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GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
LANSING



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SUBMITTED: June 3, 2024
RESUBMITTED: June 17, 2024

APPROVED
July 11, 2024
MICHIGAN NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
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(ASSISTANT TO THE COMMISSION)

MEMORANDUM TO THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Subject: Deer Regulations
Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 6 of 2024

Authority:

The Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, authorizes the Director and the Commission to issue orders to manage wild animals in this state.

Discussion and Background:

The Natural Resources Commission (NRC) requested the Department create a comprehensive Deer Management Initiative (DMI) aimed at evaluating and responding to present-day deer management challenges. The initiative also sought to develop recommendations to address these challenges and ensure the sustainable and healthy management of deer populations and their habitats across the state.

In the Lower Peninsula (LP), the Department faces significant hurdles in managing deer populations due to declining hunter numbers and how that affects traditional management. Continued changes in land-use patterns – with a high percentage of privately owned land, which can limit access to hunting lands – further exacerbate these challenges. Additionally, bovine tuberculosis (bTB) and chronic wasting disease (CWD) are established in some areas. Continued spread of CWD can further impact hunter participation in the future, and bTB represents an immediate risk to the agricultural industry and human health.

In the Upper Peninsula (UP), habitat concerns, changing weather patterns and a diverse array of predators present different challenges from those in the LP. These combinations of factors have not been experienced in deer management in recent years.

The Department actively engaged with stakeholders from various natural resources organizations as well as tribal partners to work towards improving deer management across the state. The Department also sought to involve unaffiliated individuals who share concerns about deer management to encourage a far-reaching, representative discussion.

The DMI process was intended to lay a framework for future deer management challenges. The recommendations discussed in this memorandum were either developed by the DMI or the NRC and are being brought forward to the NRC for information and consideration. Also discussed in this memorandum is a request from the National Park Service (NPS) for administrative changes

to North Manitou Island. The Department has provided a response to each recommendation for the NRC to consider when making decisions regarding deer management in Michigan. The Department will continue to collect data and information relevant to the recommendations and will present them to the NRC at the NRC Deer Regulations Work Session scheduled for June 26, 2024.

In addition, all recommendations that require a regulatory change are included in Wildlife Conservation Order (WCO) amendment. Other recommendations that are discussed in this memorandum and are not included in the WCO amendment either require a legislative change or should be considered during the appropriate species regulatory cycle.

In addition, there have been many administrative changes made throughout the order that provide consistency and clarification.

NRC Recommendations

Item 1: Commissioner Anthony – Reinstate Antler Point Restrictions on the Single Deer License in Deer Management Unit 122

There is currently no antler point restriction (APR) on the single deer license in deer management unit (DMU) 122. Antler point restrictions on the single deer license were in place until 2018, at which time they were removed by an NRC amendment in response to the first detection of CWD in Dickinson County. Antler point restrictions were not reinstated in 2023 when much of the responses to the initial detection of CWD were rolled back after no further detections were identified. Department staff found little opposition for removing them in 2018 and heard little support for their return in 2023 and recommended to keep regulations in DMU 122 similar to surrounding areas for consistency.

Commissioner Anthony recommends reinstating the 3-point APR on the single deer license in DMU 122.

Department Response:

When APRs were removed from the single deer license in the UP due to the detection of CWD, the Department did not hear any negative feedback. In addition, there was no interest reported for the APRs to be reinstated except for an individual who helped oversee the initial process to institute them. There is no evidence that reinstating the antler point restriction will aid in increasing the deer population in DMU 122. A survey conducted by the Department in 2006 showed that 76 percent of landowners owning land in DMU 122 and 74 percent of people hunting deer in DMU 122 supported continuation of APRs.

Specific language for the application of APRs to DMU 122 is not included in the WCO amendment because it is covered as part of a DMI recommendation (UP DMI Recommendation Item #5).

Item 2: Commissioner Walters – Antlerless Harvest Only During Liberty and Independence Hunts

The Liberty and Independence hunts are special hunts that provide recreational opportunities for youth hunters and hunters with disabilities. During these hunts, an antlered or antlerless deer may be harvested.

Commissioner Walters recommends that only antlerless deer may be harvested during the Liberty and Independence hunts.

Department Response:

There are approximately 20,000 youth hunters and hunters with disabilities that participate during the Liberty Hunt, typically taking between 6,000 and 7,000 deer. There are approximately 2,500 hunters with disabilities that participate during the Independence Hunt, typically taking between 500 and 600 deer. The number of deer taken during these two hunts represent about two percent of the total harvest.

With the declining trend in hunter numbers, these hunts provide training opportunities and chances for hunters to harvest a deer during less crowded hunting conditions. They also give hunters the opportunity to harvest a deer when weather is likely to be less challenging and provide a more focused mentoring and assistance opportunity for those who choose to participate. The Department has always maintained that youth mentors are more suited to assisting youth in harvest decisions during the Liberty Hunt than changing regulations. With no option to harvest an antlered deer during these hunts, participation may decrease.

Preliminary results from the 2023 Michigan Deer Harvest Survey Report showed that 43 percent of respondents support restricting take during the Liberty hunt to antlerless only, while 33 percent oppose that option.

Item 3: Commissioner Walters – Use of Deer Combination License Prohibited in Certain Areas

The deer combination license is currently allowed to be used during all seasons and in all portions of the UP, and there is a 3-point APR on the regular tag, and a 4-point APR on the restricted tag. In the high snowfall units (northernmost units) of the UP, only antlered deer can be harvested using this license. In the rest of the UP, antlerless deer may also be harvested on the deer combination license during the archery season only.

Commissioner Walters recommends that the deer combination license cannot be used in the following areas:

- North of M-134 from I-75 to Detour (Drummond Island is permitted)
- North of US-2 from I-75 to Michigan/Wisconsin border

This change would require all hunters to only use a deer license, junior deer license (for ages 10-16), or a mentored youth license (for ages up to 9) for hunting deer. Antlerless licenses could be used where and when authorized.

Department Response:

This recommendation adds complexity to deer regulations that don't currently exist. The boundaries identified, in some areas, do not follow along established DMU boundaries. This makes the usage of license type variable within the same DMU. Additionally, hunters who also hunt elsewhere in the state would be forced to purchase a deer license if they wanted to hunt within the defined region. The defined area will effectively become a one antlered deer limit as hunters would no longer have the opportunity to purchase the deer combination license. Currently, an estimated three percent of deer hunters in the UP harvest a second buck. There is no evidence to support that moving to a one antlered deer limit in any location will assist with the deer population rebounding in the UP. Excluding the use of the deer combination license in these areas present a loss of options for hunters in these areas.

If this recommendation is adopted by the NRC, APRs will need to be considered on the single deer license (UP DMI Recommendation Item #5), as APRs in the UP are currently tied to the deer combination license.

UP DMI Recommendations

The following recommendations are specific to the UP and were developed by individuals within the UP DMI. These recommendations were developed as part of a scenario building exercise when all management options were considered, with three scenarios emerging as options for individual members to vote on. Individuals rated each scenario with respect to previously defined objectives. Support and opposition for each item in the top two scenarios was then voted on to show which topics were most supported or split. After the scenario votes were tabulated, several individuals have expressed their disapproval with the process.

Item 1: Year-Round Coyote Season

The UP DMI recommends implementing a year-round coyote season.

Department Response:

The Department encourages the NRC to review this recommendation during the 2026-2027 furbearer regulations cycle. Furbearer regulations are on a two-year regulatory cycle and were approved in March 2024. This will allow the Department to appropriately engage and review coyote regulations with the internal Department Furbearer Workgroup and the external Furtaker User Group. This recommendation is not included in the WCO amendment.

Item 2: Only Allow Antlerless Harvest During Early Archery Deer Season on the Single Deer License or Deer Combination License

Antlerless take is prohibited on the single deer license and deer combination license in northern UP DMUs 127, 066, 131, 042, 031, 007, and 048. In the rest of the UP, antlerless take is allowed on the single deer license and deer combination license during the entire archery deer season (early and late).

The UP DMI recommends allowing antlerless take on the single deer license and deer combination license during the early archery deer season. To enact this regulation, the northern UP DMUs of 127, 066, 131, 042, 031, 007, and 048 will have antlerless harvest opportunities added during the archery season through November 14. Remaining UP DMUs will have antlerless harvest opportunities during the late archery season removed.

Department Response:

The taking of antlerless deer by archery equipment is highly divisive in the UP, and this was reflected in the UP DMI discussion. Some individuals want it left off and removed, and others want it reinstated and expanded to the high snowfall units. Members of the UP DMI voted 11 supporting, seven opposing, and two abstaining for only allowing antlerless deer to be taken during early archery season. For applying antlerless opportunities for archers during the entire archery season (early and late), the vote was 11 support, eight oppose, and one abstain. The recommendation allows for limited antlerless take, as a single deer license or the deer combination license would allow for antlerless take from October 1 through November 14. The recommendation represents a compromise that allows for migrating antlerless deer to not be subject to harvest later in the season (firearm and late archery) but allows for the harvest of antlerless deer during the early archery season. Reporting data indicates very few antlerless

deer are taken in the high and mid- snowfall zones with archery equipment (less than 400 reported in 2023 across more than 13,000 square miles), so the actual impact of taking antlerless deer with archery equipment on migrating deer is more a product of perception rather than what's being reported. DMI members opposing antlerless harvest opportunities often cited concerns over low deer numbers and the importance of protecting antlerless deer. DMI members supporting antlerless harvest during archery season highlighted years of antlerless harvest prohibition and the continued lack of rebound of deer populations, and expressed concern over skewed buck to doe ratios that may be impacting reproduction timing and subsequent fawn parturition.

Item 3: Eliminate Antlerless Access Permits in DMUs 351 and 352

Antlerless deer harvest is quota limited in DMUs 351 and 352. To hunt antlerless deer in these units, an antlerless deer hunting access permit for that DMU, and an antlerless deer license is required. Currently, there is a quota of 1,000 antlerless access permits per DMU, and hunters need to apply (\$5) for the access permit. Successful drawing applicants are able to obtain the antlerless access permit for the DMU they applied for. In addition to obtaining an antlerless access permit, allows hunters must purchase an antlerless deer license to hunt in either DMU. Unsuccessful drawing applicants may still purchase an antlerless deer license but are not eligible to hunt for antlerless deer in DMUs 351 and 352. Rather, they must use their antlerless deer license in another open unit for antlerless deer hunting.

The UP DMI recommends eliminating the antlerless deer hunting access permit and not allowing antlerless deer to be taken with an antlerless deer license in DMUs 351 and 352.

Department Response:

There were a reported 454 antlerless deer taken with antlerless deer licenses in DMUs 351 and 352 across 5,600 square miles in 2023. The Department does not anticipate the current quotas of 1,000 antlerless deer per DMU to be hindering the deer population from rebounding. A slight decline in quotas may help support the perception of deer management in the UP but would likely not contribute to a faster rebound of the deer population.

If this recommendation is not adopted by the NRC and a quota is maintained, then expiring antlerless licenses on private land (UP DMI Recommendation Item #6) should be reviewed, as antlerless deer licenses would expire on November 14 for private lands in DMUs 351 and 352.

Item 4: Deer Management Assistance Permits Only Available in Southern DMUs

Deer management assistance permits (DMAPs) are typically issued only to landowners whose damage can be reduced by the take of antlerless deer during an open deer hunting season. However, they can also be issued during an open deer hunting season if there is a documented, serious disease outbreak that threatens public safety, livestock, or deer health or the landowner can show that current antlerless quotas are unable to meet the landowner's deer management objectives. These permits are issued with the intended purpose of helping individuals mitigate future crop damage by decreasing the deer population on their property.

The UP DMI recommends the issuance of DMAPs only in southern DMUs. To enact this regulation, southern DMUs will include 022, 122, 255, 055, 155, and 121.

Department Response:

DMAPs are a tool for landowners to handle conflicts with deer at a localized level while keeping regulations fairly conservative. Defining counties where DMAPs can only be used in the WCO removes the Department's ability to issue permits to landowners for taking deer in areas where they are experiencing conflict. The recommendation is the opposite of the responsive and flexible deer management permitting system that has been established to support landowners.

Eliminating the ability to issue DMAPs, coupled with conservative deer harvest measures, leaves no opportunities for landowners to address conflict with deer during the season. Increases in out of season crop damage permits are likely to occur in subsequent years to offer management opportunities for landowners who experience conflict. In 2023, 62 deer were reported taken on DMAPs in the mid snowfall zone across approximately 6,600 square miles, and in the high snowfall zone, 147 deer were reported taken over approximately 7,100 square miles.

Item 5: Implement a 3-point APR on the Single Deer License

There is currently no APR on the single deer license. Most of the UP operates under a "hunters choice" option, where hunters can opt in to hunting under APRs by purchasing a deer combination license or opt out of hunting under APRs by purchasing a single deer license. Drummond Island (DMU 117) is currently the only unit where a 3-point APR is applied to the single deer license.

The UP DMI recommends applying the 3-point APR on the single deer license across the UP.

Department Response:

It is recognized that there is demand by some hunters for mandatory APRs in Michigan and therefore, the Department and the NRC established guidelines and a systematic process (*Guidelines for Initiation, Evaluation, and Review of Mandatory Antler Point Restrictions*) to evaluate these proposals. The NRC may abide by that process and the implementation of APRs can continue to be established by that policy, or the NRC can adopt APRs as recommended by the DMI.

This recommendation encompasses Commissioner Anthony's recommendation to apply the 3-point APR restriction to DMU 122. There is no evidence to support that reinstating the APR will aid in increasing the deer population across the UP.

Item 6: Antlerless Deer Bag Limits

A universal antlerless license is valid on public or private land in DMUs open to antlerless deer hunting, which include DMUs 022, 122, 255, 055, 155, 121, 351 and 352. There is currently a bag limit of 10 antlerless deer per season per hunter.

In 2020, public and private land antlerless deer licenses were eliminated, and a universal antlerless license was created that's valid on both public and private lands across all open DMUs, which included DMUs 022, 122, 255, 055, 155 and 121.

The UP DMI recommends that a bag limit of five antlerless deer per season in DMUs 022, 122, 255, 055, 155, and 121; other UP DMUs, as recommended by the DMI, would not be open to antlerless harvest, which is reflected in the current language of this WCO amendment.

Department Response:

Limiting the take of antlerless deer in these DMUs by reducing the antlerless deer bag limit would not likely cause an impact on the deer population.

Item 7: Bear Season Date Changes

The UP DMI recommends changes to the bear season dates.

Department Response:

The Department encourages the NRC to review this recommendation during the 2025-2026 bear regulations cycle. Bear regulations are on a two-year regulatory cycle and were approved in March 2023. This will allow the Department to appropriately engage and review bear regulations with the internal Department Bear Workgroup and the external Bear Forum. This recommendation is not included in the WCO amendment.

Item 8: UP Wide Wolf Hunting and Trapping Season When Available

The UP DMI recommends an UP wolf hunting and trapping season when available.

Department Response:

On October 29, 2020, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced the agency was removing gray wolves from the federal list of threatened and endangered species in the lower 48 states. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published their final rule in November 2020, which went into effect in January 2021. Wolves were then returned to the list in February 2022 due to a federal court decision that vacated the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service order. On February 2, 2024, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service submitted to the Office of the Federal Register a proposed rule concerning the listing status of gray wolves in the lower 48 states. Currently, wolves in Michigan are delisted at the state level and listed federally as an endangered species. Accordingly, management authority is at the federal level. This recommendation cannot be taken up at this time.

Item 9: Revisit Regulations Every Three Years

In 2014, the NRC and the Department agreed to a three-year deer regulatory cycle. Deer regulations have been brought forward every year since (including CWD detection in 2015).

The UP DMI recommends that deer regulations maintain the three-year regulatory cycle. This recommendation is not a regulatory change and not included in the WCO amendment.

Department Response:

Maintaining a three-year regulatory cycle stabilizes deer regulations, reduces public confusion, enhances communications, and increases the opportunity to evaluate impacts of regulation changes.

Item 10: Promote Hunter Safety in Schools

To purchase a hunting license, an individual born on or after January 1, 1960, is required to successfully complete an approved hunter education course. There are many ways a person may take a hunter education course: Traditional in-person course (field day included), online plus a field day, interactive (online) and a field day, and take-home study and field day.

The UP DMI recommends promoting hunter safety in the schools. This recommendation requires legislative action for statewide implementation; therefore, it is not included in the WCO amendment.

Department Response:

Hunter education is important because it develops individuals' knowledge and skills about safe, legal, and ethical hunting, North America's hunting heritage, principles and practices of wildlife conservation, and the roles hunters play in wildlife conservation. In addition, it teaches individuals how to be safe by following all firearm and hunting safety rules, how to be responsible about hunting, wildlife, conservation, and hunting laws, and well-informed by knowing and showing acceptable behavior and attitudes while hunting. Promoting hunter safety in the schools is another avenue for supporting individuals who are interested in hunting or wildlife conservation.

LP DMI Recommendations

The following recommendations are specific to the LP and were developed by individuals within the LP DMI. These recommendations were developed as part of a scenario building exercise when all management options were considered, with four scenarios emerging as options for individual members to vote on. Individuals rated each scenario with respect to previously defined objectives. Support and opposition for each item in the top two scenarios was then voted on to show which topics were most supported or split. After the scenario votes were tabulated, several individuals have expressed concern that there were steps yet needed to be taken to ensure recommendations were supported by data.

Item 1: Early and Late Antlerless Firearm Seasons Open to Public and Private Land

The early antlerless firearm season is a two-day firearm antlerless deer hunt that takes place on private lands in the LP starting the Saturday following September 15. The late antlerless firearm season is also a firearm antlerless deer hunt that takes place on private lands in the LP starting the Monday following the conclusion of the muzzleloader season through January 1.

The LP DMI recommends opening the early and late antlerless firearm season to both public and private lands.

Department Response:

Applying the early and late antlerless firearm season to both public and private lands provides more equitable opportunity for those who don't have access to private land to participate in hunting. Discussions at the DMI meetings centered around problematic deer on private land and getting access to those deer. There were no discussions about high deer numbers on public lands. While there may be some public properties where additional take can be supported, many conflicts with deer abundance are centered on private land. Limiting seasons to private land is one way to help focus efforts on private lands where higher deer numbers are likely to be experienced.

Item 2: Reinstate Baiting in Counties Where Disease Has Not Been Detected

In 2019, a baiting ban was implemented across the LP as a proactive approach to reduce the risk and spread of CWD and bTB on the landscape.

The LP DMI recommends reinstating baiting in LP counties where CWD and bTB has not been detected in the wild deer herd.

bTB has been detected in the wild deer herd in Alcona, Alpena, Antrim, Benzie, Cheboygan, Crawford, Emmet, Iosco, Mecosta, Montmorency, Ogemaw, Osceola, Oscoda, Otsego, Presque Isle, Roscommon, and Shiawassee counties. CWD has been detected in the LP in wild deer herd in Clinton, Eaton, Gratiot, Hillsdale, Jackson, Ingham, Ionia, Isabella, Kent, Midland, Montcalm, and Ogemaw counties.

To enact this regulation, if CWD or bTB is detected in a county during the hunting season where it's currently not, baiting will be allowed for the remainder of the hunting season. For detections of positive animals in new counties outside of the hunting season, the Department will pursue regulatory changes at the next soonest opportunity.

Department Response:

The current baiting ban has been in place for five years, and hunter numbers have not declined at a higher rate due to the baiting ban. Deer harvest has also been in the range of recent historic norms. Baiting can benefit some hunters and negatively impact others by altering deer movement. Currently, the baiting ban is easily understood with current regulations. Many individuals are not abiding by the baiting ban, and prosecution of individuals using bait has proven difficult in some areas. Having a matrix of counties where baiting is legal/illegal can present a continued enforcement challenge. Applying a baiting ban to only areas where CWD and/or bTB have been detected may impact willingness of hunters to submit deer for testing if the regulation is tied to the detection of a positive animal for bTB or CWD.

The absence of detection of either CWD or TB does not guarantee absence of the disease. The priority of the Department is limiting risk in spreading or establishing either disease. Allowing baiting to return in select counties reverses the Department's and previous NRC's proactive approach to attempting to reduce risk. While each disease is likely to persist and even spread with a baiting prohibition it will do so at a slower rate. Baiting is proven to alter deer movement and behavior, and where the disease is present, can increase contact rates and increase the potential for spread of the disease. Detection of disease in a given area does not indicate establishment of disease. However, establishment is more likely in areas where baiting is occurring. Typically, waiting to find disease before taking action often results in an inadequate response sufficient to prevent establishment of the disease. Proactive approaches are often more impactful, provided they are followed.

Items 3 and 4: Implement APRs and One Antlered Deer Limit

The deer combination license comes with two kill tags (regular and restricted) and each kill tag allows for the harvest of either an antlerless or antlered deer in the LP. A hunter may choose to harvest two antlered, an antlerless and antlered deer, or two antlerless deer.

In addition, APRs are currently in place in the northwest LP, including the counties of Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Lake, Leelanau, Manistee, Mason, Missaukee, Osceola, and Wexford. In these counties, there is a 3-point APR on the single deer license and the deer combination regular license, and there is a 4-point APR on the deer combination restricted license. In the rest of the LP, there are no APRs on the single deer license and the deer combination regular license, and there is a 4-point APR on the deer combination restricted license.

The LP DMI recommends that only one either sex (which includes antlered deer) and one antlerless deer may be harvested with a deer combination license. In addition, the LP DMI also recommends implementing APRs across the entire LP. To enact these regulations, the deer combination license will come with two kill tags (regular and restricted); the regular license will allow for the harvest of either an antlered (subject to APRs) or an antlerless deer, and the restricted tag will allow for the harvest of only an antlerless deer.

The single deer license and the deer combination regular license will have a 3-point APR in the northern LP. This includes the counties of Alcona, Alpena, Antrim, Arenac, Benzie, Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Clare, Crawford, Emmet, Gladwin, Grand Traverse, Iosco, Kalkaska, Lake, Leelanau, Manistee, Mason, Mecosta, Missaukee, Montmorency, Newaygo, Oceana, Ogemaw, Osceola, Oscoda, Otsego, Presque Isle, Roscommon, and Wexford.

The single deer license and the deer combination regular license will have a 4-point APR in the southern LP. This includes the counties of Allegan, Barry, Bay, Berrien, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Clinton, Eaton, Genessee, Gratiot, Hillsdale, Huron, Ingham, Ionia, Isabella, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Kent, Lapeer, Lenawee, Livingston, Macomb, Midland Monroe, Montcalm, Muskegon, Oakland, Ottawa, Saginaw, Sanilac, Shiawassee, St. Clair, St. Joseph, Tuscola, Van Buren, Washtenaw, and Wayne.

Department Response:

It is recognized that there is demand by some hunters for mandatory APRs in Michigan and therefore, the Department and the NRC established guidelines and a systematic process (*Guidelines for Initiation, Evaluation, and Review of Mandatory Antler Point Restrictions*) to evaluate these proposals. The NRC may abide by that process and the implementation of APRs can continue to be established by that policy, or the NRC can adopt APRs as recommended by the DMI. In addition, there is no evidence to support that APRs will reduce deer populations.

Moving to a one antlered deer regulation will limit antlered harvest by an estimated 30,000-35,000 deer. It's possible that antlerless harvest could increase with this harvest, although recent regulation changes in the LP now allow for deer combination license buyers to harvest antlerless deer during the firearms and muzzleloader season that historically didn't exist. With approximately 75 percent of deer hunters not taking an antlerless deer, and about 70 percent of hunters not purchasing an antlerless license, it's possible that many hunters who typically purchase a deer combination license will now purchase a single deer license. This could result in a significant decline in license and tag sales to the Department, as the fee for a resident deer license is \$20 and a resident deer combination license is \$40. The economic impact of this change is potentially significant. The Department does not know how license buying behavior will change due to this recommendation.

It is expected that incorporating one or both of these changes will increase the buck age structure and the number of older bucks on the landscape. How this impacts the potential for disease spread is unknown, though there exists a possibility that spread in affected areas could increase if antlerless harvest is not dramatically increased. Research has shown that bucks ≥ 2 years old typically have a higher likelihood of CWD or bTB than yearling bucks or does and that likelihood continues to increase with age. The recent APR study in Montcalm, Mecosta, Ionia, Kent, and Newaygo showed no overall change in relative abundance in APR managed units compared to non-APR units. It is also worth noting that many deer reported through the online harvest reporting are already meeting APR standards in many locations. In most counties, over 60 percent and sometimes over 70 percent of the buck harvest meets APR requirements. With many bucks already meeting this threshold, it's possible the concern over disease impacts

associated with APRs may be negligible with many hunters already voluntarily adopting this standard. With or without APRs in place, the Department expects CWD to continue to spread in Michigan, however the pace of that spread could potentially be impacted. At this time, Michigan has been able to mostly contain bTB to the northeast LP (DMU 452), but there is potential for increased spread of bTB with regulated APRs in place.

Item 5: Expand the Urban Archery Deer Season

The urban archery deer season extends until January 31 in Macomb, Oakland, and Wayne counties to manage ongoing human-deer conflicts in highly urbanized areas.

The LP DMI recommends adding counties to the extended urban archery deer season. To enact this regulation, Huron, Kent, Lapeer, Sanilac, St. Clair, Tuscola, and Washtenaw counties are proposed to be included in the urban extended archery deer season.

Department Response:

Southeast Michigan is a very urbanized area and is experiencing human-deer conflicts at a high level of intensity. While the Department attempts to minimize deer-human conflicts by managing deer at appropriate levels through hunting, it is often difficult to recruit additional hunters to public areas within existing hunting seasons as many already have established hunting locations. The extension of the urban archery season provides an additive source of harvest to areas that are actively trying to reduce their deer population and limit deer conflicts. Over the last several years, the urban archery hunt was estimated to contribute to harvest levels of 530 in 2017, 322 in 2018, 410 in 2019, 314 in 2020, 600 in 2021, and 195 in 2022, with wide confidence intervals around each year given the small sample sizes of individual hunters surveyed. The extended urban archery season currently seems to provide additional opportunity for hunters but has not shown to be impactful at limiting growth of local deer herds due to the limited participation and take demonstrated in the three counties thus far.

Item 6: Antlerless Deer Bag Limits in the NLP

A universal antlerless license is valid on public or private land in all DMUs in the LP. There is currently a bag limit of 10 antlerless deer per season per hunter.

In 2020, public and private land antlerless deer licenses were eliminated, and a universal antlerless license was created that's valid on both public and private lands across all open DMUs. In addition, antlerless quotas and drawings were eliminated in the LP. This was implemented because many DMUs across the LP did not sell out of antlerless licenses, indicating that demand for harvest was not enough to align with desired management direction.

The LP DMI recommends antlerless bag limits per season per hunter in select units. In order to enact this regulation, a bag limit of five antlerless deer per season per hunter will be applied to Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Crawford, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Lake, Leelanau, Manistee, Mason, Missaukee, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola, Otsego, Roscommon, and Wexford counties.

Department Response:

Limiting the take of antlerless deer in these DMUs by reducing the antlerless deer bag limit would not likely cause an impact on the deer population.

Antlerless deer harvest has not changed since eliminating quotas. In addition, the universal antlerless license gives hunters more flexibility when selecting locations to hunt deer and reduces regulation complexity. While the Department has heard complaints from hunters about declining deer numbers in many northern counties, deer harvest data has not supported increased antlerless harvest or declining antlered harvest rates, which would indicate a declining deer herd.

Item 7: Use of Muzzleloaders Only During the Muzzleloader Season

In Zone 3 and also the full counties of Oceana, Newaygo, Mecosta, Muskegon, Isabella, Midland, and Bay counties, all firearms that are legal during the regular firearm deer season are legal during the muzzleloader season. Those hunting in the limited firearms deer zone must follow equipment regulations for that zone.

The LP DMI supported removing this regulation and only allowing muzzleloaders to be used during the muzzleloader season. While not included in the highest rated scenario, this topic was supported by 16 members, opposed by seven, with one individual abstaining from voting in the second highest scoring scenario.

Department Response:

The muzzleloader season was changed to attempt to facilitate increased participation and increased success in Zone 3. After four years, data does not support there to be an increase in deer harvest or hunter participation in these counties. Preliminary results from the 2023 Deer Harvest Survey Report showed that 49 percent of state hunters supported any legal weapon during muzzleloader season, compared to 30 percent opposition. In the southern LP, 62 percent supported any legal weapon compared to 25 percent opposition. The Department has also viewed this as an opportunity to not restrict hunter participation during this season for those who may not have the means to own a separate muzzleloading firearm.

Item 8: Continue Mandatory Harvest Reporting

Mandatory deer harvest reporting was implemented in 2022.

The LP DMI recommends continuing mandatory deer harvest reporting. Mandatory deer harvest reporting is currently regulated in the WCO.

Department Response:

Online harvest reporting allows the Department to provide more timely responses and better information to its external customers and internal deer management program due to the ease of data collecting and data analysis. The online reporting tool also provides hunter convenience for submitting harvest information.

Item 9: Pursue Earn-A-Second Buck

Earn-a-second buck are methods that have been used in other states to rapidly reduce deer herds. This is defined as requiring hunters to take an antlerless deer prior to harvesting a second antlered deer.

The LP DMI recommends pursuing earn-a-second buck. This recommendation requires legislative action and therefore, is not included in the WCO amendment.

Department Response:

No action is currently included in this order as it has been advised that earn-a-second buck would require a legislative change to occur. Currently, the NRC does not have the authority to implement this recommendation.

Item 10: Promote and Expand the Hunting Access Program

The Hunting Access Program (HAP) was originally created in 1977 to increase public hunting opportunities in southern Michigan where 97 percent of the land base is privately owned. This program provides access to quality hunting lands with a focus in agricultural regions and disease management areas. Providing more hunting opportunity is critical for attracting new and retaining current hunters and supporting hunting traditions.

The LP DMI recommends promoting and expanding the HAP. This recommendation does not require regulatory change; therefore, is not included in the WCO amendment.

Department Response:

The HAP offers landowners annual payment in exchange for providing hunters access to their property. Expansion of the program requires funding, which is currently not available. This recommendation can be viewed as a long-term approach for deer management.

Item 11: Drone Harvest Recovery

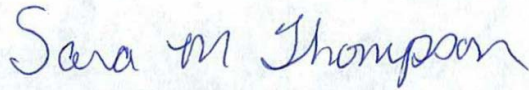
The LP DMI recommends the use of drones for deer harvest recovery. The Department abstains from providing feedback on this recommendation given a pending lawsuit.

National Park Service Recommendation

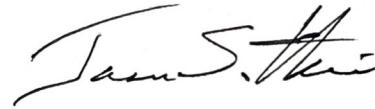
Item 1: NPS - North Manitou Island DMU

The NPS at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore requested changes to the WCO regarding the North Manitou Island DMU (145) for clarification purposes. The regulatory changes are administrative and will allow NPS staff to manage the North Manitou Island DMU (145) more effectively and efficiently.

Relevant Divisions have contributed to the preparation of this order. This order was submitted for information on June 13, 2024, at the Natural Resources Commission meeting. This item appeared on the Department's June 4, 2024 calendar and may be eligible for approval on July 11, 2024.



Sara Thompson, Chief
Wildlife Division



Jason S. Haines, Chief
Law Enforcement Division



Jeffery J. Stampfly, Chief
Forest Resources Division



Ronald A. Olson, Chief
Parks and Recreation Division



Randall M. Claramunt, Chief
Fisheries Division



Jon Spieles, Chief
Marketing and Outreach Division



Dan Lord, Chief
Finance and Operations Division

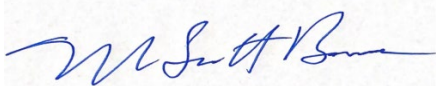


Shannon Lott
Natural Resources Deputy



Kristin Phillips
Chief Administrative Officer

I have analyzed and discussed these recommendations with staff and concur as to matters over which the Director has authority.



M Scott Bowen, Director

Date: July 11, 2024

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ORDER

Amendment No. 6 of 2024

By authority conferred on the Natural Resources Commission and the Director of the Department of Natural Resources by sections 40107 and 40113a of 1994 PA 451, MCL 324.40107 and 324.40113a, it is ordered that effective July 11, 2024, the following section(s) of the Wildlife Conservation Order shall read as follows:

3.100 Take of deer; prohibited firearms, legal weapons, “bait” and “baiting” defined, conditions for baiting established in certain area(s); unlawful acts.

Sec. 3.100 (1) “Take” means the same as defined in section 40104, 1994 PA 451, MCL 324.40104.

(2) An individual must possess while hunting deer the unused kill tag issued with the deer license, pursuant to section 3.103, and provide it to a conservation officer, a law enforcement officer, or a tribal conservation officer upon request.

(3) Unless otherwise specified in this order, an individual shall not do any of the following:

(a) Take a deer without possessing a valid license with kill tag.

(b) Take a deer other than during the open seasons established in this order.

(c) Take a deer outside of lawful hunting hours.

(d) Take a deer by any method other than by firearm, bow and arrow, or crossbow.

(e) Take a deer with a rimfire firearm .22 caliber or smaller.

(f) Take a deer during any firearm deer season in the “limited firearms deer zone,” with a firearm other than a shotgun with a smooth or rifled barrel, a .35 caliber or larger pistol capable of holding no more than nine shells at one time in the barrel and magazine combined and loaded with straight-walled cartridges, a .35 caliber or larger rifle loaded with straight-walled cartridges with a minimum case length of 1.16 inches and a maximum case length of 1.80 inches, a .35 caliber or larger air rifle or pistol charged only from an external high-compression power source, or a muzzleloading rifle or black-powder pistol loaded with black-powder or a commercially manufactured blackpowder substitute.

(g) Take a deer, or have in possession while hunting deer, a semiautomatic shotgun or rifle, capable of holding more than six shells in the magazine and barrel combined, or use a cartridge containing a tracer or explosive bullet, or a firearm capable of firing more than one shot with a single pull or activation of the trigger.

(h) Take a deer using an arrow, bolt, or quarrel with a broadhead hunting type of point less than 7/8 of an inch wide and/or a length less than 14 inches.

(i) Take a deer with a crossbow or a modified bow in zone 1 from December 1 to March 31.

(j) Take a deer while the deer is swimming in a pond, lake, stream, or other body of water.

(k) Make use of a dog in hunting a deer, except as noted in section 2.1a of this order.

(l) Use aircraft to aid in the taking of a deer.

(m) Set afire or assist in setting afire any land for the purpose of driving out a deer, or take or attempt to take a deer so driven out of any land.

(n) Purchase a deer license unless the individual holds a current base license.

(o) Possess or use lures or attractants in an area frequented by game that contain or claim to contain cervid urine or other bodily fluids originating from cervids, except for products produced by manufacturers that are actively enrolled and participating in either the official Responsible Hunting Scent Association or Archery Trade Association Deer Protection Program, which has been tested for the presence of chronic wasting disease by a qualified laboratory and certified that no detectable levels of chronic wasting disease are present and is clearly labeled as such.

(4) For the purposes of this section and sections 3.100a, and 3.205, "bait" means a substance intended for consumption by deer composed of grains, minerals, salt, fruits, vegetables, hay, or any other food materials, whether natural or manufactured. "Bait" does not include scents – whether composed of natural or synthetic materials – made inaccessible for consumption by deer and placed in such a manner to prohibit any physical contact with deer, the establishment and maintenance of plantings for wildlife, foods found scattered solely as the result of normal agricultural planting or harvesting practices, foods available to deer through normal agricultural practices of livestock feeding if the area is occupied by livestock actively consuming the feed on a daily basis, or standing farm crops under normal agricultural practices. For the purposes of this section, "baiting" means to place, deposit, tend, distribute, or scatter bait to aid in the taking of a deer.

(5) Except as otherwise provided in this subsection, it shall be unlawful for a person to make use of bait to aid in the taking of a deer within zone 2 and zone 3, exceptions:

(a) Eligible individuals participating in the liberty hunt described in section 3.101e, may make use of bait to aid in the taking of a deer if the baiting occurs only from five days prior to the second Saturday in September to the last day of the season and the provisions of subsection (6b), (6c), and (6d) are met. All bait shall be removed prior to any additional hunting during this season. This does not apply to youth hunters participating in the liberty hunt who only meet the eligibility requirements of section 3.101e (2a).

(b) Eligible individuals participating in the independence hunt as described in section 3.101g, may make use of bait to aid in the taking of a deer if the baiting occurs only from five days prior to the first day of the season through the last day of the season and the provisions of subsection (6b), (6c), and (6d) are met. All bait shall be removed prior to any additional hunting during this season.

(6) In remaining portions of Michigan not described in subsection (5), a person may engage in baiting only if all of the following conditions apply:

(a) The baiting occurs only from September 15 to January 1, except that eligible participants participating in the liberty hunt may use bait five days prior to the second Saturday in September.

(b) The bait material may be of any food type.

(c) The bait is scattered directly on the ground by any means, including mechanical spin-cast feeders, provided that the spin-cast feeder does not distribute on the ground more than the maximum volume allowed as described in subdivision (d) of this subsection. "Scattered" means that the bait is dispersed or thrown over a minimum of a 10- foot by 10-foot or equivalent area so that individual pieces of bait are separated and not placed in piles. The purpose of scattering is to mimic natural feeding conditions.

(d) The volume of bait used at any 1 point in time shall not exceed 2 gallons at any 1 hunting site.

(e) Subsection (6) is subject to Section 3.100a (2) of this order.

(7) Except as otherwise provided by subsection 5, it shall be unlawful for a person to make use of bait to aid in the taking of a deer if the bait and baiting does not meet all of the conditions specified in subsection (6) unless specifically authorized.

3.101 Deer hunting open seasons; type of deer that may be taken; carrying of firearms, season limit.

Sec. 3.101. (1) The open firearm deer season shall be from November 15 to November 30.

(2) The open muzzle-loading and black-powder firearms deer season in zone 1, zone 2, and zone 3 shall be a total of 10 days from the first Friday in December to nine days thereafter.

(3) Subject to section 43510(2) and (3), 1994 PA 451 MCL 324.43510, except as provided in subsection (5), an individual hunting deer with a muzzleloading firearm during the muzzle-loading and black-powder firearms season shall only possess or carry afield, or take a deer with a muzzle-loading rifle, muzzleloading shotgun, or black-powder pistol, loaded with black-powder or a commercially manufactured blackpowder substitute, or a crossbow.

(a) Subject to section 43510(2) and (3), 1994 PA 451 MCL 324.43510, except as provided in subsection (5), an individual hunting deer in the Lower Peninsula north of the limited firearms deer zone during the muzzle-loading and black-powder firearms season shall only possess or carry afield, or take a deer with a weapon that is legal to possess or carry afield during the open firearm deer season.

(b) Subject to section 43510(2) and (3), 1994 PA 451 MCL 324.43510, except as provided in subsection (5), an individual hunting deer in the Lower Peninsula south of the limited firearms deer zone during the muzzle-loading and black-powder firearms season shall only possess or carry afield, or take a deer with a weapon that is legal to possess or carry afield during the open firearm deer season.

(4) The open bow and arrow season shall be from October 1 through November 14 and from December 1 through January 1.

(a) Subject to all other provisions of this order, in the urban deer management zone, as defined in chapter XII of this order, the open bow and arrow season shall be from October 1 through November 14 and from December 1 through January 31.

(5) Subject to section 43510(2) and (3), 1994 PA 451 MCL 324.43510, during the open bow and arrow season, as described in subsection (4), an individual hunting deer with a bow and arrow or a crossbow shall not possess or carry afield a pistol, revolver, or any other firearm unless:

(a) The individual is properly licensed to hunt deer with a firearm and is hunting in an area open to firearm deer hunting.

(b) The individual is properly licensed to hunt deer with a firearm and is hunting in an area open to the muzzleloading and black-powder firearms deer season in zone 2 and zone 3.

(c) An individual taking a deer under the terms and conditions of a disease control permit authorized under section 5.77 of this order may possess or carry a bow and arrow or crossbow, and a firearm, if applicable.

(6) An early antlerless firearm deer season shall be a two-day hunt starting the Saturday following September 15 upon public and privately owned lands within Alcona, Allegan, Alpena, Antrim, Arenac, Bay, Barry, Benzie, Berrien, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Cheboygan, Clare, Clinton, Crawford, Eaton, Emmet, Genesee, Gladwin, Grand Traverse, Gratiot, Hillsdale, Huron, Ingham, Ionia, Iosco, Isabella, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Kalkaska, Kent, Lake, Lapeer, Lenawee, Livingston, Macomb, Manistee, Mason, Mecosta, Midland, Missaukee, Monroe, Montcalm, Montmorency, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oakland, Oceana, Ogemaw, Osceola, Oscoda, Otsego, Ottawa, Presque Isle, Roscommon, St. Clair, St. Joseph, Saginaw, Sanilac, Shiawassee, Tuscola, Van Buren, Washtenaw, Wayne, Wexford counties, upon privately owned lands within that portion of Charlevoix county within deer management unit 015, and upon privately owned lands within that portion of Leelanau county within deer management unit 045. Only an individual possessing a valid antlerless deer license, a mentored youth hunting license, a deer license, or a deer combination license may take a deer during this season. A deer kill tag issued under the

mentored youth hunting license, deer license, or deer combination license shall be used to harvest an antlerless deer only.

(7) A late antlerless firearm deer season shall be from the Monday following the conclusion of the muzzle-loading and black-powder firearms deer season through January 1 upon public and privately owned lands within Alcona, Allegan, Antrim, Alpena, Arenac, Barry, Bay, Benzie, Berrien, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Cheboygan, Clare, Clinton, Crawford, Eaton, Emmet, Genesee, Gladwin, Grand Traverse, Gratiot, Hillsdale, Huron, Ingham, Ionia, Iosco, Isabella, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Kalkaska, Kent, Lake, Lapeer, Lenawee, Livingston, Macomb, Manistee, Mason, Mecosta, Midland, Missaukee, Monroe, Montcalm, Montmorency, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oakland, Oceana, Ogemaw, Osceola, Oscoda, Otsego, Ottawa, Presque Isle, Roscommon, St. Clair, St. Joseph, Saginaw, Sanilac, Shiawassee, Tuscola, Van Buren, Washtenaw, Wayne, Wexford counties, upon privately-owned lands within that portion of Charlevoix county within deer management unit 015, and upon privately owned lands within that portion of Leelanau county within deer management unit 045. Only an individual possessing a valid antlerless deer license, a mentored youth hunting license, a deer license, or a deer combination license may take a deer during this season. A deer kill tag issued under the mentored youth hunting license, deer license, or deer combination license shall be used to harvest an antlerless deer only.

(8) The deer management assistance firearm hunt period shall be from the first Monday following the third Saturday in December through January 1 upon lands owned by federal, state, county, or local units of government, non-profit organizations, and other urban or suburban properties in zone 3. Only those areas with a wildlife division approved deer population management plan will be considered for issuance of these special deer management assistance permits. Only an individual possessing a valid deer management assistance permit issued for this hunt period may take a deer with a firearm or a crossbow during this season.

(9) The season limit shall be 1 deer per deer license.

(10) Except as provided by subsection (12) and sections 3.101a, 3.101c, 3.101e, 3.101g, 3.101i, and 3.101k, the kind of deer which may be taken during the respective open seasons and zones for each combination of season and deer license, except antlerless deer license, shall be as shown in table 2:

**TABLE 2
License, Season, Zone, Deer to be Taken**

Type of license	Season in which used	Zone in which used	Kind of deer that may be taken
Deer license	Liberty hunt and independence hunt	Zones 1, 2, and 3	Antlerless or antlered deer, subject to sections 3.101e and 3.101g. Beginning with the 2025 deer hunting season, antlerless deer only. The provision for antlerless harvest only during the liberty and independence hunts will expire on July 12, 2029.
Deer license	Bow and arrow only seasons	Zone 1	Antlerless or an antlered deer, subject to the following: (a) Antlerless deer shall not be taken in DMUs 127, 066, 131, 042, 031, 007, and 048. (b) Antlerless deer shall not be taken in DMUs 027, 036, 152, 252, 021, 349, 249, 149, 017, 117 after December 10. (c) Antler point restrictions apply as provided in sections 3.101a, 3.101c, and 3.101k.

Deer license	Bow and arrow only seasons	Zones 2 and 3	Antlerless or antlered deer, subject to the following: (a) Antler point restrictions apply as provided in section 3.101i.
Deer license	Firearm deer season, muzzleloading and blackpowder firearms only season	Zone 1	Antlered deer, subject to the following: (a) Antler point restrictions apply as provided in sections 3.101a, 3.101c, and 3.101k.
Deer license	Firearm deer season, muzzleloading and blackpowder firearms only season	Zones 2 and 3	Antlerless or antlered deer, subject to the following: (a) Antler point restrictions apply as provided in section 3.101i.
Deer combination regular license	Liberty hunt and independence hunt	Zones 1, 2, and 3	Antlerless or antlered deer, subject to sections 3.101e and 3.101g. Beginning with the 2025 deer hunting season, antlerless deer only. The provision for antlerless harvest only during the liberty and independence hunts will expire on July 12, 2029.
Deer combination regular license	Bow and arrow only seasons	Zone 1	Antlerless or an antlered deer, subject to the following: (a) Antlerless deer shall not be taken in DMUs 127, 066, 131, 042, 031, 007, and 048. (b) Antlerless deer shall not be taken in DMUs 027, 036, 152, 252, 021, 349, 249, 149, 017, 117 after December 10. (c) Antler point restrictions apply as provided in sections 3.101a and 3.101c.
Deer combination regular license	Bow and arrow only seasons	Zones 2 and 3	Antlerless or antlered deer, subject to the following: (a) Antler point restrictions apply as provided in section 3.101i.
Deer combination regular license	Firearm deer season, muzzleloading and blackpowder firearms only season	Zone 1	Antlered deer, subject to the following: (a) Antler point restrictions apply as provided in sections 3.101a and 3.101c.
Deer combination regular license	Firearm deer season, muzzleloading and blackpowder firearms only season	Zones 2 and 3	Antlerless or antlered deer, subject to the following: (a) Antler point restrictions apply as provided in section 3.101i.
Deer combination restricted license	Liberty hunt and independence hunt	Zones 1, 2, and 3	Antlerless or antlered deer, subject to sections 3.101e and 3.101g. Beginning with the 2025 deer hunting season, antlerless deer only. The provision for antlerless harvest only

			during the liberty and independence hunts will expire on July 12, 2029.
Deer combination restricted license	Bow and arrow only seasons	Zone 1	Antlerless or antlered deer, subject to the following: (a) Antlerless deer shall not be taken in DMUs 127, 066, 131, 042, 031, 007, and 048. (b) Antlerless deer shall not be taken in DMUs 027, 036, 152, 252, 021, 349, 249, 149, 017, 117 after December 10. (c) Antlered deer must have at least 1 antler with 4 or more antler points 1 or more inches in length.
Deer combination restricted license	Bow and arrow only seasons	Zones 2 and 3	Antlerless deer or a deer which has at least 1 antler with 4 or more antler points 1 or more inches in length.
Deer combination restricted license	Firearm deer season or muzzleloading and blackpowder firearms only season	Zone 1	Antlered deer, subject to the following: (a) Antlered deer must have at least 1 antler with 4 or more antler points 1 or more inches in length.
Deer combination restricted license	Firearm deer season or muzzleloading and blackpowder firearms only season	Zones 2 and 3	Antlerless deer or a deer which has at least 1 antler with 4 or more antler points 1 or more inches in length.
Mentored youth deer license	Liberty hunt	Zones 1, 2, and 3	Antlerless or antlered deer, subject to sections 3.101e and 3.101g. Beginning with the 2025 deer hunting season, antlerless deer only. The provision for antlerless harvest only during the liberty and independence hunts will expire on July 12, 2029.
Mentored youth deer license	Bow and arrow only seasons, firearm deer season, muzzleloading and blackpowder firearms only season	Zones 1, 2, and 3	Antlerless or antlered deer. Antler point restrictions do not apply.

(11) The director may authorize a disease management hunt lasting no longer than nine days between January 2 and March 31 where additional harvest is deemed necessary to meet disease management objectives.

(12) Individuals possessing a deer license, deer combination regular license, or deer combination restricted license are exempt from antler point restrictions during all deer seasons as listed in table 2 if one of the following applies:

(a) The individual is a youth 16 years of age and younger. Individuals under the age of 10 must be licensed through the mentored youth hunting program.

(b) The individual is licensed under a base apprentice license.

(13) An extended late antlerless firearm deer season shall be from January 2 through the second Sunday in January upon public and privately owned lands within Allegan, Barry, Bay, Calhoun, Clinton, Eaton, Genesee, Gratiot, Hillsdale, Ingham, Ionia, Isabella, Jackson, Kent, Lapeer, Lenawee, Livingston, Macomb, Mecosta, Midland, Monroe, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oakland, Ottawa, Saginaw, Shiawassee, St. Clair (excluding deer management unit 174), Washtenaw, and Wayne counties, and deer management units 311, 312, and 332. Only an individual possessing a valid antlerless deer license, a mentored youth hunting license, a deer license, or a deer combination license may take a deer during this season. A deer kill tag issued under the mentored youth hunting license, deer license, or deer combination license shall be used to harvest an antlerless deer only. An individual may purchase up to a limit of 10 antlerless deer licenses for this season in addition to the season purchase limit described in section 3.102(8), however the bag limit for this season is 10 antlerless deer. An individual shall only possess or carry afield, or take a deer with a weapon that is legal to possess or carry afield, or to take a deer with during the open firearm deer season for that respective county or deer management unit. This subsection shall sunset on the second Sunday in January of 2027.

3.101a Deer hunting in zone 1 season limit and, antler restriction.

Sec. 3.101a (1) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this order, except sections 3.101e and 3.101g, and an individual possessing a deer combination regular license shall not take an antlered deer unless the deer has at least 1 antler with 3 or more antler points each 1 or more inches in length in zone 1.

3.101c Deer hunting in deer management unit 117 antler restriction, one antlered deer limit.

Sec. 3.101c (1) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this order, except sections 3.101e and 3.101g, in deer management unit 117 an individual possessing a deer license or deer combination regular license shall not take an antlered deer unless the deer has at least 1 antler with 3 or more antler points each 1 or more inches in length. An individual shall not take more than one antlered deer in deer management unit 117 in a deer hunting season.

3.101e Liberty hunt, season established, limits defined, adult requirements, hunting hours.

Sec. 3.101e (1) The liberty hunt shall be a 2-day hunt starting the second Saturday in September.

(2) Individuals wishing to participate in the liberty hunt shall be eligible if one of the following applies:

(a) A youth 16 years of age or less may participate in the liberty hunt. Hunters under the age of 10 must be licensed through the mentored youth hunting program and accompanied by a qualified mentor.

(b) A veteran with 100 percent disability as defined by the United States department of veterans affairs may participate in the liberty hunt. Documentation from the United States department of veterans affairs indicating 100 percent disability shall be in the possession of a veteran participating in this hunt.

(c) A resident rated by the United States department of veterans affairs as individually unemployable may participate in the liberty hunt. Documentation from the United States department of veterans affairs indicating this rating shall be in the possession of a veteran participating in this hunt.

(d) An individual is in possession of a permit issued by the department to hunt from a standing vehicle.

(e) An individual is in possession of a permit issued by the department to hunt using a laser sighting device.

(f) An individual is blind as defined by section 1 of 260 PA 1978, MCL 393.351.

(g) An individual is deaf as defined by section 2 of 72 PA 1978, MCL 408.202.

(3) The following rules shall apply to an individual taking deer on the liberty hunt:

(a) A parent or legal guardian shall not allow a youth hunter to go afield to hunt deer unless the youth hunter is accompanied by an adult subject to section 43517 of 1994 PA 451, as amended, MCL 324.43517. Subject to section 43510(2) and (3) of 1994 PA 451, as amended, MCL 324.43510 and section 43517 of 1994 PA 451, as amended, MCL 324.43517, an adult accompanying a youth firearm deer hunter shall not possess or carry a firearm, crossbow, or bow and arrow, except as a qualified mentored youth hunting program mentor or a veteran with 100 percent disability may possess a firearm, crossbow, or bow and arrow if hunting under the authority of section 3.101e(2b).

(b) The hunting hours shall be one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset, local time.

(c) Except as otherwise specifically provided in this section, all regulations of state law and this order regarding the taking, possession, transportation, and storage of deer during a firearm deer season shall apply to an individual participating in the liberty hunt.

(4) During the liberty hunt, an individual may take antlerless or antlered deer, except an individual shall not take more than one antlered deer, provided they possess a deer license, deer combination license, an antlerless deer license valid for the unit in which they are hunting, or a deer license issued under the mentored youth license. Notwithstanding any other provisions of this order, licenses are valid for either an antlered or an antlerless deer during the liberty hunt, except that an antlerless deer license is valid only for an antlerless deer.

(5) Starting with the 2025 deer hunting season, during the liberty hunt, an individual may take antlerless deer, provided they possess a deer license, deer combination license, an antlerless deer license valid for the unit in which they are hunting, or a deer license issued under the mentored youth license. Notwithstanding any other provisions of this order, licenses are valid for an antlerless deer during the liberty hunt. The provision for antlerless harvest only during the liberty hunt will expire on July 12, 2029.

3.101g Independence hunt, season established, eligibility requirements, limits defined.

Sec. 3.101g (1) The independence hunt shall be a total of 4 days starting the Thursday prior to the third Saturday in October and for 3 days thereafter upon privately owned land, or public land requiring an access permit and open to the independence hunt by lottery.

(2) An individual wishing to participate in the independence hunt shall be eligible if one of the following applies:

(a) An individual is in possession of a permit issued by the department to hunt from a standing vehicle.

(b) A veteran with 100 percent disability as defined by the United States department of veterans affairs. Documentation from the United States department of veterans affairs indicating 100 percent disability shall be in the possession of a veteran participating in this hunt.

(c) A resident rated by the United States department of veterans affairs as individually unemployable. Documentation from the United States department of veterans affairs indicating this rating shall be in the possession of a veteran participating in this hunt.

(d) An individual is blind, as defined by section 1 of 1978 PA 260, MCL 393.351.

(e) An individual is in possession of a permit issued by the department to hunt using a laser sighting device.

(f) An individual is deaf as defined by section 2 of 72 PA 1978, MCL 408.202.

(3) An eligible individual wishing to participate in the independence hunt on public land must apply for a permit through a lottery system in accordance with instructions provided by the land manager.

(4) Except as otherwise specifically provided in this section, all regulations of state law and this order regarding the taking, possession, transportation, and storage of deer during a firearm deer season shall apply to an individual participating in this hunt.

(5) During the independence hunt, a qualifying hunter may take one deer provided they possess a deer license, deer combination license, or an antlerless deer license valid for the unit in which they are hunting. Notwithstanding any other provisions of this order, during the independence hunt, a deer license or deer combination license is valid for either an antlered or an antlerless deer.

(6) Starting with the 2025 deer hunting season, during the independence hunt, a qualifying hunter may take one antlerless deer provided they possess a deer license, deer combination license, or an antlerless deer license valid for the unit in which they are hunting. Notwithstanding any other provisions of this order, during the independence hunt, a deer license or deer combination license is valid for an antlerless deer. The provision for antlerless harvest only during the independence hunt will expire on July 12, 2029.

3.101i Deer hunting in the northwest Lower Peninsula, deer license, deer combination regular license, antler restriction.

Sec. 3.101i (1) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this order, except sections 3.101e and 3.101g, in deer management units 005, 010, 015, 024, 028, 040, 043, 045, 051, 053, 057, 067, 083, 115, 145, and 245, an individual possessing a deer license or deer combination regular license shall not take an antlered deer unless the deer has at least 1 antler with 3 or more antler points each 1 or more inches in length.

3.101k Deer hunting in deer management unit 122 antler restriction.

Sec. 3.101k (1) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this order, except sections 3.101e and 3.101g, in deer management unit 122 an individual possessing a deer license shall not take an antlered deer unless the deer has at least 1 antler with 3 or more antler points each 1 or more inches in length.

3.102 Antlerless deer license; validity; authority; types; restrictions; units; season limit.

Sec. 3.102. (1) Antlerless deer licenses are valid on public and private lands in all open deer management units when those units have a season open to the taking of deer, unless otherwise specified. Antlerless deer licenses do not grant permission to hunt on private property without the permission of the landowner.

(2) It shall be unlawful for an individual to purchase an antlerless deer license unless the individual holds a current base license or mentored youth license.

(3) Antlerless deer licenses shall only be valid for taking an antlerless deer.

(4) The deer management units, as defined in chapter XII, listed in section 3.105a are open to the taking of antlerless deer by a valid antlerless deer license.

(5) The director, in consultation with and concurrence of the natural resources commission, may require an application to obtain an antlerless deer license or may issue antlerless deer licenses through the retail sales system on a first-come, first-served basis for use in designated deer management units.

(6) The director in consultation with and concurrence of the natural resources commission may issue antlerless deer licenses through the retail sales system on a first-come, first-served basis for use in designated deer management units when the director determines that antlerless deer licenses remain unsold after the drawing, provided for in section 3.104, has been held or where such issuance is in the best interest of deer management. An application for the current year is not required to purchase an antlerless deer license that remains after the drawing, provided for in section 3.104, has been held.

(7) Requirements; restrictions for young hunters:

(a) A hunter under the age of 10 must be licensed through the mentored youth hunting program and accompanied by a qualified mentor. Youth under 10 years of age may hunt antlerless deer subject to the mentored youth hunting program as described in section 2.14 of this order. A deer kill tag issued under the mentored youth hunting license shall be valid for any deer in any open deer management unit, except during antlerless-only seasons when only an antlerless deer may be taken. When used to harvest an antlered deer, antler point restrictions do not apply.

(b) A hunter 16 years of age or younger on or before the 4th Saturday in September may purchase 1 antlerless deer license, over the counter, on a first-come, first-served basis, during the application period for antlerless licenses for any deer management unit with antlerless licenses available, if applicable.

(8) An individual may purchase up to a season limit of 10 antlerless deer licenses statewide.

3.105 Antlerless-only license quotas.

Sec. 3.105 (1) The director in consultation with and concurrence with the natural resources commission may make appropriate minor changes to antlerless deer quotas to meet disease control, population goal, or other management objectives.

(2) Notwithstanding any other provision of this order, an antlerless deer license is valid on public and private lands in all open deer management units when those units have a season open to the take of antlerless deer, except for the following areas as noted in table 3:

**TABLE 3
Deer Management Unit (DMU) License Quotas**

DMU	DMU Name	Total licenses
145	North Manitou Island	*
174	St. Clair Flats	*
245	South Fox Island	*
273	Shiawassee Unit	*
351	Mideast Upper Peninsula	**
352	Midwest Upper Peninsula	**

*Antlerless deer licenses are managed locally on public land.

**An antlerless deer hunting access permit is required to hunt antlerless deer within these DMUs when using an antlerless deer license.

3.105a Deer management units open to antlerless license quotas.

Sec. 3.105a (1) Notwithstanding any other provision of this section the status of each deer management unit for antlerless deer licenses shall be as shown in table 4:

**TABLE 4
Open and Closed DMU Status**

DMU Number	DMU Name	Antlerless Deer License
003	Allegan County	Open
005	Antrim County	Open
006	Arenac County	Open
007	Big Bay Unit	Closed
008	Barry County	Open
009	Bay County	Open
010	Benzie County	Open
013	Calhoun County	Open
014	Cass County	Open
015	Charlevoix County	Open
016	Cheboygan County	Open
017	Sault Ste. Marie Unit	Open
018	Clare County	Open

019	Clinton County	Open
020	Crawford County	Open
021	Manistique Unit	Open
022	Crystal Falls Unit	Open
023	Eaton County	Open
024	Emmet County	Open
025	Genesee County	Open
026	Gladwin County	Open
027	Watersmeet Unit	Open
028	Grand Traverse County	Open
029	Gratiot County	Open
030	Hillsdale County	Open
031	Nissula Unit	Closed
032	Huron County	Open
033	Ingham County	Open
034	Ionia County	Open
036	Amasa/Michigamme Unit	Open
037	Isabella County	Open
038	Jackson County	Open
039	Kalamazoo County	Open
040	Kalkaska County	Open
041	Kent County	Open
042	Keweenaw Unit	Closed
043	Lake County	Open
044	Lapeer County	Open
045	Leelanau County	Open
046	Lenawee County	Open
047	Livingston County	Open
048	Newberry Unit	Closed
050	Macomb County	Open
051	Manistee County	Open
053	Mason County	Open
054	Mecosta County	Open
055	Menominee Unit	Open
056	Midland County	Open
057	Missaukee County	Open
058	Monroe County	Open
059	Montcalm County	Open
061	Muskegon County	Open
062	Newaygo County	Open
063	Oakland County	Open
064	Oceana County	Open
065	Ogemaw County	Open
066	Ontonagon County	Closed
067	Osceola County	Open
069	Otsego County	Open
070	Ottawa County	Open
072	Roscommon County	Open
073	Saginaw County	Open
074	St. Clair County	Open
075	St. Joseph County	Open
076	Sanilac County	Open
078	Shiawassee County	Open
079	Tuscola County	Open
080	Van Buron County	Open
081	Washtenaw County	Open
082	Wayne County	Open
083	Wexford County	Open
115	Beaver Island	Open
117	Drummond Island	Open

121	Bay De Noc	Open
122	Norway Unit	Open
127	Ironwood Unit	Closed
131	Twin Lakes Unit	Closed
145	North Manitou Island	Open
149	Round/Bois Blanc Island	Open
152	Gwinn Unit	Open
155	Gladstone Unit	Open
174	St. Clair Flats	Open
245	South Fox Island	Open
249	Trout Lake Unit	Open
252	Rock Unit	Open
255	La Branche Unit	Open
273	Shiawassee Unit	Open
311	Keeler Unit (Berrien – Cass – Van Buren)	Open
312	Sherwood Unit (Branch – Kalamazoo – St. Joesph)	Open
332	Greenleaf Unit (Huron – Sanilac – Tuscola)	Open
349	Engadine Unit	Open
452	TB Core Area	Open
487	NLP Multi-County Unit	Open
351	Midwest Upper Peninsula	Open
352	Midwest Upper Peninsula	Open

3.108 North Manitou island deer management unit, deer hunting regulations.

Sec. 3.108 (1) A special permit is required to hunt deer during the designated special open firearms season within the North Manitou island deer management unit. The special permit shall be applied for by contacting the park superintendent, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. To establish hunting eligibility, a current State of Michigan deer hunting license must be purchased. Proof of hunting license purchase is required. In issuing these permits, the park superintendent shall serve as the agent of the department to implement the open firearms deer hunt on North Manitou island as designated in section 3.110 of this order.

(2) A current deer license for the appropriate season shall be required to hunt deer during the designated open archery, firearm and muzzleloader deer hunting seasons on North Manitou island as designated in section 3.110 of this order. No special permit is required during the open archery, firearm and muzzleloader deer hunting seasons.

(3) An individual shall not sell, lend, or allow another person to use their North Manitou island special permit, nor shall an individual use or attempt to use another person's North Manitou Island special permit.

(4) The park superintendent or his agents shall affix a validation tag to each legally taken deer during the special open firearms season for the North Manitou island deer management unit.

(5) The use of bait is prohibited on North Manitou island.

3.109 North Manitou island deer management unit, season limit, exemption.

Sec. 3.109 (1) An individual shall not be limited on the number of deer taken from the North Manitou island deer management unit during the designated special open firearms season for North Manitou island. Deer taken from the North Manitou island deer management unit during the designated special open firearms season shall not be included in the season limit as defined in section 3.101(8) of this order. Deer taken on North Manitou island shall not be tagged using a deer license during the special open firearms season on North Manitou island as designated in section 3.110 of this order.

(2) Deer taken from the North Manitou island deer management unit during the designated archery only deer hunting season, the regular state designated firearms season, and the state muzzleloader seasons,

shall be included in the season limit as defined in section 3.101 (8) of this order and shall be tagged using a valid deer license.

3.110 North Manitou island deer management unit, deer hunting seasons.

Sec. 3.110 (1) The archery only deer hunting season shall be from October 1 through the last Friday of October and resumes on December 1 through January 1 within the North Manitou island deer management unit.

(2) The permitted dates of the special open firearms deer hunting season within the North Manitou island deer management unit shall be determined by the park superintendent or his agents annually. The special open firearm deer hunting season will not occur sooner than the last Saturday in October or later than November 13 within the North Manitou island deer management unit.

(3) The permitted dates of the regular firearm and muzzleloader seasons within the North Manitou island deer management unit are in accordance with the dates established by the State of Michigan.

3.124 Mideast Deer Management Unit 351, and Midwest Deer Management Unit 352, deer hunting regulations, deer hunting access permits.

3.124 (1) An application may be required to obtain an antlerless deer hunting access permit. Antlerless deer hunting access permits may be issued to persons chosen in a random drawing from applicants. Permits shall not be transferrable to other hunters. The department may limit the number of antlerless deer hunting access permits that are available for the drawing for each deer management unit.

(2) The following regulations apply if the mideast deer management unit 351 and/or midwest deer management unit 352 are open to antlerless licenses in table 4, section 3.105a:

(a) A person hunting deer in the mideast deer management unit 351, or midwest deer management unit 352, shall comply with all existing laws and rules regarding the taking of deer.

(b) A person shall not hunt deer in the mideast deer management unit 351 or midwest deer management unit 352 without a deer hunting access permit.

(c) A person hunting deer in the mideast deer management unit 351 or midwest deer management unit 352 shall comply with all rules and regulations printed on their deer hunting access permit.

(d) Applications must be submitted in accordance with instructions no later than August 15 of that year in which application was made to be eligible for the drawing.

(e) A person shall not make more than 1 application for a deer hunting access permit per license year.

(f) Any leftover hunting access permits may be issued to hunters after the drawing on a first-come, first served basis until quotas are met.

(g) The department may allow a hunter 16 years of age or younger on or before the 4th Saturday in September to purchase 1 antlerless deer hunting access permit for the mideast deer management unit 351 or the midwest deer management unit 352 over the counter during the application period for antlerless deer hunting access permits for the mideast deer management unit 351 or the midwest deer management unit 352.

5.80 Deer management assistance (DMA) hunting permits; definitions, criteria for issuance, validity of permits, application procedures, restrictions and requirements; exception; unlawful acts.

Sec. 5.80 (1) The terms in this section shall have the meaning described to them in this section.

(a) Permit means a deer management assistance (DMA) permit.

(b) Permittee means an individual who has applied for and been authorized to purchase deer management assistance permits by the department.

(c) Authorized designee means one individual who has been designated by the landowner and approved by the department, to act on behalf of the landowner to apply for and implement the provisions of deer management assistance permits. The department reserves the right to deny an individual, including the permittee, the authority to personally implement the provisions of a permit if such authority would conflict with a court order, administrative rule, or law.

(2) Except as otherwise provided in this section, permits may be issued statewide to owners of land, or their authorized designee, located in areas where current antlerless or antlered harvest methods are insufficient to achieve department deer management objectives or where one or more of the following conditions exist:

(a) The department has documented that the property owner has significant agricultural or horticultural crop damage caused by deer.

(b) The department has documented that a serious disease outbreak is a threat to the deer herd, livestock, or human health.

(c) The department has documented a significant safety hazard caused by deer.

(d) Current antlerless regulations are insufficient to achieve landowner deer management objectives.

(3) DMA permits are valid only during an open season for the taking of deer as established by this order and only upon the land for which issued and adjacent private property with permission of the landowner.

(4) Except as otherwise provided in this section, DMA permits are valid only for the taking of an antlerless deer. An individual hunting under the authority of a DMA permit shall carry the unused permit and shall exhibit the unused permit upon the request of a law enforcement officer.

(5) An individual owning land within a qualifying area as determined by the department, or their authorized designee, may apply for a DMA permit with the wildlife supervisor on a form provided by the department. This application shall include an estimate of desired antlerless or antlered harvest and the numbers of hunters needed to meet the desired harvest objective. A DMA permit shall be signed by both the permittee and wildlife supervisor. The number of DMA permits will be determined by the wildlife supervisor. A minimum of 5 DMA permits shall be issued per permittee.

(6) The permittee shall not purchase more DMA permits than approved by the department.

(7) DMA permits may be subsequently issued to hunters by the permittee or authorized designee. An individual shall not accept, carry afield, use or attempt to use a DMA permit unless in possession of a current base license and deer license. A permittee or authorized designee shall not sell, lend, barter, or trade a DMA permit. Permittees or authorized designees shall inform hunters about rules pertaining to the use of DMA permits.

(8) A hunter issued a DMA permit by a permittee or authorized designee shall not sell, lend, barter, trade, or allow another individual to use the DMA permit. Unused permits may be reissued to hunters only by the permittee or authorized designee.

(9) The provisions of section 3.103 shall apply to a permit and kill tag issued under this section. In addition, unless otherwise provided in this section, an individual issued a DMA permit shall comply with lawful hunting hours and all regulatory requirements for the taking of deer for the season in which they are hunting.

(a) A firearm shall not be used with a DMA permit during archery season except with permission. This exception may be authorized on a case-by-case basis by the wildlife supervisor and district law enforcement supervisor consistent with the exception criteria published in the DMA permit decision tree.

(i) A permittee shall observe a quiet period during the last three full weekends being Friday, Saturday, and Sunday prior to November 10, including the provisions of section 2.1(3) and shall not use firearms during this time.

(b) DMA permits may be valid for the taking of deer with antlers extending three inches or more above the skull with permission when active and acute horticultural damage is being caused by an antlered deer. The total number of DMA permits issued for the taking of antlered deer statewide shall be one DMA permit per permittee, except that the total number of DMA permits issued for the taking of antlered deer in the deer management units listed in section 3.101i shall be a minimum of one DMA permit per permittee but shall not exceed three DMA permits per permittee. This exception may be authorized on a case-by-case basis by the wildlife supervisor and district law enforcement supervisor if the department determines that taking only antlerless deer will not be sufficient to reduce active and acute horticultural damage.

(i) After attaching the kill tag, a permittee or permittee's agent shall transport any antlered deer head and antlers in an open manner to the nearest department office and surrender the head and antlers to the department within 72 hours of harvest.

(10) A permittee or authorized designee shall report their deer harvest as instructed by the department within 72 hours after retrieval of a deer or before transfer of possession of a deer, whichever comes first. All persons reporting their deer harvest must retain the associated harvest confirmation number, if applicable. A person who kills a deer may designate another person to report their deer harvest. "Transfer of possession" means 1 of the following:

(a) The entire deer carcass is transferred to another individual for consumption.

(b) The entire deer carcass, or head, has been accepted by a processor or taxidermist.

(c) The entire deer carcass, or head, has been submitted to the department.

(11) A permittee's first failure to comply with the terms and conditions of the permit will make the permittee ineligible to receive a DMA permit for 1 year. Any subsequent failure to comply with the terms and conditions of a permit will make the permittee ineligible to receive a DMA permit for up to 3 years as determined by the department.

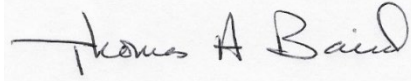
(12) Deer taken under the authority of a DMA permit shall not be included in the season limit as defined in section 3.101(8) of this order. The daily limit and season limit shall be 1 deer per DMA permit.

12.499 "Urban deer management zone (Huron, Kent, Lapeer, Macomb, Oakland, Sanilac, St. Clair, Tuscola, Washtenaw, and Wayne counties)" defined.

Sec. 12.499 "Urban deer management zone" means all of Huron, Kent, Lapeer, Macomb, Oakland, Sanilac, St. Clair (excluding DMU 174), Tuscola, Washtenaw, and Wayne counties.

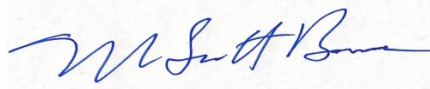
Issued on this 11th day of July, 2024.

Approved as to matters over which the Natural Resources Commission has authority.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas A Baird". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "T".

Thomas Baird, Chair
Natural Resources Commission

Approved as to matters over which the Director has authority.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "M. Scott Bowen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "M".

M. Scott Bowen
Director