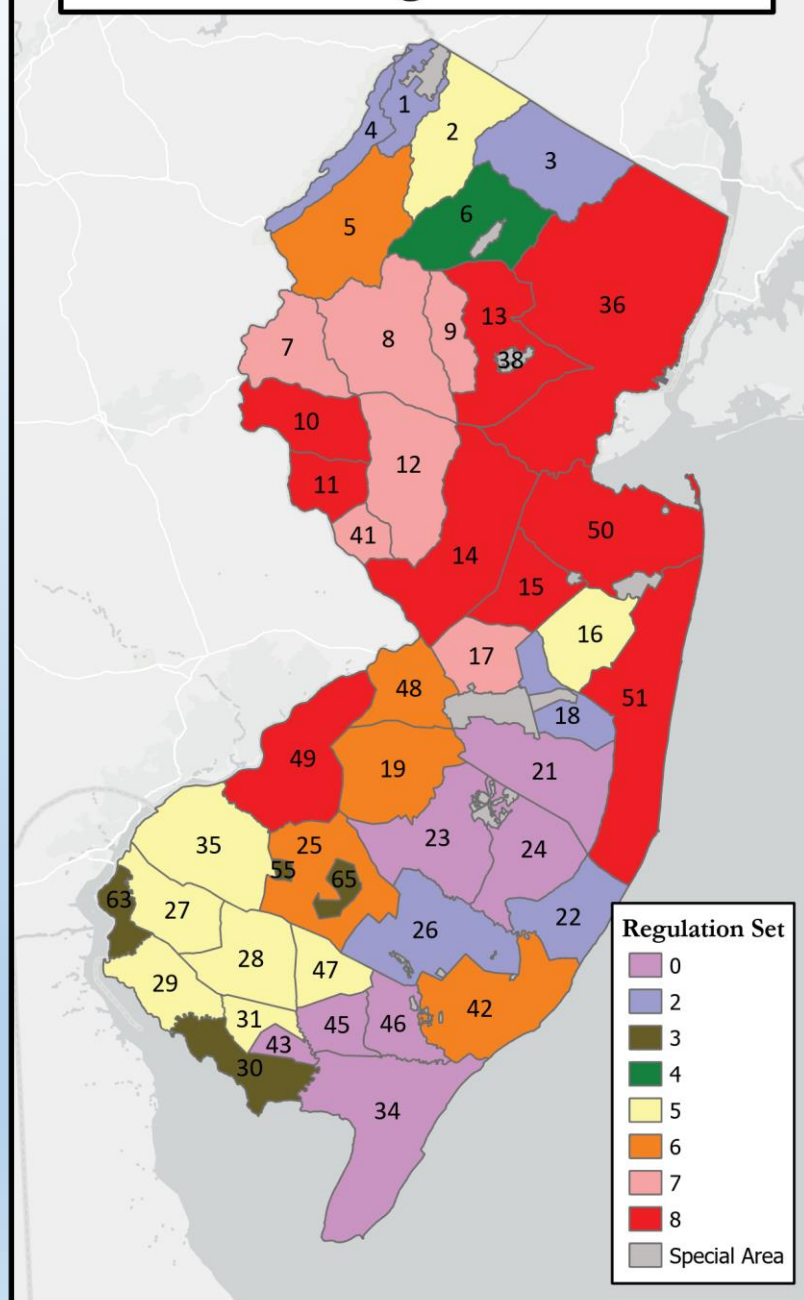
Why are we looking at Regulation Sets?

- Too many different season dates, bag limits, opening/closing days!
- R3 – intimidating to new and current hunters

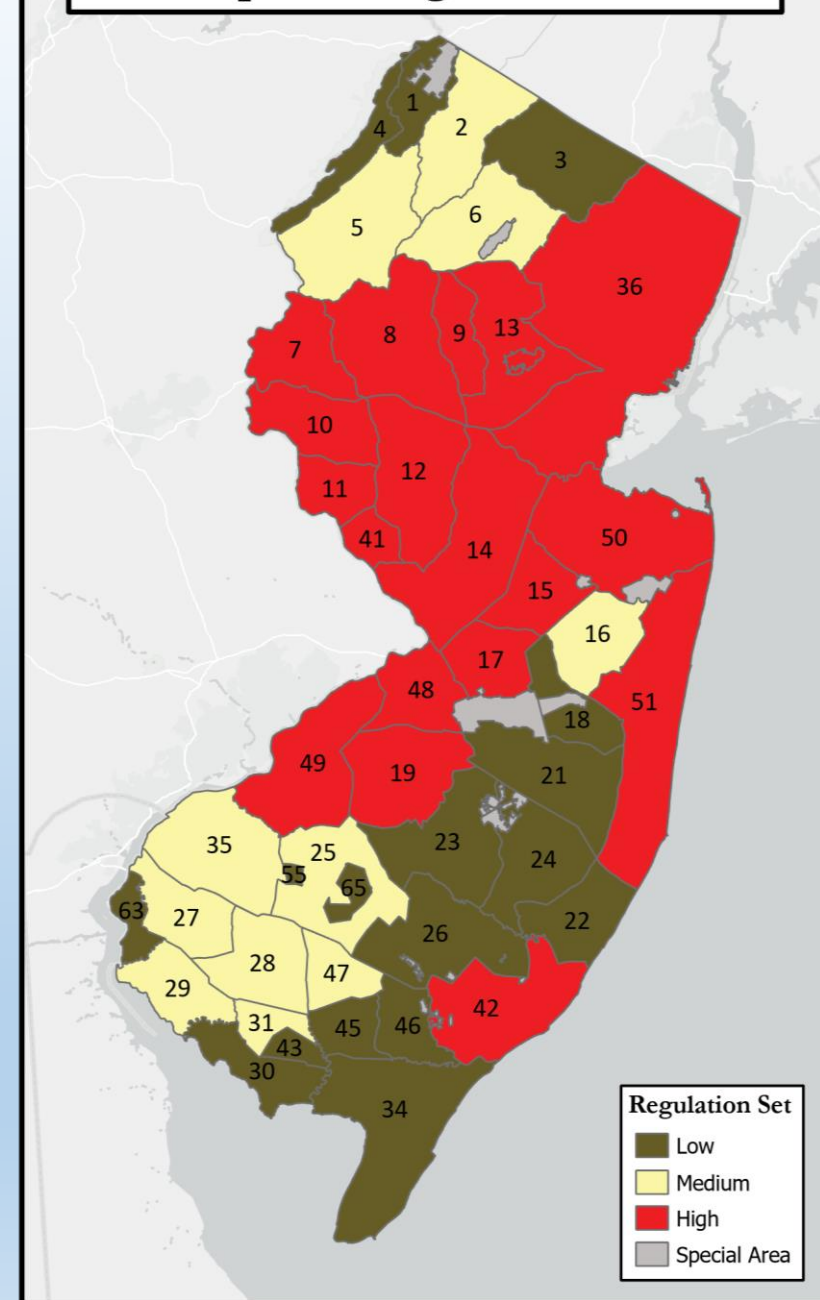
Regulation Set Simplification Analyses

- **Harvest trends**
 - Antlered and Antlerless by season
 - Antlered and Antlerless by date of harvest
- **Deer habitat**
 - Land use & land cover considerations when assigning DMZs
- **Bag limits**
 - Analyzed how many hunters reached bag limits seasonally and annually
 - Analyzed how many bucks each hunter is harvesting annually

Current Regulation Sets



Proposed Regulation Sets



Existing Regulation Set Structure

Current Deer Regulation Sets

SET #	Zones	Season							Total Days
		Fall Bow	Permit Bow	Youth Day	Six-Day	Permit M/L	Permit S/G	Winter Bow	
0	21, 23, 24, 34*, 43, 45, 46	28-1	22-1	2-2	6-2	15-1	3-1	31-1	107
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* indicates APR Zone

Suggested New Season Structure

Proposed New Regulation Sets Seasons

Old Set	New Set	Zones	Season							Total Days
			Fall Bow	Permit Bow	Youth Day	Six-Day	Permit M/L	Permit S/G	Winter Bow	
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	Oct 1-28	Oct 29 - Nov 19	Sept 24 Nov 19	Dec 5-10	Nov 28-29, Dec 17-31	Dec 14-16	Jan 1-31
3 (Low)	Oct 1-28	Oct 29 - Nov 27	Sept 24 Nov 19	Dec 5-10	Nov 28-29, Dec 12, 13, 17-31, Jan 2-6	Dec 14-16	Jan 1-31
5 (Medium)	Sept 10-30 (EAB), Oct 1-28	Oct 29 - Dec 31	Sept 24 Nov 19	Dec 5-10	Nov 28-29, Dec 12-31, Jan 2-6	Dec 12-16, Jan 2-21	Jan 1-31
8 (High)	Sept 10-30 (EAB), Oct 1-28	Oct 29 - Dec 31	Sept 24 Nov 19	Dec 5-10	Nov 21-23, 25, Dec 5-10 (Aless Only) Nov 28-29, Dec 12-31, Jan 2-Feb 18	Nov 21-23, 25, Dec 5-10 (Aless Only) Dec 12-16, Jan 2-Feb 18	Jan 1-Feb 18

*Dates based off of the 2022-23 deer season, season dates change from year to year

Hunter Success Rates During Permit Seasons

		Percent of Hunters Harvesting x Number of Antlerless Deer								
		Averages based on data from 2016 to 2022								
Regulation Set:		0	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Permits Purchased:		41506	48446	13751	12362	107488	91139	109371	116635	
All Permit Seasons	# Antlerless Deer Harvested	0	93.0%	93.0%	88.3%	91.1%	86.3%	86.8%	87.2%	88.0%
		1	7.0%	6.8%	9.4%	7.7%	10.9%	9.3%	8.5%	8.0%
		2	0.1%	0.1%	0.8%	1.0%	2.2%	2.6%	2.6%	2.4%
		3			0.1%	0.1%	0.5%	0.8%	0.9%	0.8%
		4				0.0%	0.1%	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%
		5				0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%
		6-10					0.0%	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%
		11-15						0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
		16-20							0.1%	0.1%
		21+							0.1%	0.1%
Total Average Successful:		7.0%	7.0%	10.3%	8.9%	13.7%	13.2%	12.8%	12.0%	

* All Permit Seasons includes Permit Bow, Permit Shotgun and Permit Muzzleloader

2016-2022 Avg. Annual Total Harvests – All Seasons

Percent of Hunters Harvesting x Number of Deer

		Set:	0	2	3 *	4	5 *	6	7	8 *
Annual Bag Limit:		7	11	11	UL.	31	51	UL.	UL.	UL.
Percent of Hunters Harvesting x Number of Deer	1	81.41%	75.84%	74.02%	69.12%	63.17%	60.81%	55.39%	55.24%	
	2	14.51%	17.14%	18.27%	21.01%	22.13%	21.88%	22.99%	23.10%	
	3	3.21%	4.82%	5.57%	6.45%	8.56%	8.86%	9.94%	9.85%	
	4	0.71%	1.52%	1.60%	1.80%	3.40%	4.29%	5.04%	5.04%	
	5	0.13%	0.49%	0.35%	0.82%	1.42%	1.89%	2.46%	2.61%	
	6-10	0.02%	0.18%	0.18%	0.77%	1.28%	2.05%	3.33%	3.47%	
	11-15				0.02%	0.03%	0.17%	0.60%	0.45%	
	16-20					0.00%	0.06%	0.23%	0.21%	
	21+						0.03%	0.19%	0.13%	

92%*

85%*

78%*

* Percentage of successful hunters who took 2 or fewer deer

* Represents potential harvest trends for the new proposed regulation sets

Why are we looking at the buck bag limit?

- Confusing regulation for the second buck during Six-day Firearm Season OR Permit Shotgun
- Forcing hunters to make a choice to buy Antlered Buck Permit
- Perception of harvesting too many bucks per year is not valid

2016-2022 Antlered Harvests

Bucks per Hunter Summary							
# Bucks Taken	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
1	77.01%	76.13%	74.70%	75.87%	74.23%	78.21%	77.78%
2	17.66%	18.42%	19.38%	18.97%	20.05%	17.47%	17.93%
3	4.16%	4.23%	4.52%	4.03%	4.49%	3.39%	3.48%
4	0.95%	0.96%	1.12%	0.87%	0.99%	0.71%	0.64%
5	0.17%	0.23%	0.23%	0.19%	0.19%	0.17%	0.13%
6	0.04%	0.03%	0.06%	0.06%	0.04%	0.05%	0.05%
% of Hunters Harvesting 3 or Fewer Bucks:	6 98.8%	5 98.8%	9 98.6%	9 98.9%	7 98.8%	6 99.1%	6 99.2%

16 - 36

94% - 96% of successful hunters take 2 or fewer deer per year.

<2% of successful hunters take more than 3 bucks annually

Justification for Simplifying Deer Reg Sets

- **Maintaining and improving management objectives**
- **Reducing the number of Regulations Sets from 9 to 3**
 - Simplification for new hunters to reduce concerns of making mistakes
 - Majority of hunters are not limiting out in antlerless harvest in any of the current reg sets
 - Encouraging hunters to expand into new zones
- **Streamlining season structure**
 - Better alignment of season dates
- **Reinstating buck bag limit of 7**
 - Simplifying buck bag limits to eliminate confusion around Permit Shotgun and Six-Day bag limits
 - Annually, about 98% of successful hunters harvest three or fewer bucks

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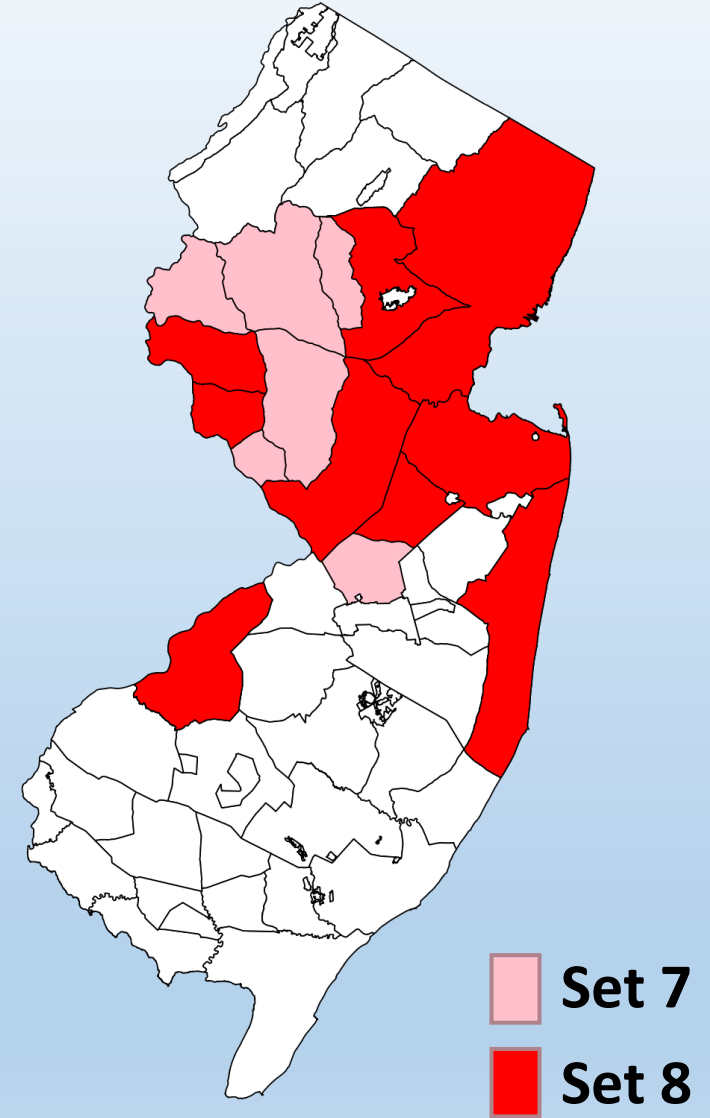
Why are we looking at Multi-Zone Permits?

- Regulation has been in effect for two years
- Gauge popularity
- Get feedback from purchasers
- Effects of cost savings
 - New High Set: 18 zones for the price of 2 (\$56)
 - New Medium Set: 17 zones for the price of 2 (\$56)?
- Assess harvest from Multi-Zone Permit purchasers

Current Multi-Zone Permit

- Introduced in 2021
- Cost-effective - \$56 to hunt entire Reg Set
- Encourages hunters to explore new areas
- Regulation Set 7 - DMZs: 7, 8, 9, 12, 17, 41
- Regulation Set 8 - DMZs: 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 36, 49, 50, 51
- Available for each permit season (PB, PM, PS)

Buck permits stay the same



Multi-Zone Permit Analysis

- Multi-Zone Permit purchaser survey
- Effect on harvest in Multi-Zone Permit Regulation Sets 7 and 8
- Cost-saving analysis for participants
- Permit purchasing behavior of hunters in Regulation Sets 7 and 8

Proposed Regulation Sets

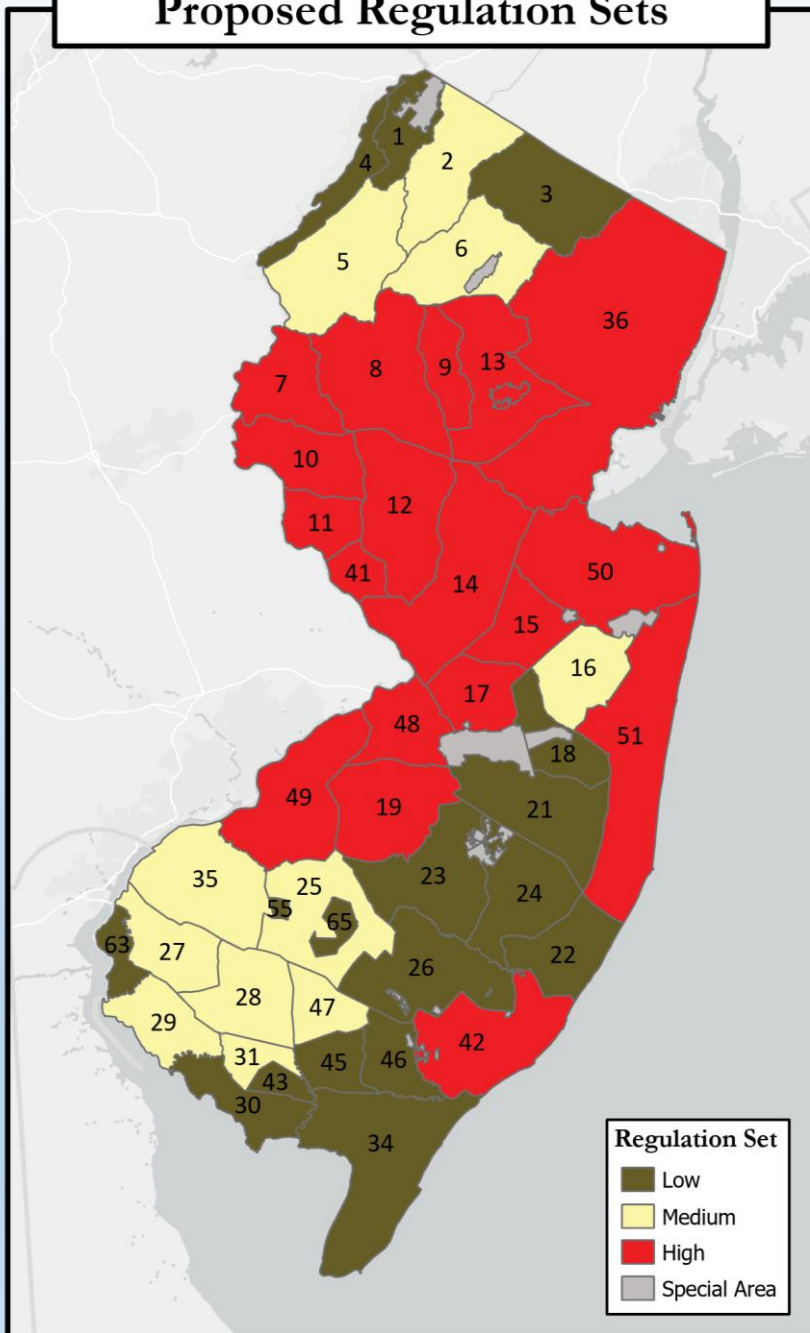
Expansion of Multi Zone Permits?

High Reg Set - Keep

Medium Reg Set – Yes!

Low Reg Set – No?

Purchase of single zone permits still available.



Justification for Expanding the Multi-Zone Permits

- Increased potential for better management by increasing opportunity for hunters
- Gives new and existing hunters the opportunity to explore more of New Jersey at a lower price point (R3)
- Increasing in popularity as hunters learn about the option
- Majority of purchasers that responded would buy the permit again
- More bang for your BUCK!

In Conclusion

Removal of APR

- Simplify regulations to help eliminate confusion for new and existing hunters
- Social/Cultural program

Combination of Regulation Sets and Alignment of Season Dates

- Simplify regulations to help eliminate confusion for new and existing hunters
- Aligns with management strategies
- Encourages hunters to explore new zones

Expansion of Multi-Zone Permit

- Positive feedback from current users
- More bang for your buck!
- Encourages hunters to explore new zones

Meetings

- Fish and Game Council Game Committee
- Stakeholder Group
- Federation Deer Committee
- Presented to Council at the September meeting
- Farm Bureau
- Hunter Forums
 - North – September 7th
 - Central – September 28th
 - South – October 5th

Hunter Forums

Deer Regulation Simplification

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

Multi-Zone Permits

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

Hunter Forums

7 Buck Bag Limit

- North – Negative
- Central – Positive
- South – Negative

APR

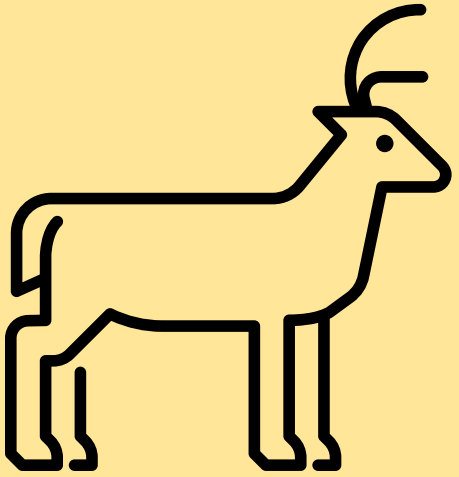
- North – Negative
- Central – Positive
- South – Negative

Coming Soon...

Hunter Surveys

APR Survey

Deer Hunting Survey

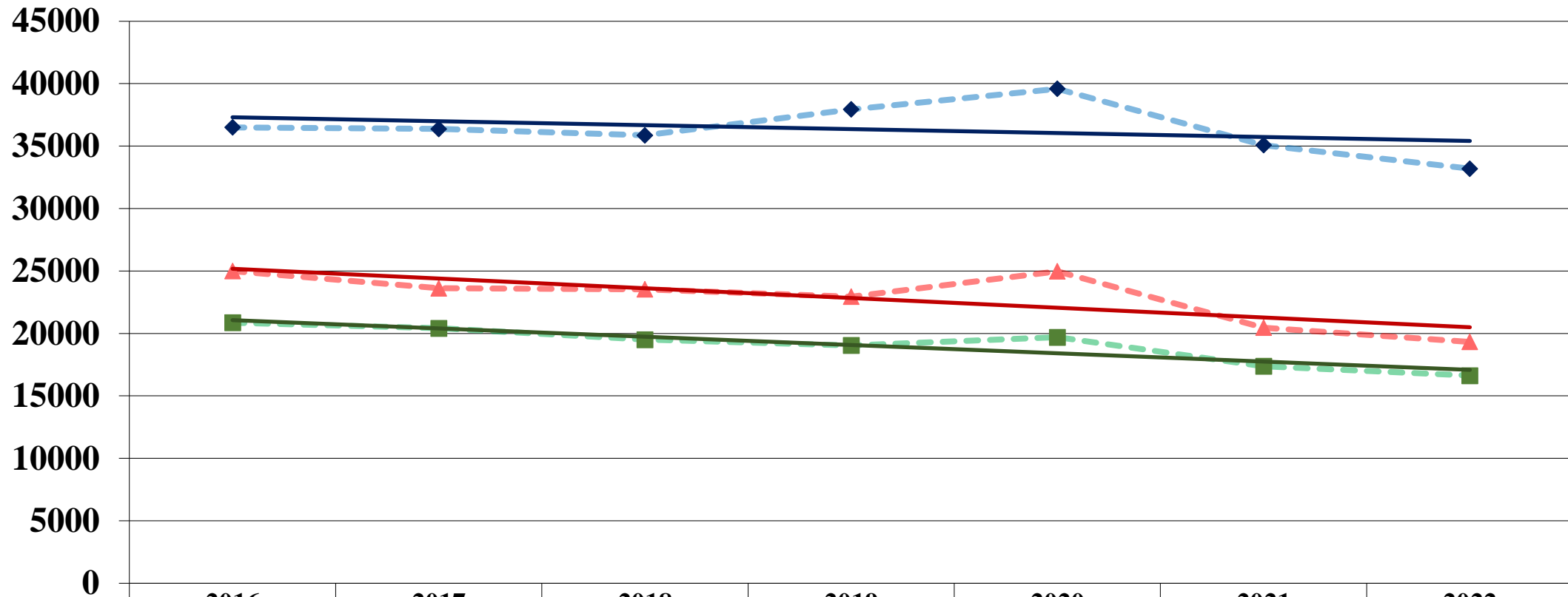


Questions?

Additional analyses performed

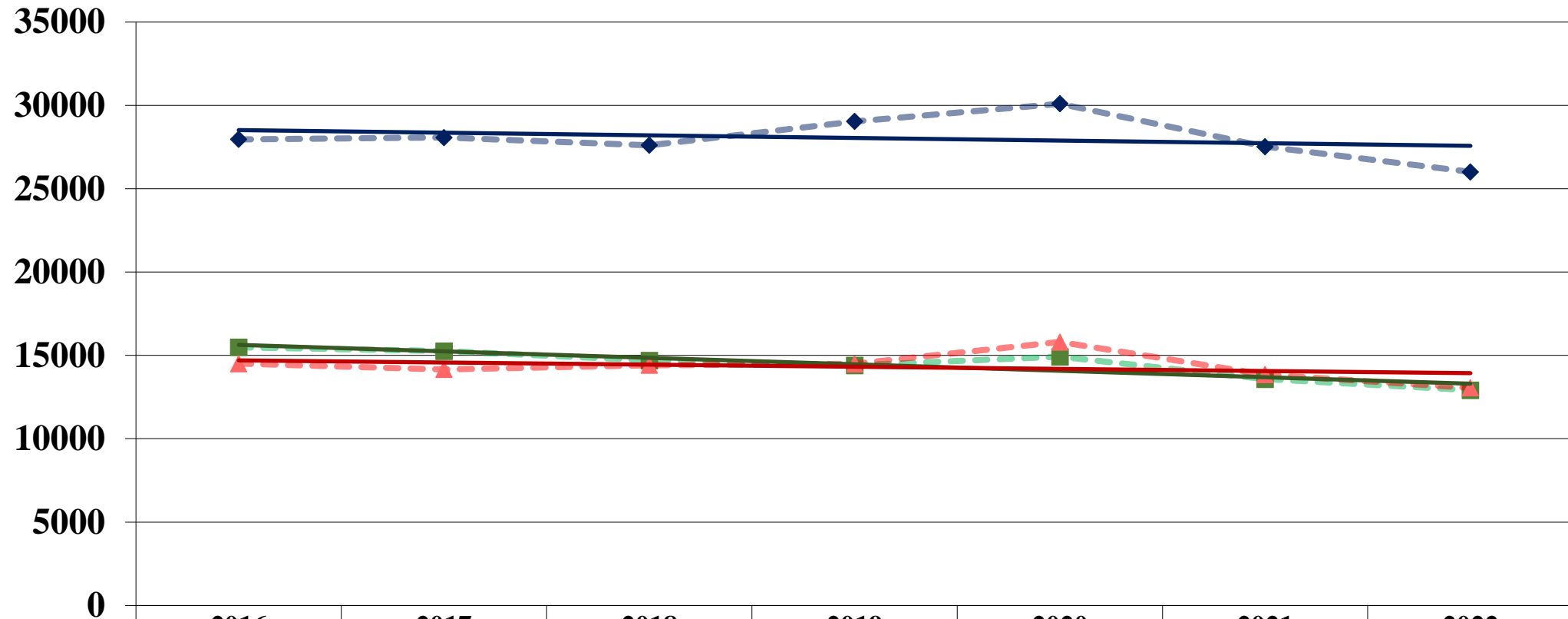
- **Potential impact of aligning season dates**
 - Removal of February Winter Bow
 - All February harvest by date and season
 - Extending Permit Shotgun and Permit Muzzleloader into Feb.
 - Adding/removing the three days of Permit Shotgun and Permit Muzzleloader prior to Thanksgiving
 - Adding antlerless only during Six-Day Firearm to all zones

Antlerless Permit Sales



	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
◆ Sales: Permit Bow	36493	36377	35860	37935	39590	35075	33188
■ Sales: Permit Muzzleloader	20863	20412	19500	19039	19695	17374	16620
▲ Sales: Permit Shotgun	24995	23614	23533	22947	24975	20462	19325

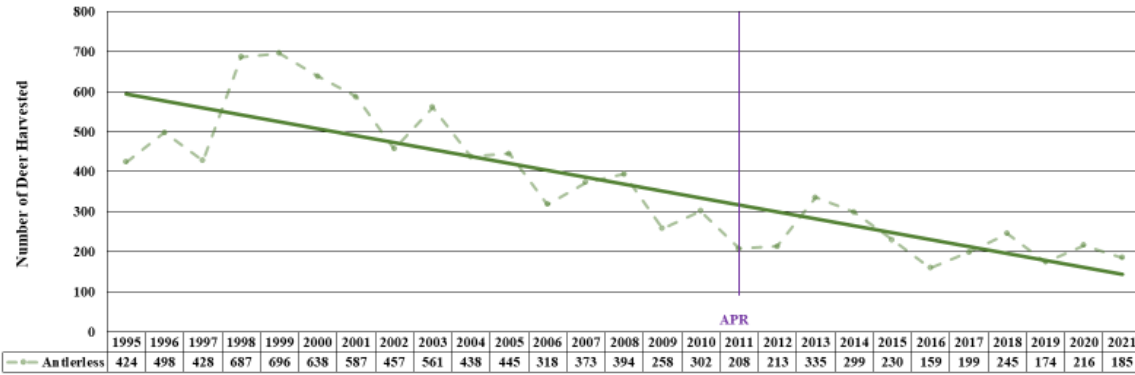
Buck Permit Sales



◆ Sales: Buck Permit Bow	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
■ Sales: Buck Permit Muzzleloader	27958	28069	27603	29038	30097	27527	26007
▲ Sales: Permit Shotgun	15488	15255	14699	14405	14920	13575	12912
	14504	14157	14408	14491	15803	13848	13056

APR Zones Historical Antlerless Harvest

Zone 34 (Reg Set 0)

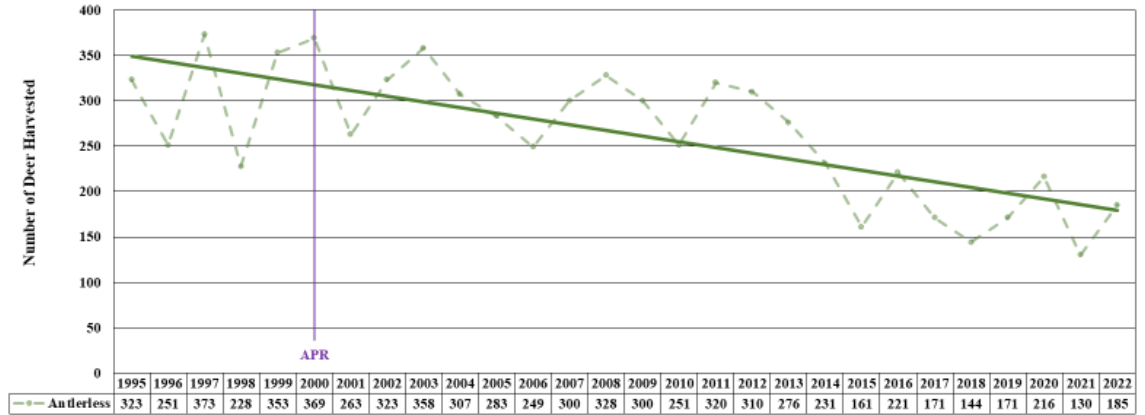


Bag Limit: 1 deer for all seasons

2011: Antler Point Restrictions

APR Zones Historical Antlerless Harvest

Zone 3 (Reg Set 2)

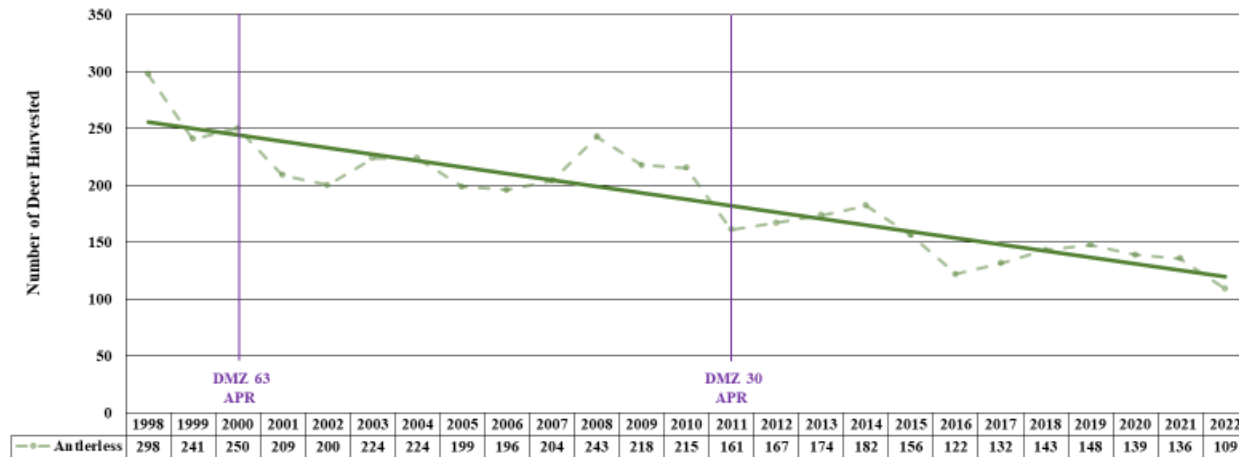


Bag Limit: 2 deer, only one may be antlered

Since 2000: Antler Point Restrictions
2005: lost 7.4 sq. mi. in boundary change

APR Zones Historical Antlerless Harvest

Zones 30, 63 (Reg Set 3)

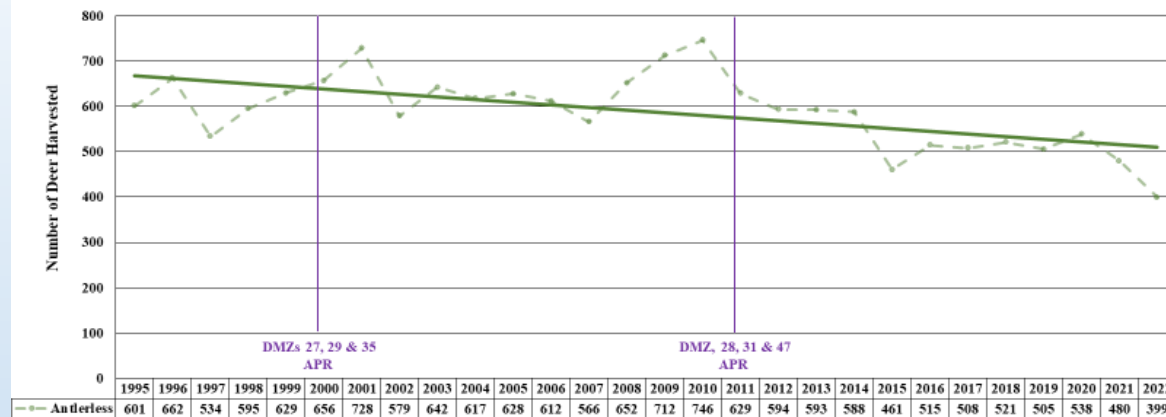


Bag Limit: 2 deer, only one may be antlered

DMZ 63 Since 2000: Antler Point Restrictions
DMZ 30 Since 2011: Antler Point Restrictions

APR Zones Historical Antlerless Harvest

Zones 27, 28, 29, 31, 35, 47 (Reg Set 5)

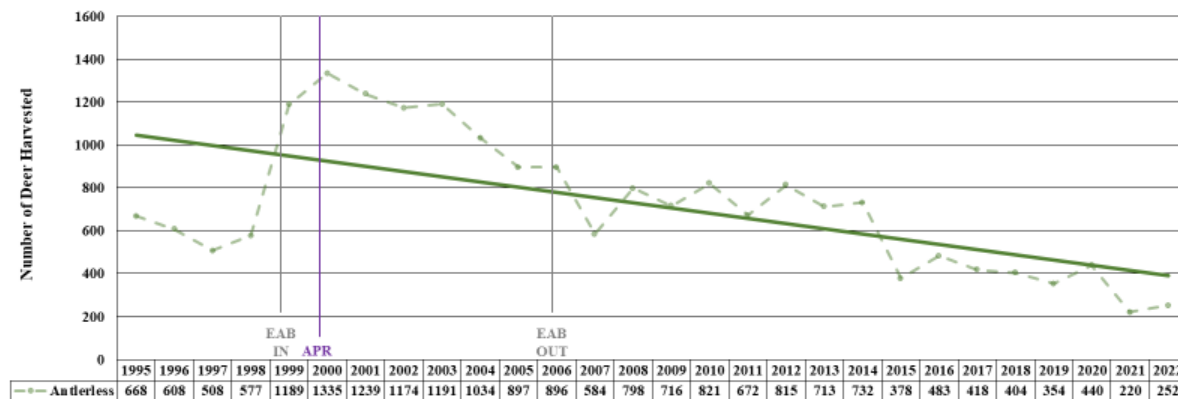


Bag Limit: 5 antlerless

DMZ 27, 29 and 35 Since 2000: Antler Point Restrictions
DMZ 28, 31 and 47 Since 2011: Antler Point Restrictions

APR Zones Historical Antlerless Harvest

Zone 9 (Reg Set 7)



Bag Limit: unlimited antlerless

1999-2006: All-Season Earn-A-Buck
Since 2000: Antler Point Restrictions

APR Zones Historical Antlerless Harvest

Zone 13 (Reg Set 8)



Bag Limit: unlimited antlerless

1999-2006: All-Season Earn-A-Buck
Since 2000: Antler Point Restrictions

Number of Bucks per Hunter by Reg Set

2016 – 2022 Average

	Regulation Set							
# Bucks	0	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	1358.9	1239.4	283.6	291.7	1897.7	2030.0	2302.6	2758.9
2	202.4	232.4	44.1	44.3	348.6	400.4	498.9	625.7
3	40.4	41.6	7.4	4.1	63.1	69.3	100.3	134.3
4	6.1	8.4	1.0	0.6	8.1	12.1	18.7	30.0
5	0.4	1.1	0.1	0.1	1.0	1.9	3.6	7.1
6		0.4				0.4	0.6	1.6

	Regulation Set							
# Bucks	0	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	84.49%	81.36%	84.32%	85.58%	81.85%	80.74%	78.73%	77.55%
2	12.59%	15.26%	13.13%	12.99%	15.03%	15.93%	17.06%	17.59%
3	2.51%	2.73%	2.21%	1.22%	2.72%	2.76%	3.43%	3.77%
4	0.38%	0.55%	0.30%	0.17%	0.35%	0.48%	0.64%	0.84%
5	0.03%	0.08%	0.04%	0.04%	0.04%	0.07%	0.12%	0.20%
6	0.00%	0.03%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.02%	0.02%	0.04%

	New Regulation Set		
# Bucks	Low	Mid	High
1	2797.3	3278.1	5654.14
2	500.3	629.7	1361.71
3	98.6	108.3	301.571
4	18.9	16.0	65.286
5	2.0	2.3	16
6	0.4	0.6	4.429

	New Regulation Set		
# Bucks	Low	Mid	High
1	81.85%	81.24%	76.37%
2	14.64%	15.61%	18.39%
3	2.88%	2.68%	4.07%
4	0.55%	0.40%	0.88%
5	0.06%	0.06%	0.22%
6	0.01%	0.01%	0.06%

When combining number of bucks harvested by hunter within current and proposed regulation sets, the percentage of hunters taking 3 or less bucks remained the same at less than 2%

Bucks per Hunter - Number

Bucks per Hunter Summary							
# Bucks Taken	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
1	11535	11436	11837	10795	11942	9641	9795
2	2646	2767	3070	2699	3225	2154	2258
3	623	636	716	574	723	418	438
4	143	144	177	124	159	87	80
5	25	34	36	27	31	21	16
6	6	5	9	9	7	6	6

Multi-Zone Permit Sales

Reg Set 7 - "Before"

Total Number of Permits Purchased per Hunter

Regulation Set 7 - 2019			
# Permits Bought	Bow # of Hunters	MuzzleLoader # of Hunters	Shotgun # of Hunters
1	6105	2651	4790
2	539	180	340
3	27	11	18
4	2		1
5			1
Total > 2/CID:			60
			-\$1,820

33 multi-zone permit sales needed to recoup the \$1,820.00 lost

Multi-Zone Permit Sales

Reg Set 7 - “After”

Reg Set 7 Multi-Zone Permit Purchasers 2022

Regulation Set 7						
Season	2019 Zone Sales		2022 Multi-Zone Sales		2022 New Sales	
Bow	271 <i>(196 purchasers)</i>	\$7,588	464	\$25,984	268	\$18,396
Muzzleloader	118 <i>(87 purchasers)</i>	\$3,304	213	\$11,928	126	\$8,624
Shotgun	199 <i>(151 purchasers)</i>	\$5,572	373	\$20,888	222	\$15,316
TOTAL	588 <i>(434 purchasers)</i>	\$16,464	1050	\$58,800	616	\$42,336

2019: calculated the # of hunters who bought ≥3 permits
 Needed to sell 33 multi-zone permits

Multi-Zone Permit Sales

Reg Set 8 – “Before”

Total Number of Permits Purchased per Hunter

Regulation Set 8 - 2019			
# Permits Bought	Bow # of Hunters	MuzzleLoader # of Hunters	Shotgun # of Hunters
1	7730	2186	4456
2	667	163	380
3	50	11	28
4	7	6	6
5	1		
		Total > 2/CID:	109 -\$3,640

65 multi-zone permit sales needed to recoup the \$3,640.00 lost

Multi-Zone Permit Sales

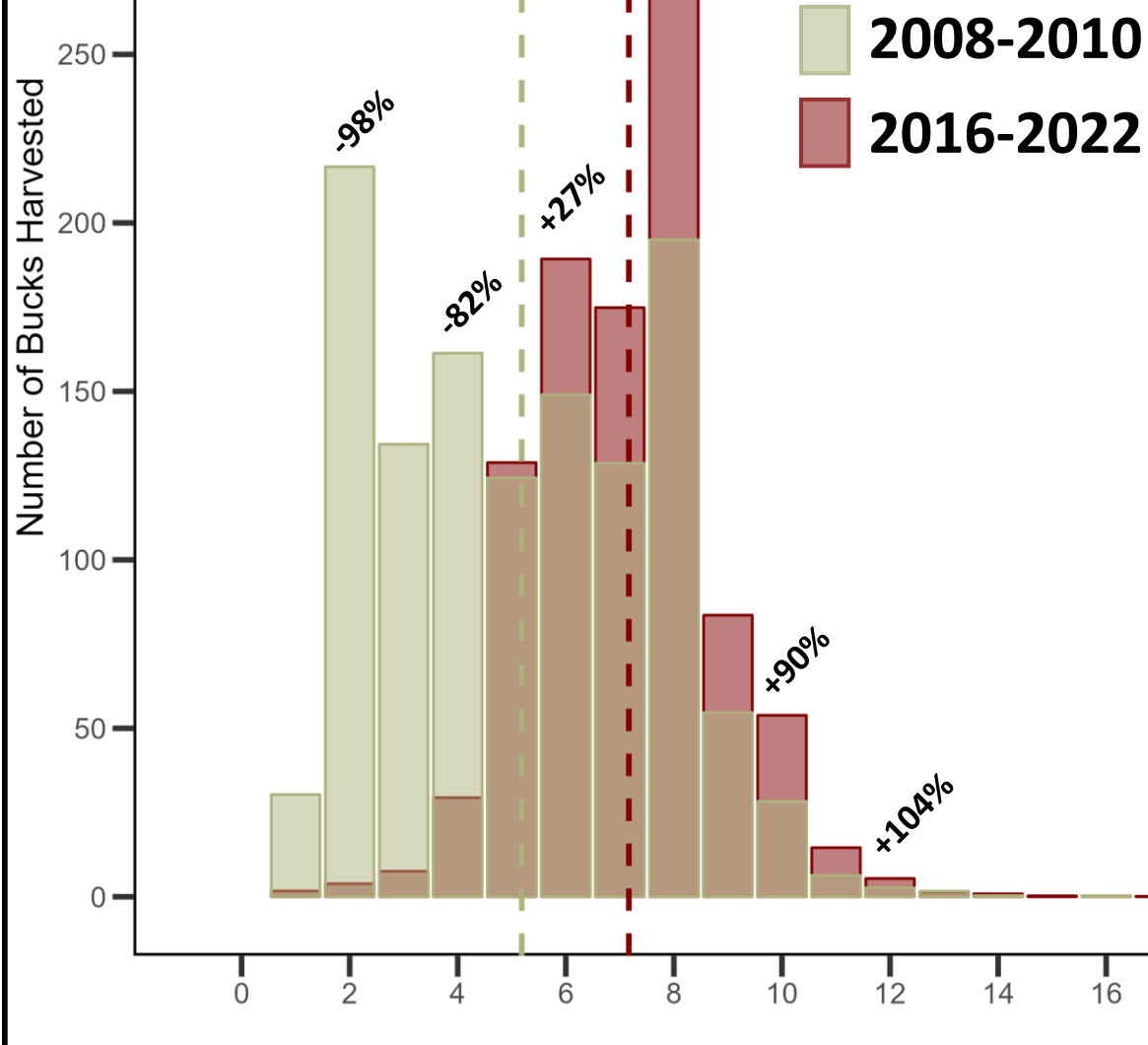
Reg Set 8 – “After”

Reg Set 8 Multi-Zone Permit Purchasers 2022

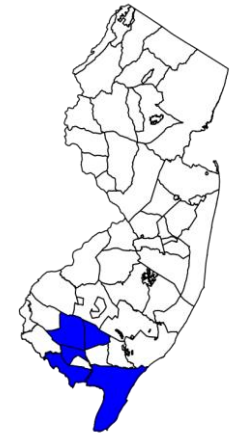
Regulation Set 8						
Season	2019 Zone Sales		2022 Multi-Zone Sales		2022 New Sales	
Bow	499 <i>(356 purchasers)</i>	\$13,972	679	\$38,024	323	\$24,052
Muzzleloader	142 <i>(101 purchasers)</i>	\$3,976	224	\$12,544	123	\$8,568
Shotgun	564 <i>(348 purchasers)</i>	\$15,792	655	\$36,680	307	\$20,888
TOTAL	1,205 <i>(805 purchasers)</i>	\$48,888	1931	\$108,136	843	\$59,248

Buck Harvest Distribution by Total Antler Points

2008-2010 Vs. 2016-2022



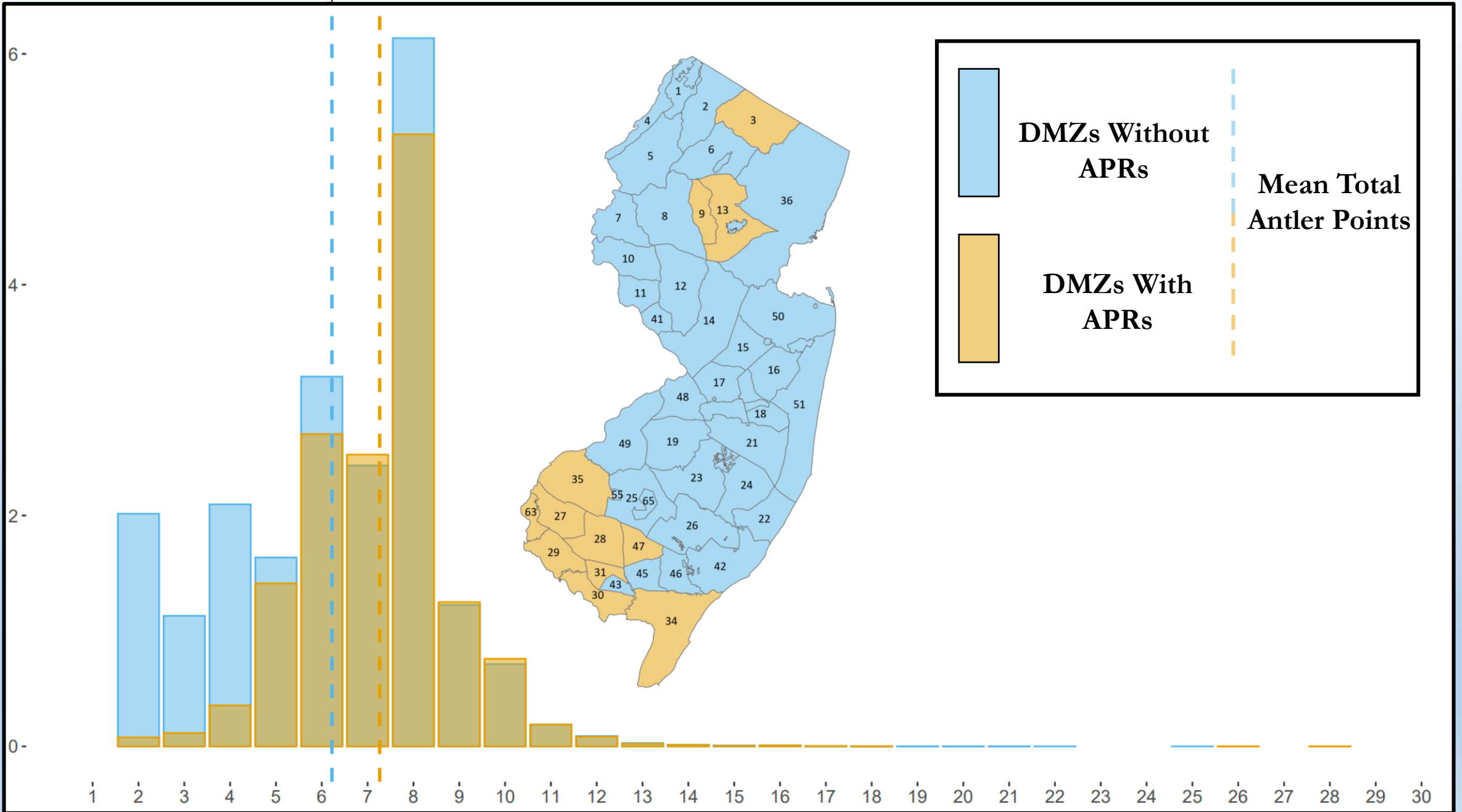
Antler Points	Δ Bucks	Δ Bucks/mi ²	% Δ Bucks
1	-28.333	-0.08	-93%
2	-212.167	-0.59	-98%
3	-125.5	-0.35	-93%
4	-127	-0.35	-79%
5	26	0.07	21%
6	71.833	0.20	48%
7	75.333	0.21	59%
8	186.667	0.52	96%
9	42.833	0.12	78%
10	34.5	0.10	122%
11	10.667	0.03	168%
12	3.666	0.01	137%
Total:	-41.501	-0.12	-3.4%



DMZs: 28, 47, 31,
30, 34

Density of Deer Harvested with x Number of Antler Points from 2017 to 2022

Density of Deer (Deer / sq mi of Range)



Number of Antler Points

DMZs Without
APRs

DMZs With
APRs

Mean Total
Antler Points

Density of Deer Harvested with x Number of Antler Points from 2017 to 2022

