



2025 GAME CODE

Game Committee Recommendations

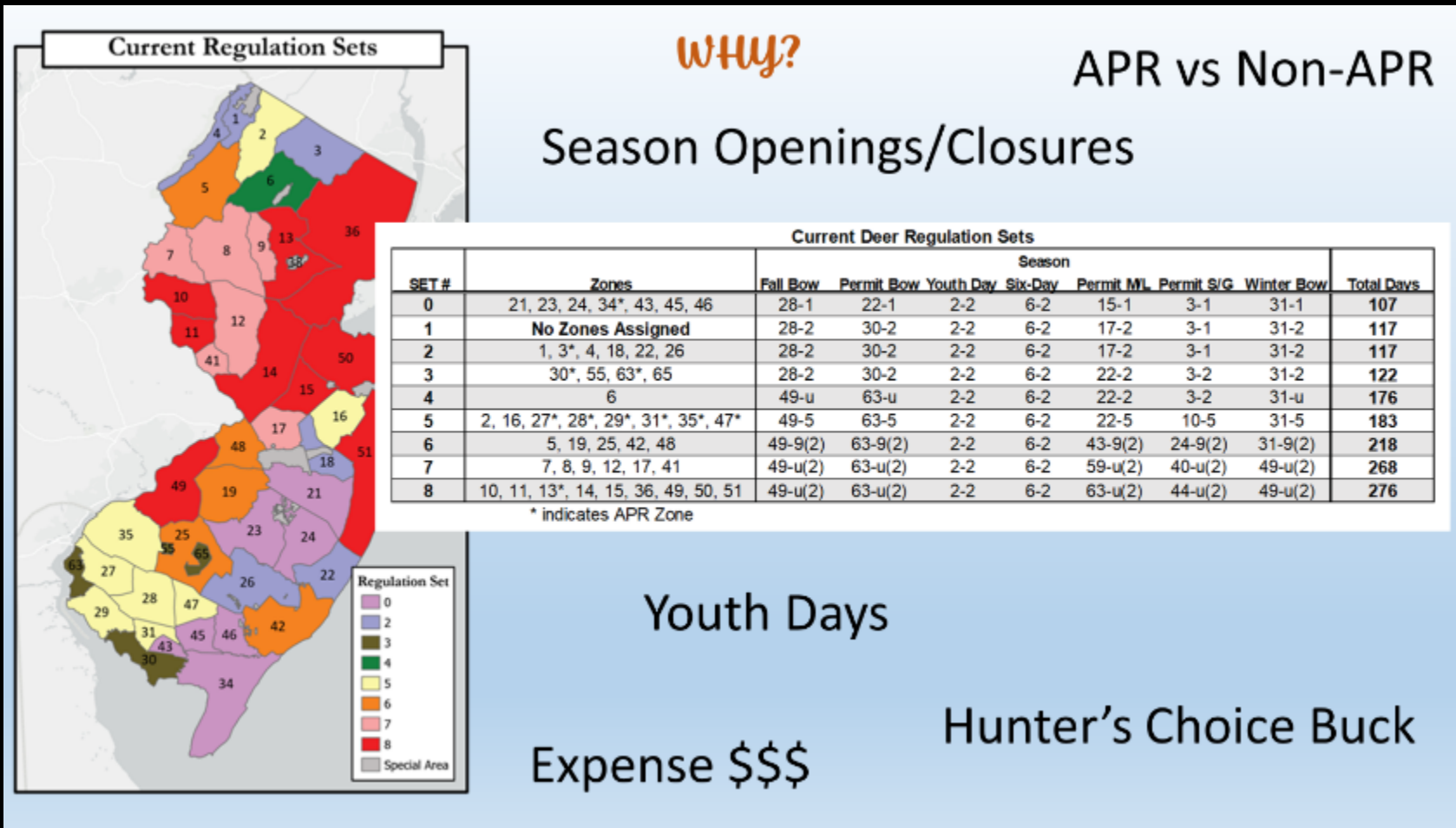
May 14, 2024 Fish & Game Council Meeting

2025 GAME CODE

Regulation Simplification

Recodification

DEER



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

DEER

9,876 Respondents (12% response rate)

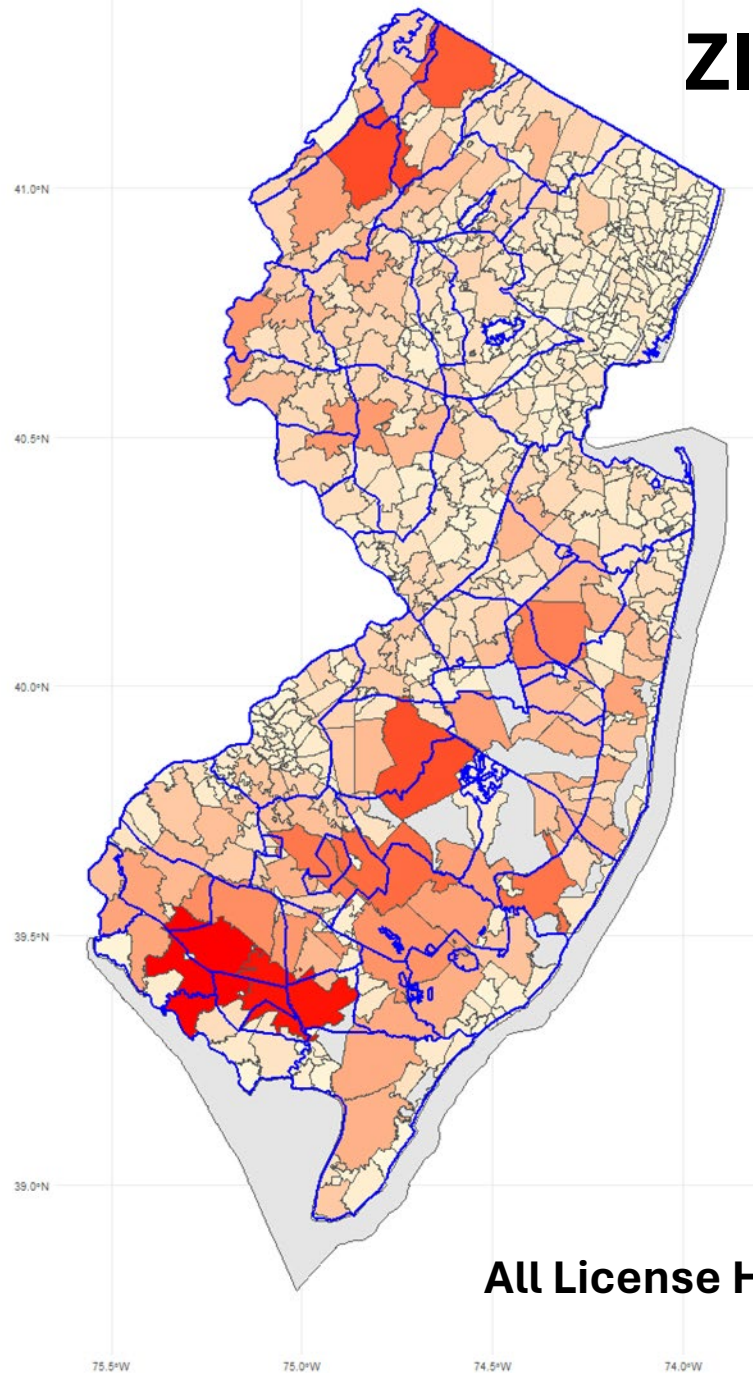
Data clean-up - Duplicate survey responses, invalid CID #s,
incomplete surveys removed

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

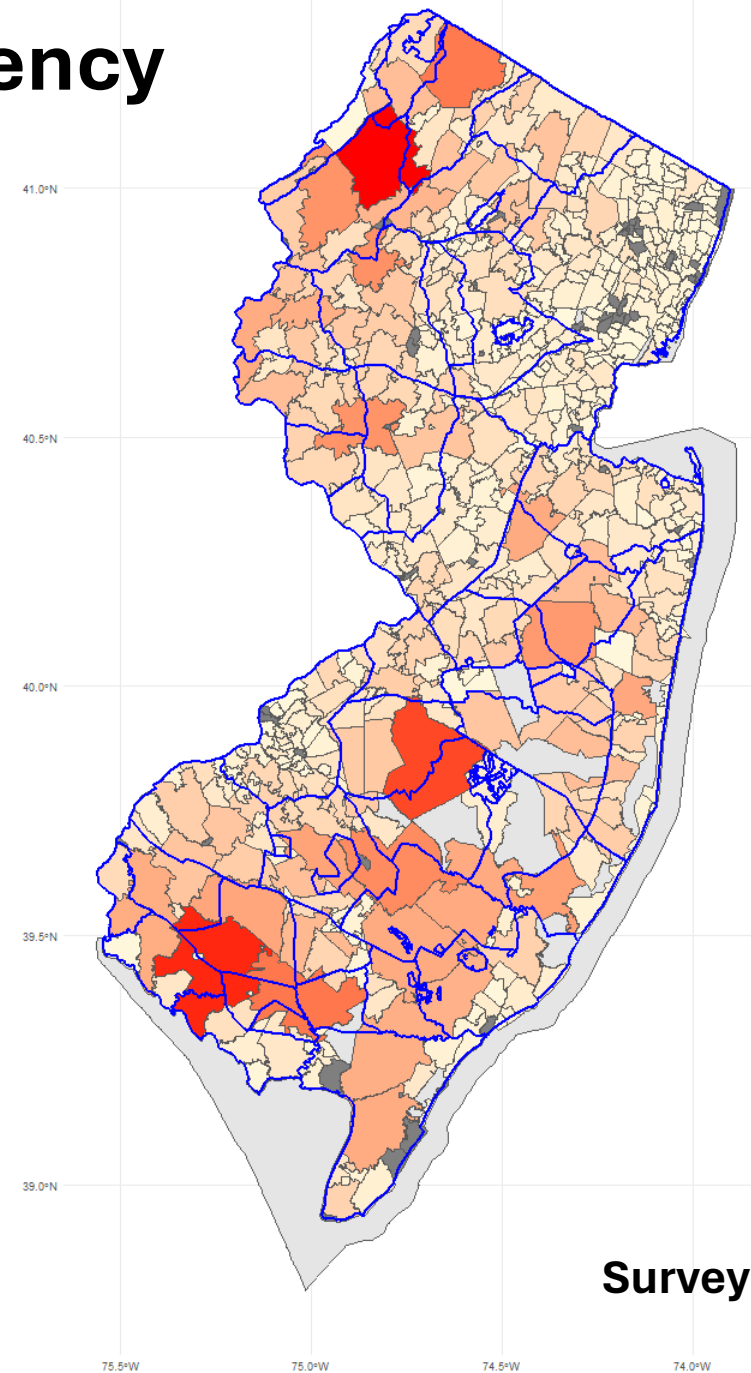
Avg. Time to Complete – 23 min.

DEER HUNTER REGULATION SURVEY

ZIP of Residency

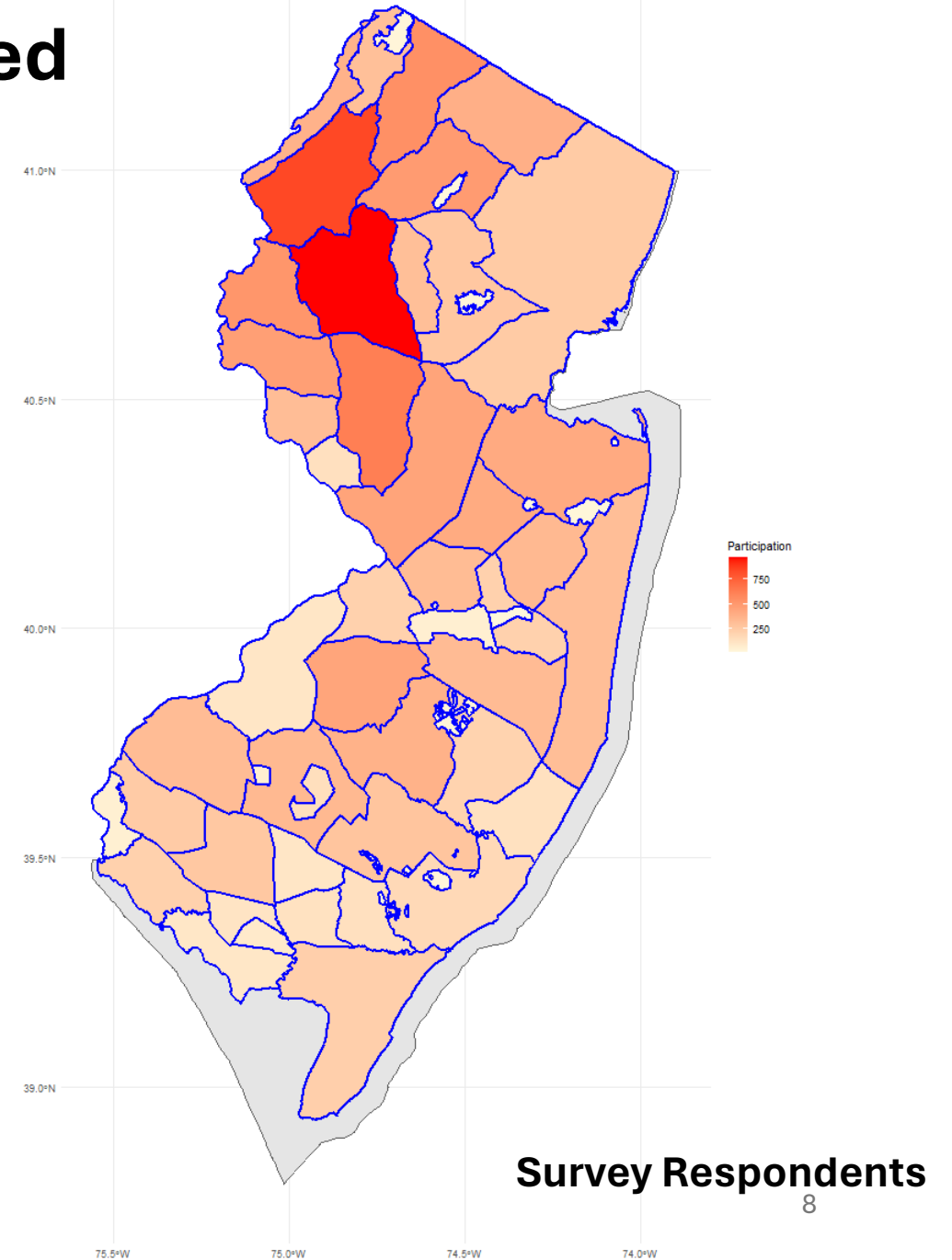
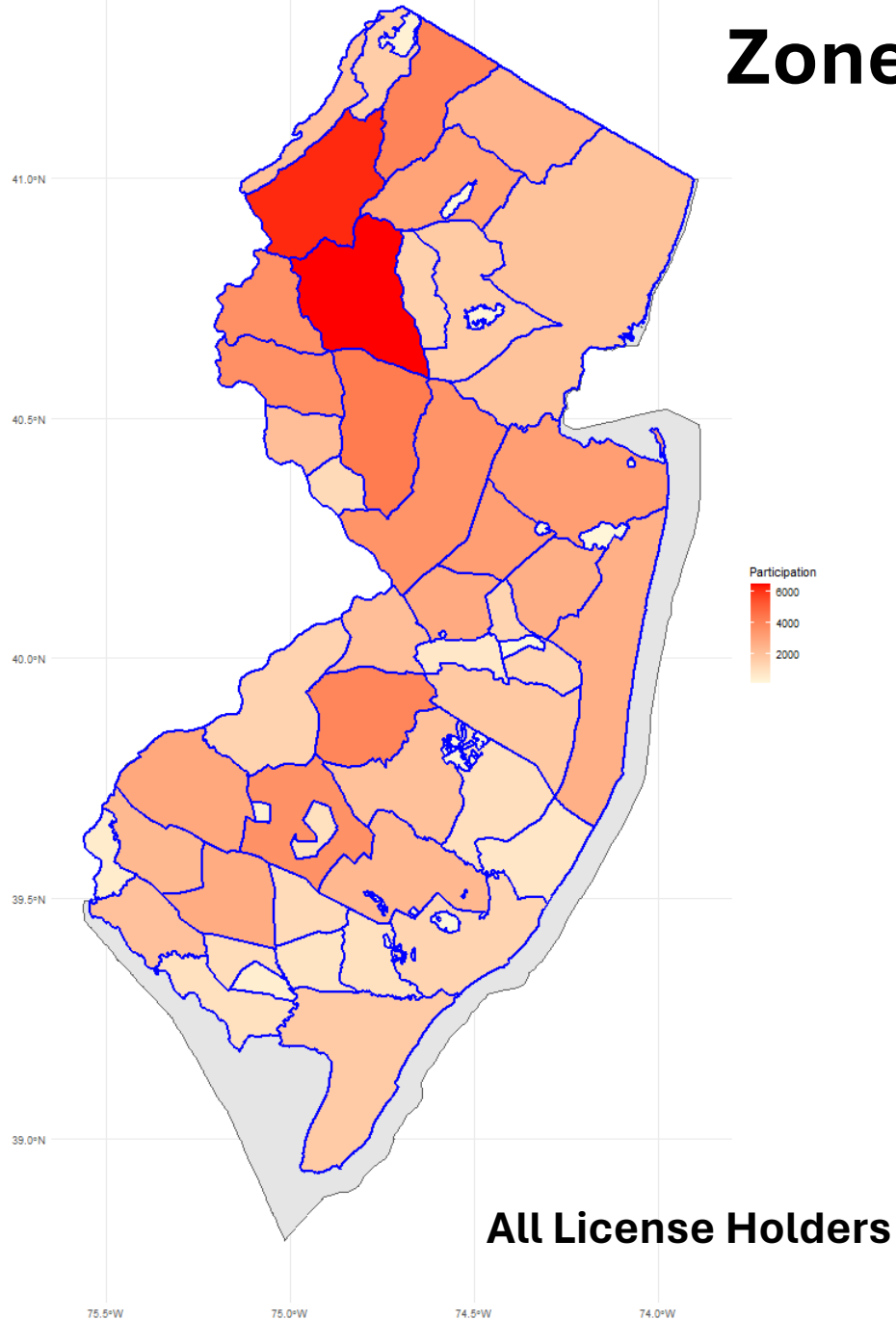


All License Holders

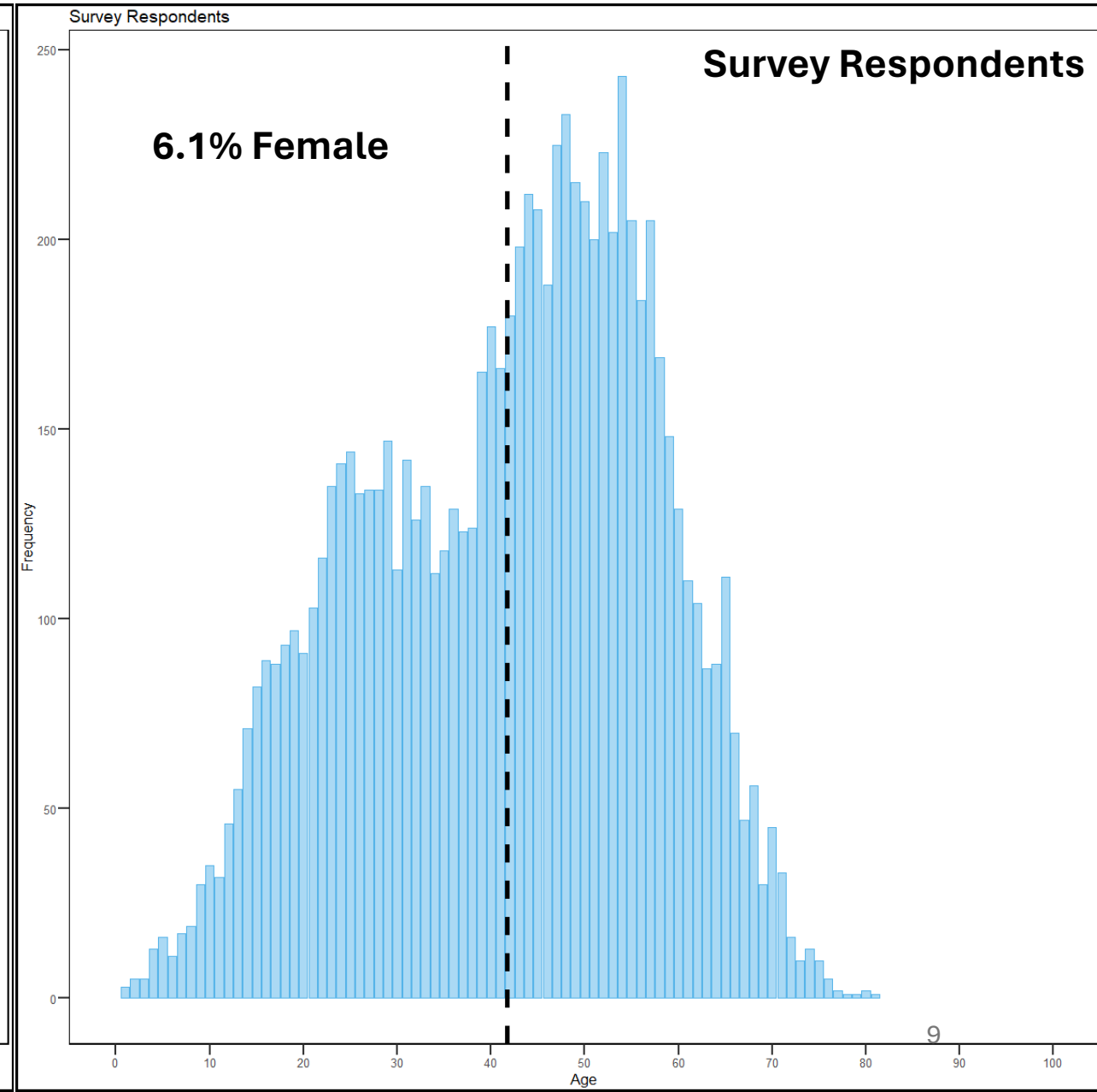
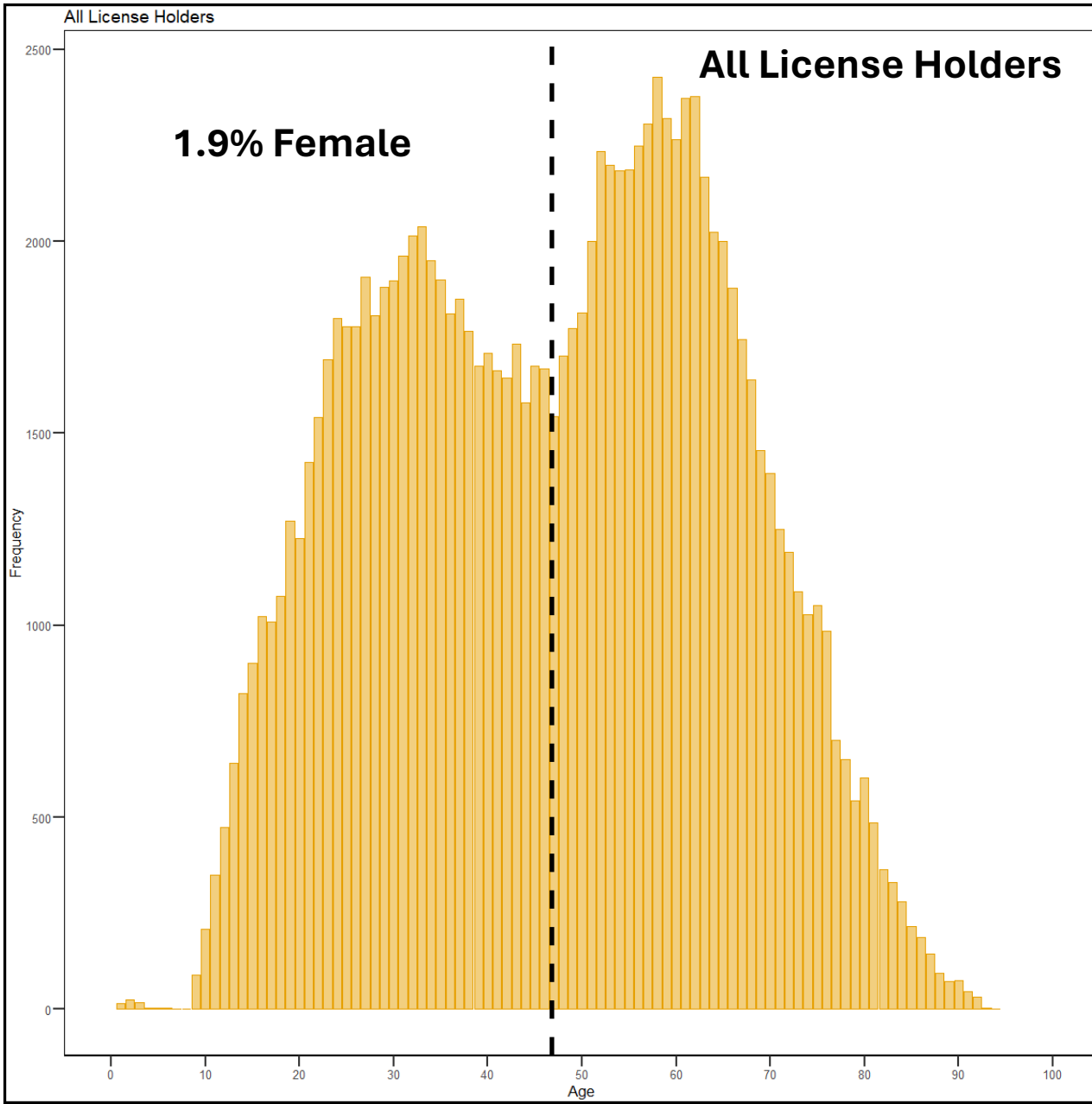


Survey Respondents

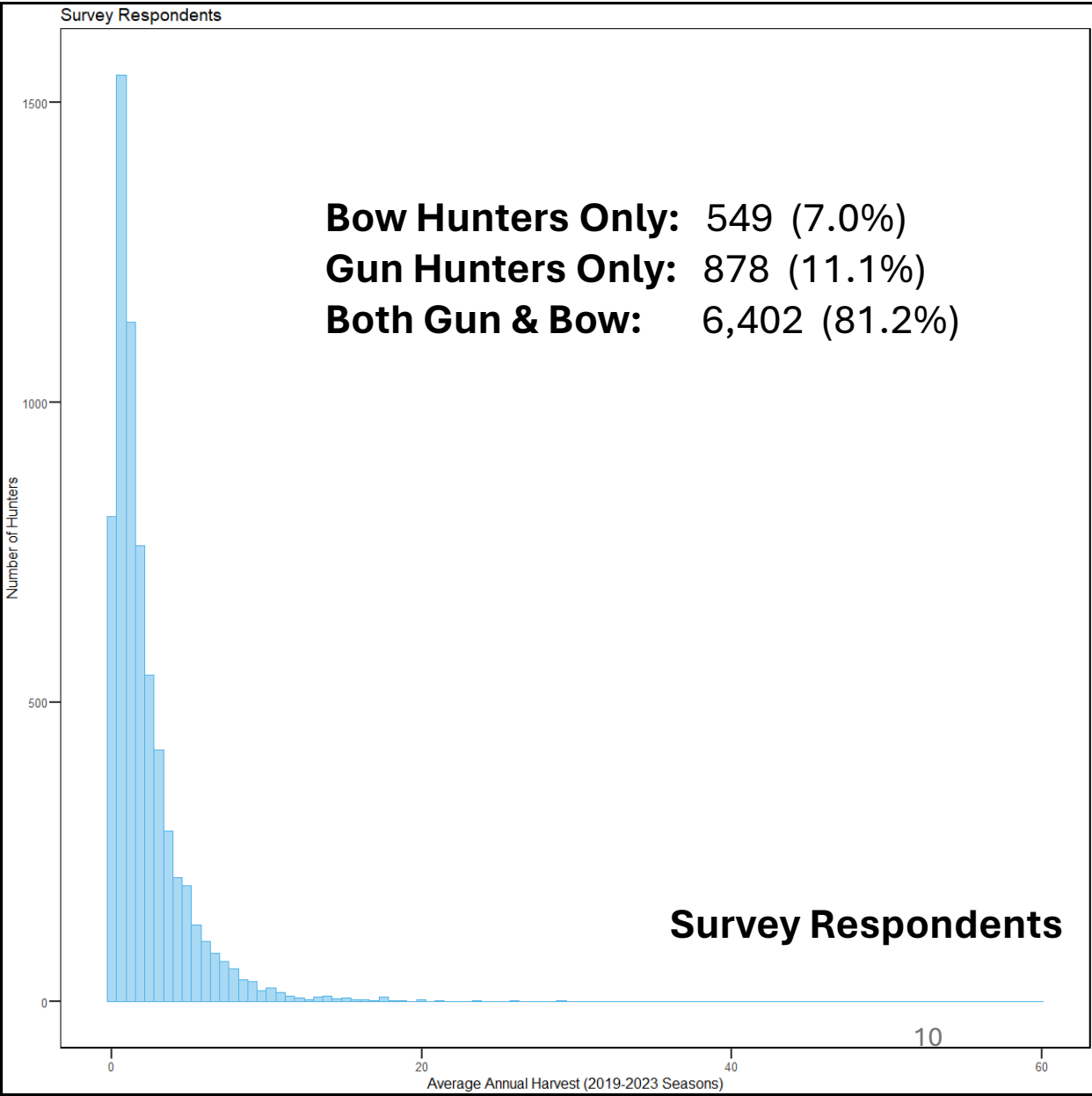
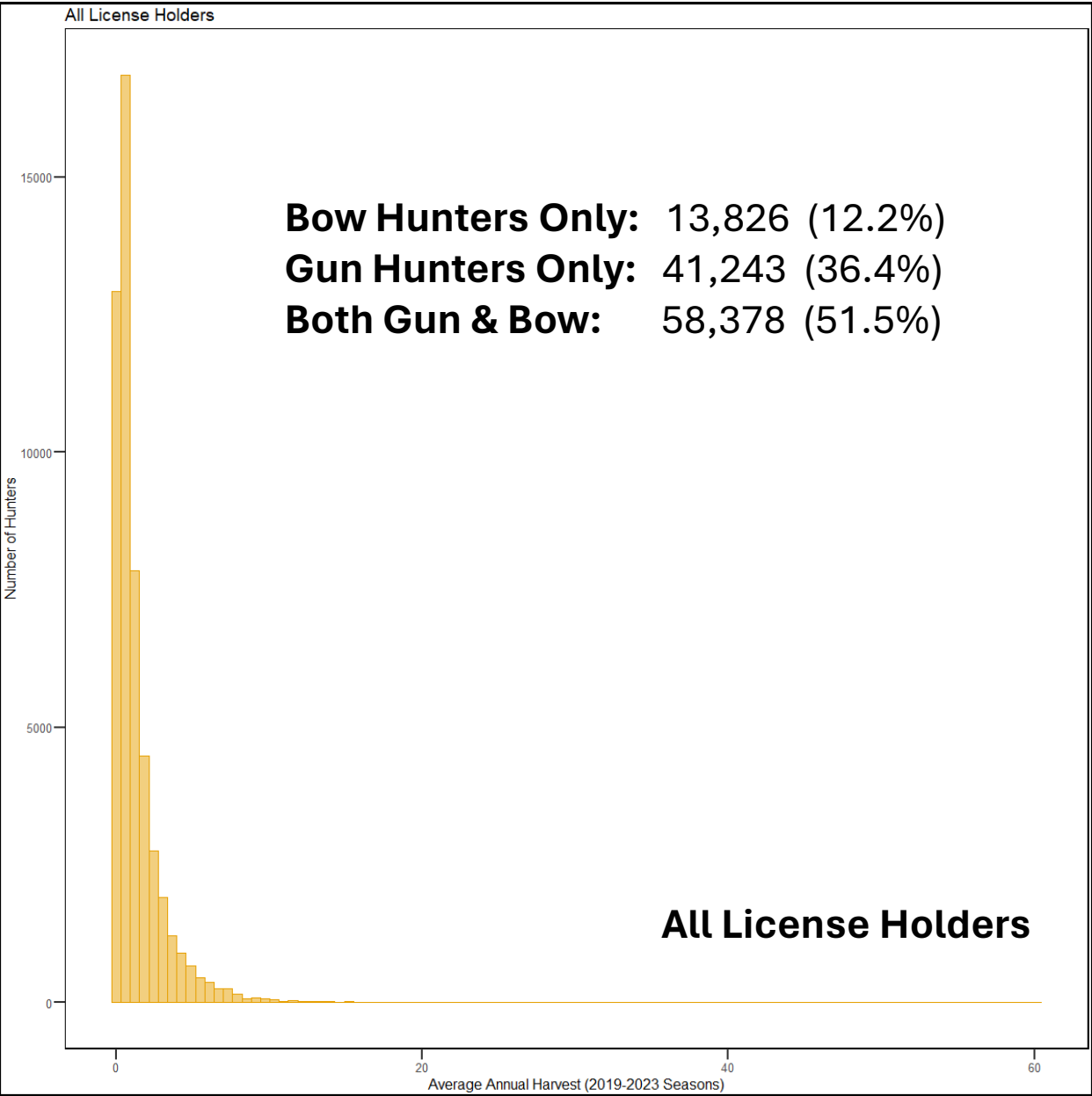
Zones Hunted



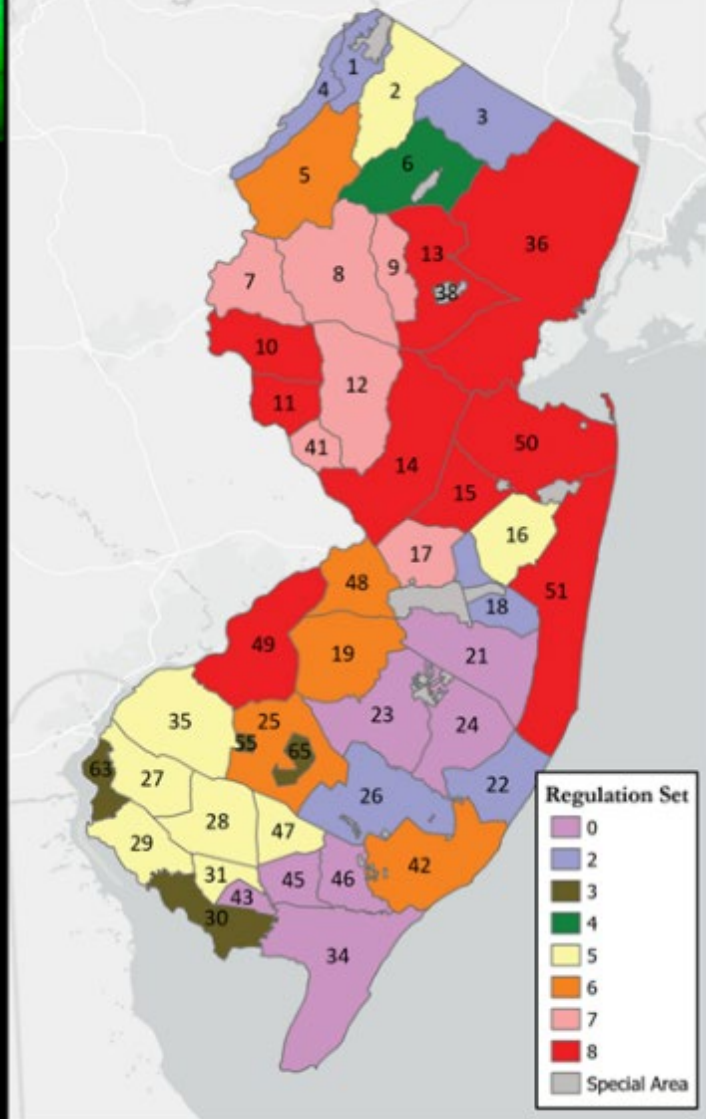
Age Distribution



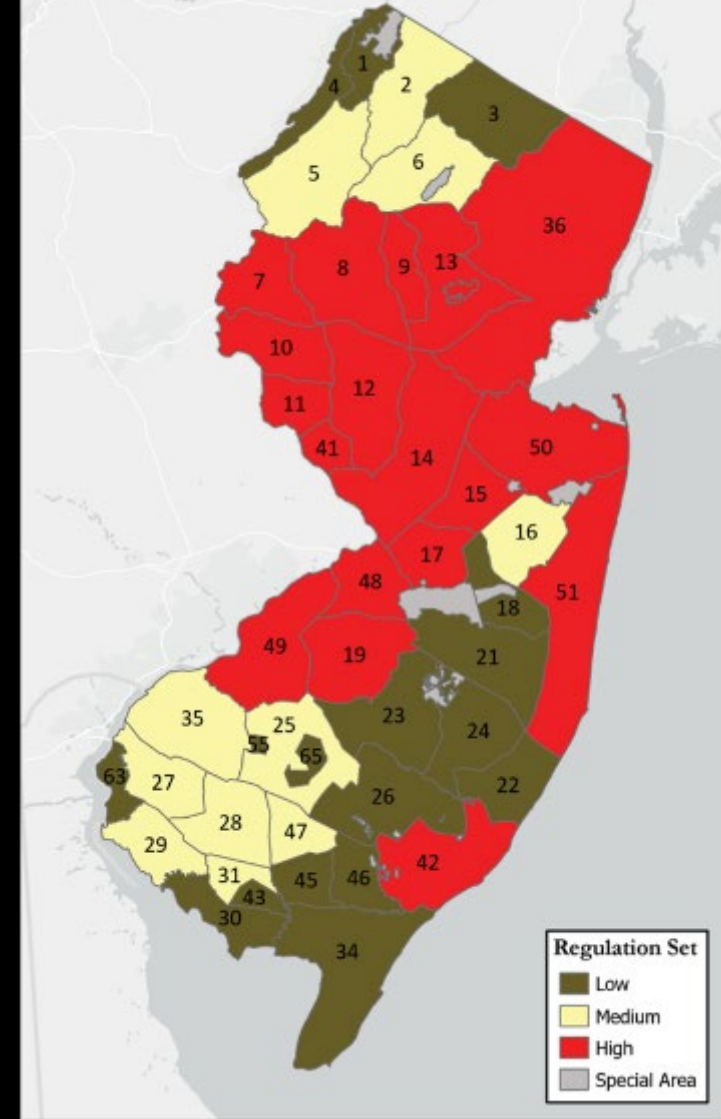
Number of Hunters with x Average Annual Harvest



Current Regulation Sets



Recommended Regulation Sets



COMBINE 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
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 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

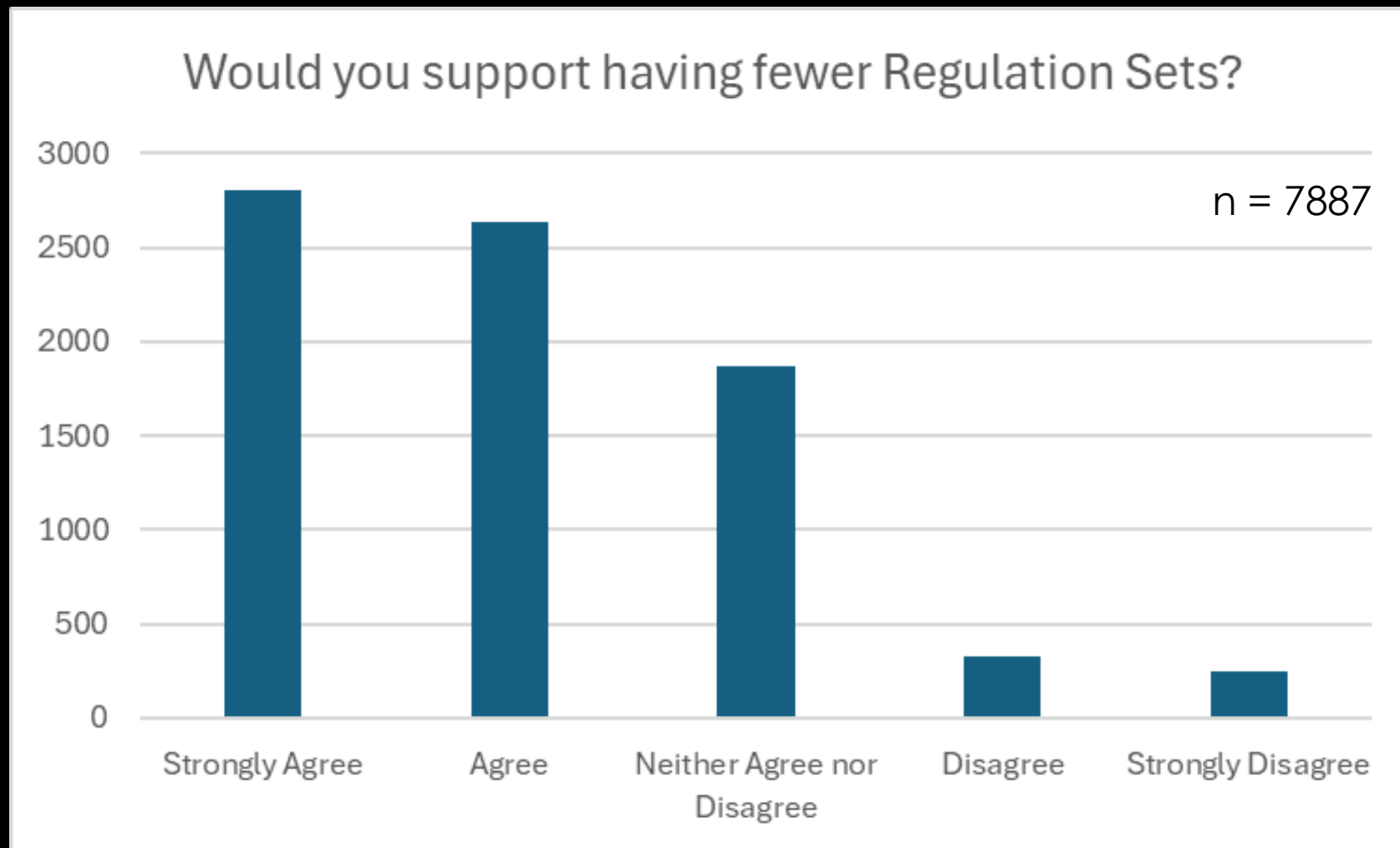
Black indicates the zone didn't change reg sets

- Eliminate and combine regulation sets
- Align season date structure

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

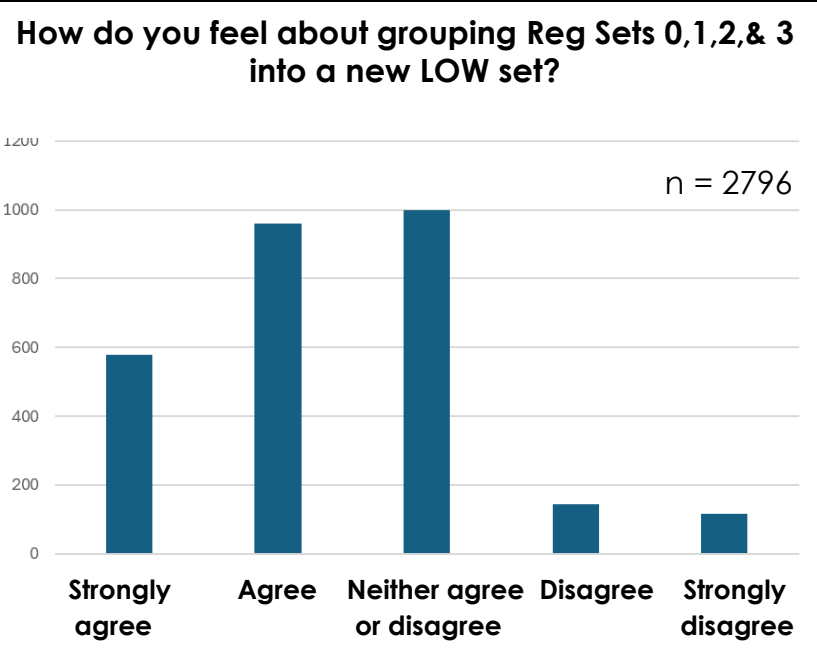
* These dates are based off of the 2025-26 Deer Season

North – Positive
Central – Positive
South - Positive

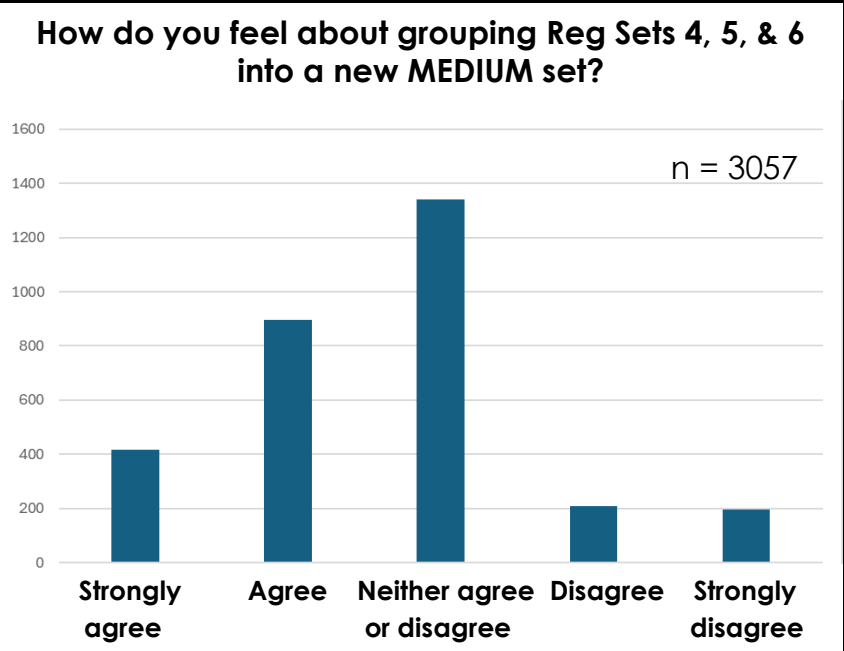


COMBINE REGULATION SETS

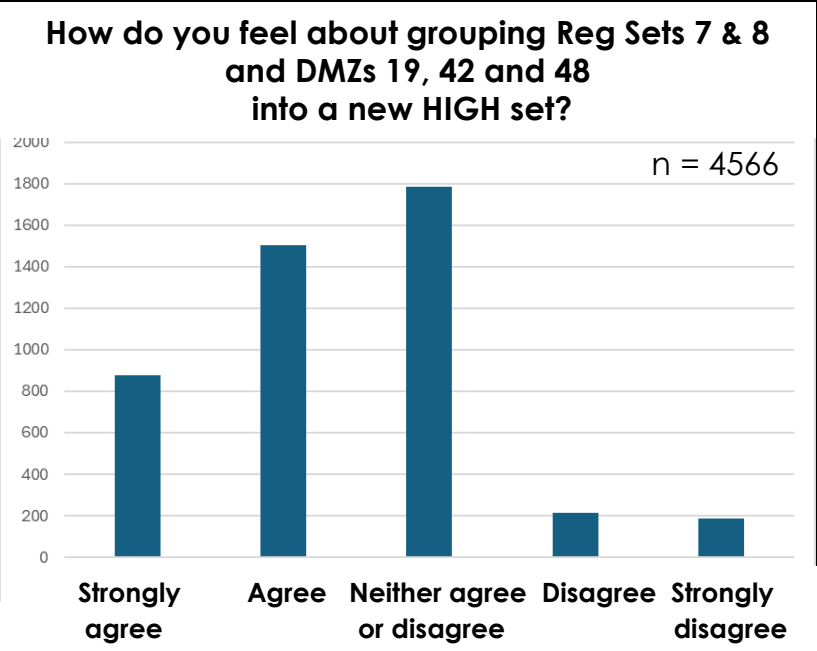
North – Positive
Central – Positive
South - Positive



LOW



MEDIUM



HIGH

Set	Fall Bow	Permit Bow	Youth Days	Six-Day	Permit Muzzleloader	Permit Shotgun	Winter Bow
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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

* 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.

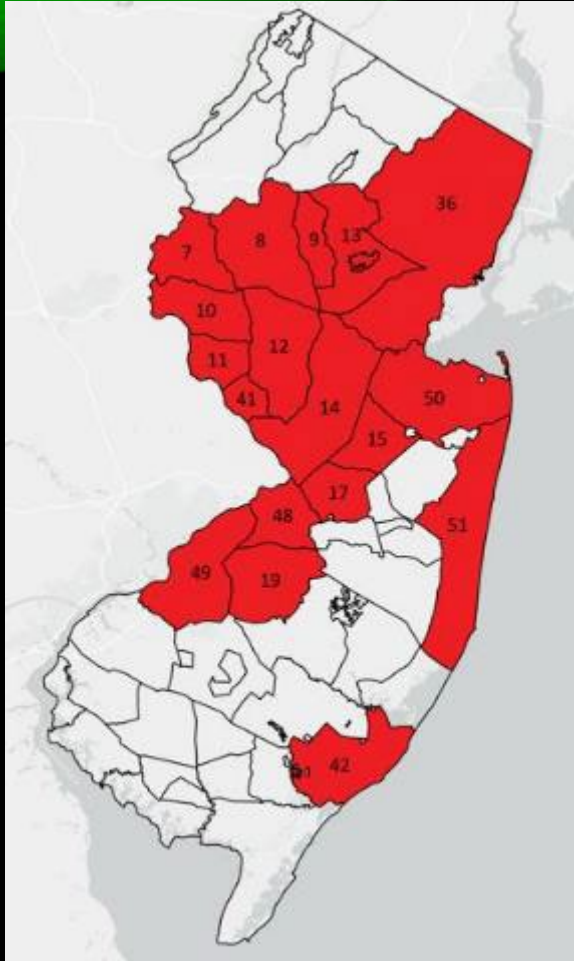
SEASON ALIGNMENT – HIGH SET

HIGH

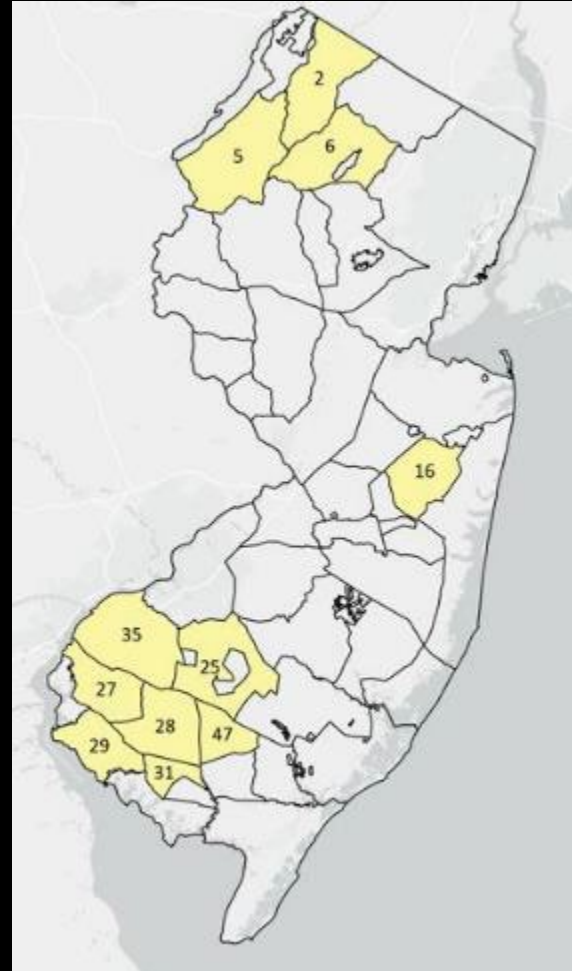
MEDIUM

LOW

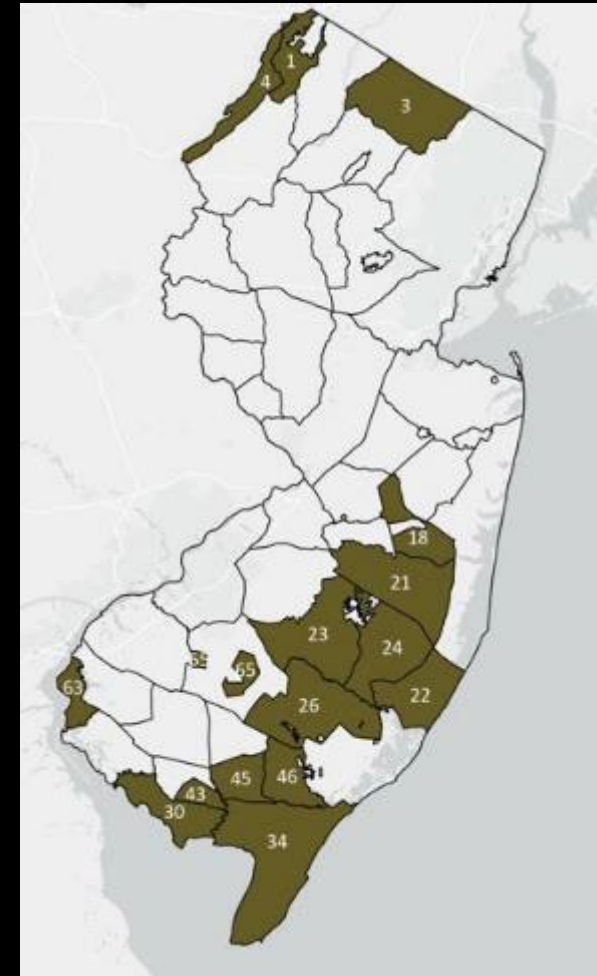
17



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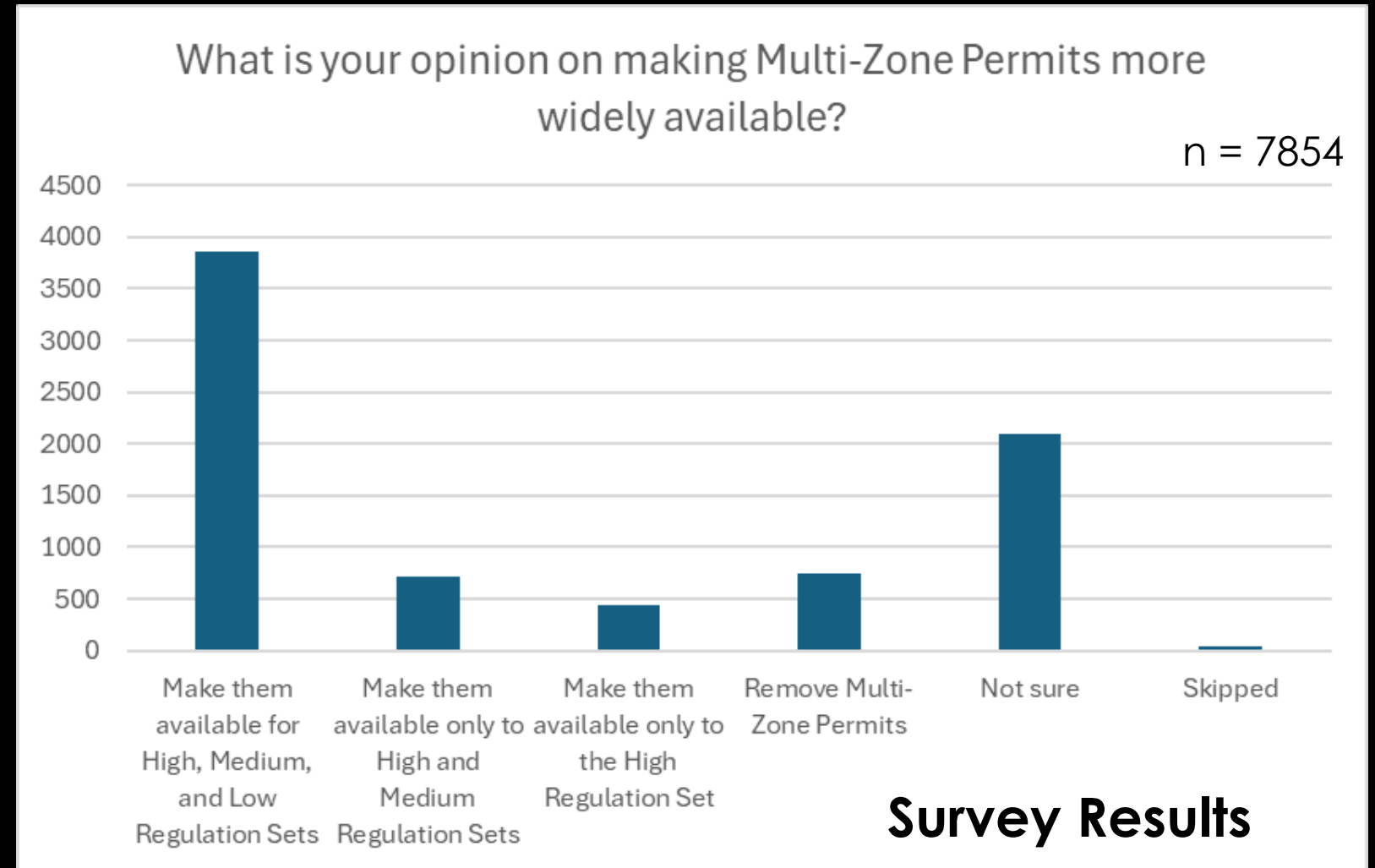
MULTI-ZONE PERMIT EXPANSION

\$ 56

FORUMS

18

North – Positive
Central – Positive
South - Positive



MULTI-ZONE PERMIT EXPANSION

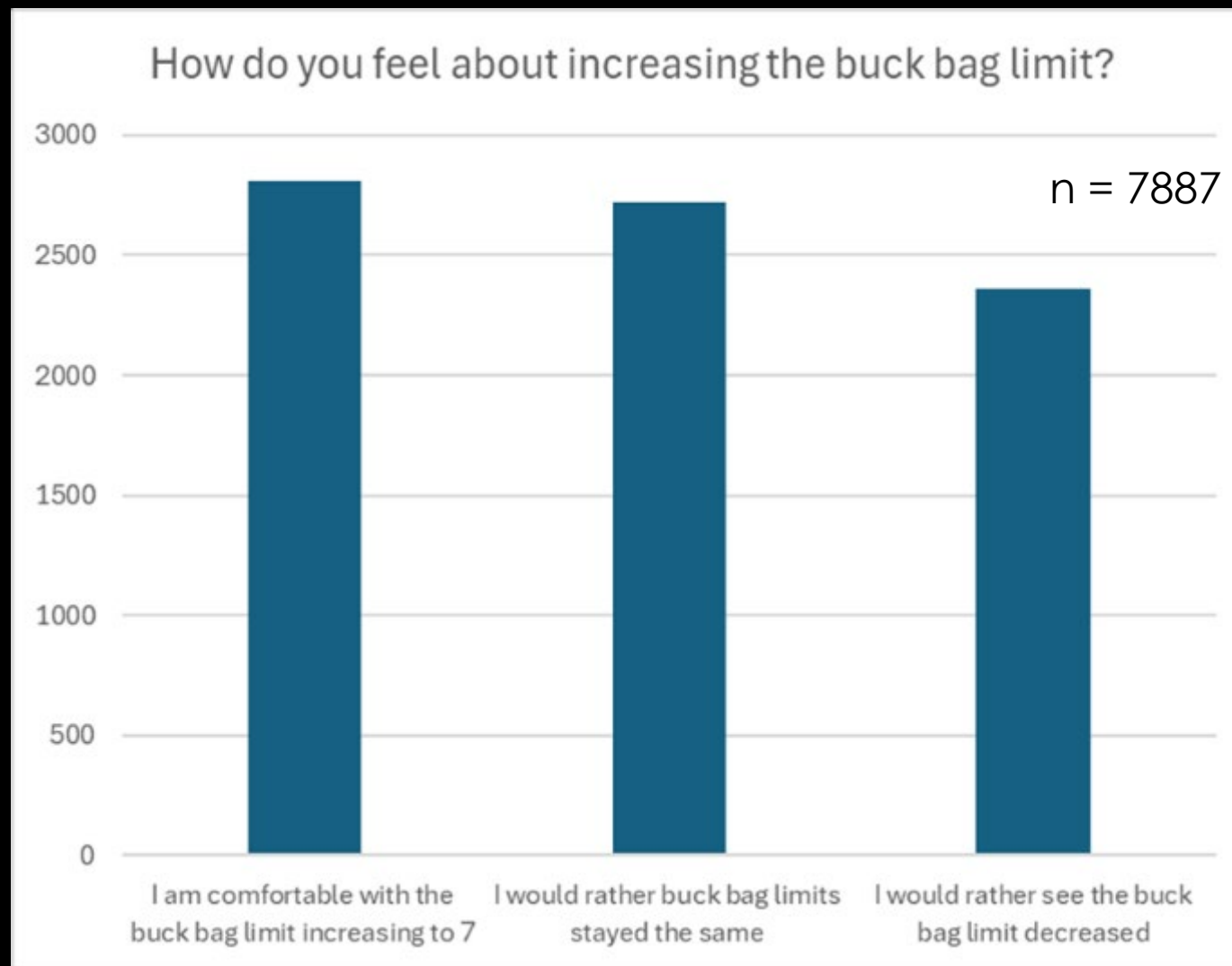
- Hunters would no longer need to forfeit their Permit Shotgun buck tag if they harvest 2 bucks during the Six-Day Firearm season.
- Maintains an equal opportunity for hunters to harvest a buck across each of the six seasons.
- Despite having the opportunity to harvest more bucks, most successful hunters (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

20



REINSTATE BUCK LIMIT TO 7 FROM 6

Complicates
regulations

Antlerless harvest
decreasing at
higher rate than
non-APR

Can be deterrent
to new hunter's
success (R3)

Lessen quality
gene pool

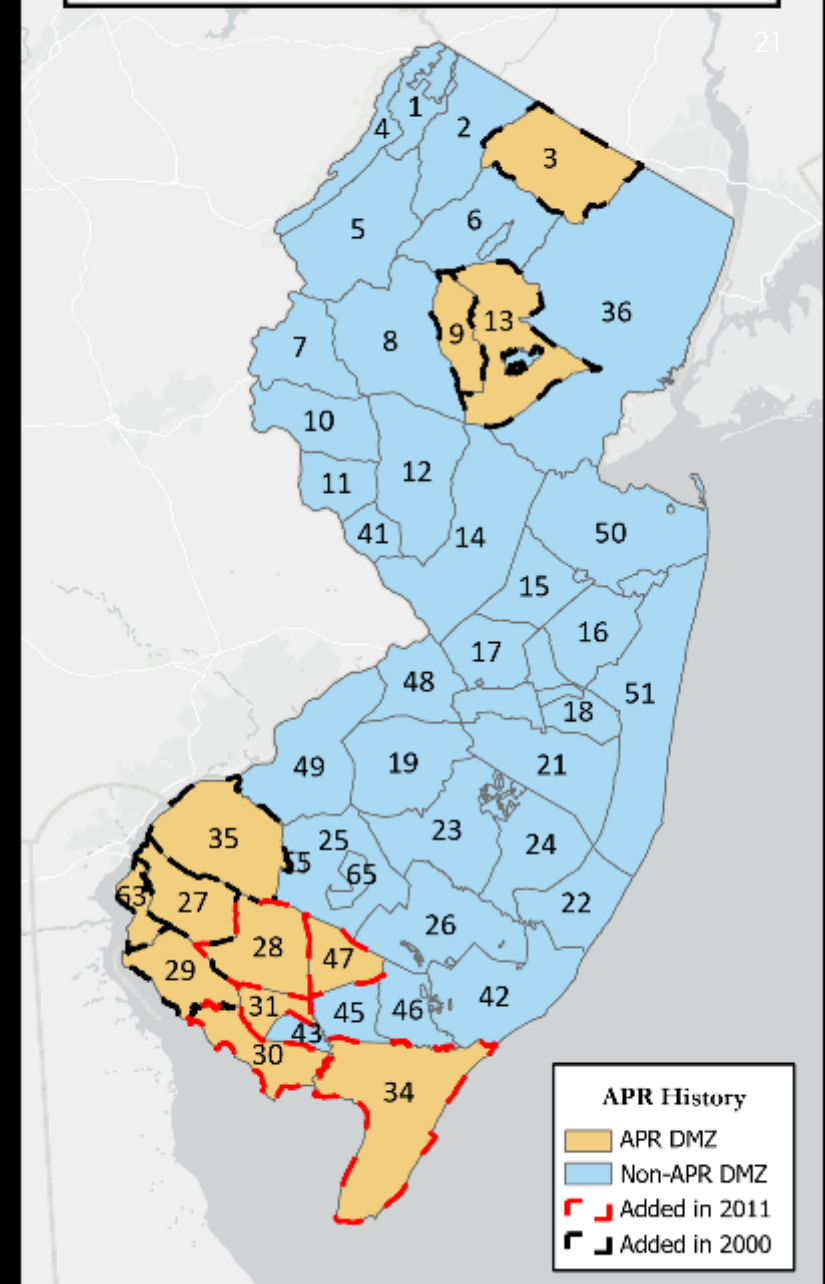
Potential for
spread of
diseases (CWD)

Potential for
increased deer
vehicle collisions

Currently applies to youths outside of the designated
youth days.

ANTLER POINT RESTRICTIONS

Antler Point Restriction DMZs



FORUMS

22

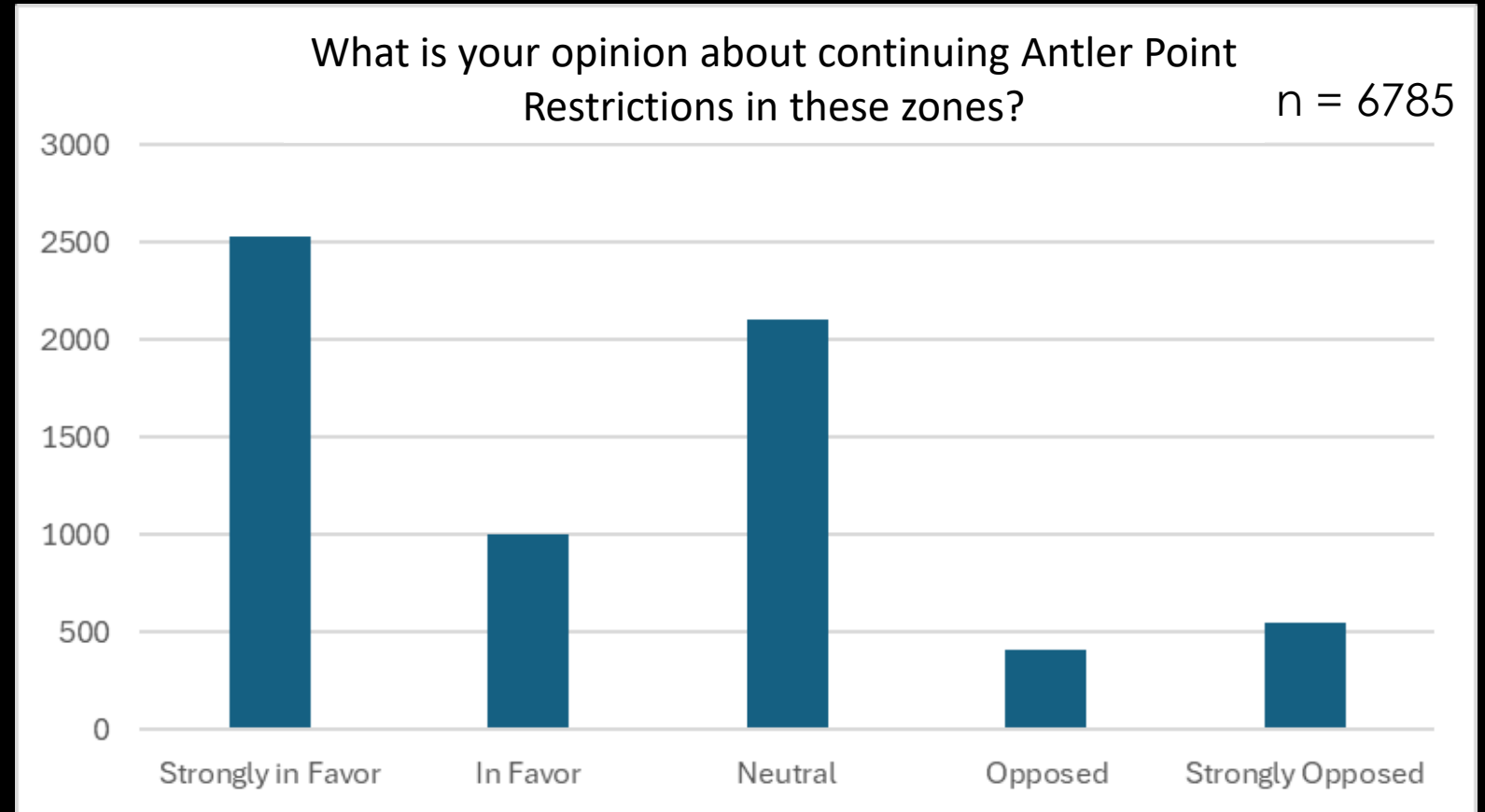
Eliminating APR

North – Negative

Central – Positive

South - Negative

SURVEY RESULTS - Statewide

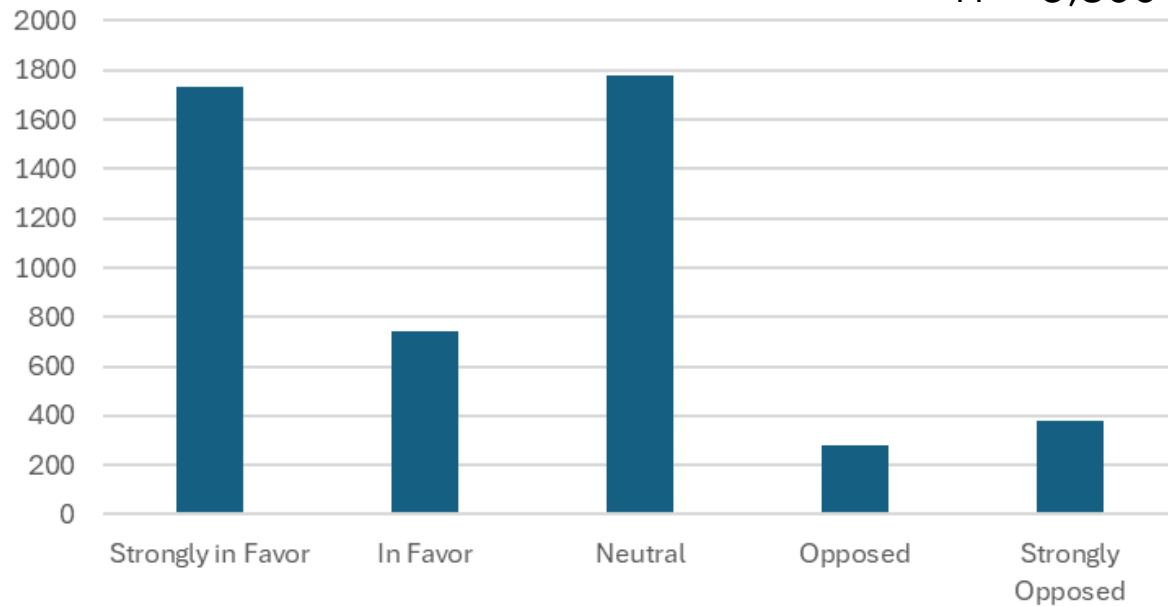


ANTLER POINT RESTRICTIONS

SURVEY RESULTS – By APR Participation

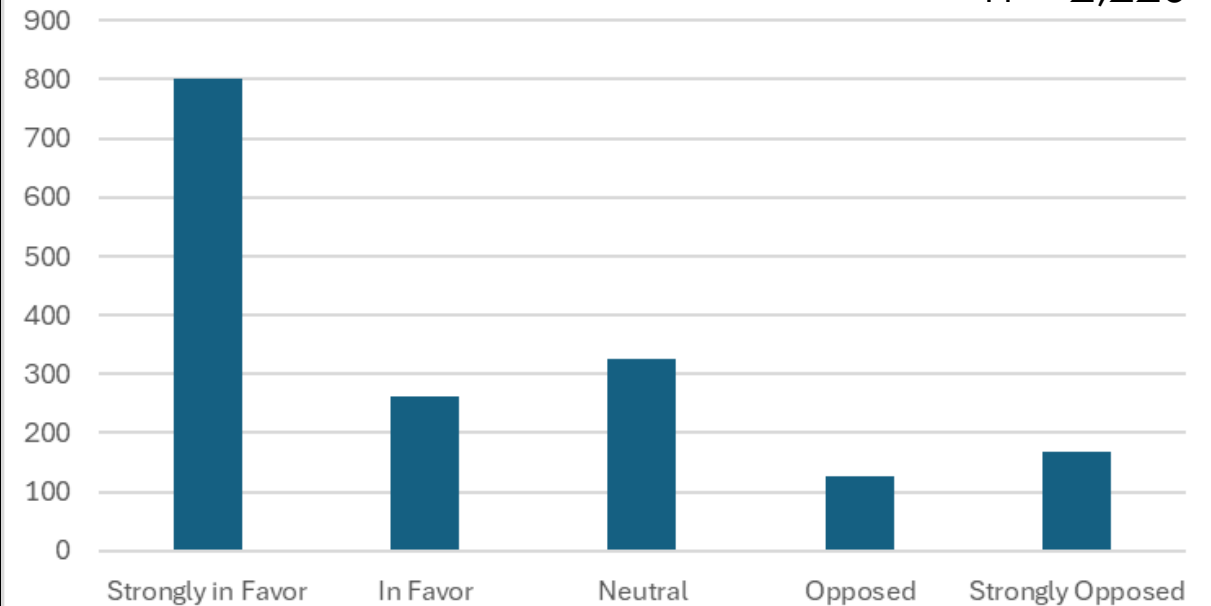
Not Hunting an APR Zone

n = 5,800



Hunting an APR Zone

n = 2,220

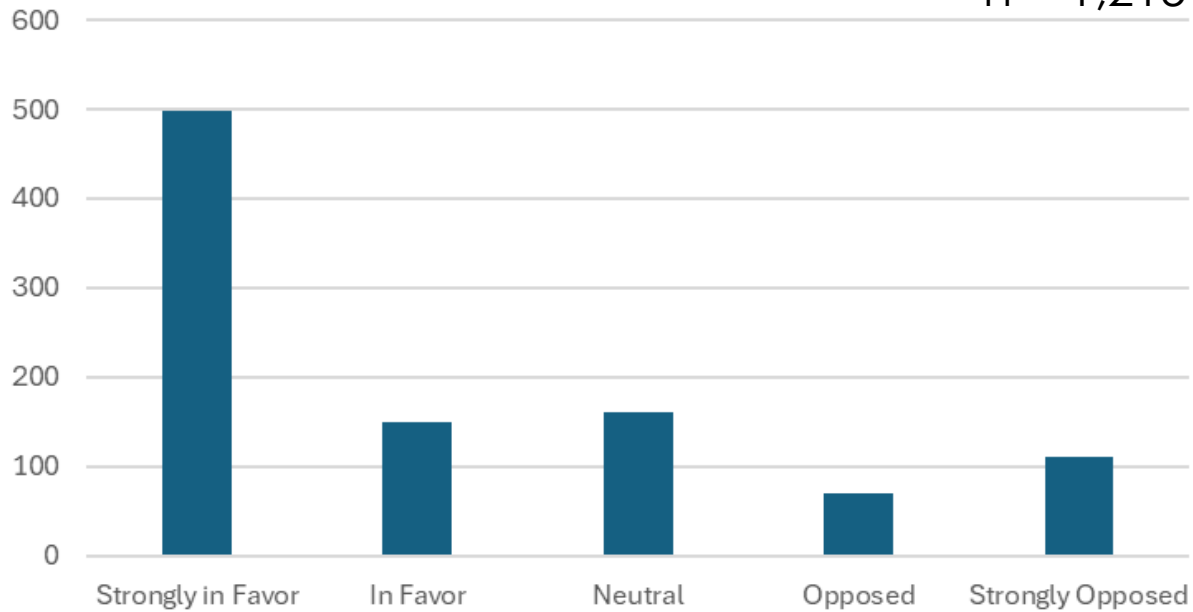


ANTLER POINT RESTRICTIONS

SURVEY RESULTS – By APR Region

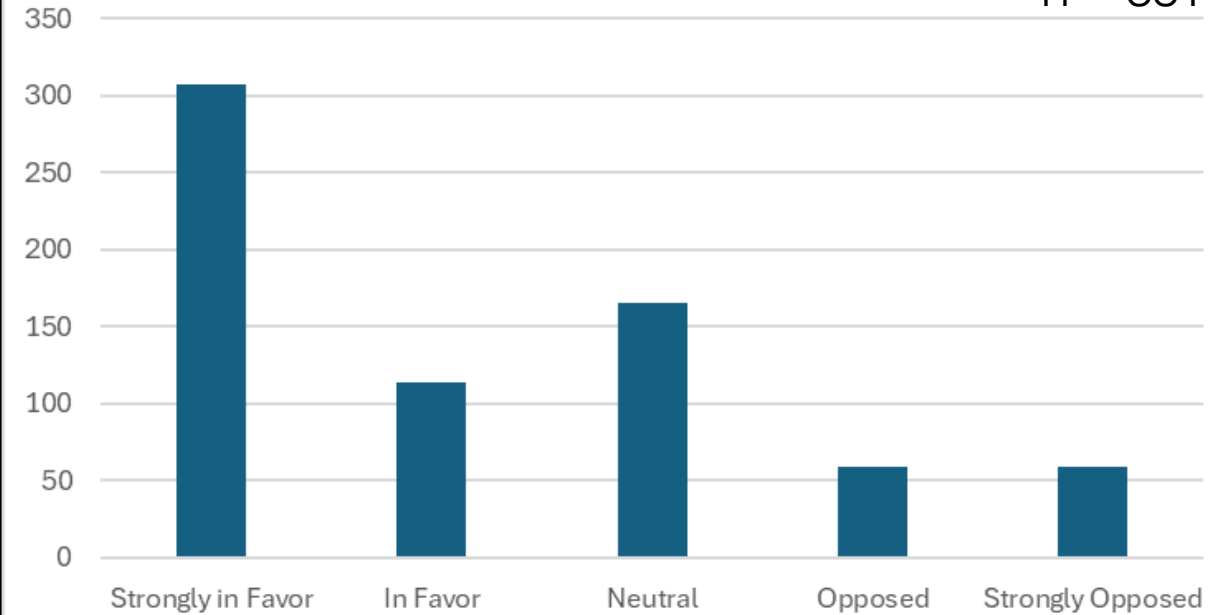
Hunting a Southern APR Zone

n = 1,215



Hunting a Northern APR Zone

n = 881



ANTLER POINT RESTRICTIONS

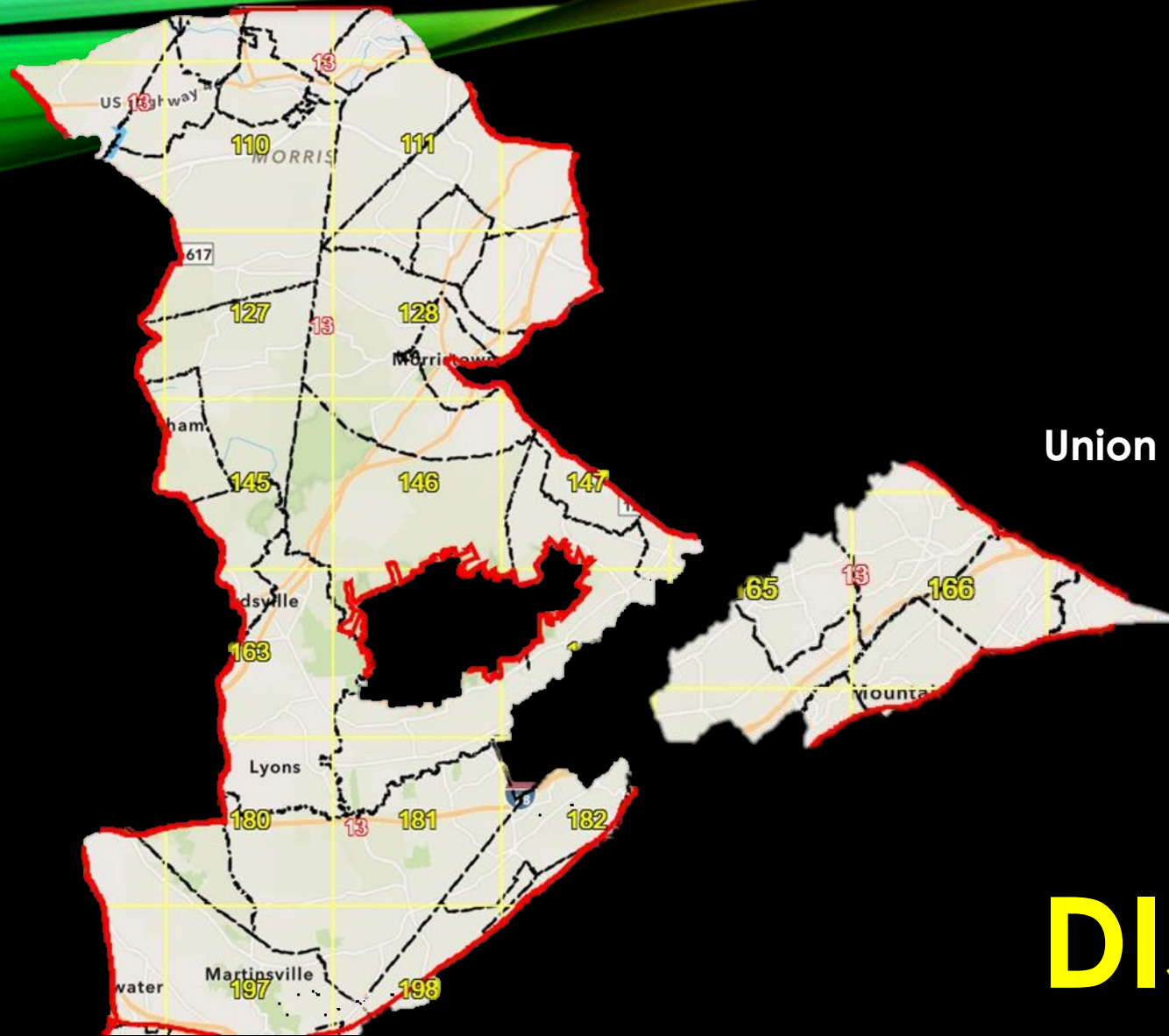
DISCUSSION

- **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

ANTLER POINT RESTRICTIONS



Union County – Zone 13

DISCUSSION

ZONE 13 – UNION COUNTY

SIX-DAY FIREARM SEASON

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

DISCUSSION

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

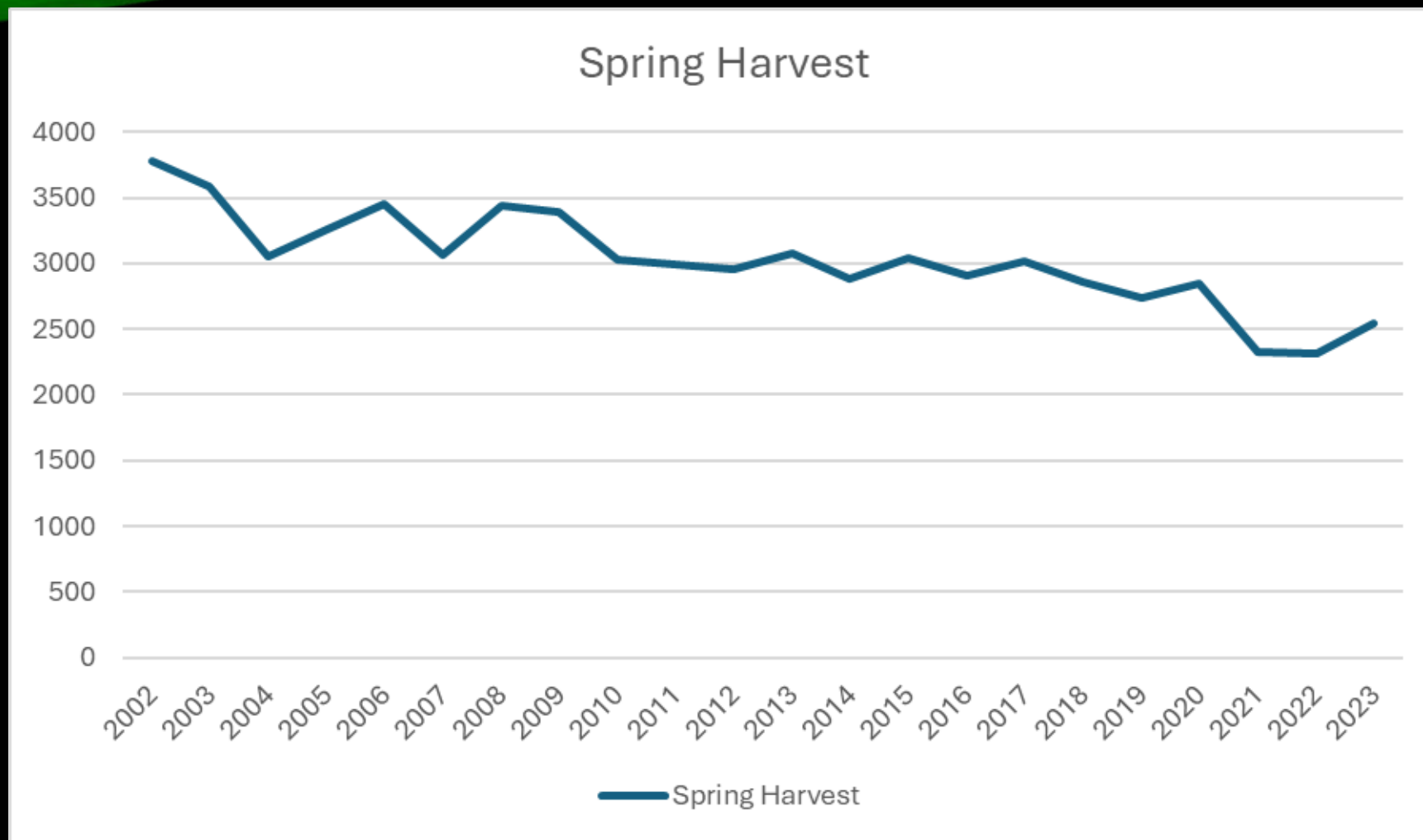
TURKEY

Close Fall Either-Sex Season

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



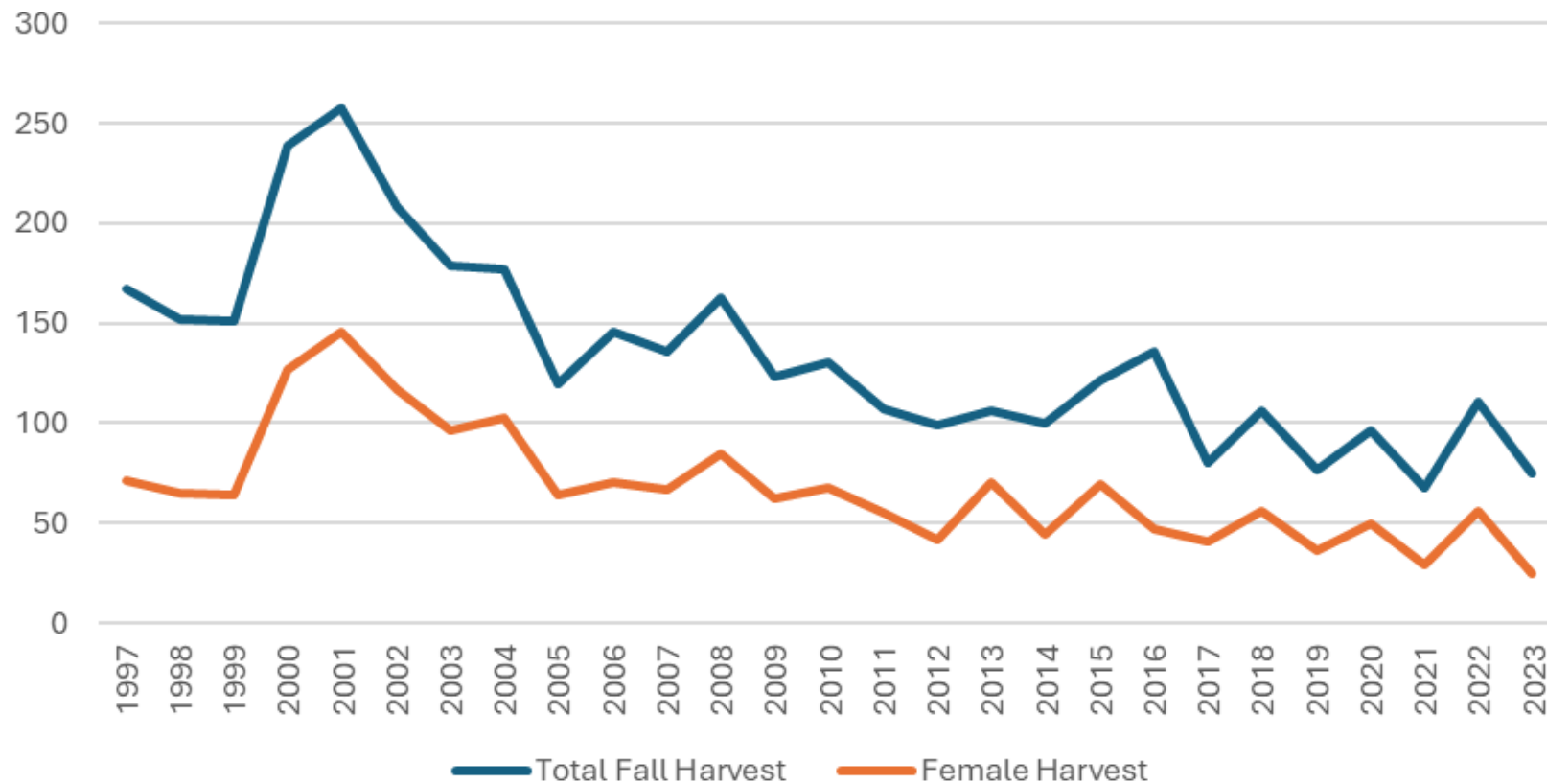
TURKEY



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

TURKEY

Fall Either-Sex Turkey Harvest 1997-2023



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

TURKEY

- **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**

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

TURKEY

- **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**

DISCUSSION

- **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**
- **Prohibit dog training on WMAs stocked for Youth Day hunt during the youth week of pheasant hunting.**
- **Remove list of specific WMAs and reference Fish & Wildlife website**

SMALL GAME

- **Gray Fox**
 - Require harvest reporting
- **Air Guns**
 - Allow .25 caliber air guns for rabbit, squirrel, raccoon, opossum, and coyote hunting



Muzzleloading Rifle Squirrel Areas



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

DISCUSSION

- **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

DISCUSSION

- **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

BEAVER

- **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

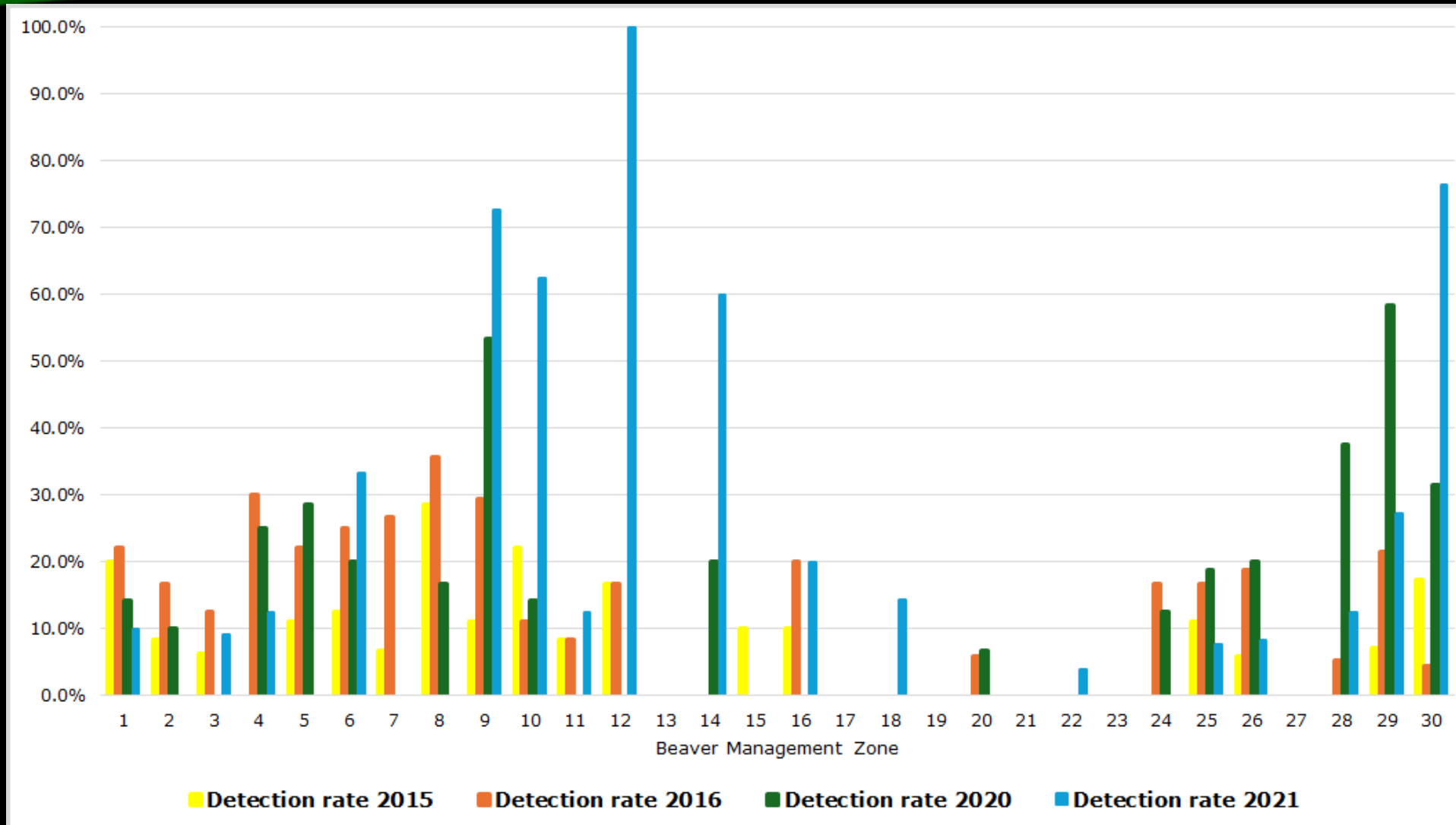


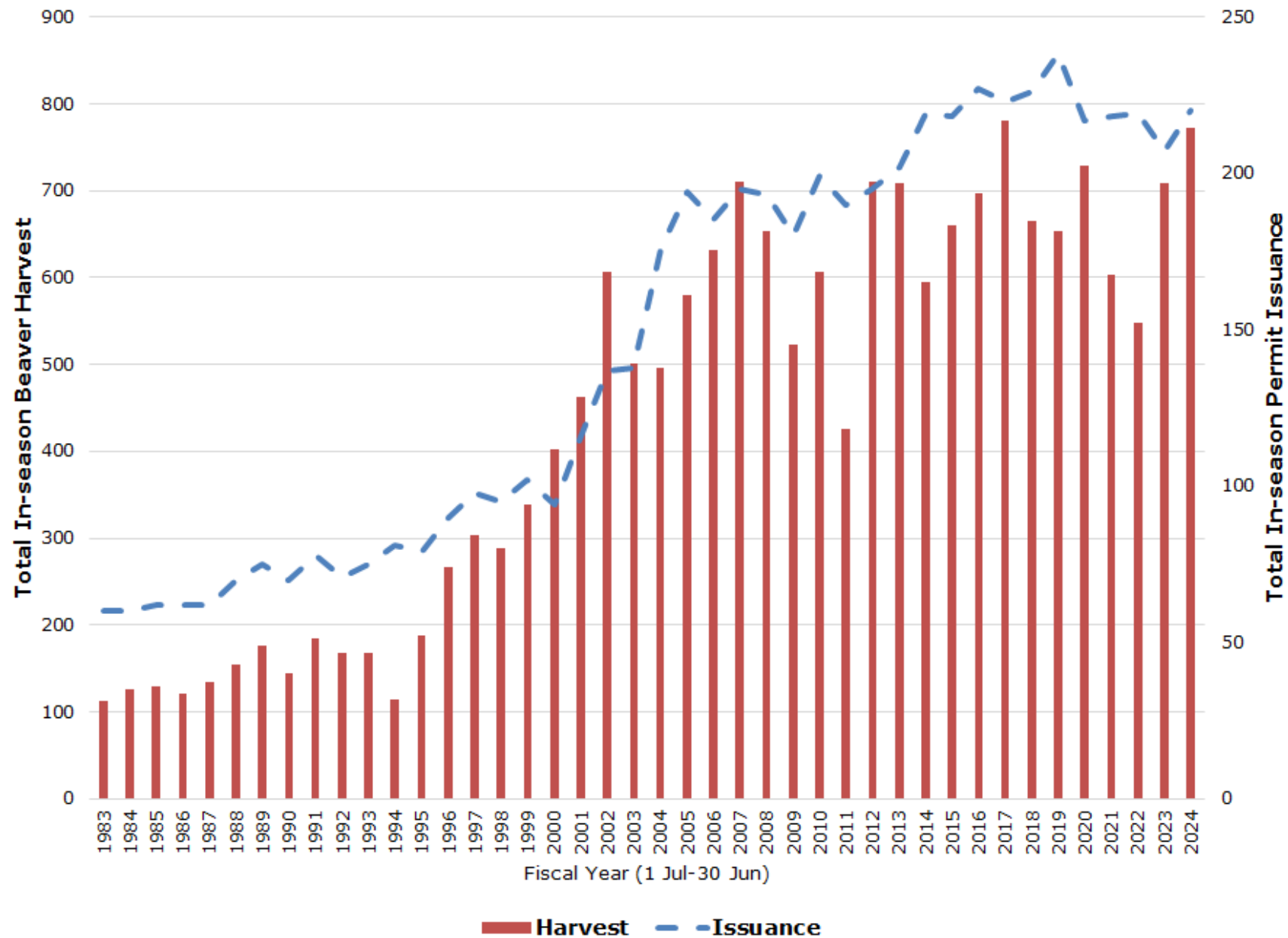
BEAVER

- 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

BEAVER

Stream survey –
higher detection
rates through
time



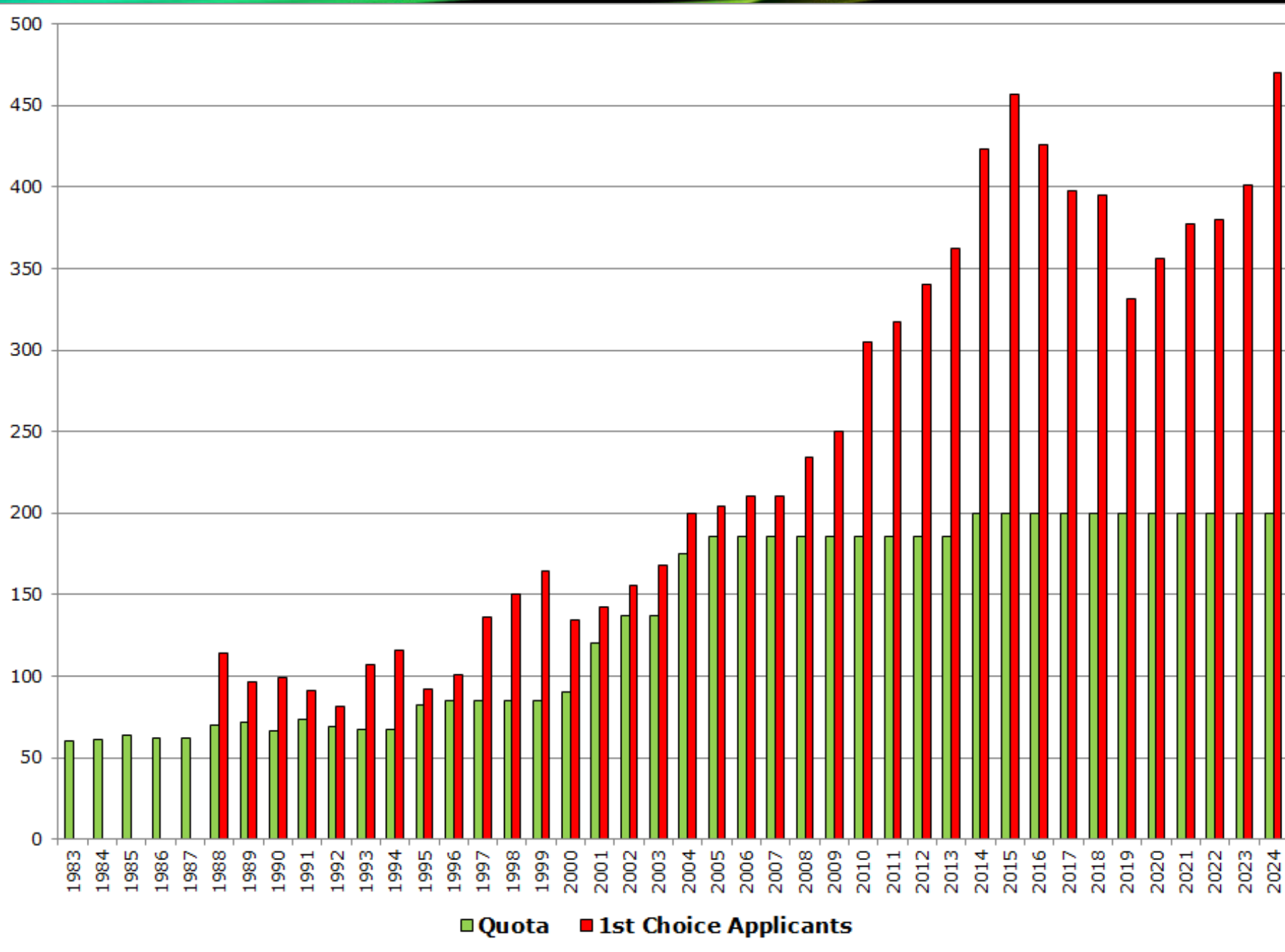


BEAVER

- Increasing harvest over time

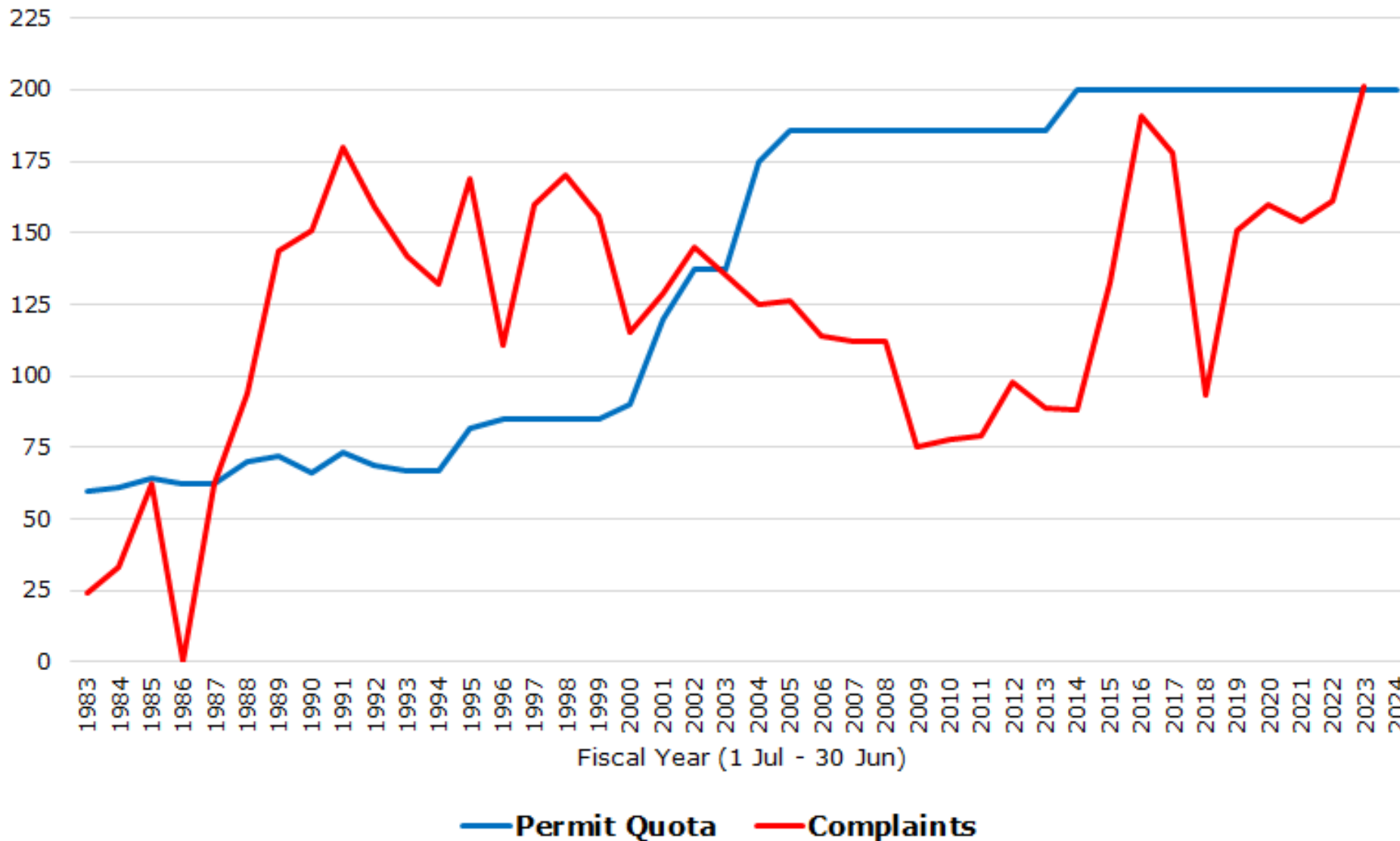
BEAVER

- Higher level of interest than current 200 permit quota can accommodate



BEAVER

- Overall increase in complaints, particularly in southern NJ



DISCUSSION

- **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

OTTER

- **Eliminate requirement** to surrender otter carcass

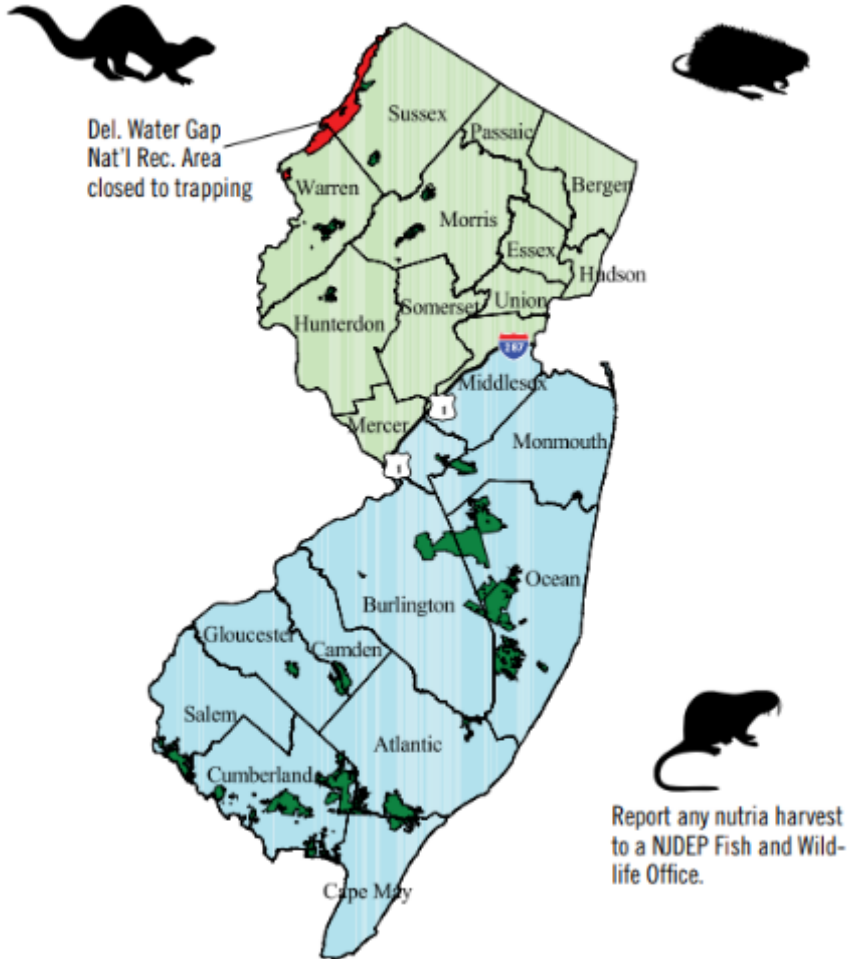


DISCUSSION

MINK, MUSKRAT & NUTRIA

- **Eliminate North/South Zones**
 - North Nov. 15 – March 15
 - South Dec. 1 – March 15
- **Statewide Season**
 - November 15 – March 15

Mink, Muskrat and Nutria Trapping Zones



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

DISCUSSION

- **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

DISCUSSION

- **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
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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.)

DISCUSSION

HARVEST REPORTING DEADLINE

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

DISCUSSION

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** (a) Licensing and permit requirement
- **WHEN** (b) season dates, hunting hours
- **HOW MANY** (c) bag limits
- **HOW** (d) manner
- **MEANS** (e) method and ammo
- **PERMITS** (f) permits (if applicable): application process (regular and farmer) and issuance etc.
- **TAGGING/REPORTING** (g) tagging, AHRS, etc.
- **WHERE** (h) management zones or areas, as applicable
- **PERMIT QUOTAS** (i) quota tables
- **AUTHORITY** (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*).

DISCUSSION

**A HUGE
THANK YOU
& 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