

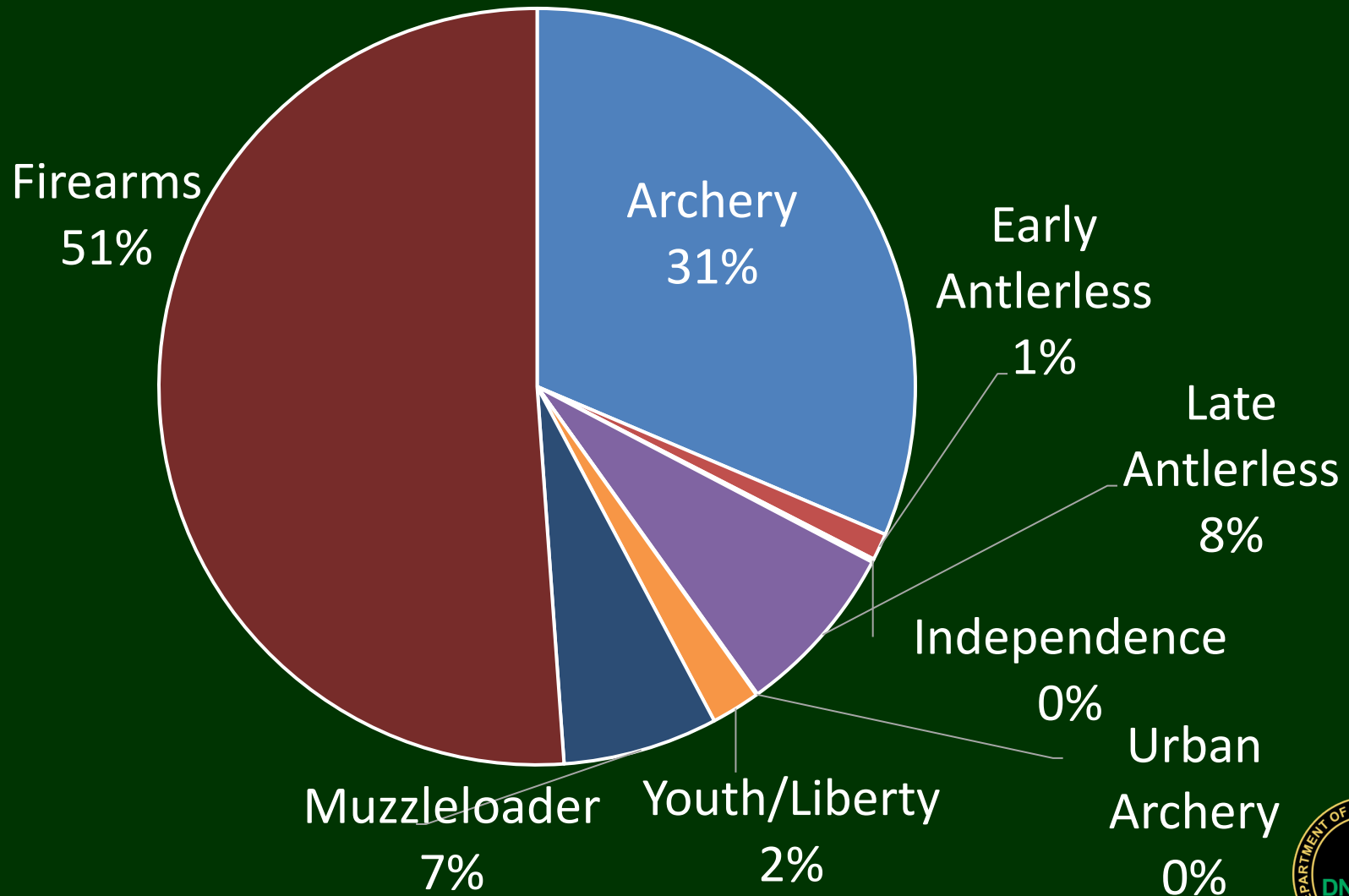
# Evaluation of Deer Season Structure



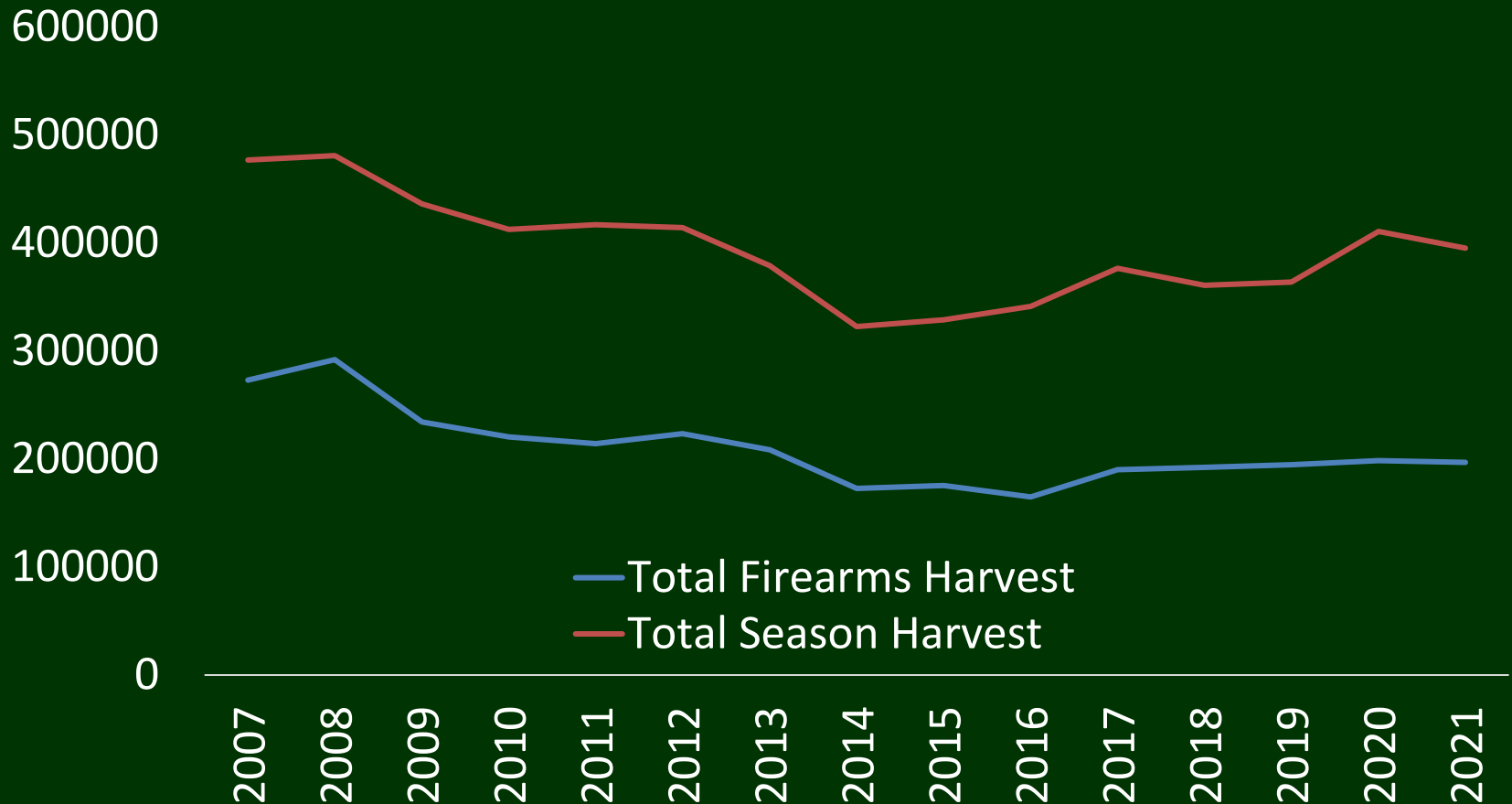
Chad Stewart, Deer, Elk, and Moose Management Specialist  
Michigan Natural Resources Commission  
April 13, 2023



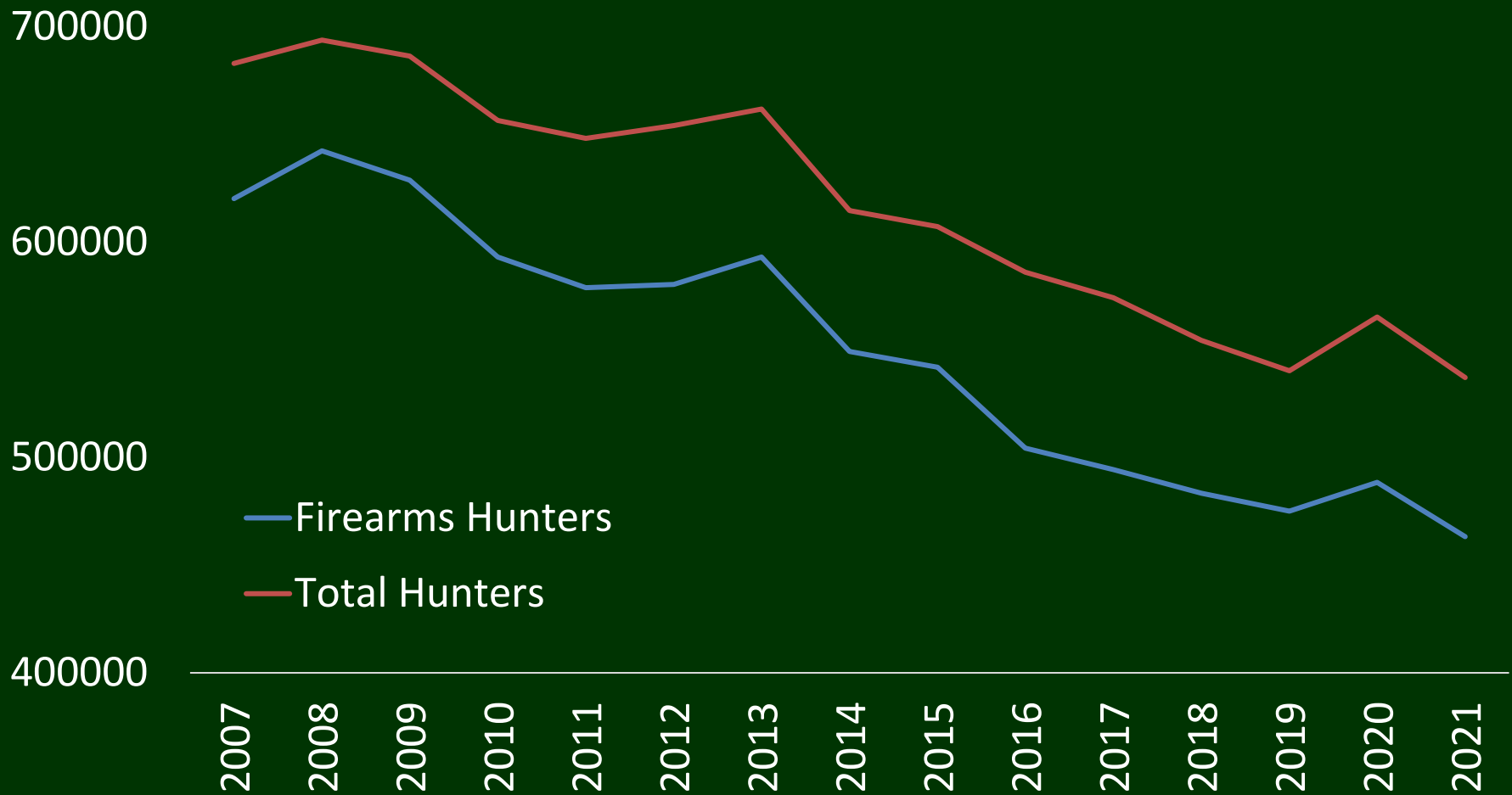
# Reported Deer Harvest, 2022



## Total Firearms and Season Harvest, 2007-2021



## Firearms and Total Hunters, 2007-2021



# Would Michigan Be Better Served Moving Away from the November 15 Opener?



# History of November 15 Opening Day

- Legislature established a November 1-25 season in 1895
- Season changed to November 15-30 in 1925
- Experiments in 1960s with split seasons and openers
- Opening returned to November 15 in 1968 where it has remained since



# Total Firearms Harvest By Opener Day, 2007-2021 (1=Monday, 7=Sunday)



# Total Season Harvest by Opener Day, 2007-2021

(1=Monday, 7=Sunday)





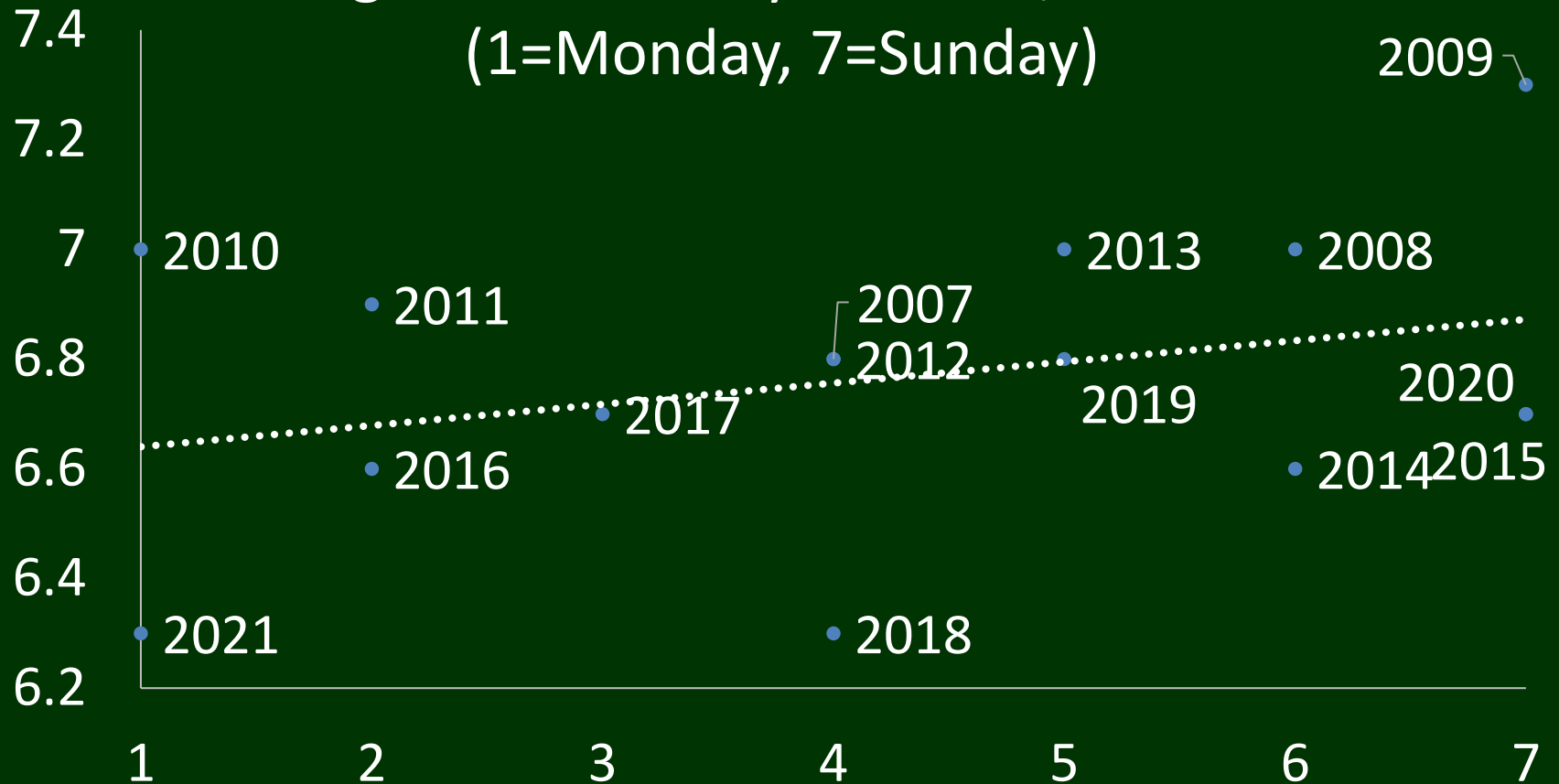
# Firearms Season Participation, 2007-2021 (1-Monday, 7=Sunday)



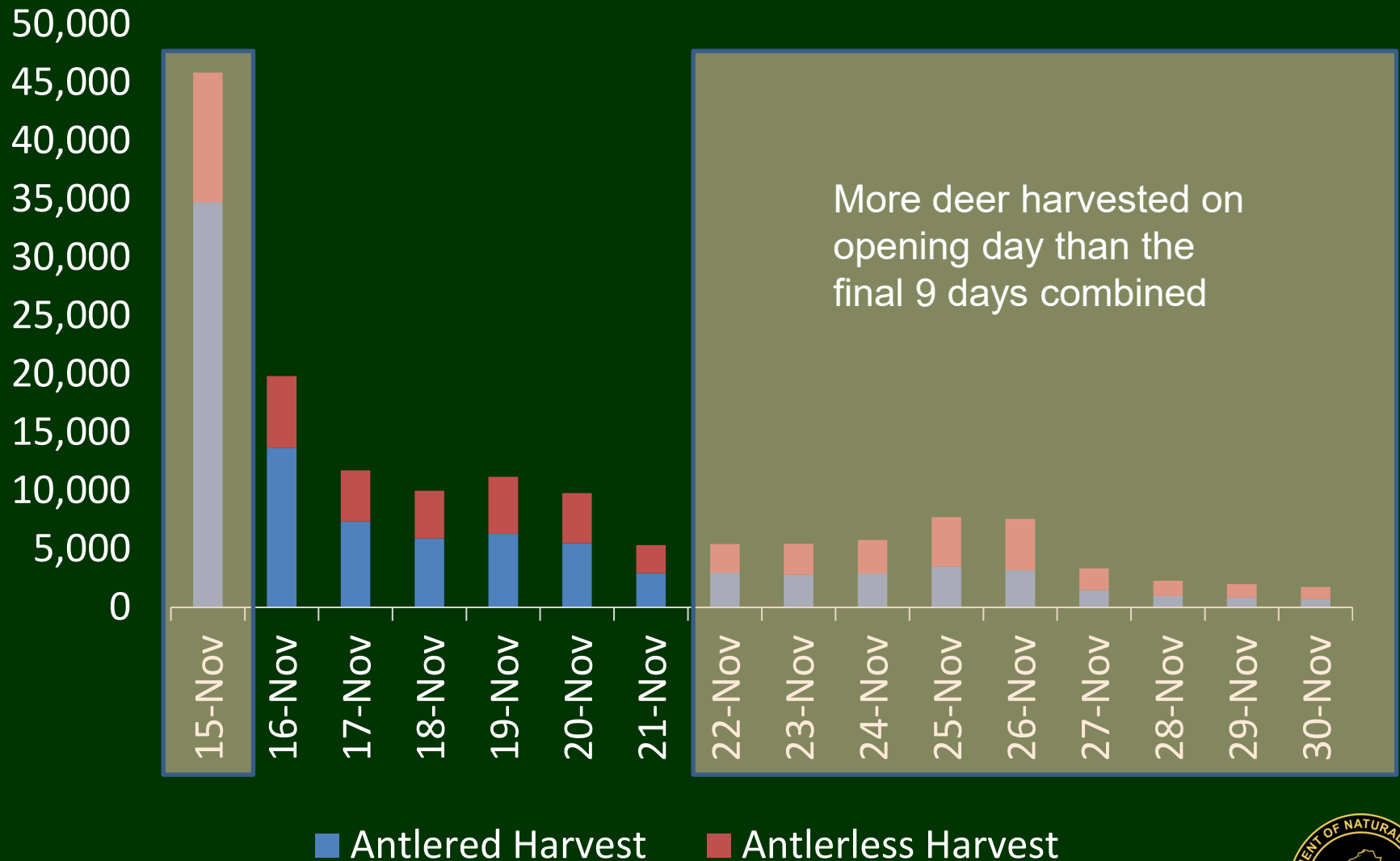
# Firearms Season Success Rates, 2007-2021 (1=Monday, 7=Sunday)



## Average Firearms Days Hunted, 2007-2021 (1=Monday, 7=Sunday)



## 2022 Daily Firearms Harvest



# Hunter's Opinion

- **2009-Support/Opposition for various scenarios**
  - Maintain November 15 opener—84% support, 10% oppose
  - Open Saturday near November 15—42% support, 49% oppose
  - Open Saturday before Thanksgiving—20% support, 69% oppose
- **2016-Support/Opposition for various scenarios**
  - Maintain November 15 opener—85% support, 10% oppose
  - Open Saturday near November 15—36% support, 56% oppose
  - Open Saturday before Thanksgiving—19% support, 72% oppose
  - If date change increases participation—31% support, 58% opposition

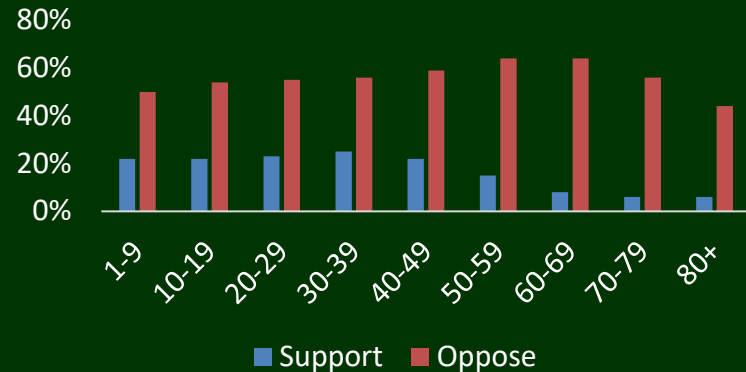


# 2016 Deer Hunter Survey, By Age

Keep November 15 Opening Date,  
2016 Deer Hunter Survey



Open Saturday prior to Thanksgiving,  
2016 Deer Hunter Survey



Open on Saturday nearest November 15,  
2016 Deer Hunter Survey



Change Opening Date to Increase  
Participation, 2016 Deer Hunter Survey



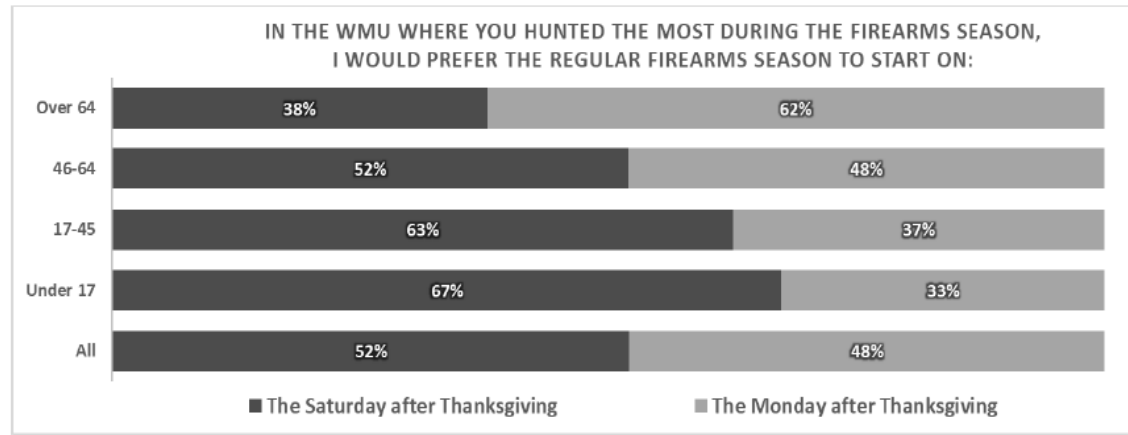
# Pennsylvania date change

- Shifted in 2019 from Monday after Thanksgiving to Saturday after Thanksgiving (+1-2 days, with no Sunday hunting allowed in 2019)
  - Differing regulations confound analysis (ex. Differing antlerless quotas, changing from split antlerless season to concurrent 14-day firearms season in 2021).

54. In the WMU where you hunted the most during the firearms season, I would prefer the regular firearms season to start on: (Circle only one)

*Note: this question was asked after the 2019-20 deer season, which was the first season of moving the opening day from Monday to Saturday and prior to when the Sunday after Thanksgiving was a legal hunting day.*

*A survey conducted in January 2022 found approximately 60% of respondents support Saturday as the opening day ([link](#)).*



# Pennsylvania date change

2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Game Take Survey Data
726,606	697,575	698,791	659,689	651,048	663,089	646,422	Estimate of Total Deer Hunters
323,487	324,787	330,871	320,749	332,335	333,979	331,162	Estimate of Archery Deer Hunters
67,917	59,815	65,662	50,517	61,046	68,269	50,848	Oct. Muzzleloader Antlerless Hunters
27,855	23,227	24,711	24,841	24,233	23,440	27,343	Oct. Special Firearms Hunters
650,427	623,759	619,743	585,476	568,641	575,824	558,172	Estimate of Regular Firearms Deer Hunters
99,519	91,454	82,144	79,383	75,687	80,766	71,785	Estimate of Flintlock Season Hunters
5.3	5.3	5.4	5.1	5.4	5.7	5.4	Mean Days per Hunter (Archery)
3.8	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.5	3.8	3.6	Mean Days per Hunter (Firearms)
10.2	10.0	10.0	9.6	9.9	10.5	9.9	Mean Days per Hunter (All Deer Seasons)





# Pennsylvania date change

2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Game Take Survey Data
726,606	697,575	698,791	659,689	651,048	663,089	646,422	Estimate of Total Deer Hunters
650,427	623,759	619,743	585,476	568,641	575,824	558,172	Estimate of Regular Firearms Deer Hunters
3.8	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.5	3.8	3.6	Mean Days per Hunter (Firearms)

My summary: the change in opening day (and it technically added extra days to the season) did not really cause any major changes in harvest of antlered or antlerless deer. It appears hunters still put in similar effort (see Game Take data ~ 3.5-3.8 days per hunter), but just shift their days.

-David Stainbrook, Deer and Elk Section Supervisor, PAGC



# Starting on November 15, Running for 3 Weekends

M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	1	

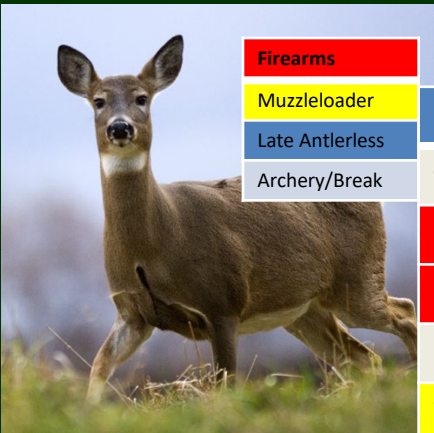
M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	1

M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
1						

M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1					

M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	1				

M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	1			



M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	1		



- Current structure (Ranges between 42-48 days of firearms opportunities)
  - Firearms season lasts 16 days
  - Muzzleloader season lasts 10 days
  - Late antlerless season (Lower Peninsula only) ranges between 16-22 days
  - Break between firearms and muzzleloader ranges from 0-6 days

### Starting on November 15, Running for 3 Weekends

- Results in 44 days of firearms opportunities
  - Firearms season ranges from 15-21 days
  - Muzzleloader season always 10 days preceded by a 4-day break
  - Late antlerless season (Lower Peninsula only) ranges from 13-19 days



**No evidence that moving  
November 15 Firearms  
opener will increase harvest,  
increase participation, or  
retain hunters**



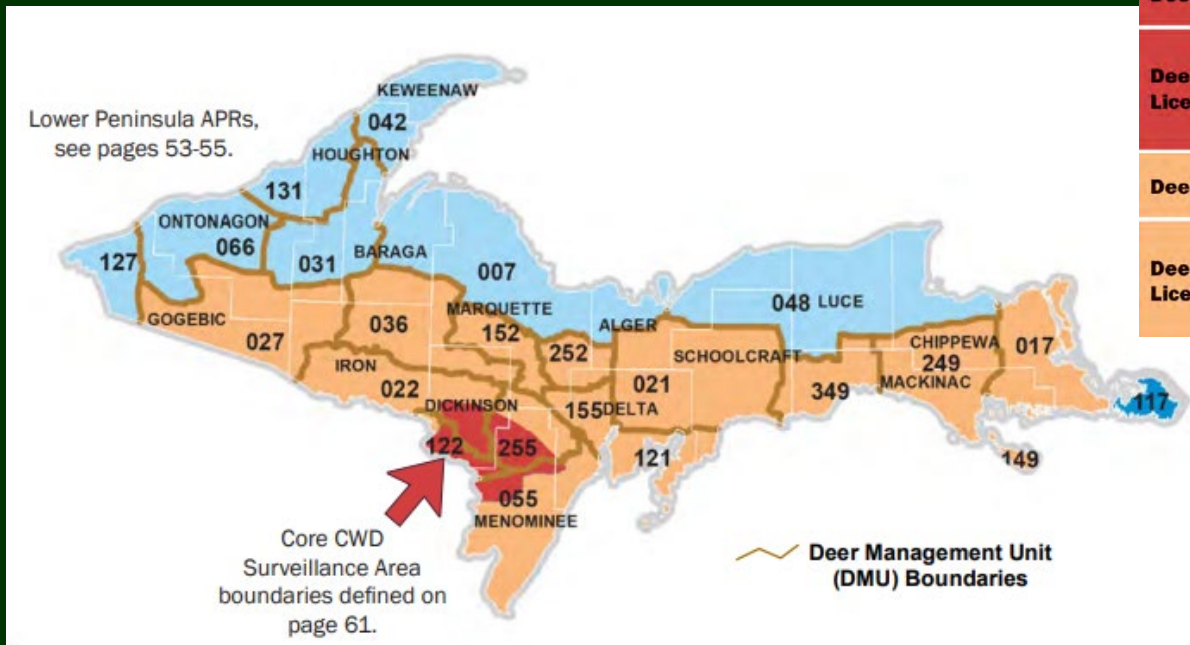
# Upcoming Deer Regulation Considerations





# Upper Peninsula CWD Regulations

- Review of CWD Surveillance Zone and associated regulations established in 2019
  - Baiting and feeding regulations
  - Antler point restrictions/hunter's choice
  - Crossbow allowance in late season

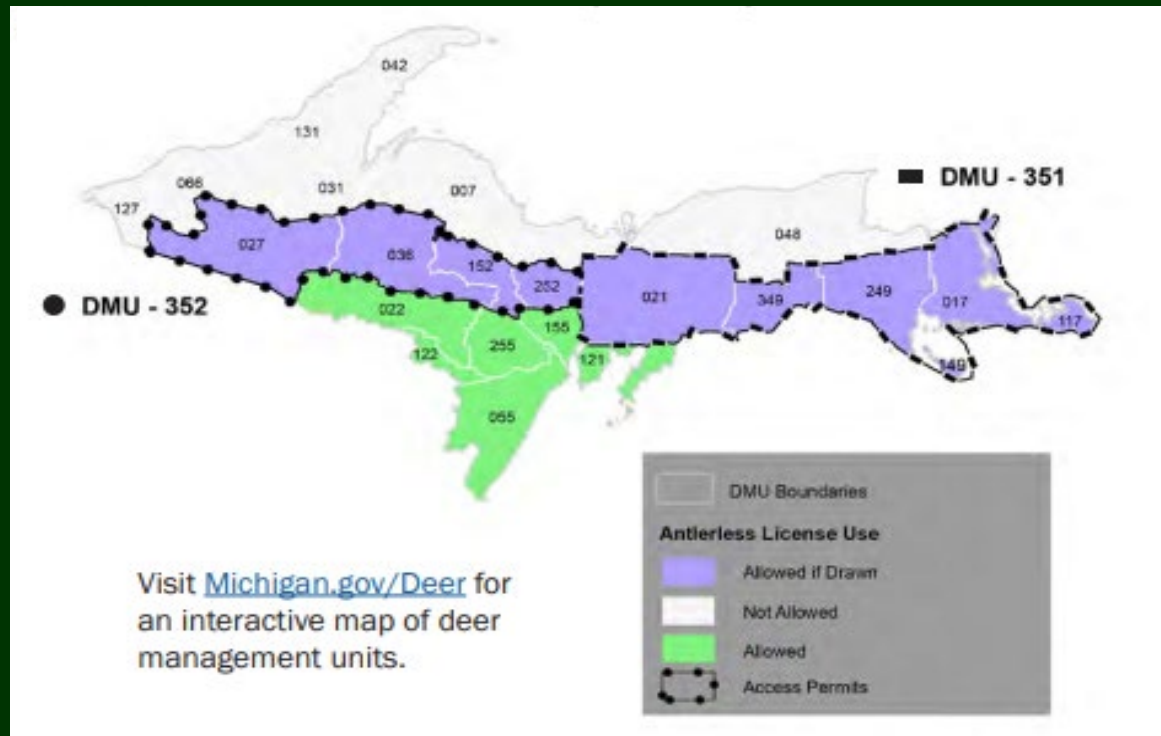


		Seasons		
		Archery	Firearm	Muzzleloader
<b>Deer License</b>				
<b>Deer Combo License</b>	Regular Tag			
	Restricted Tag			
<b>Deer License</b>		or		
<b>Deer Combo License</b>	Regular Tag	or		
	Restricted Tag	or		
<b>Deer License</b>		or		
<b>Deer Combo License</b>	Regular Tag	or		
	Restricted Tag	or		



# Upper Peninsula Deer Regulations

- Review of recent deer regulation changes
- Revisit previous topics of discussion
  - Antlerless harvest with archery equipment in select units
  - Allowance of crossbow in late antlerless season



# Liberty Hunt Regulations

- Currently, Liberty season hunters are limited to 1 deer
  - Review of current regulations and data
  - Considerations for increasing bag limit to one antlered deer and additional antlerless deer





# Antler Point Restrictions

- Preliminary evaluation of APR study in our current CWD area
  - Evaluation of camera survey to determine relative abundance and relevant population dynamic data
  - Modeling of CWD spread in APR and non-APR areas
- Review of current statewide harvest in APR and non-APR areas



# Additional topics

- Harvest reporting
  - Eliminate the requirement for DMA permittees to complete a final report
  - Clarify harvest reporting language (administrative change)
  - Standardize reporting times for Deer Damage Shooting Permits and Disease Control Permits to 72 hours
- WCO language clean up for deer damage shooting permits
- WCO language clean up for North Manitou Island permit



# Thank You

---

[www.michigan.gov/deer](http://www.michigan.gov/deer)

