



# BIG GAME PROGRAM

## BRIEFS



January - July 2006

### HIGHLIGHTS

#### Proposed Regulation Changes are Adopted

##### New Bear Hunting Areas

As a result of black bears increasing in number and expanding their range in the northern Catskills, Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has added Wildlife Management Units (WMUs) 4F, 4G, and 4H to the legal bear hunting areas in the Southern Zone. Opening of these three units to bear harvest is expected to result in a significant change in negative bear-human interactions, reduce levels of bear nuisance activity and property damage while providing a high quality opportunity for black bear hunters to expand their range for bear hunting.

##### Expansion of Antler Restriction Pilot Program

With strong support evident among local sportsmen, DEC has expanded the pilot antler restriction program in the Southern Catskills to include WMUs 3H and 3K located primarily in Sullivan County. The pilot antler restriction program was initiated in WMUs 3C and 3J in 2005 and is intended to expand the age structure of the buck population. This harvest strategy requires that bucks taken in WMUs 3C and 3J and now also WMUs 3H and 3K have at least three antler points on a side to be legal. Hunters under 17 years of age are exempt from the three point requirement. To evaluate the pilot antler restriction program, DEC, in cooperation with Cornell University, has begun surveying hunters in these areas to assess

satisfaction and participation levels. Similarly, DEC plans to survey hunters statewide to evaluate interest in alternative buck harvest strategies.

Buck harvest in WMUs 3C and 3J during the first year of the pilot antler restriction program were down significantly from 2004, as expected. The percentage of yearling bucks in the harvest dropped from 58% in 2004 to 9% in 2005 in WMU 3C and from 61% to 42% in WMU 3J. Though some yearling bucks in each unit met the antler point requirement and were harvested, overall, hunters in these units should see more bucks and more 2½ year old bucks during the 2006 season. DEC anticipates that the buck take in both units will increase toward Citizen Task Force established objectives over the next several years. A similar trend in buck harvest is expected for WMUs 3H and 3K where the buck take will likely decrease by about 50% in 2006, then slowly rebuild toward objective levels during the following years.

##### Deer Management Permits

In response to lower deer harvests throughout a large portion of the State in 2005, DEC deer biologists will maintain a relatively low level of deer management permit (DMP) availability in 2006. Additionally, DEC will not be issuing DMPs in WMUs 3A, 4K, 4L, 4M, 4O, 4P, 4R, 4S, 4U, 4W, 4X, and 6C. However, with the reduced antlerless harvest in 2005 and mild winter of 2005-06, DEC expects deer populations to increase in many areas and thus some units will have a slight increase in permit availability. Overall, approximately 342,000 DMPs will be available this fall.

Hunters accustomed to applying for DMPs in WMUs 4J and 8C during the Extended Application period for left-

Compiled by Jeremy Hurst  
Big Game Biologist

over DMPs will need to plan differently this season. DEC will not be issuing first-come/first-serve DMPs during the November Extended Application period in WMUs 4J and 8C. Hunters may still apply for DMPs during the Instant Lottery and may collect Bonus Permits in these units.

## Deer Population Trend Count Survey

Last summer saw a new program piloted in WMUs 3C, 5A, 7J, and 8H. The program enlists volunteers to record deer observations at a site of their choosing on 3 occasions from mid-August to mid-September. During the first year, over 30 volunteers joined the program and over 1500 deer observations were recorded. Given enough participants (ideally at least 75 volunteers in each unit) this program could provide DEC a useful index to deer population and herd composition trends.

Anyone interested in participating in the survey should contact DEC for more information and request a survey packet.

WMU 3C - Region 3 Wildlife	845-256-3098
WMU 5A - Region 5 Wildlife	518-897-1291
WMU 7J - Region 7 Wildlife	800-388-8244 ext.240
WMU 8H - Region 8 Wildlife	585-226-5461
Bureau of Wildlife - Albany	518-402-8867

## New York Big Game

### Unveiling an Electronic Mailing List

DEC is inviting sportsmen and women to join New York Big Game, our newest outlet for information on black bear and white-tailed deer in New York State. Subscribers to this email list will periodically receive information from DEC about bear and deer biology, management, research, regulations and hunting. To subscribe to New York Big Game, visit our website at:

<http://lists.dec.state.ny.us/mailman/listinfo/nybiggame>.

Join today and become a more informed hunter.

## Personnel Changes

Region 1 Deer Biologist, Christopher Arfsten, has transferred to the Bureau of Marine Resources. Wildlife Biologist, Mike Wasilco, has assisted with deer management on the island for several years and will now be covering the deer program for the Region.

Region 3 Deer Biologist, Mike Putnam, has recently accepted a transfer to Region 7. He remains with the Bureau of Wildlife but will now serve as a Land Stewardship Biologist working to improve the

management of state lands. Region 3 is hoping to fill the deer biologist vacancy in short order.

Region 9 Sr. Wildlife Biologist, Jim Snider, retired April 1, 2006, after serving the Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources for 32 years. Jim, known as "Region 9's Deer Guy," had been part of New York's Deer Management Team since its inception in 1989. Over the years, Jim was involved with several Region 9 programs. He participated in the original turkey trap and transfer program, was responsible for the region's Pheasant Program in the 70's and 80's, and performed diving duck surveys on the Niagara River and Lake Ontario. He also did some of the original wetland mapping in Erie and Niagara counties. At his retirement dinner Jim stated that he took pride in his association with the Deer Team and singled out the establishment of the Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) as a major accomplishment of the team during his tenure. Jim established and maintained a rapport of mutual respect with the sportsmen and other stakeholder groups in Western New York that benefitted the entire wildlife program.

Tim Spierito has been appointed as Region 9's Deer Biologist. Tim has worked as a biologist in Region 9's Bureau of Habitat since 1998 and is very familiar with deer management in the region. A 1995 graduate of the State University of New York, College of Environmental Science and Forestry, Tim has worked with white-tailed deer in the Adirondacks and Sitka deer in Alaska.

## REGIONAL REPORTS

### Region 1

#### 2005 Deer Harvest and 2006 Prospects

The 2005 deer take in Suffolk County (2,076 deer) was similar to the 2004 take (2,069 deer) but was down slightly from the record harvest of 2,456 deer in 2003. Deer checked by staff at the Regional Check Stations showed that the average weight of deer in the 1½ yr old class in 2005 remained the same as average weights in 2004. However, average fawn weights increased in 2005 by 2.7 pounds from 2004, and weights of 2½ and 3½ year old deer increased 4 pounds from 2004. This overall increase in the average weight can be attributed

to a heavy acorn crop in 2005 and the mild weather during the hunting season.

Weather conditions were dramatically different from the past two winters. Brookhaven National Laboratory recorded only 4 inches of snow during January 2006, a sharp contrast to the 29 inches recorded in January 2005. The total recorded snow fall last year was 30.5 inches which is just slightly below the average of 31.2 inches per year. Additionally, the average temperature during January 2006 was almost 9 degrees higher than it was in January 2005.

As a result of the heavy mast crop in 2005 and the mild weather conditions this past winter, deer recruitment and hunter success is expected to increase in 2006.

Hunters in WMU 1C will again be guaranteed DMPs during the instant lottery in 2006. Additional DMPs will be available through the Bonus Permit system and will also be available on a first-come/first-serve basis in November. To learn more about the DMP application process on Long Island, please view the DEC website: <http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dfwmr/license/dmpermit.html>.

### **DMAP & Damage Permit Summary**

Due to a unique management need on the Wertheim Refuge, Region 1 was able to use the DMAP to create a win-win situation for local hunters and the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS).

Vegetation on the Wertheim Refuge has begun to show signs of over browsing by deer and the USFWS management plan called for reducing the deer population. By issuing a DMAP permit to the USFWS, Region 1 provided antlerless tags which the USFWS then distributed to participating hunters through a lottery drawing. This collaboration resulted in 32 deer harvested on the Wertheim Refuge. This program is expected to continue in 2006.

Need for Deer Damage Permits (DDPs) has remained fairly steady in Region 1. The Region issued 123 DDPs in 2005, and 115 DDPs have been renewed or issued in 2006. The majority of these permits are for truck farms, vineyards and nursery-landscape wholesalers.

- Christopher Arfsten: former Region 1 Deer Biologist

## **Region 3**

### **2005 Deer Harvest and 2006 Prospects**

Total deer take in Region 3 decreased by roughly 4% in 2005. This was largely due to no DMPs issued in WMUs 3A, 3H, and 3K, and a reduction of available DMPs for all other units except for 3S, 3R, and 3N. Also, fewer bucks were harvested in WMUs 3C and 3J as expected during the first year of the pilot antler restriction program.

With the notable exception of some of the Catskill units, the outlook is generally good for deer hunters this fall. For the 2006 deer season, most applicants will receive a first DMP in many Region 3 units. Only WMU 3A will have no DMPs available this fall. Bonus Permits will again be available in WMU 3S (Westchester County). Check the DEC website for updates on dates and locations for obtaining bonus permits.

### **DMAP & Damage Permit Summary**

The number of DMAP applications for 2006 is similar to 2005. In general, however, fewer tags per DDP and DMAP permit have been issued.

Regional wildlife staff, working in cooperation with regional law enforcement, have sent warning letters to all damage and DMAP permit holders who neglected to provide summary reports in 2005. The letters have generated a significant phone and mail response and increased compliance with permit reporting.

### ***Echinococcus granulosus***

Last year, regional wildlife staff collected a whitetail doe in the town of Thompson, Sullivan County, which was found to have died as a result of large, numerous cysts on the lungs and kidneys caused by the tapeworm *Echinococcus granulosus*. This was the first time that this species of tapeworm was documented in NY.

The adult form of *E. granulosus* uses canids (dogs, coyotes, foxes) as host, while the larval form can infect wild cervids (deer), livestock and humans. Infestation of *E. granulosus* in humans is rare and preventable with proper handling of meat. Several coyote carcasses were supplied to the Wildlife Pathology Unit in conjunction with the infected deer, but none of the coyotes were found to be infected with *E. granulosus*. DEC will continue collecting coyote carcasses from

Sullivan County this fall and winter to monitor the prevalence of this parasite in the coyote population.

- Michael Putnam: formerly Region 3 Deer Biologist

Unit 4R covers a portion of the Central Catskills located in Greene County. The deer population in this unit is still struggling to recover from the harsh winters of 2002 and 2003, and it is time to reassess the high objective that was originally set in 1994 for this area.

## Region 4

### 2005 Deer Harvest and 2006 Prospects

In 2005, Region 4 Wildlife Management units west of the Hudson Valley (4A, 4B, 4F, 4G, 4H, 4N, 4O, 4P, 4R) showed stable or slightly increasing buck takes as compared to the 2004 season. With the recent mild winter and the continuation of management efforts designed to allow the population to rebound, these units should see gradual increases in buck takes in the coming seasons. DMP prescriptions will be similar to 2005 for the coming year.

Many of the Wildlife Management units within the Hudson Valley and to the east of the Hudson River (4L, 4M, 4S, 4U, 4T, 4Y, 4Z) had moderate declines in buck takes this past hunting season. Future management efforts in this part of the region will be designed to allow these herds to recover. Hunters can expect to see DMP reductions in most of these units during the 2006 hunting season.

### DMAP & Damage Permit Summary

Both the number of DMAP permits and the number of deer taken with those permits declined by 7% in 2005. A total of 204 DMAP permits were issued across the region and 922 deer were taken under these permits. Overall harvest with DMAP permits has declined 30% since its 2002 peak in Region 4.

Agricultural deer damage permits also declined by 22% in 2005. Sixty-one permits were issued in Region 4, with the majority of permits in Columbia (27 DDPs), Rensselaer (12 DDPs), and Albany (11 DDPs) counties. A total of 172 deer were taken on Region 4 damage permits in 2005.

### Citizen Task Forces

Task forces are being developed this year in Wildlife Management units 4A and 4R. Unit 4A includes a large part of Montgomery County lying south of the Mohawk River and parts of Otsego and Schenectady Counties and was last reviewed in 1992.

### Black Bear

The opening of wildlife management units 4O and 4P contributed 74 bears to the record Catskill harvest of 494 bears in 2005. To date in 2006, Region 4 has seen a slight decline in bear nuisance reports compared to the same time period in 2005.

Regions 4 and 5 recently finished a Black Bear Stakeholder Information Group (SIG) process for Washington, Rensselaer, and Columbia Counties. The group was comprised of representatives of various groups with an interest in black bear management such as landowners, beekeepers, hikers, hunters, motorists, etc. The group discussed the positive and negative impacts that black bears have in their communities, and they recommended actions for DEC to address the most important of the impacts. The bear population in the three counties has been increasing recently as the population in neighboring states also increases.

- Jeffrey Peil: Region 4 Deer Biologist

## Region 5

### 2005 Deer Harvest and 2006 Prospects

The Region 5 total deer take and the buck take were statistically equal to the take in 2004. The number of DMPs issued, and thus the antlerless deer take, remained very low in three of the region's four Southern Zone units, because all three units were below the buck take objective. The number of deer taken under DDPs and DMAP permits declined in 2005.

The winter of 2005-06 was extremely mild, with lower than average snow depths and higher than average temperatures. These conditions allowed deer to stay away from the core areas of deer yards and remain in hardwood areas with access to good browse throughout the winter. Dead deer surveys conducted this spring showed virtually no winter losses throughout the region.

Accordingly, muzzleloading season regulations for fall 2006 are unchanged, allowing the harvest of deer of either sex in all units in Region 5.

The Northern Zone units in the region have benefitted from two consecutive mild winters, and hunting should improve this fall. The easy winter coupled with a good fawn crop last spring should mean a good supply of yearling bucks will be available to hunters this year.

The Southern Zone units in the region are all either at or below the buck take objectives. This will mean low numbers of DMPs again this year to allow the populations to grow toward the objectives. DMAP tags will also decrease this year due to lower deer populations in these units and former DMAP properties having effectively reduced their deer damage.

### **Black Bear**

The 2005 black bear harvest was below average in the region. Several factors may have influenced the low take, including high bear harvests the previous two seasons and environmental conditions this past fall that made bears less vulnerable to hunting.

See note in Region 4 regarding the recent Bear SIG.

### **Moose**

Spring has brought a rash of moose sightings in the region due to dispersal of yearling animals. Last year's calves must now begin to fend for themselves as their mothers prepare to give birth to the next generation of moose. New York's moose population may be nearing the point of rapid growth, similar to that which happened in both New Hampshire and Vermont.

The Wildlife Conservation Society, in conjunction with DEC, has conducted a survey of deer hunters the past two seasons asking them to record sightings of moose and moose sign while hunting. The results of those surveys will be an index to moose populations in the future. As the number of moose and the amount of moose sign seen by hunters changes, a similar change in the moose population is indicated.

- Ed Reed: Region 5 Deer Biologist

## **Region 6**

### **2005 Deer Harvest and 2006 Prospects**

The 2005 deer harvest in Region 6 was slightly lower than in 2004, although the buck take did increase slightly. The overall decline occurred mainly as a result of lower DMP availability. Following several years of effort to reduce deer herds from high levels, recent management has been directed towards either stabilizing numbers, or providing for moderate herd growth in some areas. It appears from the 2005 harvest that deer herds in many portions of the Region are beginning to show signs of a slight increase towards desirable levels.

The winter of 2005-06 was a very mild one by North Country standards. Early snow in November and early December suggested a long, severe winter to follow, but thaws in late December resulted in little snow on the ground by early January. Mild temperatures, low midwinter snowfall, and frequent thaws combined to provide excellent conditions for deer survival for the duration of the winter season. An early green up also treated deer to a much needed nutritional boost as much as two weeks earlier than normal.

Because deer numbers throughout the Region are either near objective or slightly below, DMP allocations will remain relatively low in 2006 to either allow for recovery or hold deer numbers near current levels. Declines in the antlerless harvest of 2005, combined with limited winter losses, should set the stage for increases in deer numbers in many WMUs.

### **DMAP & Damage Permit Summary**

Concurrent with overall lower deer numbers than the peak years of 2000-2002, the number of DDPs issued within the Region declined for the fifth straight year. For the first time since the inception of the program, applications for DMAP also declined. Overall, 393 DMAP permits were issued in 2005, down from a peak of 425 in 2004. While the program retained many past applicants, the number of new applicants was smaller, and generally, each applicant requested tags for fewer deer than in the past. The program remains popular with farmers and hunters as a means of reducing deer damage issues, while providing hunting opportunity.

**Black Bear**

See note in Region 5.

- Jim Farquhar: Region 6 Deer Biologist

has a website which has been recording overwhelming support for the proposal. Two meetings hosted by the group and local County Federations drew over 450 people, with about 55% support versus 45% opposition evident.

**Region 7****2005 Deer Harvest and 2006 Prospects**

With the issuance of fewer DMPs, total deer take dropped in much of Region 7 in 2005. Buck takes however rose in 4 of the Region's WMUs indicating that the deer herd is recovering from the declines witnessed in 2003-04. Prospects for 2006 look good as DMP numbers will be up in many units, including 7A and 7M, as we move from a mode of letting herds rebuild to trying to keep numbers in check in several units.

The winter of 2005-06 was largely a non-event for regional wildlife. Deer, turkeys and other wildlife had a easy go of it. This bodes well for deer in areas where we would like to see populations rebuild, but will heighten the challenge of keeping deer numbers in check in areas where we don't want populations to rise.

**Citizen Task Forces**

A Citizen Task Force (CTF) was convened for WMU 7M this past winter. The 12 member CTF was comprised of residents of the unit representing different stakeholder interests including farmers, foresters, and hunters. Agricultural damage, impacts on forest regeneration and highway safety were all strong concerns, and the Task Force recommended that the deer population in WMU 7M be lowered 10% from its current level. This recommendation results in lowering the unit's buck take objective about 30%. The new objective results in a big swing in management direction in the unit - from a mode of allowing the population to recover (no DMPs) to a mode of trying to stop any growth (the return of DMPs).

**CNY Whitetails Proposal**

A private group, Central NY Whitetails, has been promoting a proposal to adopt new deer harvest standards in 3 central NY WMUs: 7F, 7H, and 7J. The proposal calls for a 1 buck per hunter bag limit and a new buck antler standard of width outside the ears. The group

As has been the case, DEC is willing to pursue new harvest standards where and when broad support is evident for a change. Given the mixed response the CNY Whitetail's proposal has generated, DEC is planning to conduct a survey of hunters to gain a clearer understanding of hunter opinions about alternative buck harvest strategies.

- David Riehlman: Region 7 Deer Biologist

**Region 8****2005 Deer Harvest and 2006 Prospects**

Region-wide, deer take dropped about 11% from 2004, but this was an expected decline resulting from the large reduction in DMPs issued last fall. The good news is that the 2005 regional buck take stayed steady, indicating a population that appears to be stabilizing. In our southern tier units, where deer population declines since 2003 have generated widespread concern, buck take appears to have flattened out and in some units has begun increasing. In our more productive northern units, buck harvests have risen a bit more, and in most cases are resuming their march above objective levels set by Citizen Task Forces.

An extremely mild winter and one of the best mast crops in recent memory has seen most all deer come through this past winter in good shape. Habitat in many areas, however, continues to show signs of the overabundant deer populations of the late 1990s and early 2000s, especially in our more heavily forested southern units. A reduction in available winter browse, evidence of feeding on less palatable vegetation, and a gradual decline in yearling buck antler beam diameters are the most striking evidences of the decline in habitat quality. These habitat changes happen gradually and so go unnoticed by many hunters, but they have far-reaching effects on a deer herd. With continued lower deer populations, habitat conditions should improve, but they will do so slowly.

## Region 9

In general, DMPs will be slightly more numerous than last year in Region 8, reflecting deer populations which are stabilizing and can support slightly greater harvest. Permits will be up about 12% overall; a little more than this in the northern units, and a little less in the south. It is important that antlerless permits keep pace with population growth, to guard against deer numbers getting too high. A gradual increase in DMPs over the next few years will hopefully ease unit populations back toward objective levels without letting the populations quickly swell beyond objectives.

### **DMAP & Damage Permit Summary**

Issuance of DMAP permits in the region increased by 11% in 2005. This increase represents successful efforts to encourage landowners experiencing deer damage to shift much of the damage deer kill to the traditional hunting time frame using DMAP and recreational hunting as the primary tool to solve damage problems.

Accordingly, deer take under DDPs decreased in 2005. The 24% decline was partially due to applicants switching to DMAP but was also a function of reduced deer populations in the region and less damage occurring. It is important to note that the number of deer taken under DDPs represents only 3.2% of the total deer killed during the fall hunting seasons in the region, and that the average number of deer killed per permit is only 2.9. Furthermore, less than 10% of Region 8 farms receive DDPs. Staff will be visiting many of our damage sites this summer to renew contacts with farmers and their operations, substantiate damage, and discuss program rules and regulations.

### **Citizen Task Forces**

All 15 WMUs in Region 8 are overdue for new CTF meetings, and first up this year will be Units 8N and 8X, two units which have never had harvest objectives set by a CTF. Deer populations in both these units have come down substantially from levels many professionals felt were much too high for the habitat to support. It will be interesting to see how new Task Forces will react to this change, and what population objectives they recommend.

- Arthur Kirsch: Region 8 Deer Biologist

### **2005 Deer Harvest and 2006 Prospects**

As typical elsewhere in the state, total deer take in Region 9 dropped in 2005 by about 20% due to reduced DMP availability. Buck take was almost equal to the take in 2004, indicating a probable end to the declining trend in deer numbers in much of the southern portion of the Region. Take in WMUs 9A and 9F indicate that these areas continue to have deer populations above the objectives set by Citizen Task Forces.

After a cold snowy late December and early January winter was fairly mild with relatively little persistent snow cover. The mild winter bodes well for deer populations throughout the Region, and increased fawn survival and recruitment in the southern units should boost deer populations toward objectives. In response to expected increasing deer populations, DMP availability will be increased slightly in most units in an attempt to bring populations toward objectives gradually over the next few years.

### **Elk**

At the time of this writing Region 9 staff are in the midst of rounding up the remaining 3 of 6 yearling elk that escaped from a farm in Attica, Wyoming county. The elk were being housed in a barn and escaped when the barn door was left open. One was recaptured by the owner. Two more were shot, and the heads were submitted to NYS Dept. Of Agriculture & Markets (DAM) for CWD testing. The subject farm has been enrolled in DAM's monitored herd program.

### **Black Bear**

Bear complaints have been numerous this spring including a few problem bears in residential areas. One bear spent a few days in the city of Olean but moved on without incident. At least two bears have been making nightly rounds in the village of Limestone just outside Allegany State Park.

- Timothy Spierto: Region 9 Deer Biologist

## CENTRAL OFFICE

### DEER

#### 2005 Statewide Deer Harvest

During the 2005 season, hunters harvested slightly more than 180,200 total deer, including 89,000 bucks and approximately 91,200 antlerless deer. The total deer harvest for 2005 represents a 14 percent reduction from the 208,000 deer taken in 2004 and is the lowest total deer take since 1994. Reduced total take reflects the decrease in antlerless take following an intentional 35% reduction in DMP availability, an action intended to rebuild and stabilize the deer population in many areas of the state. New York's deer hunters took about 89,000 bucks in 2005, roughly the same as in 2004, indicating that the overall deer population is stabilizing.

New York's deer population seems to have weathered the worst of the storm that led to population and harvest declines since 2002. Deer populations throughout much of the Northeastern US have undergone similar declines during this period, providing further evidence that winter conditions can play havoc with deer populations. Unfortunately, New York was in a stage of intentional herd reduction in many areas when the severe winters hit, and the impact on the deer population was greater than DEC anticipated.

Now, with reduced antlerless take in 2004 and 2005 combined with mild snow depths throughout most of New York this past winter, deer populations are poised to increase in many areas. Many WMUs still have deer populations well below objectives, so DEC will be cautiously increasing DMP availability in these areas providing for gradual population increase over the next few years. Other areas, most notably the Catskills and Rensselaer County, need more time without DMPs to stem deer population declines and allow the herd to stabilize and increase.

#### Chronic Wasting Disease Surveillance and Monitoring

After the discovery of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in New York in April 2005, DEC stepped up the tissue collection program from wild white-tailed deer populations

throughout New York State in its efforts to test for the presence of the disease. DEC also established a CWD Containment Area in Oneida and Madison counties including a mandatory check of all hunter-killed deer in that area. In 2005, more than 8,000 wild deer were sampled statewide including more than 2,000 from the Containment Area. As of June 2006, only five captive and two wild deer in New York have tested positive for CWD, all found in March-April 2005 in Oneida County as part of the initial response.

In addition to the regulations for the Containment Area, there are also statewide restrictions on the movement of deer, elk and moose carcasses and parts from other states into New York, rehabilitation of wild white-tailed deer at facilities that house live deer, regulations specifying record keeping and reporting requirements for taxidermists and restrictions on the sale of deer feed.

DEC will continue intensive surveillance for CWD in 2006 by collecting tissue samples from about 5,000 deer throughout the state and all deer harvested in the CWD Containment Area. For more information on CWD visit our website: [www.dec.state.ny.us](http://www.dec.state.ny.us).

### BEAR

#### 2005 Statewide Bear Harvest

Hunters harvested a total of 1,066 black bears statewide during the 2005 bear hunting seasons, up slightly from the 2004 harvest of 1,014 bears. Statewide totals include 184 bears harvested during the Northern Zone's early season, 227 bears during archery seasons, 56 bears during muzzleloader seasons, and 599 bears during regular bear seasons.

Bear populations have been increasing in number and expanding in range throughout much of southern New York, a fact evidenced by the 2005 bear harvest. For the first time in the history of bear hunting in New York, bear take in the Catskills (493) topped the bear take in the Adirondack range (454). This was a record take for the Catskills, almost double the 2004 take of 257 bears. The Allegany range also set a record take in 2005 with 119 bears harvested, an increase of more than 40% from the 2004 take of 83 bears.

Bear take in the Adirondacks was down almost 25% from the ten year average, reflecting conditions afield and a reduced bear population following the record take of 1,370 bears in 2003. However, biologists are confident that the Adirondack bear population is healthy and note that environmental factors such as abundant food supply and early snowfall likely contributed to a reduced bear take this past fall.

- Chuck Dente: Central Office, Big Game Biologist
- Jeremy Hurst: Central Office, Big Game Biologist