

Michigan Department of Natural Resources
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HUNTERS HELPING LANDOWNERS 2014 PROGRAM DATA

Sarah B. M. Cummins



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Abstract

Public Act 241 of 2012 created the Hunters Helping Landowners Program. Accordingly, the Department of Natural Resources, "the Department," designed an online form which gives hunters the opportunity to voluntarily enroll and indicate two counties where they would like to hunt antlerless deer on private lands. Hunters without Internet access could also enroll by calling or visiting a Department operations service center. Landowners were able to request from the Department a list of volunteer hunters, with associated contact information, for the county where they own land. In 2014, over 1,900 hunters voluntarily enrolled in the program. Washtenaw County was selected the most by hunters with a combined first and second choice total of 201 volunteers. Lapeer was the second most often selected county with a total of 199 volunteers. All of the 20 most selected counties were located in Michigan's Lower Peninsula and in Hunting and Trapping Zone 3. Ten landowners requested a list of hunters.

Background

Due to Public Act 241 of 2012, the Department created the Hunters Helping Landowners Program, "the program", and began collecting information in August of 2012. By completing an online form, hunters voluntarily enrolled in the program and indicated two counties where they would like to hunt antlerless deer on private lands. Hunters without Internet access could enroll by calling or visiting a Department operations service center. Landowners were able to participate in the program by requesting from the Department a list of volunteer hunters, with associated contact information, for the county where they own land. Reasons why landowners may have needed additional antlerless deer harvested on their property, included:

- Deer were regularly damaging crops on their property
- Deer were causing extensive damage to landscaping
- More hunters could benefit from harvest opportunity on their property

As per statute, at the end of each year, all volunteer information must be deleted and the survey is reset. Because data cannot be carried over from one year to the next, the Department cannot compare the number of new volunteers to repeat volunteers.

For the year 2014, there were 1,943 hunters who volunteered for the program as compared to 1,844 in 2013 and 1,644 volunteers in 2012. Washtenaw County was selected the most by hunters with a combined first and second choice total

of 201 volunteers with Oakland County as the top combined choice in 2013 with 186 volunteers and Lapeer County as the top combined choice in 2012 with 185. Lapeer County was the second most often selected county with a total of 199 volunteers in 2014, with Oakland County acquiring the third most choices at 191 (Figure 2). Oakland County was most selected as the first choice for volunteer hunters with 116 (Figure 1) as compared to its first choice ranking with 124 in 2013 and 94 in 2012. Washtenaw and Livingston counties were next with 102 volunteers and then Kent County with 86 in 2014 (Figure 1). All of the 20 most selected counties in 2014 (Figure 2) were located in Michigan's Lower Peninsula and in Hunting and Trapping Zone 3. These counties accounted for over 60 percent of the total county choices selected by volunteer hunters. This is also the most densely populated area of Michigan and has the least public land available for hunting. No one selected Gogebic or Ontonagon counties, but it is notable that neither public nor private antlerless deer licenses were available in those two counties, or most of the Upper Peninsula, for the 2014 seasons.

A total of 10 landowners requested a volunteer hunter list for their county in 2014. In 2013, four landowners signed up to receive a county list and in 2012 there were 12 landowners. The 2014 requests were for Emmet, Hillsdale, Jackson, Kent, Lapeer, Lenawee, Livingston, Oakland, Ogemaw, and Washtenaw counties. Eight requests came for counties in Hunting and Trapping Zone 3 and two for counties in Hunting and Trapping Zone 2.

Program Rules

Public Act 241 of 2012 required several provisions for the program specific to the Department, the landowners, and the volunteers.

The Department was instructed to:

- create a mechanism for hunters willing to harvest antlerless deer to submit their top two county choices and contact information;
- notify any participating landowners requesting a list that the Department has not verified that volunteers possess valid licenses;
- indicate on all forms and information about the program that participation in the program is voluntary;
- delete all information obtained during the previous year on January 1 of the following year; and
- make available on the DNR's website a list of all the deer hunting licenses and permits available in Michigan, the criteria for qualifying for each of these licenses or permits, and where to obtain these licenses or permits.

Volunteer hunters are:

- not allowed to register to harvest antlerless deer under the program in more than 2 counties; and
- are responsible for ensuring they are properly licensed to harvest antlerless deer.

Under the program, all landowners:

- May request a contact list for all the volunteer hunters who indicated that they would be willing to harvest antlerless deer in the owner's or lessee's county.

The program is repealed effective January 1, 2017.

SUMMARY

The intention of Public Act 241 of 2012 was to allow for the creation and maintenance of a list by the Department for farmers and other landowners to use to contact additional hunters when deer are doing damage or to have an additional tool to aid in deer management on private property in Michigan. Although hunters volunteered for 81 of Michigan's 83 counties, only 10 landowners requested a volunteer hunter list in 2014 with only four requesting a list in 2013 and 12 landowners requesting a list in 2012. The proportion of volunteer hunters to landowners was about 195 to 1 in 2014. The participating landowners only represented 10 counties or about 12% of the possible selections. Due to a lack of landowner participation, it is unlikely that a significant portion of volunteers were contacted.

Figure 1: Volunteer hunter county choices in the year 2014.

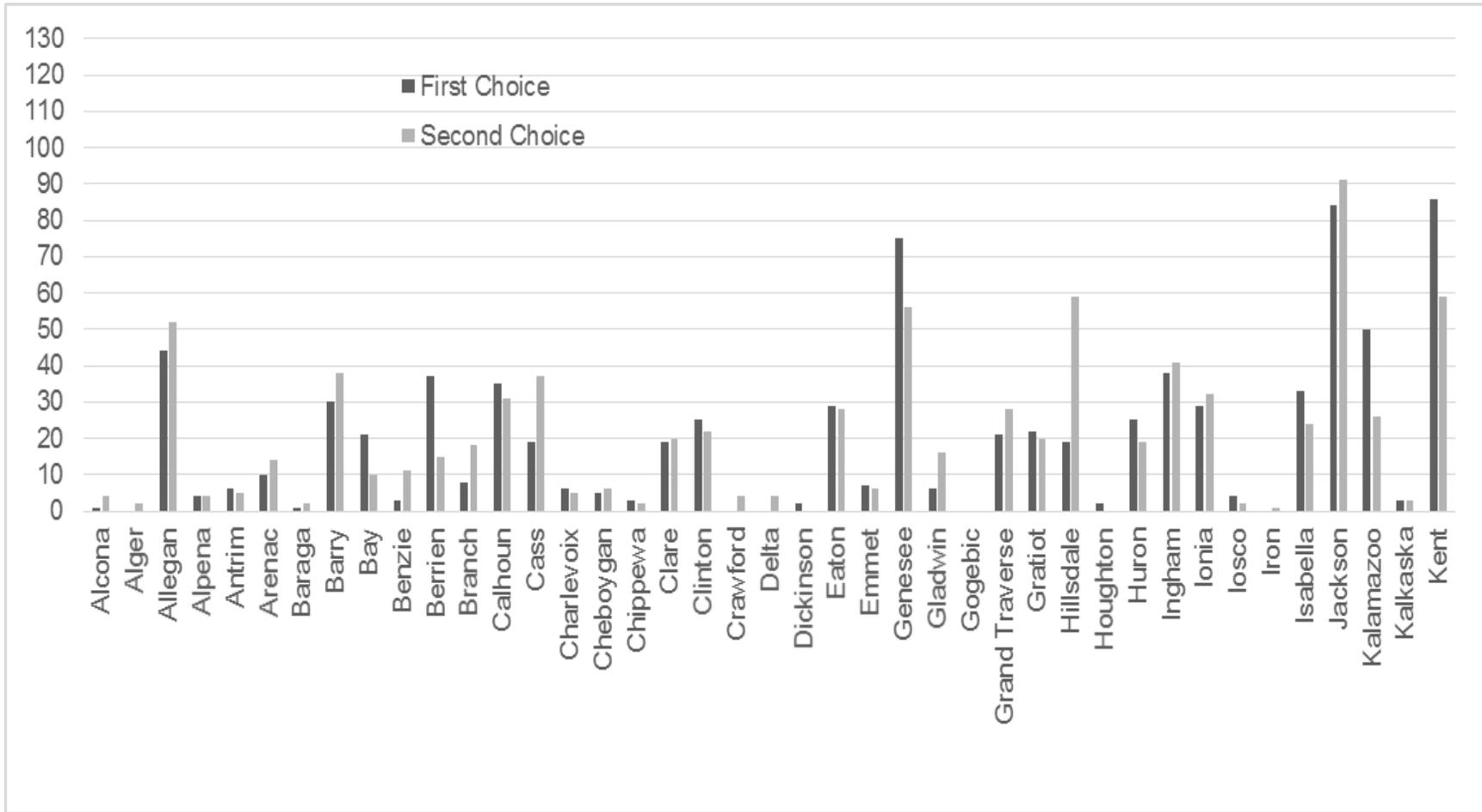


Figure 1 Continued: Volunteer hunter county choices in the year 2014.

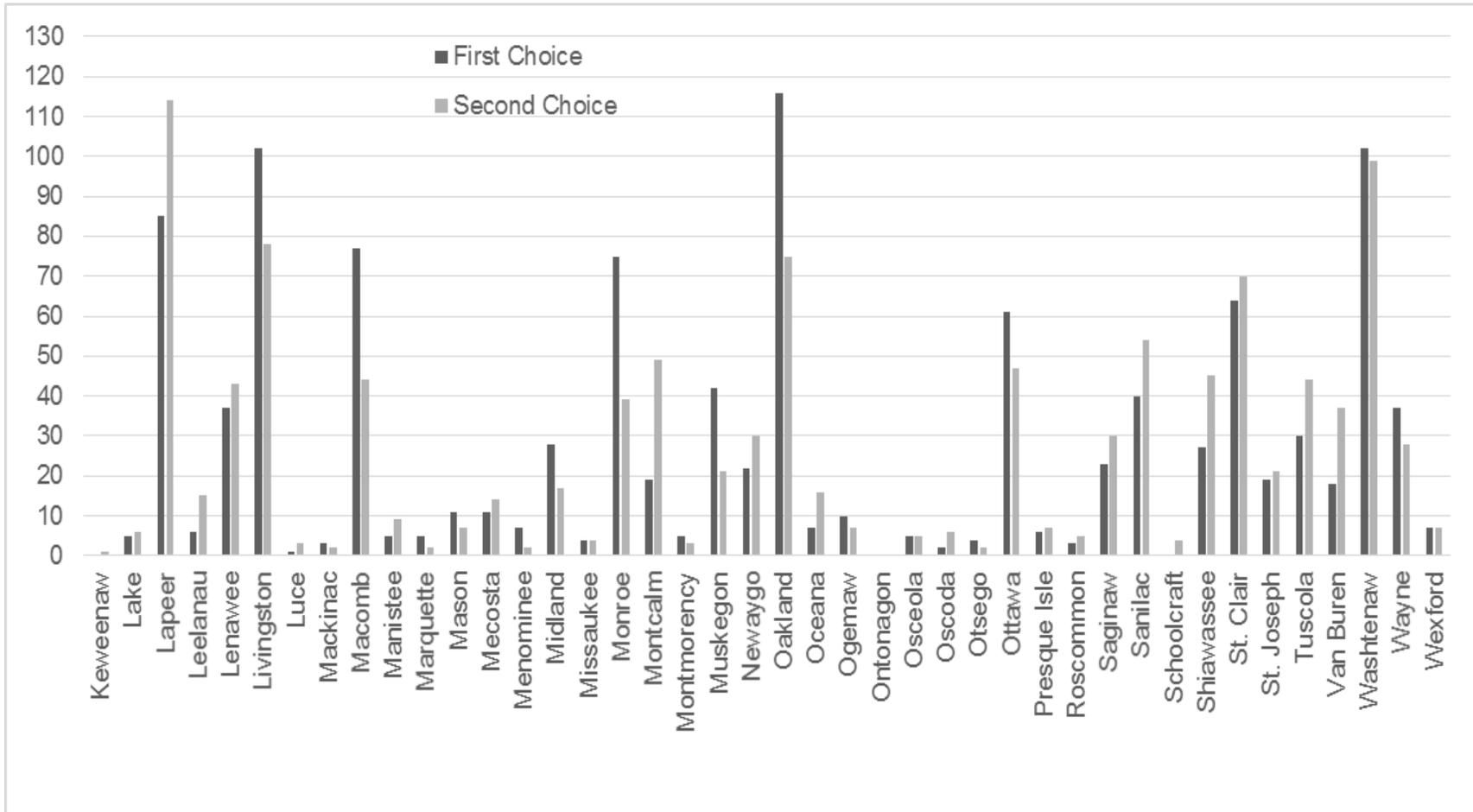


Figure 2: The top 20 Michigan counties chosen by volunteer hunters in 2014.

