Region 3

Region 3 encompasses the southeastern portion of New York, stretching from the Catskills to the Hudson Valley and south to the New York City and New Jersey borders. The deer habitat varies greatly throughout the Region and includes suburban landscapes, agricultural lowlands, contiguous forests, and high elevation mountains. Consequently, deer populations and deer hunting vary greatly as well. Hunting opportunities abound on public Forest Preserve lands and Wilderness Areas in the Catskills. However, terrain can be quite rugged and deer densities much lower than other parts of the region. Outside of the Catskills, DEC-owned public land hunting opportunities exist on Wildlife Management Areas, Multiple Use Areas, and State Forests. There are also opportunities in select State Parks and New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) watershed lands throughout the Region, as well as some County Parks in Westchester. The highest deer densities in the Region can be found in Wildlife Management Unit 3M, which is comprised primarily of Orange County in the Hudson River Valley. However, public hunting opportunities are limited in the unit. The effects of winter severity are most noticeable in WMUs 3A and 3H, but with relatively mild winters the last two years we expect good fawn survival and minimal winter mortality. Deer population trends in the rest of the Region are influenced more by Deer Management Permits (DMPs) and annual antlerless harvest than winter severity.

Unit Summaries for the 2017 Season

Included in the discussion of most Wildlife Management Units (WMUs) is a term called the Buck Take Objective (BTO). A BTO for a WMU is the desired number of antlered bucks expected to be harvested per square mile when the WMU’s deer population is at the desired level as determined by the Citizen Task Force. The BTO is not the estimated take for the coming season but rather is the objective of our management efforts. The annual buck harvest is used as a gauge of population size and its relationship to the desired population level.
WMU 3A

Area = 694 mile²  
2016 Buck Take = 0.9 bucks harvested per mile²  
BTO = antler restriction unit  
2016 Total Deer Take = 1.1 deer harvested per mile²

WMU 3A is located in the northwestern portion of Region 3. This unit is characterized by steep slopes, rocky outcrops, shallow soils and mature forests that are typical of the Catskill Mountains. A significant portion of this unit is part of the Catskill Park and is subsequently protected from forestry and all other land management activities. As with other antler restriction (AR) units, the buck take objective is no longer applicable in this unit. Despite the implementation of the AR in 2012, the buck take has remained fairly close to the pre-AR numbers. This is likely due to the fact that yearlings already made up a relatively small proportion of the total buck take prior to AR implementation. With little ability for population growth in 3A, primarily due to habitat limitations, expect the 2017 deer population and buck take to be similar to the average over the last three years. As usual, there will not be any DMPs issued this year.

WMU 3C

Area = 316 mile²  
2016 Buck Take = 2.2 bucks harvested per mile²  
BTO = antler restriction unit  
2016 Total Deer Take = 3.2 deer harvested per mile²

WMU 3C is located primarily in Ulster County, north and west of Route 209 and the Shawangunk Ridge. It is comprised of mix of agricultural lands, primarily along Route 209, and forested habitats with scattered residential communities. This unit has rich mineral soils, capable of producing lush vegetation for deer browse. There are some public hunting opportunities in the forested portions of the unit, but deer densities are generally lower than in the agricultural areas. The peak for post-antler restriction buck harvest in 2011 had shown a fairly steady decline until last year when BT showed a significant increase. It is likely that deer populations are now near desired levels. DMP issuance will be slightly increased this year to slow population growth. Residents will have medium odds of obtaining a 1st permit in this unit. No 2nd permits will be available, nor will permits be available for non-residents.
WMU 3F

Area = 332 mile² 2016 Buck Take = 2.3 bucks harvested per mile²
BTO = 2.4 bucks harvested per mile² 2016 Total Deer Take = 4.3 deer harvested per mile²

WMU 3F is located in the Hudson Valley on the eastern shore of the Hudson River and has limited agricultural production of primarily forage crops. The unit is characterized as having mineral rich soils and is capable of producing lush vegetation for browse. Growing suburban communities and a lack of hunting on properties adjacent to the river allow deer numbers to grow in localized settings. After managing for a gradual increase in deer population over the last two years, BT is once again at objective for this unit. In order to maintain current population levels DMP issuance will slightly increase from 2016. Chances for 1st selection will once again be high for both residents and non-residents. Chances of selection for 2nd choice permits will be medium for residents but will not be available to non-residents.

WMU 3G

Area = 457 mile² 2016 Buck Take = 1.5 bucks harvested per mile²
BTO = 2.2 bucks harvested per mile² 2016 Total Deer Take = 2.6 deer harvested per mile²

WMU 3G is located in primarily in eastern Dutchess County and is bordered by Connecticut to the east and the Taconic Parkway to the west. This unit is characterized by rolling hills and valleys with good soils and a mix of agriculture, old fields, and woodlands that create excellent deer habitat. Concerns of deer impacts on forest regeneration, agricultural crops, and private property prevail throughout the unit. The Buck Take Objective was lowered for this unit in 2009 to 2.2 bucks per square mile in the harvest to meet the desires of stakeholders in the unit. As with the other Dutchess County unit, 3F, the buck take dropped more than expected from 2013 to 2015. Although buck take did experience an increase in 2016, the deer population in this unit is still below objective, DMP numbers will be slightly higher than last year but should still allow for a gradual population increase. Again, first choice permits will be available for resident hunters only in 2017, hunters will have low odds for obtaining those permits.
### WMU 3H

**Area = 554 mile²**  
**2016 Buck Take = 2.8 bucks harvested per mile²**  
**BTO = antler restriction unit**  
**2016 Total Deer Take = 4.2 deer harvested per mile²**

WMU 3H is located in the southwestern corner of the region, primarily in Sullivan County. The majority of this unit is forested. Soils in this area are shallow, rocky, and mineral deficient. Some agricultural activity still occurs on a relatively small scale, as well as logging on private properties. Large landholdings owned by hunting clubs have done much to improve deer habitats in local settings, and forest cuttings are the best way to improve deer habitat in this unit. After a steady decline from the peak of post-antler restriction BT in 2012, BT increased nicely last year. In order to maintain current population levels DMP issuance will be similar to last year, only residents can obtain DMPs in 3H in 2017, with preference points required to obtain permits as their 1st choice. No 2nd choice permits will be available.

### WMU 3J

**Area = 356 mile²**  
**2016 Buck Take = 2.6 bucks harvested per mile²**  
**BTO = antler restriction unit**  
**2016 Total Deer Take = 5.0 deer harvested per mile²**

WMU 3J is located on the western edge of the Hudson Valley and is comprised of agriculture, primarily orchards, with increasing housing developments and large estates, many of which do not allow hunting. This unit has rich mineral soils and, combined with the matrix of agriculture, fields, and woodlots, has excellent habitat for producing some quality deer. This unit saw a major and rather unexpected increase in the buck take in 2011 and 2012, with harvests exceeding 3.0 bucks per square mile in both years. It was not expected that buck harvests would remain that high and it continued to decline to 2.1 in 2015 but rebounded to 2.6 last year. Although the previous buck take objectives no longer apply in AR units, indices suggest that the deer population in 3J is nearing desired levels. DMP issuance will remain similar to last year to allow a modest increase in deer populations within the unit. For both resident and nonresident hunters, chances of obtaining a DMP as a 1st choice will be high in 2017. Residents will require preference points for obtaining a DMP as a second choice, but no second choice permits will be available to nonresident hunters.
WMU 3K

Area = 381 mile²
BTO = antler restriction unit

2016 Buck Take = 2.1 bucks harvested per mile²
2016 Total Deer Take = 2.5 deer harvested per mile²

WMU 3K is located in the southwestern corner of the region in southern Sullivan County and includes part of western Orange County. This unit is comprised of big woods with some agriculture and old fields (remnants of old farms). WMU 3K has some of the poorest soils in the state, and accordingly has the poorest antler development and body weights of deer among all of the Southern Zone units. Unlike the other antler restriction units in Region 3, buck takes in WMU 3K have not noticeably increased since the programs’ inception in 2006, but have remained fairly stable. With the moderately severe winters of 2013 and 2014 and the poor habitat quality, buck take dropped a bit in 2015, but with the relatively mild winters of 2015 and 2016, populations rebounded nicely last year to 2.1 bucks harvested per square mile. This increase in BT is expected to continue into 2017 as well. DMP availability will increase slightly this year, preference points will be required for residents applying for 1st choice. No DMPs will be available to non-residents.

WMU 3M

Area = 749 mile²
BTO = 3.1 bucks harvested per mile²

2016 Buck Take = 3.8 bucks harvested per mile²
2016 Total Deer Take = 9.1 deer harvested per mile²

This unit is located on the southern edge of the region and is primarily within Orange County. This unit has mineral rich soils, active agriculture, and old fields that combine to provide for a highly productive deer herd. Hunter access is an ever increasing problem in this unit as the majority of land is privately owned. In 2015 the buck take in this unit was near objective for the first time in 10 years, but increased sharply last year to a buck harvest of 3.8 per square mile. Because this unit is well above objective, DMP availability will remain high for both 1st and 2nd choices for both residents and nonresidents in 2017. Issuance of first come first serve DMPs, will also be available November 1st.
WMU 3N

Area = 223 mile²  
2016 Buck Take = 1.9 bucks harvested per mile²  
BTO = 2.7 bucks harvested per mile²  
2016 Total Deer Take = 3.3 deer harvested per mile²  

WMU 3N is located primarily within Putnam County. This unit is characterized as having hills and valleys with soils capable of growing adequate vegetation for deer browse. Land-use patterns have predominantly changed from agriculture to housing developments, strip malls, and single family homes. Public hunting access opportunities exist at DEC owned Wildlife Management Areas, State Forests, and Multiple-Use Areas, as well as properties owned by the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Though the population had remained stable near the desired level for about a decade, buck take began to drop in 2013. A continual reduction in doe harvest over the last five years seems to finally had an effect and 2016 saw a modest increase in BT. To allow for this gradual population increase to continue, DMP issuance will remain similar to last year. Chance s will be high for residents and nonresidents to obtain 1st choice permits. Second permits will be available only to residents with preference points.

WMU 3P

Area = 125 mile²  
2016 Buck Take = 1.4 bucks harvested per mile²  
BTO = 2.5 bucks harvested per mile²  
2016 Total Deer Take = 2.2 deer harvested per mile²  

WMU 3P is located in the southern portion of the region in southeastern Orange County, bordering New Jersey. This unit is characterized as mountainous with steep slopes and valleys and maturing forests. Sterling Forest State Park, Black Rock Forest, and West Point Military Academy comprise a large portion of the land in this unit, and much other land has been developed for commercial and residential use. The past five hunting seasons have seen the buck take in this unit decline to well below desired levels. It is difficult to say whether this is a response from a declining population or changes in the hunting programs and associated hunter effort and selectivity within the parks and at West Point. The age structure of the buck population has been shifting toward older males, possibly indicative of changing hunter selectivity or reduced hunting pressure. To allow for population growth, we are reducing DMP availability for the third consecutive year, with permits available only as the 1st choice for resident hunters with preference points.
WMU 3R

Area = 206 mile^2  
BTO = None  
2016 Buck Take = 1.0 bucks harvested per mile^2  
2016 Total Deer Take = 1.7 deer harvested per mile^2

This unit lies in the southern portion of the region on the western shore of the Hudson River, primarily within Rockland County. The Ramapo Mountains comprise 1/3 of this unit on its western side and heavy development comprises the rest. There is very little habitat management occurring here that would be conducive to big game. The buck take in WMU 3R has remained steady at 1.0 bucks per square mile over the last 3 years. Expect deer numbers to be similar to past years, or increasing slightly. Although deer harvest appears to be very low compared to other units in the region, harvest numbers in 3R are skewed by the fact that hunter access to private lands holding deer is very limited. Being that much of 3R is urbanized, there is no population objective set, and DEC seeks to maximize the number of DMPs issued in 3R to reduce deer-human conflicts. Therefore chances are high for both residents and nonresidents to obtain two permits.

WMU 3S

Area = 431 mile^2  
BTO = None  
2016 Buck Take = 1.3 bucks harvested per mile^2  
2016 Total Deer Take = 2.9 deer harvested per mile^2

WMU 3S encompasses Westchester County only. This unit is characterized as hills and valleys with good quality soils and some limited agricultural and forestry activities in the north, and suburban development to the south. Similar to WMU 3R, access for hunters is mainly limited to private properties, as DEC does not own land in this unit. Soil conditions, limited agriculture, and suburban settings contribute to high deer densities in this unit. The buck take in unit 3S, has been fairly stable over the past twelve years, fluctuating between 1.2 and 1.5, but dipped to 0.9 bucks harvested per square mile in 2014 and 2015. Those harvests appear lower than other units because of the issue of limited access to hunting lands in Westchester County, even though many of those lands hold high deer densities. Some additional opportunities have been created in Westchester County through the opening of some Westchester County Park lands. Look for current trends to continue in the future. For now, expect the buck take to continue in the realm of the historic trend, with small annual fluctuations. Given the need for reducing deer populations in this largely suburban unit, the stagnation in antlerless harvest is a bit troubling. This trends could signal modest declines in deer populations on huntable lands, which we believe is unlikely, or they could signal shifting hunter focus and reduced effort. Despite readily available DMPs, the number of DMP applicants has shown a decline, and DMP success rate has dropped from 15% in 2009 and 2010 to 9% in 2016. Also, applications for and use of Bonus DMPs has declined in recent years.

Like 3R, we have not set a specific population objective for WMU 3S but rather seeks to maximize harvests to reduce deer-human conflicts. Therefore, DMPs will again be readily available to all interested applicants in 2016. Resident and
nonresident hunters can receive two permits during the initial lottery period, two more during the November issuance period, and essentially unlimited antlerless harvests with Bonus DMPs throughout the season.

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