

White-Tailed Deer

Hunting Preview



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Photo: Linda Freshwaters Arndt

Deer Season Overview

Compared to the previous three mild winters, heavier snows and cold temperatures were measured across much of the north in 2017-18. However, except for a relatively small area centered on Iron County and diminishing outward, most of the north experienced moderate winter conditions while the southern two-thirds of the state received considerably less snowfall, more mild temperatures, and little impact on the deer herd. A late April snow storm

caused some concerns due to its lateness in the winter during a critical time for deer. While the storm likely had little impact on overall deer survival or fawn recruitment, antlerless harvest quotas were reduced in some northern counties. An excellent growing season that is providing abundant food sources and reports from across the state indicate plentiful deer sightings are fueling enthusiasm of good prospects for Wisconsin's deer hunting seasons in 2018.

For a complete overview of all deer hunting rules including changes for this season, please check the 2018 Wisconsin Deer Hunting Regulations available online or at any hunting license vendor or DNR Service Center. For additional information, visit dnr.wi.gov and search keyword "deer." There, you will find an abundance of helpful information including FAQs, maps, resources to help find a place to hunt and more.



2018 DEER HUNTS

Archery And Crossbow Seasons
Sept.15 – Jan.6, 2019

Extended Archery And Crossbow Season**
Jan.6 - 31, 2019

Youth Deer Season
Oct.6 – 7

Gun Deer Hunt For Hunters With Disabilities*
Oct.6–14

Traditional Nine-Day Gun Deer Season
Nov.17 – 25

Metro Sub-Unit Gun Deer Season
Nov.17 – Dec. 5

Muzzleloader Season
Nov.26 – Dec.5

December Statewide Four-Day Antlerless-
Only Season
Dec.6–9

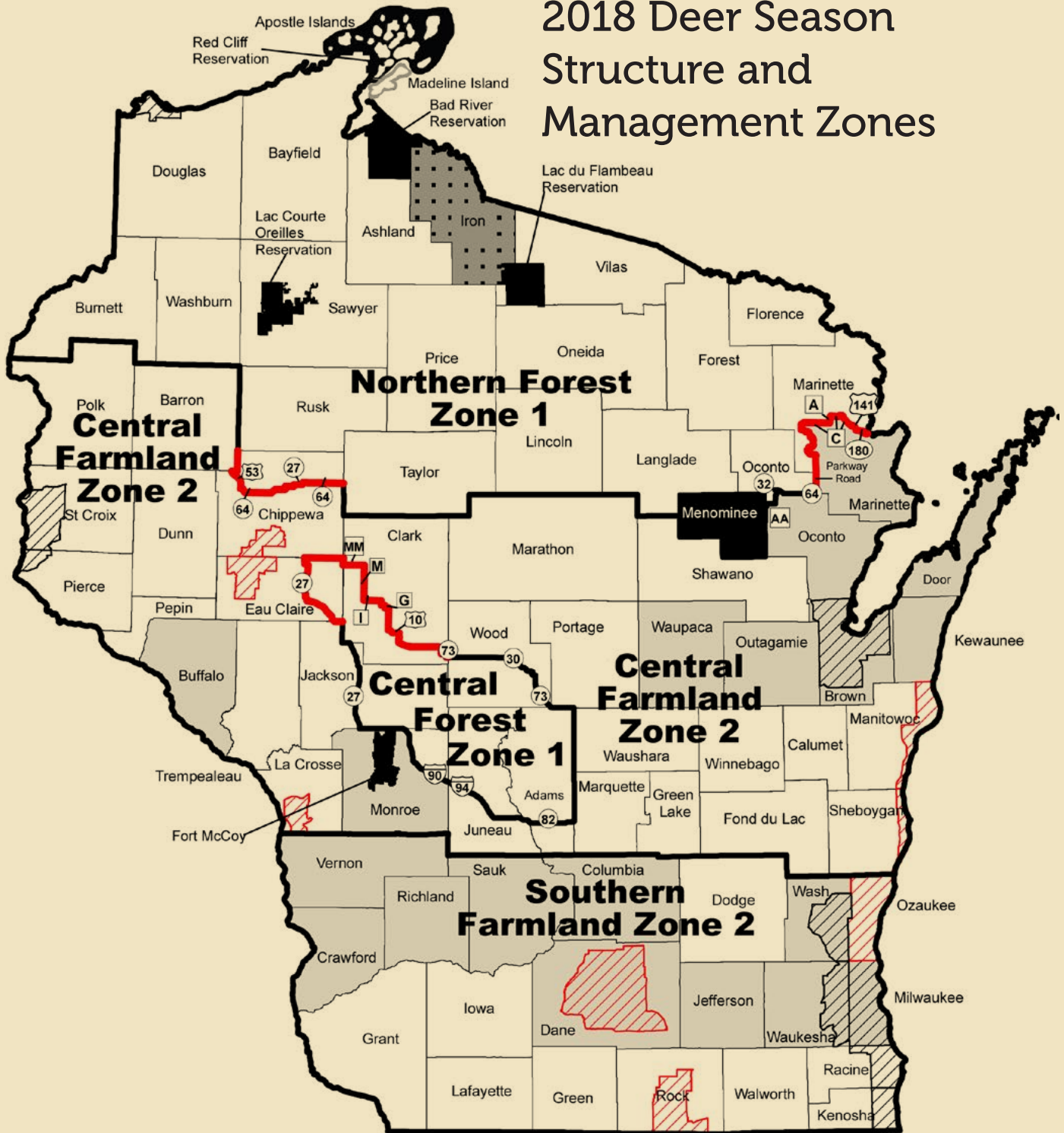
Antlerless-Only Holiday Hunt**
Dec.24 – Jan.1, 2019

*On Sponsored Properties Only

**Select DMUs (See Page 7 For Details)

Photo by Linda Freshwaters Arndt

2018 Deer Season Structure and Management Zones



Statewide: Bucks plus antlerless by permit

Statewide bag limits for all seasons: Bucks plus antlerless deer by harvest authorization availability unless otherwise noted at right



Buck Only- all seasons. No antlerless harvest authorizations available



Antlerless Only Holiday Hunt: Dec 24- Jan 1



Metro Sub-units: see regulations for more information on boundary lines and extended season dates

Modified DMZ Boundary



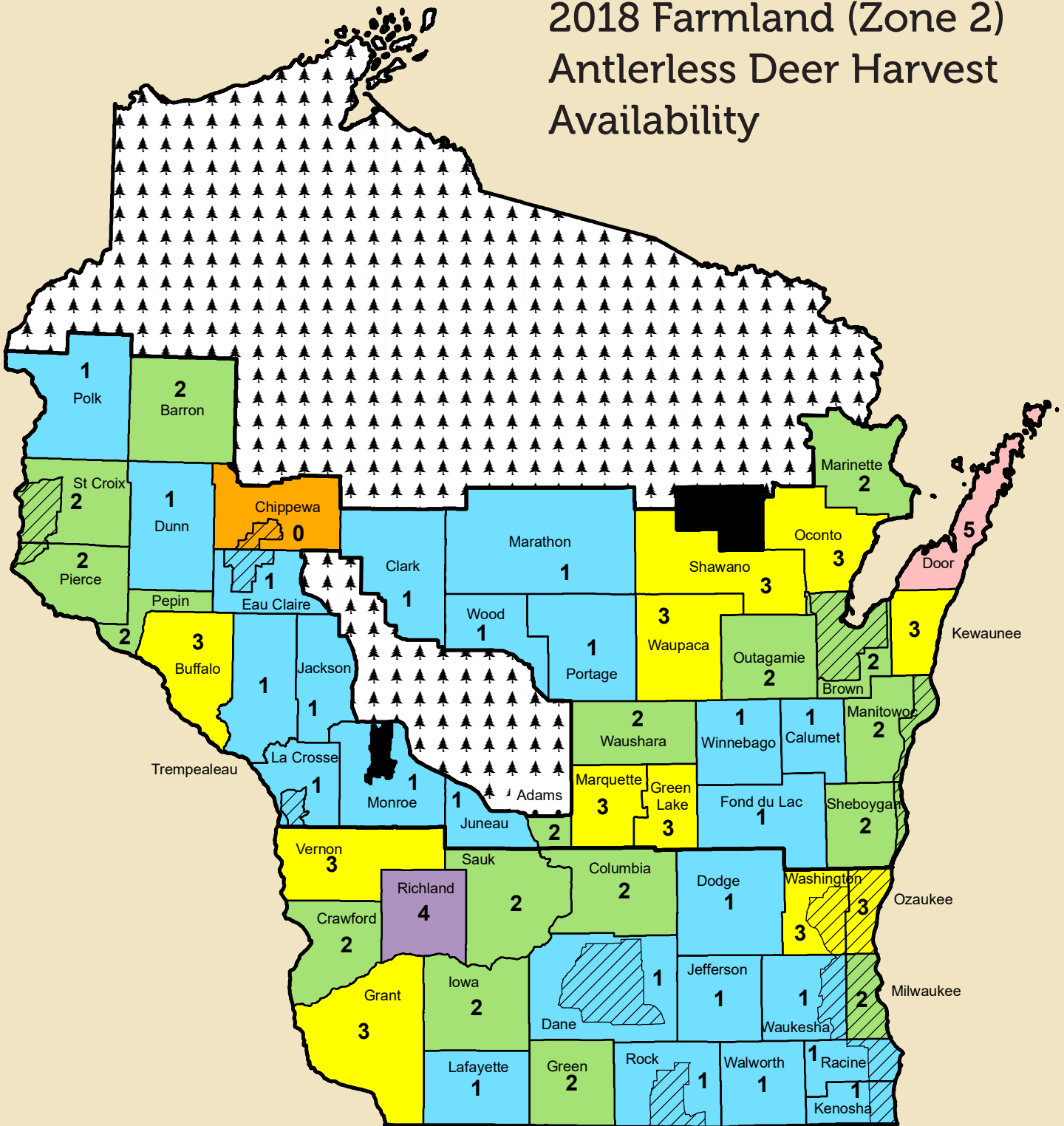
Non-quota Area: no harvest authorizations issued by the DNR



Modified or creation of Metro sub-unit

Note: See regulations for more information on the extended archery season

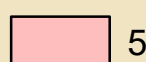
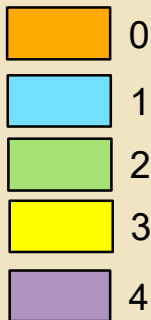
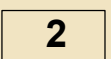
2018 Farmland (Zone 2) Antlerless Deer Harvest Availability



Forest Zone: No Farmland
Zone Harvest Authorizations
issued but Bonus Antlerless
Deer Harvest Authorizations
may be available.



Number of Farmland
Zone tags offered:

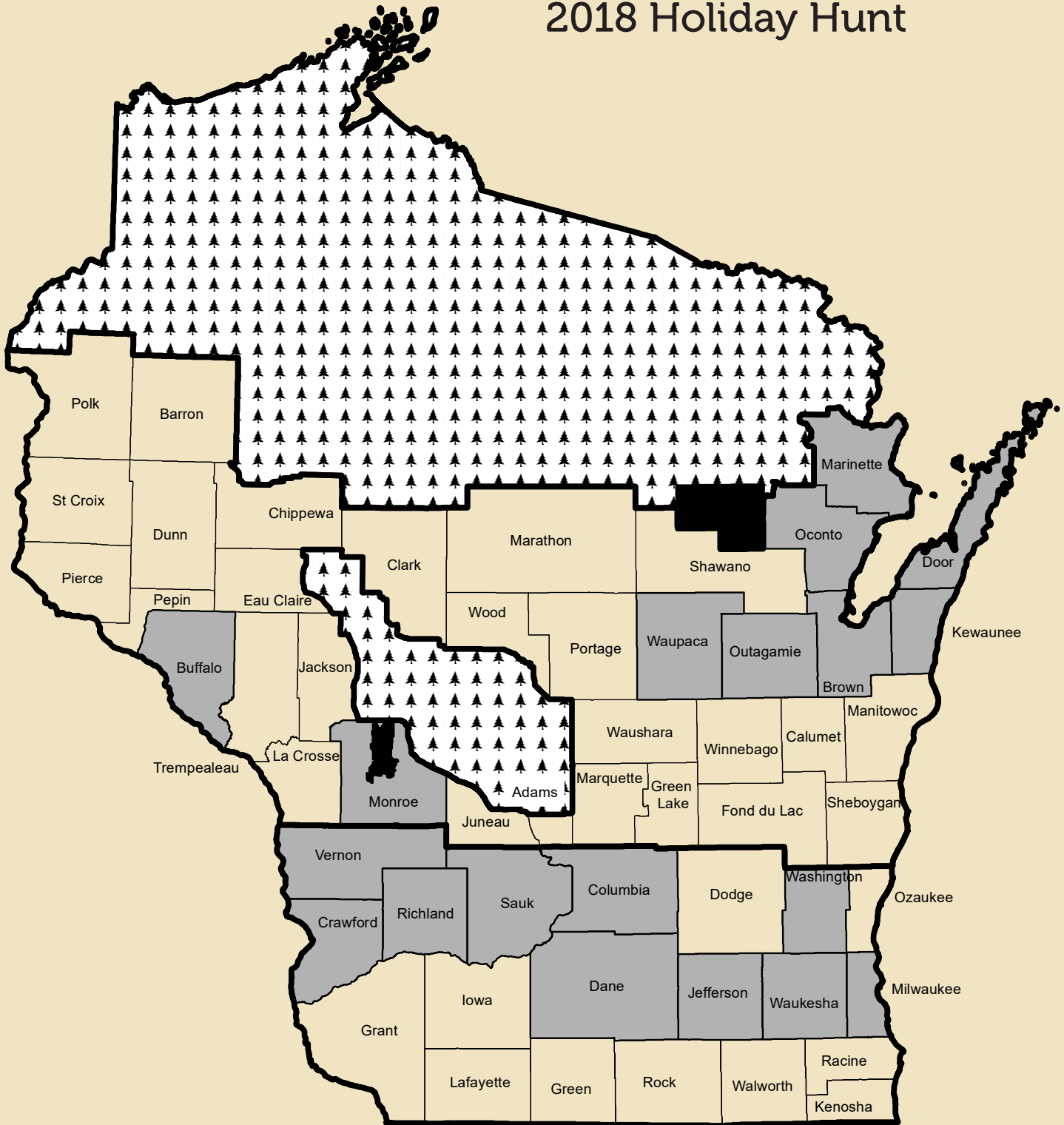


Non-quota Area: no tags
issued by the DNR



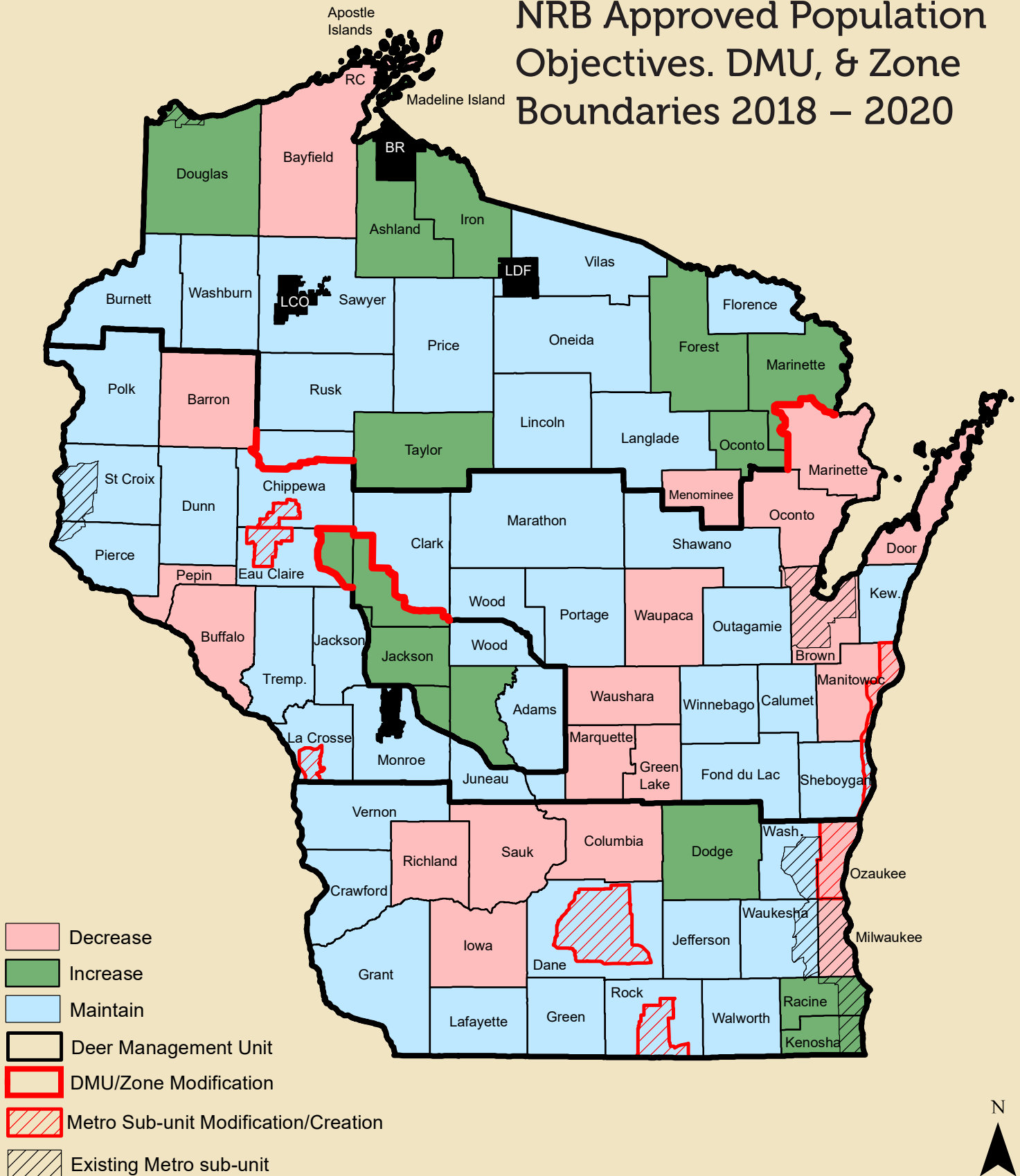
Metro Sub-unit

2018 Holiday Hunt



- Dec. 24 - Jan. 1 2019: Antlerless-only Holiday Hunt for all weapon types
- Forest Zone

NRB Approved Population Objectives. DMU, & Zone Boundaries 2018 – 2020



Extended Archery And Crossbow Seasons

 Metro Sub-unit

 Forest Zone

NOTE: Archery Season Extension can only be recommended in DMUs with a Holiday Hunt

CDACs and Antlerless Harvest Authorizations

County Deer Advisory Councils (CDACs) were formed in 2014 to increase local involvement in deer management. Councils are comprised of representatives from local hunting or conservation clubs, forestry, agriculture, tourism and local governmental interests. Each council is led by local Wisconsin Conservation Congress delegates, while a team of three liaisons from the DNR's wildlife, forestry and law enforcement programs attend CDAC meetings to present data and offer professional perspectives. Wisconsin's 72 councils participate directly in reviewing and setting population objectives, Deer Management Unit (DMU) boundaries, antlerless harvest quotas and antlerless harvest authorization (formerly called deer tags) levels. They also provide recommendations on various season structure elements that will affect the deer seasons. These include whether to implement the Dec. 24-Jan. 1 antlerless-only "Holiday Hunt", and new this year, whether to extend the archery and crossbow seasons through January 31st.



Photo: Linda Freshwaters Arndt

During the fall of 2017, councils reviewed deer herd metrics and solicited public input to develop three-year population objective recommendations to increase, decrease or maintain herd levels in each county. Once population objectives were approved in December 2017, the CDACs developed antlerless quotas and harvest authorization recommendations for 2018, relying on deer herd data and public feedback.

In addition, CDACs also reviewed all deer management zone (DMZ) and DMU boundaries in the fall of 2017, resulting in a number of boundary changes as well as new metro sub-units. Please

review pages 24-27 of the 2018 deer hunting regulations.

For more information regarding County Deer Advisory Councils, visit dnr.wi.gov and search keyword "[CDAC](#)."

Management Zones and Units

Wisconsin is broken into four Deer Management Zones (DMZs) and 77 Deer Management Units (DMUs). Several modifications and new DMUs were created during the DMU review conducted by CDACs during the fall of 2017. DMUs follow county boundaries in most cases, and ten DMUs are split by zone boundaries.

Go Wild Licensing System

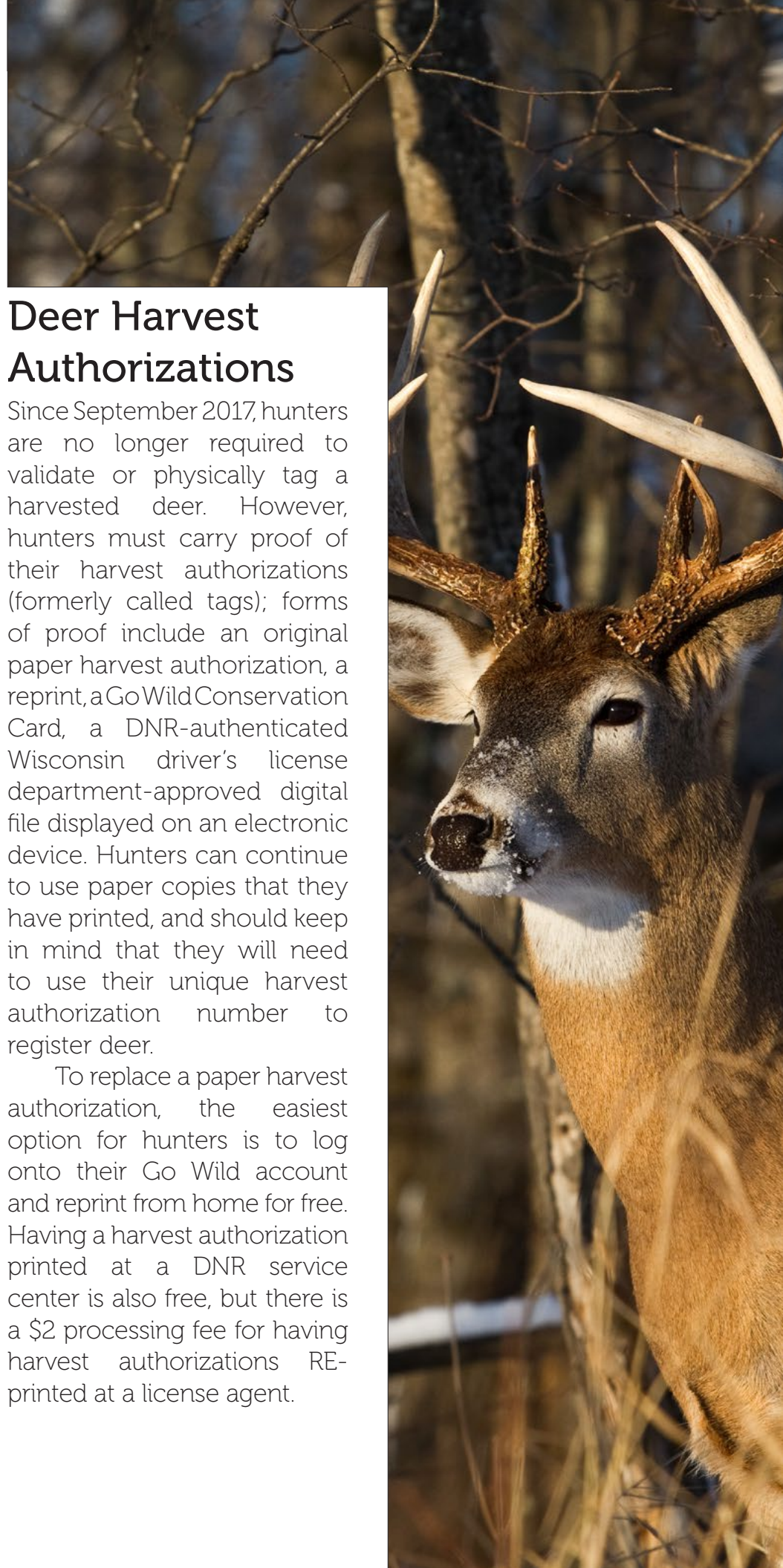
This is the third year since the DNR introduced the Go Wild licensing and registration system to deer hunters. Through Go Wild, hunters can purchase their deer hunting licenses, select their antlerless harvest authorization(s) and print them all from the convenience of home at no cost. There are still over 1,000 license agents that hunters can visit to purchase licenses. To find a license agent, hunters may visit dnr.wi.gov, and search keywords "[license agent](#)."

With licenses and harvest authorizations being printed on plain paper, changes to the forms of proof for hunting licenses were created in 2016. Hunters may present, as proof of license, a paper copy of their license printed from Go Wild, their DNR-authenticated Wisconsin driver's license, a department-issued Conservation Card or a department-approved PDF of the license displayed on a mobile device. Deer harvest authorizations will be printed on plain paper and a hunter may only hold a single copy of any individual harvest authorization when afield. Read more about Go Wild at gowild.wi.gov.

Deer Harvest Authorizations

Since September 2017, hunters are no longer required to validate or physically tag a harvested deer. However, hunters must carry proof of their harvest authorizations (formerly called tags); forms of proof include an original paper harvest authorization, a reprint, a GoWild Conservation Card, a DNR-authenticated Wisconsin driver's license department-approved digital file displayed on an electronic device. Hunters can continue to use paper copies that they have printed, and should keep in mind that they will need to use their unique harvest authorization number to register deer.

To replace a paper harvest authorization, the easiest option for hunters is to log onto their Go Wild account and reprint from home for free. Having a harvest authorization printed at a DNR service center is also free, but there is a \$2 processing fee for having harvest authorizations RE-printed at a license agent.





Electronic Harvest Registration

More than 320,000 deer were registered electronically by phone or online in 2017. Wisconsin deer hunters have adapted to the elimination of in-person registration, and electronic methods. Hunters experienced few problems with 97 percent managing to register their deer with no assistance during the opening weekend of the gun deer season. The other 3 percent were assisted by a Customer Service agent.

Hunter registration compliance was measured using several methods including warden field checks and hunter surveys. Results showed that approximately 90 percent of gun hunters and 94 percent of archery/crossbow hunters

complied and registered their deer in 2017. This level of compliance is estimated to be similar to compliance rates when in-person registration was required.

Successful deer hunters will register their deer online (fastest and easiest method) or by phone. They also have the option of registering electronically at a participating walk-in registration station. For a list of participating businesses offering walk-in registration, visit dnr.wi.gov and search keywords "[registration stations](#)."

To register a deer electronically, hunters will visit gamereg.wi.gov or call 1-844-426-3734 (1-844-GAME-REG). To start, the electronic

registration system will prompt hunters to enter the unique deer harvest authorization number for the harvest authorization they have filled, and their date of birth. Then, harvest information such as location of kill, age (adult or fawn) and sex (buck or doe) of the deer and weapon type used to harvest the animal will be collected. Once hunters have provided this information, they will receive a unique 10-character confirmation number. This number is no longer required to be written on a deer harvest authorization. All deer harvested during any deer season must be registered by 5 p.m. the day after harvest. For more information, visit dnr.wi.gov and search keywords "[electronic registration](#)."

New for 2018

1. Deer tags are now referred to as harvest authorizations.

2. The archery and crossbow deer seasons have been extended in several deer management units, and will close January 31, 2019. See page 12.

3. Baiting and feeding regulations have changed in select counties. For more information, visit dnr.wi.gov and search keywords "[baiting and feeding regulations](#)".

4. Boundaries in several DMZs, DMUs, and metro sub-units have changed in 2018. DMZ/DMU boundary changes have occurred in the counties of Chippewa, Clark, Eau Claire, Marinette, and Oconto Counties. In addition, boundaries of several metro sub-units have been modified and include Dane, Manitowoc, Sheboygan, Ozaukee, and Vernon metro sub-units. Three new metro sub-units have been created including those in Rock, Eau Claire, and Chippewa counties.



Photo: Linda Freshwaters Arndt

2018 Deer Hunts

Archery and Crossbow

The archery and crossbow seasons run concurrently. The seasons run Sept. 15 to Jan. 6, 2019.

Seasons have also been extended through January 31 in 12 counties including Brown, Dane, Door, Jefferson, Milwaukee, Oconto (Farmland Zone only), Outagamie, Richland, Sauk, Vernon, Washington, and Waukesha counties. The archery/crossbow seasons in metro sub-units also runs through Jan. 31, 2019.

Only antlerless deer may be harvested during the Statewide Antlerless-Only Hunt (Dec. 6-9) and county-specific "Holiday Hunt" (select counties, Dec 24-Jan 1, 2019), regardless of weapon type.

Youth Deer Season

The youth gun deer season will be held Oct. 6-7. This special hunt was established to provide youth hunters with an opportunity to hunt with the guidance of a mentor during



Father and son on a mentored deer hunt in 2017.

a period with little hunting pressure and more comfortable weather conditions.

The youth season will be held in all DMUs statewide. Resident and non-resident youth hunters under the age of 16 who possess a valid gun deer hunting license may participate. It is important to note that youth hunters must be accompanied by an adult parent or guardian during this hunt, even if the youth hunter holds a hunter education certificate. Qualified youth hunters may harvest one buck deer with their Gun Buck Deer Harvest Authorization and one antlerless deer to fill their statewide Junior Antlerless Deer Harvest Authorization(s). Youth hunters may harvest additional antlerless deer through the purchase of

Bonus Antlerless Deer Harvest Authorization(s), where available, or with a Farmland (Zone 2) Antlerless Deer Harvest Authorization included with a license. Note that these harvest authorizations are not valid statewide and are specific to the zone, DMU and land type.

Mentored hunters must be within arm's length of an adult mentor. No more than two youth hunters may be accompanied by a single mentor. Supervising adults may not hunt deer with a firearm while accompanying or mentoring a youth deer hunter. All hunters, with the exception of waterfowl hunters, are required to meet highly visible (blaze orange or florescent pink) clothing requirements during the youth gun deer hunt.

Gun Deer Hunt For Hunters with Disabilities

The gun deer hunt for hunters with disabilities will be held Oct. 6–14. This special hunt was established to provide more opportunities for hunters with disabilities to participate in Wisconsin's deer hunting traditions. Disabled hunters with a valid Class A, C or D disabled permit, or a Class B permit that is issued for longer than one year (and authorizes hunting or shooting from a stationary vehicle) may participate.

The gun deer hunt for hunters with disabilities is not a statewide season; it is only authorized on lands specifically enrolled in the disabled hunt program. Individuals participating in this hunt will have the opportunity to harvest a buck in any DMU statewide. They may also harvest one antlerless deer in any DMU statewide using a Farmland (Zone 2) Antlerless Deer Harvest Authorization, including in buck only units (Iron County). Please see the 2018 deer hunting regulations for more details. Landowners or managers interested in sponsoring lands for the 2019 hunt must submit an online application before

June 1, 2019. Qualified disabled hunters are encouraged to contact sponsors before Sept. 1. For a

list of sponsors for the 2018 season, visit dnr.wi.gov and search keywords "[disabled](#) [deer hunt](#)."



Jeff Heineman shows off his 9-pointer harvested near Waupaca in 2017.

A photograph of two deer in a lush green field. One deer is in the foreground, standing and looking towards the camera. The other deer is in the background, also standing and looking towards the camera. The field is filled with tall green grass, and the sky is a clear, light blue.

Traditional Statewide Nine-Day Gun Deer Season

The traditional nine-day gun deer season opens annually on the Saturday before Thanksgiving. In 2018, the hunt occurs November 17 to November 25.



**Photo: Linda
Freshwaters
Arndt**

Muzzleloader Season

The muzzleloader-only season annually occurs during the 10 days immediately following the nine-day gun season. In 2018, the season will run Nov. 26 to Dec. 7 and is open statewide. There is no separate muzzleloader license, and any gun harvest authorizations that were not filled during previous gun seasons may be filled.

December Statewide Four-Day Antlerless-Only Season

The four-day December antlerless-only deer season is a statewide hunt, occurring in all DMUs and will occur Dec. 6–9. The season is restricted by antlerless harvest authorization availability, and no antlered bucks can be harvested, with any weapon type, in any DMU during this period. Therefore, all hunters must possess (or be in a group with someone who possesses) an antlerless deer harvest authorization valid for the zone, DMU and land type in which they choose to hunt. All hunters, with the exception of waterfowl hunters, are required to meet highly visible (blaze orange or florescent pink) clothing requirements.

Antlerless-Only Holiday Hunt

The antlerless-only Holiday Hunt will run Dec. 24–Jan. 1, 2019. This hunt is only occurring in select Farmland (Zone 2) DMUs including: Brown, Buffalo, Columbia, Crawford, Dane, Door, Jefferson, Kewaunee, Marinette (Farmland Zone only), Milwaukee, Oconto (Farmland Zone only), Outagamie, Waupaca, Monroe (Farmland Zone only), Richland, Sauk, Vernon, Washington, and Waukesha Counties (see map on page 5).

Hunters must possess an antlerless deer harvest authorization valid for the zone, DMU and land type in which they choose to hunt during this season. No antlered deer can be harvested, with any weapon type, in a DMU where a Holiday Hunt is in progress. All hunters within the area of this hunt, with the exception of waterfowl hunters, are required to meet highly visible clothing (blaze orange or florescent pink) requirements.



Valuable Information For The 2018 Wisconsin Deer Seasons

Buck-Only Deer Management Units in 2018

Iron County is the only DMU designated as a buck-only unit for all deer seasons in 2018. Buck harvest authorizations may not be used to harvest a buck during any antlerless-only season. Bonus antlerless harvest authorizations are not available for purchase in this DMU.

Metro Sub-Units

Seventeen counties containing eight metropolitan sub-units provide additional hunting opportunity through extended gun, archery and crossbow seasons. Season dates for archery/crossbow

are September 15 – January 31, 2019. Regular gun deer season dates are November 17 – December 5, plus they follow the same season dates for all other firearm deer seasons (4-day antlerless, holiday hunt, etc.)

Hunters wishing to pursue antlerless deer in a metro sub-unit must do so using a valid antlerless deer harvest authorization designated for the zone, DMU and land type within the sub-unit. Some local municipalities may have weapons restrictions – hunters are encouraged to check local ordinances before hunting in metro sub-units.

Certain metro sub-units offer, at no cost, a Metro Sub-unit Antlerless Deer Harvest Authorization, which will be issued upon request to any hunter who

purchases a deer hunting license. Metro Sub-unit Harvest Authorizations are only valid within the zone, DMU, metro sub-unit and land type specified.

Also, select metro sub-units are offering Bonus Metro Sub-unit Antlerless Deer Harvest Authorizations at a cost of \$12 for residents, \$20 for non-residents, and \$5 for youth. They are only valid for harvesting an antlerless deer in the zone, DMU, metro sub-unit and land type designated on the printed harvest authorization. All Bonus Antlerless Harvest Authorizations go on sale using the same schedule as normal Bonus Antlerless Deer Harvest Authorizations. The dates and times of sale can be found at dnr.wi.gov search keywords, "[bonus availability](#)".



Deer Management Zones and Units

Several deer management zones and units changed this year (see map on page 3). All deer hunters should be familiar with the zone, DMU and land type (public access or private) in which they plan to hunt. Hunters will need this information before selecting and using all antlerless harvest authorizations which must be filled in the zone, DMU and land type designated on the printed harvest authorization.

For registration purposes, it is important that hunters properly enter the information

regarding where they harvested the deer. For example, if a hunter shot an antlerless deer in Taylor County, the deer would be registered in the Northern Forest (Zone 1), the Taylor DMU and the land type where the deer was shot (public or private).

Transportation

While afield, no person may possess or transport another hunter's deer, even after it has been registered, unless accompanied by the person for whom the deer harvest authorization was issued. However, anyone may transport another person's registered deer on a public road or possess it at a residence, camp or business.

Using Bows and Crossbows

All hunters using a crossbow to hunt deer must purchase a crossbow license or a crossbow upgrade after purchasing an archer license first. Hunters may also hunt with a bow or crossbow under the authority of a gun deer license, but only during a firearm season. Laws regulating the use of bows and crossbows for hunting within cities or villages may have changed. Check with city or village authorities for local ordinance restrictions.



Josh Jackl shows off his deer harvested on public hunting land in 2017.

Public Access Lands

Public lands include state, federal or county properties open to hunting, stewardship and utility properties, Managed Forest Law and Forest Crop Law lands (in whole or in part) designated as open for public hunting, and Voluntary Public Access lands leased for public hunting. Private lands include all lands not listed above. It is important to remember that hunters must have permission to access all private lands. Check out the Public Access Lands Atlas! dnr.wi.gov, keyword "[Maps](#)"

FAQ Page and Live Q & A

Hunters are encouraged to check out the Frequently Asked Questions page for additional information at dnr.wi.gov search keyword "[deer](#)". The FAQ document provides brief responses to a wide variety of deer hunting questions, ranging from DMU boundaries to antlerless tags. To help deer hunters prepare for the seasons, the department will host an online chat with wildlife and regulations experts in November. For more information and to view a schedule of upcoming chats, search keyword "[chat](#)."





Get Involved in Wisconsin's Deer Management

There are many opportunities available to play an active role in the management of white-tailed deer in Wisconsin:

Deer Hunter Wildlife Survey

Help monitor the relative abundance and distribution of deer and other wildlife species in Wisconsin. Use an online form to record your experiences and submit information you collected during your time in the field. To submit your observations, search keywords "[deer hunter wildlife](#)."

Contact Your Local Biologist

Wildlife biologists are available to speak with you and to answer questions, address any concerns you have and to gather input when setting the upcoming

deer season framework. To get in touch with your local wildlife biologist, search keyword "[contact](#)."

Operation Deer Watch

Help monitor deer reproduction in Wisconsin. Keep a tally sheet in your car, or go online, and record all deer sightings from Aug.1 to Sept.30. DNR biologists are interested in all buck, doe and fawn sightings. Operation Deer Watch data is combined with DNR staff observations to help estimate fawn-to-doe ratios and deer population estimates. For more information regarding Operation Deer Watch, search keywords "[operation deer watch](#)."

Trail Camera Photos

Do you have a trail cam photo of a rare or unusual animal? Trail cameras are a valuable resource for documenting more elusive wildlife, including species that are endangered in Wisconsin. Send in your trail camera photos during any season of the year. To submit photos, search keywords "[deer hunter wildlife](#)."

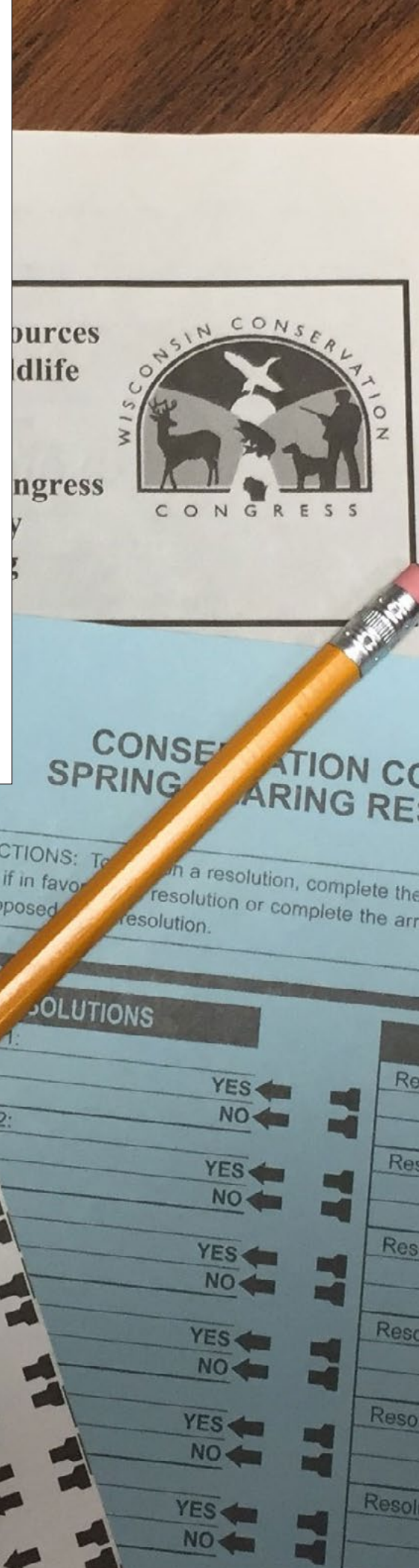


County Deer Advisory Councils and Online Public Input Opportunities

Annual deer herd forums take place each spring at local County Deer Advisory Council meetings where antlerless harvest quotas and various season structures are set. These meetings are open to the public, and comments are gathered during a public comment period. CDAC meetings also provide an opportunity to interact with DNR wildlife biologists and learn more about deer biology and management, population objectives, and harvest statistics in each county. Those interested in providing feedback on preliminary quota and bonus antlerless permit recommendations can also comment online. To provide input or apply to sit on your CDAC, search keyword "[CDAC](#)."

Conservation Congress Spring Hearings

Annual Wisconsin Conservation Congress meetings, held in each county statewide on the second Monday in April, give citizens the opportunity to comment and vote on proposed fish and wildlife rule changes and submit resolutions for future rule changes. This opportunity is unique to Wisconsin and helps play a significant role in determining how you enjoy your time in the outdoors. For more information regarding spring hearings, search keywords "[spring hearings](#)."



A photograph of a deer standing in a garden. To the left of the deer is a large potted plant with broad, variegated leaves. To the right is a stone fountain with a cherub statue on top. In the background, there is a white bench and dense green foliage.

Chronic Wasting Disease and Associated Rules

*By Tami Ryan, DNR wildlife health section chief,
608-266-3143, tamara.ryan@wisconsin.gov*

CWD Sampling in Wisconsin

During the 2018 deer hunting season, DNR will continue to sample deer within the Southern Farmland Zone and at select locations in other CWD-affected counties. The department will also sample deer around CWD positive deer locations in Adams, Juneau, Portage, Eau Claire, Lincoln, and Oneida counties, as well as in the wild deer herd surrounding CWD positive captive deer facilities in Marathon, Eau Claire, Oneida, Shawano, Waupaca,

Marinette, and Oconto counties. Exact sampling locations will be available on the department's webpage prior to the 2018 archery and crossbow season.

For 2018, weighted surveillance will occur in Washington, Ozaukee, Sheboygan, and Fond du Lac counties. This will be the second consecutive year of weighted surveillance in these counties. Weighted surveillance plays a key role in attempts to further increase the efficacy and efficiency of CWD surveillance efforts. Weighted surveillance focuses collection and

sampling efforts on select age and sex classes of harvested deer that are most likely to have the disease. Since CWD is found at higher prevalence rates in adult males than in other demographic groups of harvested deer, they are at the highest CWD risk and represent the most valuable group of harvested animals to test for CWD detection in areas where the disease has not previously been found.

Wisconsin has monitored CWD for 16 years since the first detection in 2002. For more information visit dnr.wi.gov, search keyword "[CWD](#)"

Baiting & Feeding in Wisconsin

Under state statute 29.336, Wis.Stats, DNR is required to prohibit baiting and feeding of deer when one of three criteria is found to exist. These criteria include a county within a designated CWD control zone, a CWD or Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) positive wild or captive deer is detected within the county, or a portion of a county is within a 10-mile radius of the location of a CWD-positive wild or captive deer. If the DNR determines a county meets at least one of these three criteria, a Secretary's order will be issued prohibiting baiting and feeding deer in that county.

In August 2017, an act signed into law to amend current state statute allows the DNR to:

- remove deer baiting and feeding prohibitions in counties where 36 months have passed since any confirmed positive test for chronic wasting disease or bovine tuberculosis within the county; and
- remove deer baiting and feeding prohibitions in adjacent counties where 24 months have passed since any confirmed positive test

for chronic wasting disease or bovine tuberculosis within a 10-mile radius of the county.

With this new legislation, the 24/36-month period would start over again with each new positive test result

as they are confirmed. Please visit dnr.wi.gov, search keyword "[baiting and feeding](#)" and check frequently for updates, as new baiting and feeding bans may be enacted or dropped during 2018 and beyond.



Photo: Linda Freshwaters Arndt

A photograph showing two men in winter gear working on a deer in a snowy, wooded area. One man is wearing a dark jacket and the other a green jacket. They are both looking down at the deer, which is lying on the snow. The background shows bare trees and a clear sky.

DNR Wildlife Biologists Dan Storm, Mitchell Kern and Mike Watt performing a variety of tests on a deer as part of the Southwest CWD, Deer, and Predator Research Project.

Photo: Ben Pierson / DNR

White-Tailed Deer Research

There is a variety of interesting and exciting deer research taking place in Wisconsin. The largest current project is the Southwest Wisconsin CWD, Deer and Predator Study, which stems from Governor Scott Walker's commitment to reevaluating chronic wasting disease in Wisconsin. For this project, we're examining the primary factors that could impact deer survival and population growth in southwestern Wisconsin. Those include chronic wasting disease, predation, habitat suitability, and hunter harvest.

To this end, we've collared over 500 deer in Grant, Iowa and Dane Counties. With fall approaching, we want hunters to know that collared deer are legal to harvest. We simply ask hunters to treat collared deer exactly as they would any other. Collars don't indicate anything about the deer's health or age. If you would normally harvest the deer, go for it! If not, let the deer pass. If you harvest a deer with a collar, it is vital that you call the number on the collar so the research staff can record that deer's information.

When spring arrives, we'll be looking for volunteers to help us with our spring fawn survey. To learn more and get involved, visit dnr.wi.gov and search keyword "[CWD research](#)." From there, you can keep up to date on the project by subscribing to our project newsletter. For specific questions, contact Daniel Storm, deer and elk research scientist, (715)-365-4712 dnrdeerresearch@wi.gov

2018 District Deer Season Forecasts



Southern District Forecast

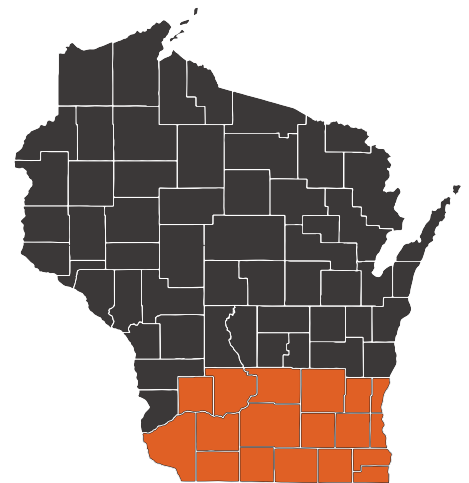
Bret Owsley, SOD Wildlife Supervisor, 920-210-2451, Bret.Owsley@wisconsin.gov

Across the Southern District, Wildlife Biologists are optimistic about the deer season for 2018. Mild winters, lower antlerless harvest and available habitat have led to increased populations throughout the Southern District, all of which falls within the Southern Farmland Zone. Many DNR staff and the general public have reported seeing deer frequently this summer and a high number of fawns. With lower than historic antlerless

harvest the past few years, hunters should see numbers slightly higher than last fall. However, it is important for hunters to keep in mind that there is great variation in the habitat as well as the quality of the habitat across the landscape and as a result, the number of deer between individual properties can vary significantly. Southern Farmland Zone County Deer Advisory Councils (CDACs) are offering, on average, more antlerless tags in response to the expected

increase in deer numbers.

The Southern District encompasses a wide range of deer habitat types. They range from the high wooded ridges



and coulees in the southwest to the flatter, urbanized landscape of Waukesha, Racine and Kenosha counties. We also have the rolling southern kettles in the east and the extensive wetland and woodland areas of Dodge, Jefferson and Columbia Counties. This high level of variation in habitat types and conditions results in local deer numbers that can vary dramatically from one square mile to the next. Deer numbers tend to be higher in the western portion of the District but good to great opportunities to harvest a deer can be found in any of the counties that make up the Southern Farmland Zone.

Early season food sources appear to be doing well and should provide plenty of opportunities for hunters to locate deer taking advantage of the hard and soft mast produced during this time of year. In addition, agricultural crops are looking good and are a few days ahead of previous years, due to the drier spring and summer. Hunters should keep in mind that once these seasonal food sources are no longer available, deer will start to expand their range looking for other food sources. In areas where deer numbers are the highest, you can expect to see the quality of habitat



decrease, resulting in deer traveling further looking for other sources of food. This is where the appropriate habitat and herd management practices can assist in your success throughout the hunting season. I encourage people interested in learning more about habitat and herd management to sign up for the Deer Management Assistance Program at dnr.wi.gov, keyword "[DMAP](#)."

Most Southern District deer are harvested on private property, which makes up more than 90 percent of the landscape, but good deer hunting can also be found on the thousands of

acres of county, state and federally owned lands open to deer hunting in southern Wisconsin. Nancy Frost, Wildlife Biologist in Sauk County mentioned that much of the public land in Sauk County, including Dell Creek Wildlife Area and the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area had timber sales occur that create young forest vegetation that provides both cover and a high-quality food source.

Travis Anderson, Wildlife Biologist for Iowa and Lafayette Counties has high hopes for the upcoming deer season as well. Due to several mild winters over the last few years, the deer herd

in Iowa County seems to be on a slightly increasing trend, especially in northern and southeastern portions of the county. State owned public lands in Iowa County that offer excellent deer hunting opportunities include Blackhawk Lake Wildlife Area, Trout Creek and Love Creek Fisheries Areas, and various management units in the Lower WI State Riverway. Additionally, the three state parks that are located here (Governor Dodge, Blue Mound, and Tower Hill State Parks) offer hunting opportunities as well. Be sure to check the dnr.wi.gov using the keyword search "[hunt](#)" for further information when hunting in state parks. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) manages hundreds of acres in Iowa County, which are also open for public hunting. Maps and information on lands they manage can be found [here](#).

Additionally, Mr. Anderson believes that the deer herd in Lafayette County has seen a very stable to slightly increasing population over the last few years. Several back-to-back mild winters is helping in this trend. Much of this county is in private ownership, but there are a few public land hunting opportunities including the Yellowstone Wildlife Area. Also,

two state parks offer additional hunting opportunity within the county: Yellowstone Lake State Park (embedded within the Yellowstone Wildlife Area) and Belmont Mound State Park.

The increasing to stable population trend continues as we move to Columbia County, where Wildlife Biologist Sara Kehrli mentions that the deer herd in Columbia County appears to be very robust this year. Anecdotal observations from both DNR staff and the general public indicate that there are a lot more deer around this year compared to previous years. No reports of epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD) have been received in recent years; however confirmed CWD cases have been on the rise, especially in the southwest corner of the county. Columbia County hunters can benefit from the large amount of public land that can be found throughout the county. The deer population in this county seems to be highest along the northern tier of townships – French Creek, Pine Island, Jennings Creek and Peter Helland Wildlife Areas all provide excellent opportunities to see and harvest deer. Voluntary Public Access (VPA) lands and properties enrolled in the

agricultural damage program are great places to try as well.

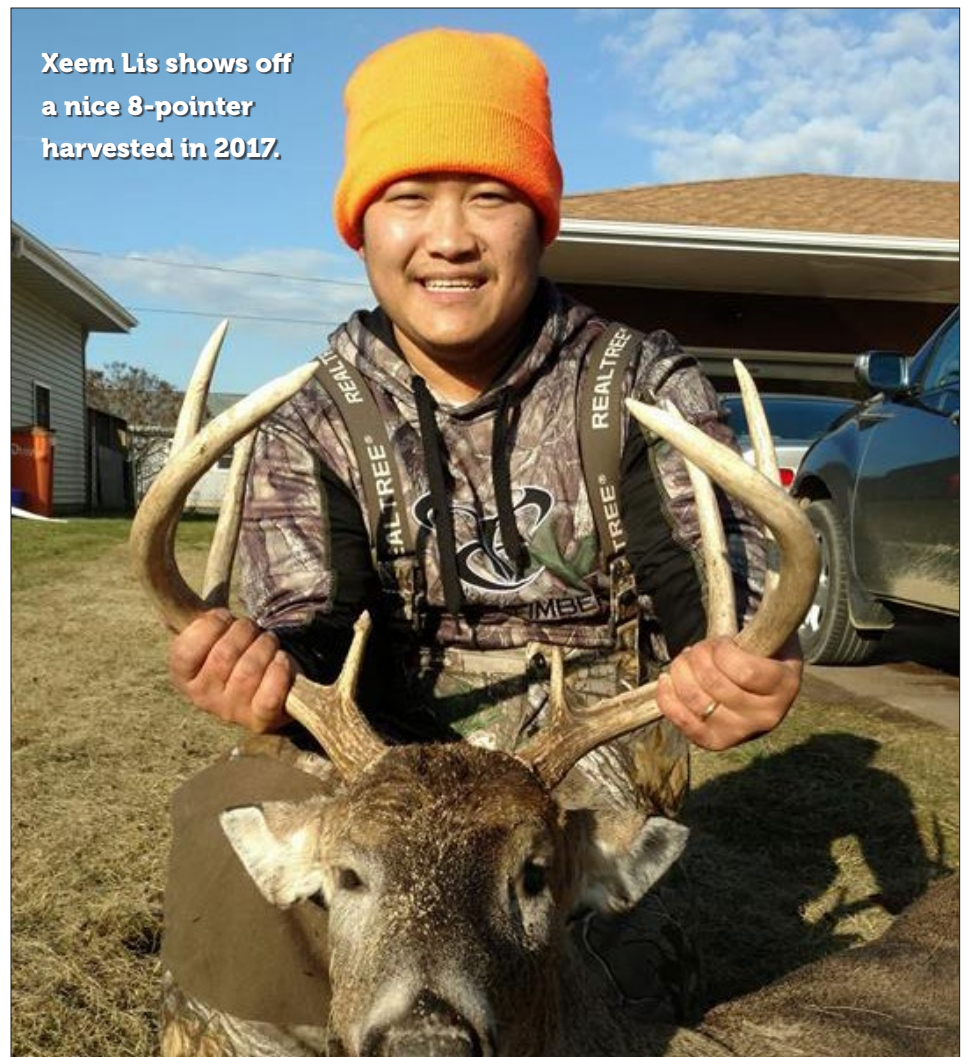
In Dane County, the deer herd appears to be stable to slightly increasing as well. New in 2018 is the expanded metro zone which will offer increased opportunities in the more urban areas of Dane County, specifically around Madison. Although many DNR wildlife areas in Dane County have high hunter pressure, Wildlife Biologist Julie Widholm stated that several larger properties still offer plenty of opportunities for deer hunting including Brooklyn, Lodi Marsh, and Goose Lake; the Dane County Park system also offers lands open to public hunting.

Wildlife Biologist Sam Jonas is seeing the same increasing trend for Jefferson County. Mr. Jonas says that the antlered harvest in Jefferson County has continued to increase each year for the previous 5 years – this is a good indication that the deer herd is also increasing so hunters should expect great deer numbers for 2018-2019 hunting season. Public hunting opportunities in Jefferson County are abundant with approximately 20,000 acres of state-owned lands open for public use. Each state-owned wildlife area in the county is suitable

for deer hunting. Jefferson March and Waterloo Wildlife Area have some very large continuous acres which allow for great deer movement and opportunities for hunters to scout and get away from other hunting pressure.

The Green County deer herd appears to have stabilized and hunters can expect a similar number of deer on the landscape as last year. Jason Cotter, Wildlife Biologist for Green and Rock Counties says there are excellent opportunities to harvest deer on the various state managed lands; especially Albany, Liberty Creek, and Brooklyn Wildlife Areas. These properties are intensively managed as a mix of oak uplands, bottom land hardwood forest, and prairie habitat that deer seek throughout the hunting season.

In Rock County, Mr. Cotter believes that the population is stable to slightly increasing with great opportunities to see deer during the season. Much of the county is private land but there are a few places open to the public that hold a fair amount of deer, especially Avon Bottoms, Lima Marsh-Storr's Lake, Footville, and Evansville Wildlife Areas. These properties are



intensively managed as a mix of oak uplands, bottom land hardwood forest, and prairie habitat that deer seek throughout the hunting season.

Continuing to the southeast portion of the state, Wildlife Biologist Marty Johnson feels that the deer herd in the Kenosha and Racine Counties has been slightly increasing the past couple of years. Fall hunter surveys have indicated that hunters are seeing more deer throughout both counties and should have a good season. The

New Munster Wildlife Area, a 1,682-acre property in Kenosha County, provides good deer hunting opportunities with a mixed landscape consisting of agriculture fields, oak woodlands, and wetlands and has a 33-acre Voluntary Public Access (VPA) site on HWY KD. The Tichigan Wildlife Area, a 1,580-acre property in Racine County, also provides good deer hunting opportunities with a similar landscape and has a 98-acre VPA site east of Marsh Road. A recent thinning of an oak woodland area by the half circle



DNR Wildlife Technician Katie Luukkonen climbs a tree stand while taking part in the Southwest Wisconsin CWD, Deer and Predator Project in Grant County.

parking area off Marsh Road has opened the woodland area improving foraging areas for deer (i.e., woody browse, mast production, etc.) and providing better access for hunters.

Along with the opportunities in Racine and Kenosha county, there are many other properties in the more urbanized southeast portion of the state that provide great opportunities during the deer season. You can visit Big Muskego Lake Wildlife Area and Vernon Wildlife Area within Milwaukee and Waukesha Counties. Wildlife Biologist Dianne Robinson says both properties provide a mix of wetland, grassland and oak woodland habitats that hold large numbers of deer, all within a short drive of Milwaukee and its suburbs. Theresa Wildlife Area also provides a variety of

natural habitat types nestled among agricultural fields, yielding high deer numbers among these excellent food sources. Theresa and Jackson Marsh Wildlife Areas both in Washington County, are near urban centers in Milwaukee and Ozaukee Counties, making these parcels prime spots for a bow hunting day trip after work or on weekends close to home. There are many opportunities across the Southern District to hunt on public land and have an opportunity to harvest a deer. Those looking for public land that is available for hunting can check out the DNR website at dnr.wi.gov, keywords "[public hunting lands](#)."

If interested in hunting on private lands, hunters are advised to get out well in advance of deer season to meet with landowners and

seek permission to hunt. Remember to get out early to scout the areas you plan to hunt throughout the fall. Keep an eye out for those natural food sources that will attract deer, and pattern their movements to and from those sources.

Another important aspect for Southern District deer hunters to keep in mind is that the prevalence of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) continues to increase in prevalence and geographic area. Recent CWD positive animals found in Dodge County (wild deer positive), Milwaukee County (wild deer positive) and Washington County (captive deer positive) have put into effect a baiting and feeding ban. Within the Southern District, baiting and feeding is only allowed in



Photo: Linda Freshwaters Arndt

Ozaukee, Racine and Kenosha Counties. Hunters interested in getting their deer tested for CWD will be able to go to one of the co-op CWD sample stations or self-service kiosks that will be posted on the DNR website prior to the season opener. For more information on CWD, please visit the DNR website, keyword search "[CWD](#)". This year as in years past, hunters can also contact the local Wildlife Biologist to get their deer sampled. You can find their contact information by going to dnr.wi.gov, keyword search "[contact](#)".

Hunters in ten counties within the Southern District will have the opportunity to enjoy the "Holiday Hunt" deer season during the winter holiday season. Those counties include; Columbia, Crawford, Dane, Jefferson, Milwaukee, Richland, Sauk, Vernon, Washington and Waukesha. The Holiday Hunt is an antlerless-only season that will take place December 24 – January 1, 2019.

Eight of those same counties will also offer extended archery and crossbow seasons for the first time, with the seasons closing on January 31 in Dane, Jefferson, Milwaukee, Richland, Sauk, Vernon, Washington and Waukesha.

We anticipate an excellent deer season in the Southern District in 2018. We wish everyone a safe and successful fall!

**Wisconsin's
deer need
your help.**

**Submit your deer for
CWD sampling**



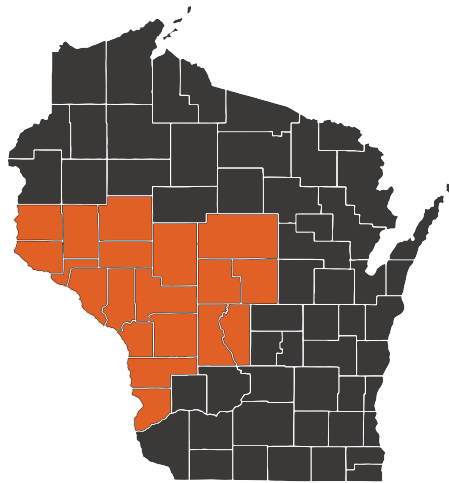
West Central District Forecast

By Kris Johansen,
WCD Wildlife
Supervisor, 715-839-3736 Kris.Johansen@wisconsin.gov

The 2018 deer hunting season is shaping up to provide ample quality hunting opportunities for deer hunters in the 19-county West Central District. Most of the counties within the district experienced an average to milder than average winter in regard to temperatures and snow depth. An early spring snow storm that dumped a foot of snow in most areas did not seem to have a negative impact on fawn production due to the warm temperatures that followed the storm, melting the snow before it could stress the deer at the critical time following winter. Reports of twin and triplet fawns are common this summer across the district in the agricultural areas and the central forested counties are also reporting good fawn production. The spring green up came a bit later than normal this year, but growing conditions through late spring and summer



have been very good, with adequate moisture and warm weather which has yielded abundant natural vegetation and agricultural crops.



In the fall of 2017 County Deer Advisory Councils (CDAC's) reviewed and developed new population objectives to be in effect for

a three-year period, which are in place for the 2018 deer seasons. Most counties have an objective of maintaining the deer herd, while others aim to decrease or increase over the coming 3-year period. CDAC's also reviewed Deer Management Zone boundaries as well as metro sub-unit boundaries. Some counties added metro sub-units or adopted changes to zone boundaries that will be in effect this fall, and offer new hunting opportunities. The counties of Chippewa, Clark, Eau Claire and La Crosse all made modifications to metro sub-unit boundaries within their county, so hunters spending time there should

pay special attention to those changes.

Hunters within the West Central District will be asked to assist in a district-wide CWD sampling effort this fall. A number of counties along the western side of the district have not had a comprehensive sampling effort since the late 2000's, so this fall, CWD sampling will occur within every county across the district. This sampling effort is extremely important to identifying where CWD exists within the wild deer herd across Wisconsin. Cooperation from hunters in this sampling effort is integral to meet sampling goals. Sampling stations will be set up during the archery and gun seasons in every county, utilizing self-service kiosks and a network of cooperating taxidermists and meat processors. Hunters can visit dnr.wi.gov search keywords "[CWD sampling](#)" to identify sampling locations prior to their hunt and then make the trip to a sampling station part of their 2018 hunt plans.

Hunters should also be aware of new baiting and feeding regulations within Eau Claire, Chippewa, Dunn, Buffalo, Pepin and Trempealeau Counties. In March of 2018, a wild white-

tailed deer tested positive for CWD in Eau Claire County. State law requires a baiting and feeding ban to be in effect when CWD is found within a county or any county within 10 miles of the CWD detection. In response to this recent CWD discovery, the Chippewa Valley CWD Advisory Team was formed to provide recommendations to the Department regarding CWD surveillance and sampling. In conjunction with this team's recommendations, the Department has established a CWD sampling focus area for the 2018 season where hunters will be asked to participate in sampling to assist in developing a better understanding regarding the geographic distribution and prevalence of CWD in this area. More information about CWD sampling and how hunters can assist will be provided throughout the fall.

The West Central District's landscape contains a diverse variety of excellent deer habitat across the 19 counties. Much of the western border of the district is within the "driftless area" of Wisconsin, characterized by steep oak and hickory-dominated hillsides with fertile ridges and valleys that are generally cropped with alfalfa, corn, and soybeans. This area has some

of the highest deer densities in the state and is also known for exceptional antler growth. Year in and year out, some of the greatest numbers of Boone and Crockett and Pope and Young entries come from this region due to an older age structure of bucks and excellent habitat. The district also has a great mix of public lands within the Central Forest Zone counties. Deer populations within the forested zone are not as high as the farmland areas, but hunters can still expect to find ample quality hunting opportunities. On the eastern side of the district, deer populations are robust as well, with most counties seeing an upward trend in deer numbers. The mix of agriculture and woodlots within this landscape provides excellent deer habitat with opportunities for hunters to fill their antlerless harvest authorizations (included with the purchase of a deer hunting license), and have a good chance of harvesting a mature buck with nice antlers.

Deer populations are stable to increasing in Pierce and St. Croix Counties. Winter conditions were a bit harder than years past, but Wildlife Biologist Ryan Haffele reports the winter conditions have not hampered reproduction,



as evidenced by field observations this summer. Haffele noted that both St. Croix and Pierce Counties will have 2 antlerless harvest authorizations included with each license to allow hunters more opportunities to harvest a surplus of antlerless deer. Hunters in St. Croix and Pierce Counties have not had a comprehensive sampling effort for the past 10 years, so will be asked to participate in sampling this fall at designated stations throughout the counties.

Dunn and Pepin County are also reporting excellent recruitment and ample opportunities for hunters this fall. Wildlife Biologist Missy Sparrow-Lien notes that, though populations of deer are stable to increasing in both counties, densities of deer are not evenly distributed across the landscape. Thus, hunters are encouraged to do some preseason scouting to identify the best areas to focus their hunting effort.

According to Buffalo and Trempealeau County Wildlife Biologist Mark Rasmussen, "Habitat conditions have been very good this spring and summer so far. We have had plenty of rain and warmth, so there is abundant vegetation available. Fruit crops are looking good so far as well and it should be a good year for both berry and apple production." Buffalo County is one of four counties within the district that will host the antlerless-only Holiday Hunt gun season.

Further south, the trend of increasing deer herds continues in La Crosse, Vernon and Crawford counties. Wildlife Biologist Ron Lichtie recommends hunters focus their preseason scouting on areas with white oaks. He anticipates good acorn production based upon the growing season thus far. Ron also has observed excellent antler development as bucks have become more visible over the latter part of the summer in agricultural fields as they increase their uptake of food to offset the energy demands of antler development. Neighboring Wildlife Biologist Dan Goltz has also noted excellent recruitment in Vernon and Crawford counties with reports from local landowners of "seeing many deer while driving around at dusk." Crawford County CDAC Chair Bob Ziel also noted numerous reports of people seeing

a lot of deer and shared he is "optimistic for a good harvest this year." All of these counties are making antlerless harvest authorizations abundantly available, and both Vernon and Crawford counties are offering the Holiday Hunt.

The Central Forest portion of the West Central district offers excellent hunting opportunities for hunters who like to recreate on large tracts of public land. As stated already, deer densities are not as high as counties with more agriculture and more fertile soils, but hunters that put time into scouting and planning their hunts can anticipate good success. Hunters in the Central Forest Zone are reminded that each county has a limited antlerless quota for public and private lands. As a result, bonus harvest authorizations can be purchased starting on August 13. Farmland Zone antlerless tags are not valid within any county portion that falls within the Central Forest Zone.

Wildlife Biologist Darren Ladwig noted that for the third consecutive year, the winter severity in the Central Forest Zone portions of Adam and Juneau Counties was low, allowing for excellent recruitment this spring. Like other areas within the district, the April blizzard dumped significant snowfall on Adams



and Juneau Counties, but 5 days later most areas were snow free, and the late snow had negligible impact. Ladwig also reminds hunters, "Adams and Juneau County are split by the boundaries of the Forest and Farmland Zones, so hunters need to pay close attention to utilize the correct antlerless harvest authorizations based upon their location of harvest."

The Central Forest Zone counties are comprised mostly of wooded habitat, and most counties have active timber management occurring. Wildlife Biologist Scott Roepke recommends focusing effort on areas

with recent timber harvests. Roepke noted "Timber sales can be dynamite hunting locations if you put time into scouting. If you aren't seeing much sign where you have been hunting, try a new area! You may be surprised at what you find just a short distance away." Roepke also has observed increasing deer numbers within the Central Forest Zone portions of Jackson and Clark counties. Hunters in Clark County should be aware of a change to the Farmland and Forest Zone boundary that will allow the zones to better reflect the actual habitat conditions on the landscape

(mainly farmland habitat was removed from the Forest Zone) and allow managers to better manage deer populations in those zones. The boundary will follow several county highways so hunters are encouraged to review the new boundary prior to purchasing antlerless harvest authorizations or hunting. This change will add a significant area of public land to the Farmland Zone, increasing hunting opportunity for hunters in an area that had lacked public land in the past.

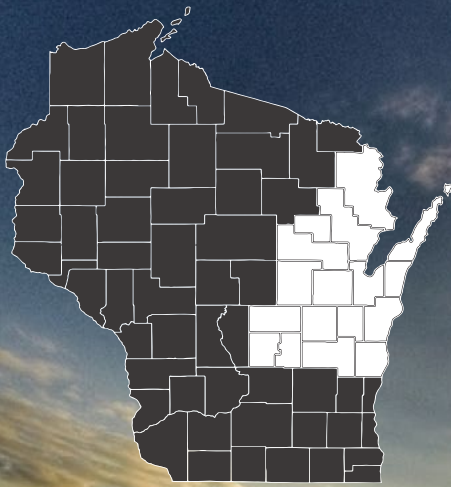
Hunters that focus on Chippewa and Eau Claire Counties will see a number of changes compared to last year. Due to an increase in deer populations in the Eau Claire Central Forest Zone, a modest number of bonus antlerless harvest authorizations will be available for hunters to purchase. Wildlife Biologist Bill Hogseth notes that "Eau Claire's central forest area is known for extensive tracts of public land with a wild and remote character and a long-time tradition of deer camps. Hunters who go the extra mile to find locations away from roadways are often rewarded with solitude and fewer hunters, providing less pressured

deer and a good chance for success." In Chippewa County, the CDAC advanced recommendations to designate the northern portion of the county that is predominantly county forest, as part of the Northern Forest Zone. As a result, a zone boundary change was made, and will allow management that can better focus on the varying habitat and land ownership in Chippewa County. Eau Claire and Chippewa counties also have a new metro sub-unit focused on the cities of Eau Claire, Chippewa Falls, Hallie and Altoona. This change also was recommended by the CDAC to better manage deer numbers in residential areas to reduce negative impacts. Hunters in the metro sub-unit will enjoy both extended gun and archery seasons, as well as additional antlerless harvest opportunities.

Deer numbers within the central Wisconsin counties of Marathon, Wood and Portage are also growing, and these counties will provide ample opportunities for hunters this fall. Wildlife Biologist Brandon Stefanski notes that "The late snow storm didn't seem to affect adult deer health or fawn recruitment.

Recruitment in Marathon and Wood Counties looks great and antler growth looks very good." Year after year, Marathon and surrounding counties are the leading counties for deer harvested. With a quota of 6,500 antlerless deer and one antlerless harvest authorization offered with each deer hunting license, Marathon County hunters will again be provided with great opportunities to recreate and harvest deer.

Deer hunting is a rich and time-honored tradition in Wisconsin thanks to the dedication of hunters and landowners. This season, consider providing that experience to a new hunter so they can enjoy that tradition as well. Those considering hunting deer within the West Central District are asked to please consider participating in the District-wide CWD surveillance detailed above, and with ample harvest opportunities this fall, consider donating a deer through the Venison Donation program. Donation sites can be found at dnr.wi.gov, search keyword "[deer donation](#)". Finally, remember to safely enjoy the time afield this fall with family and friends!



Northeast District Forecast

By Bryan Woodbury, Wildlife Biologist, 920-832-1804 Bryan.Woodbury@wisconsin.gov

Hunters should be optimistic with the upcoming 2018 deer hunting season. Most of the district experienced another mild winter. This is the fourth consecutive mild winter which has contributed to strong fawn production throughout Northeast Wisconsin. Many DNR staff and the general public have reported seeing deer frequently this summer and a high number of fawns. Most of the District experienced a mid-April snow fall, with the central section accumulating up to 30" of new snow. This snow event and a wetter than normal spring delayed agricultural production by 10-14 days. Hunters should expect corn

and soybeans to be harvested later than normal which can impact deer movements and available cover.

Marinette and Oconto counties are each split into two Deer Management Units by the boundary of the Northern Forest and Central Farmland Zones. In the Northern Forest Units, the buck harvest has been increasing the last couple of years, and is expected to increase again this year. Bonus harvest authorizations for these Northern Forest portions of the counties are likely to sell out quickly. During the 2017 fall County Deer Advisory Council (CDAC) meeting, Marinette County

modified the boundary split between the forest unit and the farmland unit. Marinette County hunters are encouraged to check the new boundary location at dnr.wi.gov, search keyword "[DMU](#)", to verify they are hunting in the proper zone for the authorizations they possess. The CDACs in both counties are looking to increase the antlerless deer harvest in the Central Farmland portions of their counties. Marinette will be issuing three free Farmland (Zone 2) antlerless harvest authorizations with each license and Oconto will be issuing two free Farmland (Zone 2) antlerless harvest authorizations with each.



These harvest authorizations can only be used in the Central Farmland Zone of the county. Both counties are providing additional hunting opportunities in the Central Farmland Zone with a Holiday Hunt, and Oconto is extending the archery and crossbow seasons in their Central Farmland Zone.

Many of the CDACs in the Central Farmland counties in the Northeast District are concerned about achieving an adequate harvest on antlerless deer. The harvest objective, as established utilizing public input through the CDACs, is to either maintain or decrease the size of the herd in the Farmland Zone portions of these counties for the next three years. As the deer herd continues to grow above sustainable and habitat-healthy levels, these counties are offering multiple antlerless harvest authorizations with each license, an antlerless-only firearm Holiday Hunt in some counties, as well as extended archery and crossbow seasons through the end of January in some counties. Door County is issuing five free Farmland (Zone 2) antlerless harvest authorizations with deer hunting license again this year, allowing hunters with access to high deer density areas to take additional antlerless deer. Waupaca, Shawano, Kewaunee, Green Lake, Marquette and Oconto Farmland Zone are each issuing 3 antlerless harvest authorizations. Outagamie, Brown, Manitowoc, Sheboygan, Waushara and Marinette Farmland zone are issuing 2 antlerless harvest authorizations per license.

Many CDACs are providing their hunters with more hunting opportunities as is evident in Waupaca, Outagamie, Door, Brown, Kewaunee, and both Farmland zones in Oconto and Marinette who are offering an antlerless-only Holiday Hunt. Additionally, Outagamie, Door, Brown and Oconto Farmland Zone have extended the archery and crossbow seasons through the end of January.

It is important for hunters to keep in mind that there is great variation in the habitat type as well as the quality of the habitat across the landscape. As a result, the number of deer utilizing individual properties can vary significantly. Manitowoc and Sheboygan CDACs modified the Metro sub-unit boundary in their counties. Hunters should check out the new unit and zone boundary and season structure at dnr.wi.gov, keyword search "[DMU](#)".

The group of counties around Lake Winnebago tends to have high deer numbers in places, but the habitat is more patchy and fragmented resulting in hunting pressure that is relatively high for the available cover. As a result, overall deer numbers across these counties, comparatively aren't as robust as some other areas. With a lower need for antlerless harvest to keep deer numbers in check, hunters in Calumet, Fond du Lac and Winnebago counties are limited to one antlerless harvest authorization included with each deer hunting license, and a very limited number of bonus antlerless harvest authorizations are



Adam Wampole and his 8-point buck harvested in 2017.

available when sales begin in August 13th.

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) has not been detected in wild deer in the Northeast District. The district's southern counties of Fond du Lac and Sheboygan will be conducting weighted CWD sampling. If CWD were to exist in an area, weighted sampling targets the deer most likely to carry the disease. This is accomplished by cooperating with local taxidermists and finding other opportunities to sample older age class deer. CWD has been detected in one Oconto County and one

Marinette County captive deer farms and two Waupaca County hunting preserves. Monitoring the health of our deer is an important CWD management strategy. The DNR will be collecting deer heads for CWD testing around the focus area in Marinette and the two focus areas in Shawano County and the adjacent portion of Oconto County. Check the DNR CWD Sampling website for sample locations, phone numbers and hours of availability at dnr.wi.gov, keyword "[CWD](#)".

Good luck this hunting season, and we wish everyone a safe and enjoyable fall.



Northern District Forecast

Photo: Linda Freshwaters Arndt

By Curt Rollman, DNR Deer Biologist, 715-369-9399 Curtis.Rollman@Wisconsin.gov

The deer herd in Northern Wisconsin has been on an upward trend as is evident with increases in sightings, as well as antlerless quotas and overall harvests including bucks. Region wide another year of growth is expected. The amount of growth will vary among areas largely due to variable habitat quality and winter severity in 2017-18 that ranged from moderate in most areas to severe in the heart of the snowbelt. A good portion of the region experienced a mild to moderate winter until a late snowstorm hit most of the area. The snowstorm came at a critical time as

deer are most stressed near the end of winter waiting for spring green up to replenish diminished reserves.

Fortunately, deer were tolerating conditions well going into late winter and the snow from the storm melted fairly quickly, followed by a rapid spring green up. Health assessments of vehicle-hit deer found most with some fat reserves remaining, while localized areas showing deer with little to no fat did occur but were not widespread. Overall, the northern herd came through winter in good condition which is a sign of a balanced deer herd that has enough habitat to support

them through a more severe Wisconsin winter. To keep a balanced herd many of the County Deer Advisory Councils (CDACs) have selected a "maintain" population objective over the next three years. This is in recognition of the growth of the herd as shown by many different deer metrics across the region. Deer metrics can be found for any deer management unit (DMU) at dnr.wi.gov, keywords "[Deer Metrics](#)"

Late winter to early spring is a difficult time for deer as they wait for green-up. This is especially true in the northern forested regions of the state. During this time, fat reserves

are highly important for each individual deer's ability to survive winter stress caused by harsh conditions and low availability of food. High fat reserves also help deer begin the spring and summer in better condition, allowing them to get a jump on summer nutritional intake that creates prime-condition deer during hunting season. Herd health assessments, conducted across the north by observing fat reserves of car-killed deer early in the spring, indicated an overall well-prepared herd with fat reserves still available in mature deer. Some of last year's fawns were observed to be in poor condition with fat reserves fully utilized. This is normal, and it is very common and expected that adult deer will be in better condition to survive than younger deer. Wildlife biologists in many areas of the north walked miles through traditional deer yarding areas only to find limited winter losses. Of those deer that had succumbed to winter, the majority were last year's fawns in poor condition, leading to the conclusion that overall winter did not have a large or widespread impact on the northern deer population.

If a hunter does their scouting and puts in their time, they can expect ample opportunity in the north



Rob Hanson proudly displays his deer harvested on public land in Bayfield County in 2017.

to harvest a deer. All but one DMU (Iron County) is providing antlerless harvest opportunity, offering the chance to collect some extra high-quality meat from the field. An increased antlerless harvest will also take pressure off young bucks and add to future potential of seeing more mature bucks in the woods. Based on the previous trends seen during the past few seasons through aging and harvest, a good adult age class of bucks is expected this year due to the previous mild winters. Antler growth is not expected to be as great as last year due to the later winter stress than can impact

body and antler condition, but an excellent spring and summer growing season may make up the difference. The difference can be based largely on habitat quality that can dampen winter impact on body condition.

Deer are not evenly distributed across the landscape as they tend to congregate on areas of the best habitat. Some areas seem to perpetually sustain higher deer numbers, but more commonly, an area can be good for several years and then produce less deer activity as once-prime, young forest habitat declines over time. It is important to

stay mobile with hunting locations and adjust based on habitat changes. For the largely forested north, the areas of prime habitat are centered around aspen cuts and oak ridges. Thick aspen regeneration provides excellent deer cover but can be difficult to hunt. Many successful hunters use topography and travel corridors near aspen cuts to catch deer moving in or out of the thick areas. Scouting oak areas can reveal excellent hunting opportunities as well. Oaks generally have a substantial acorn crop every 3-5 years so it is important to check on acorn development throughout the summer and fall. The growing season has been especially great in the Northwest part of the region and reports are coming in of an excellent acorn crop. Other habitat types hold deer as well, but when pressured, deer head for cover they feel most secure in. Stands where one can see long distances in the forest may provide excellent shooting opportunity but may not provide many deer sightings. While scouting this year look for areas of recent timber harvests and pick points that deer may funnel in and out once the pressure of deer season comes.

DNR Wildlife Biologist County Reports

Burnett County – Bob Hanson:

The lingering winter did not seem to curb deer production. We are seeing plenty of fawns and a good number of twin fawns even in the sand country. Driving the countryside at dusk shows good numbers of deer moving and feeding. It would appear the problem of hot and cool spots in deer distribution has mostly been corrected. That being said, scouting and being mobile may still be critical to hunting success. Abundant rainfall has our deer range green, with prime food resources. At this point, we anticipate an excellent deer hunting season in Burnett County.

Barron and Polk County – Kevin Morgan:

Sportsmen will be finding plenty of deer when they head to the fields and forests this fall, despite a winter that never seemed to end. After three mild winters in a row, these Central Farmland counties experienced a more severe winter. However, losses were minimal and the effect on reproduction does not seem to be great. There are plenty of does that have

twin fawns and even some reports of triplets. Fawns seem to be healthy and growing to a large size already. Winter stress on bucks can affect their antler development, but we will wait and see this fall what the effects will be on rack size. Preliminary observations of bucks show some nice bucks on the landscape in these farmland units so effects may not be great. Overall, Barron and Polk produce trophy bucks and provide entries every year in the Pope and Young and Boone and Crockett record books. Approximately 40% of the harvested bucks are 2 ½ years or older so even if they do not make the record book, with abundant food, fertile farmland soils, and good genetics, these are a quality deer in anybody's book.

Along with quality bucks, these counties produce good numbers of deer for those that want to fill the freezer. Polk County is consistently in the top 10 statewide for total harvest and was in the top 5 for both gun and bow harvest in 2017. Although it does not have as many deer as its neighbor to the west, Barron County made the top 10 in total harvest in 2017. With abundance comes some challenges, and several metrics point to the abundant

population. There has been a substantial increase in deer/vehicle collisions in both counties. The number of nuisance complaints in regard to grazing on ornamental flowers, shrubbery and gardens has increased. Agricultural damage is increasing and forest regeneration is being affected in some areas. Managing deer populations to remain in balance with these environmental and social factors will require a substantial antlerless harvest. In Barron County, two antlerless harvest authorizations are included with each deer hunting license. Likewise, Polk County hunters will receive one antlerless harvest authorization with each license. Both counties will have additional antlerless harvest authorizations that can be bought over the counter.

Some sportsmen and outdoor enthusiasts may be concerned about overharvest with these large numbers of antlerless harvest authorities available. However, along with population estimates which show increasing deer numbers in both counties, other independent indicators and observations by the public also point toward a growing deer population. Maintaining a deer population in balance with the habitat is



A nine year old boy calls his mother to tell her about his first deer, harvested during a mentored hunt.

important for the well-being of the deer themselves and allows them to survive severe winters such as the one just experienced, or to a greater degree, like the winter of 2013-14. Overall, it looks like a great fall for hunting in Barron and Polk County for whatever kind of deer that interests you, whether you are looking for that trophy buck or just want to fill the freezer. Enjoy it.

Iron County – Jenna Kosnicki: The 2018 Deer Hunting Season should bring improved hunting opportunities this year in Iron County—weather dependent. No antlerless harvest occurred in Ashland,

Vilas and Iron County in 2015, 2016 and 2017 in an attempt to allow the herd to increase after the record severe winters of 2013 and 2014. We continue to see more deer in all habitat types. Deer populations also show signs of increasing as a result of improved fawn recruitment as has been evident in recent years by the common sighting of does with two fawns and many others with one. However, despite the continued growth, desire to continue this trend will see one more year of no antlerless harvest allowed during the 2018 season in Iron County.



Douglas County – Greg Kessler

The deer herd in Douglas County continues to grow and a modest increase in buck harvest is expected this fall despite a long winter and heavy spring rains. Several years of very low antlerless harvest and relatively mild winters have allowed the herd to grow to the point that the County Deer Advisory Council has recommended an increase in antlerless harvest authorizations for 2018. There has been some concern expressed over the recent heavy rain's possible impacts on fawn survival, but early observations indicate there was very little impact, and if any, it is likely very localized.

The upside of the snow and spring rains is that forage is very plentiful and it appears we are going to have a good crop of almost every native nut and berry the forest has to offer. Blue berries and June berries have been very abundant this year. Likewise, hazel and oaks are developing nicely, but require continued good weather with timely rains to produce a decent to excellent crop.

Douglas county has a very active forest management program on county, state, and timber company lands that offer a wide variety of habitats and accessibility options for hunters that range from very accessible areas in the sandy soils in the southern and central parts of the county to very remote and difficult access in the lowland swamps in the west-central part of the county. Despite the positive outlook for a great fall, hunters must still exercise their basic planning and scouting skills to find areas that have the deer sign to provide the hunt they hope for.

Photo: Linda Freshwaters Arndt

Langlade and Lincoln County

– Janet Brehm:

Deer hunting this fall in Langlade and Lincoln counties looks very promising for both archers and gun hunters. Many deer are being seen throughout both counties by the public and foresters working in the area. Does with one fawn are common, and good numbers of twins are also being seen. Most areas experienced a mild winter until the brief late snow storm events in April.

Car-killed deer health assessments before and after the late snow storms looked at fat content and pregnancies to see how deer coped with the winter, indicated that most deer carried sufficient fat content and many does were pregnant with twins. Minimal losses are thought to have occurred as a result of the late heavy snow in Lincoln and Langlade Counties. Combined with the three previous winters that were mild, trends indicate that deer numbers appear to be increasing overall.

We've had a good growing season of lush browse as well, further helping deer reach prime condition going into fall. The acorn crop is looking good, so that will only add to the abundant food supply.

Both counties have antlerless harvest opportunities, offering 7,275 bonus antlerless harvest authorizations for sale in Langlade County (1,800 public, 5,475 private lands), and 8,000 available (1,600 public, 6,400 private lands) in Lincoln County. Overall I expect that hunting opportunity in both Lincoln and Langlade County will be very good thanks to higher deer numbers and greater availability of antlerless harvest authorizations.

Price, Rusk and Taylor County

– Derek Johnson:

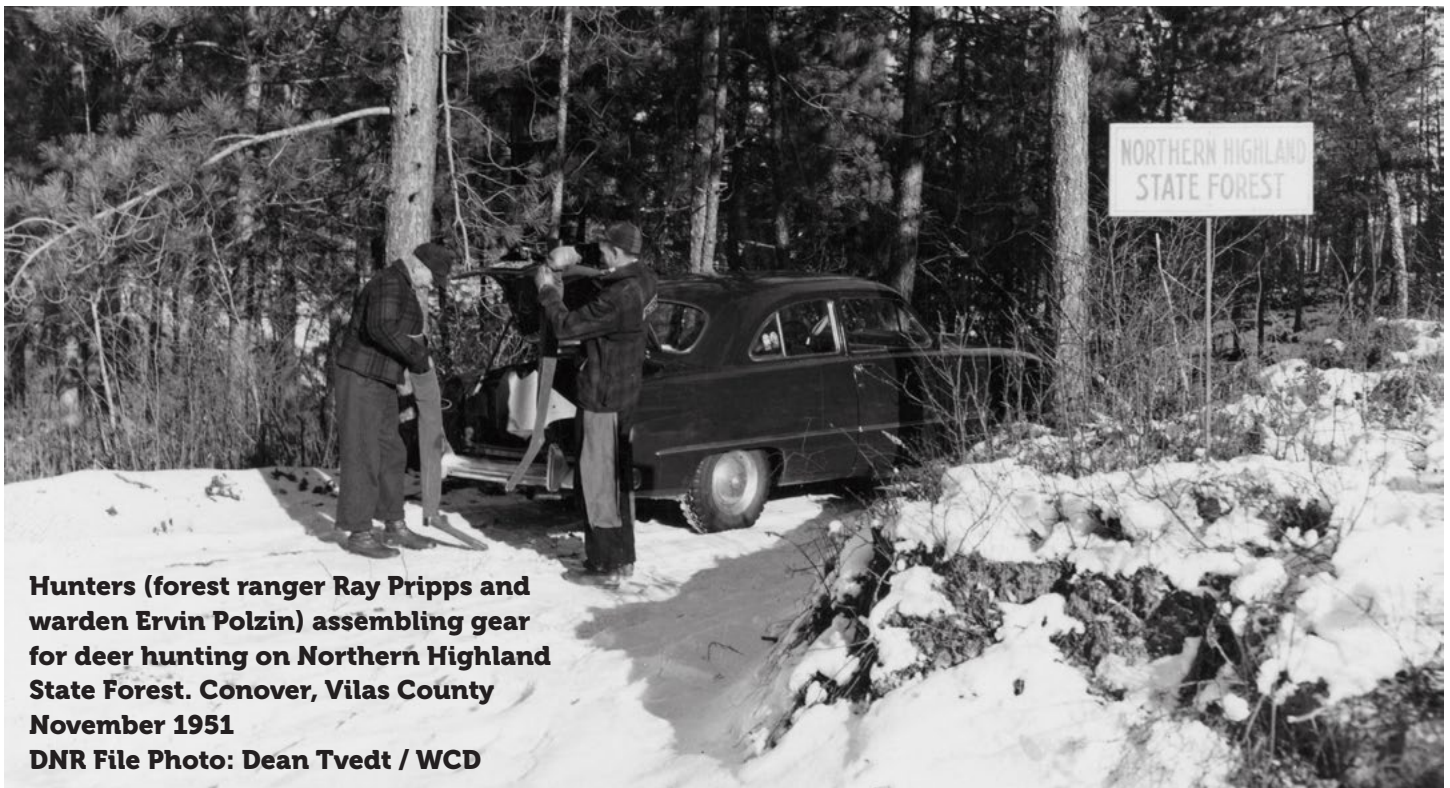
A slightly harsher winter will put the Price County 2018/19 deer season in the same ballpark as the 2017/18 season. In Rusk and Taylor counties, we expect to see a modest increase in the harvest this fall. Though winter conditions were harsher in some areas compared to recent years, it was considered more of a "normal" winter for our area. The deer herd entered winter in excellent condition, and appears to have handled conditions very well with only a handful of fawn and yearling mortalities reported. The Price County antlerless quota was reduced from the original estimate to a quota of 750 on private land only. This was to account for impacts of

winter severity. This modest quota is planned to increase the herd even more for next season. 1,925 private land bonus antlerless harvest authorizations are available for hunters to purchase this year. The herd grew more in Rusk and Taylor counties with the moderate winter and modest antlerless quotas in 2017. Both County Deer Advisory Councils recommended, and the DNR approved, antlerless quotas of 1,900 deer. Based on recent harvest success rates from each county and the surrounding counties, Rusk County will offer 425 public and 3,875 private land antlerless harvest authorizations. Taylor County will offer 500 public and 5,000 private land antlerless harvest authorizations. This fall's deer seasons looks to be similar to last year, and hunters can anticipate slightly to many more deer on the landscape, depending on where they are hunting. Best of luck to all hunters and be safe out there!

Ashland and Bayfield County

– Todd Naas:

Some portions of Ashland and Bayfield Counties were hit by the late season snowstorm that dumped an extra 12+ inches of snow during a critical period for deer. While this may have



**Hunters (forest ranger Ray Pripps and warden Ervin Polzin) assembling gear for deer hunting on Northern Highland State Forest. Conover, Vilas County November 1951
DNR File Photo: Dean Tvedt / WCD**

had some negative impact, deer populations in these counties have responded well to the past few years' strategy to increase the herd, and adjustments were made to incorporate an antlerless harvest this year that should still result in an increasing population in Ashland County, and a decreasing to stable population in Bayfield County. While plenty of bonus antlerless harvest authorizations are available to hunters of all property types in Bayfield County, Ashland County antlerless harvest authorizations are limited in number, and are only for use on private lands. We're hoping that most will be used in and around the agricultural areas of Ashland County, where

the greatest densities of deer are found. This should allow continued growth of the herd in heavily forested areas and on public lands, and yet provide landowners with the ability to manage deer appropriately on their property to prevent problems associated with high deer density.

Vilas County – Michele Woodford:

Hunters should expect to see the same or more deer in Vilas county this year. The late spring may have had some impact on fawn recruitment, but observations in late July showed a mix of large and small fawn sizes with plenty of reports of twin fawns in all types of habitats.

Vilas County will have antlerless harvest authorizations for the first time in a number of years after a concerted effort to rebuild the herd. With concerns that repeated bucks-only season structures for the past several years were causing high pressure on yearling bucks and resulting in few older-aged bucks, the local CDAC decided to issue antlerless harvest authorizations in 2018. In doing so, they will offer limited antlerless harvest that is expected to maintain the current population size and to prevent deer from over-browsing important deer habitats, while offering added hunting opportunity and future older aged bucks.



Photo: Linda Freshwaters Arndt

Look for new hunting spots in and around new clear-cuts that provide nearby thick cover and plenty of hiding places and diverse forage for deer.

Forest and Florence County–

Tom Carlson:

Deer hunters in Forest county should notice an increase in this year's deer population, as desired by public involvement in the CDAC process. We experienced more normal and moderate winter conditions again, following a string of

several mild ones. Coupled with low antlerless harvest quotas the past few years, this has allowed for continued population growth. Forest County has seen a rising buck harvest the past two seasons and a nearly 35% harvest success rate on antlerless harvest authorizations, both good indicators that the population is increasing. 300 bonus antlerless harvest authorizations are available for sale this fall, with a split of 200 on private land and 100 on public.

Florence County also recorded another mild winter on the WSI scale, and Carlson anticipates that hunters will have good hunting opportunity this fall on both public and private lands for antlerless deer. 3450 bonus antlerless harvest authorizations will be available in the unit this fall, with a split of 2250 on private lands and 1200 on public lands. Based on last year, hunters can anticipate a success rate of about 40% on Florence County antlerless harvest authorizations.