

2016 DEER HUNTING FORECAST

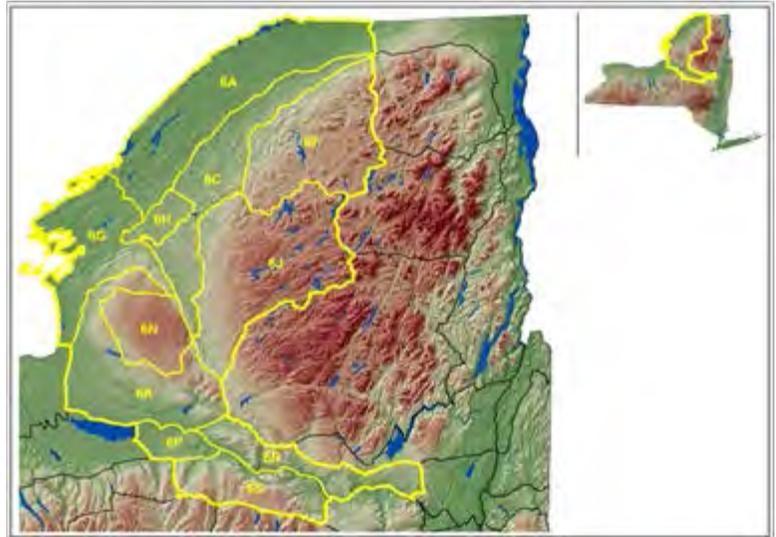


Department of
Environmental
Conservation

Region 6

The 2015 season was not an exceptional season and hunters from across the Region complained of poor deer activity and reduced sightings. Lower deer numbers and warmer than average temperatures during the season significantly contributed to slow hunting activity. Deer numbers were down after the very harsh winter conditions experienced in 2014-15, the 2nd hard winter in a row for many WMUs in the Region. Then, during the 2015 season, hunters in many parts of the Region experienced virtually no snow conditions and ultra-mild temperatures. These factors contributed to poorer than average hunting last fall.

Regionally, buck harvest in 2015 declined in most units as anticipated, and antlerless harvest declined substantially due to intentional reductions in [Deer Management Permits \(DMP; antlerless tags\)](#) and a rule change prohibiting antlerless harvest in WMU 6A during the early muzzleloader season.



The 2015-16 winter was exceptionally mild and a complete opposite of the previous winter. Fawn survival was excellent last winter and antler development should be above average. As portions of the Region rebuild from reduced deer numbers, DMP allocations will be reduced or held steady in most units with permit availability. If fall hunting conditions remain normal and hunters experience cooler weather, the outlook for 2016 looks excellent.

Unit Summaries for the 2016 Season

Included in the discussion of most [Wildlife Management Unit \(WMU\)](#) summaries 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 6A

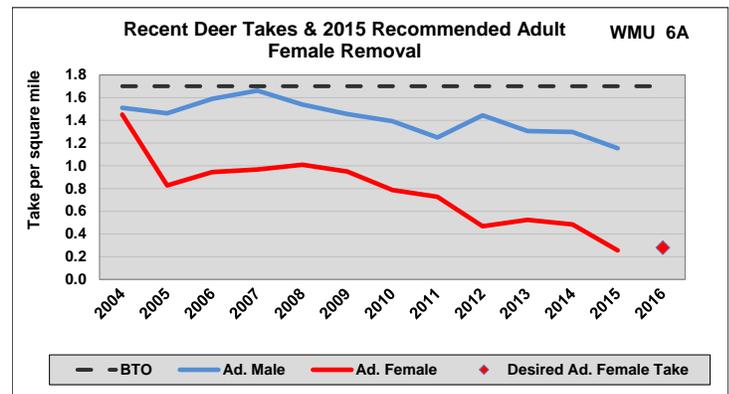
Area = 1,472 mile²

BTO = 1.7 bucks harvested per mile²

2015 Buck Take = 1.2 bucks harvested per mile²

2015 Total Deer Take = 1.5 deer harvested per mile²

WMU 6A is situated along the St. Lawrence River in Jefferson, St. Lawrence and Franklin counties. The landscape is primarily agricultural lowlands associated with the St. Lawrence Valley. Historically, deer numbers in this unit were quite low, but changes in land use and restrictive harvest regulations allowed for a dramatic rise in deer numbers throughout the 1990s. Management has been solely directed at increasing the population over the past 7+ years. The harvest declined slightly in 2015 from the harvest in 2014 and continues to remain below objective.

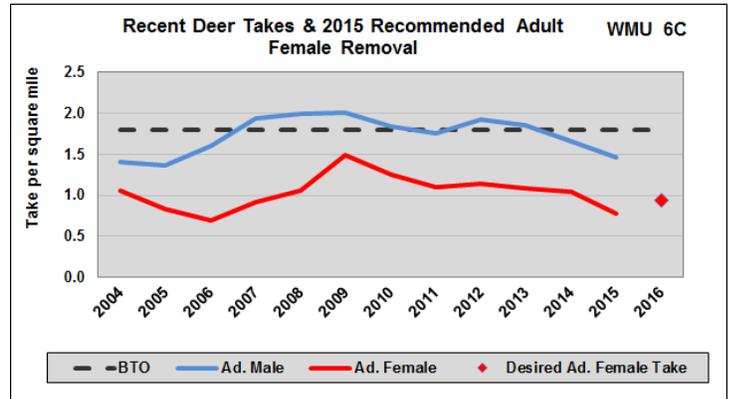


In 2015, we elected to again not issue DMPs for the unit and we eliminated antlerless harvest during the muzzleloader season in October. Adult female harvest was cut almost in half through these management options. We continue to restrict adult female harvest where possible to turn the herd trajectory around. The mild winter of 2015-16 coupled with significant reductions in doe harvest should help deer numbers grow.

WMU 6C

Area = 977 mile²
 BTO = 1.8 bucks harvested per mile²
 2015 Buck Take = 1.5 bucks harvested per mile²
 2015 Total Deer Take = 2.5 deer harvested per mile²

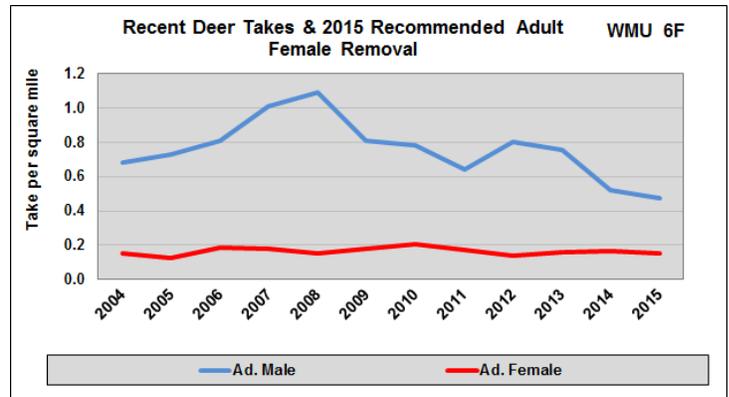
WMU 6C is considered a transitional area between the St. Lawrence River plain and the Adirondacks. It is made up of portions of Lewis, St. Lawrence, and Franklin counties. A mix of active agriculture, abandoned cropland, and maturing forest provides good deer habitat. Winter conditions are periodically severe over portions of the unit, which can negatively impact deer numbers following severe winters like those in 2014 and 2015. After significant increases in deer numbers during the 1990s, this herd declined in the early 2000s. The buck take has been at or slightly above objective the last nine years and remains remarkably stable. The 2015-16 winter conditions in the unit were very mild and deer numbers should rebound from the slight decline in harvest in 2015. The deer population in this unit remains essentially at objective, although took a mild dip in 2015 and the management focus will be to maintain current herd status. DMP allocations for the unit will remain similar to those in 2015; demand remains strong for permits so preference points will still be required.



WMU 6F

Area = 1,213 mile²
 BTO = None
 2015 Buck Take = 0.5 bucks harvested per mile²
 2015 Total Deer Take = 0.7 deer harvested per mile²

WMU 6F is part of the west-central Adirondack region, situated in St. Lawrence and Franklin counties. Although not as high in elevation or as rugged as the High Peaks, it is largely made up of mature forests on hilly to small mountain terrain. This unit has more private lands than State Forest Preserve. Deer populations are at fairly low densities, and winter severity in this unit does impact deer numbers more than any other factor. The remote nature of this WMU restricts hunter accessibility and therefore can limit overall deer take.

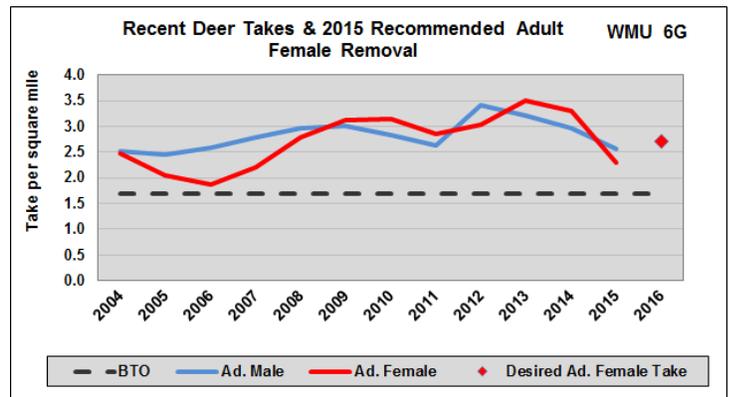


DMPs are not offered in this unit, or in other central Adirondack WMUs because of low deer numbers, sensitivity to antlerless harvest and unpredictable population fluctuations due to winter impacts. The unit experienced the mildest winter in the last 10 years which should foster herd growth. In addition DEC will eliminate antlerless harvest during the October muzzleloader starting in 2016. While there is no BTO for this unit, management is aimed at trying to get buck take back to a sustained 1.0 bucks per square mile.

WMU 6G

Area = 933 mile²
 BTO = 1.7 bucks harvested per mile²
 2015 Buck Take = 2.6 bucks harvested per mile²
 2015 Total Deer Take = 5.5 deer harvested per mile²

Unit 6G is located along the eastern Lake Ontario plain in Jefferson and Oswego counties. The dominant land use is agricultural. Deer herds in this unit continue to remain above objective despite tough winters in 2014 and 2015. The deer population in this unit has decreased the last few

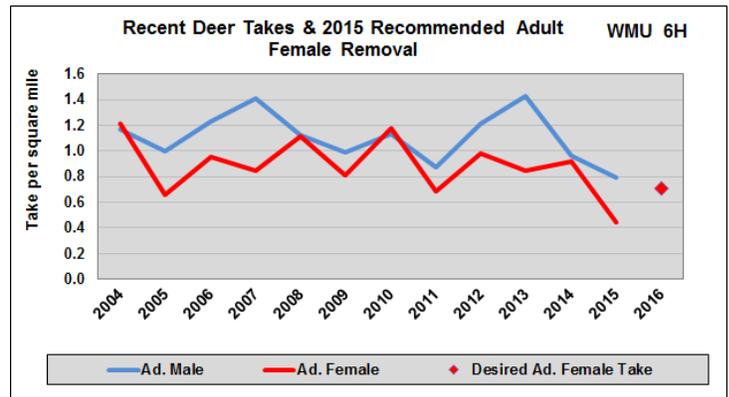


years but continues to remain above objective. In 2015, buck take and total take declined significantly due to warm weather conditions, a smaller deer herd, and reduced DMP availability. DMP allocations were decreased slightly for 2016, reflecting the decline in numbers of deer. The 2016 winter was one of the mildest winter experienced in the unit in the last decade and it is anticipated the herd could still grow if adult female harvest pressure is not maintained. All applicants will receive a permit.

WMU 6H

Area = 173 mile²
 BTO = None
 2015 Buck Take = .8 bucks harvested per mile²
 2015 Total Deer Take = 1.4 deer harvested per mile²

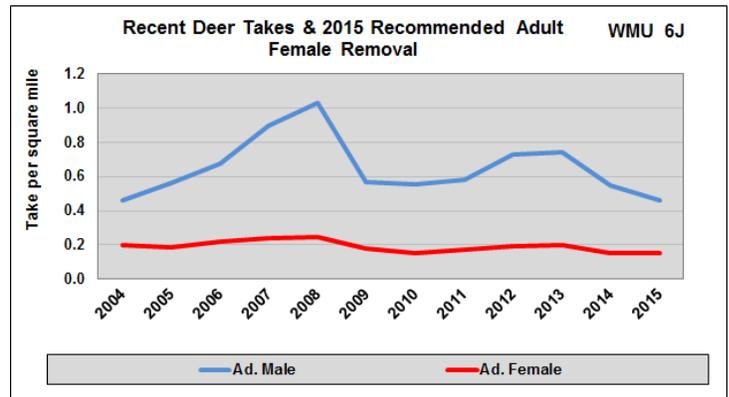
WMU 6H is the [Ft. Drum Military Reservation](#), situated in Jefferson and Lewis counties. Substantial portions are open to deer hunting, although military training and closed hunt areas may affect the amount of available hunting opportunity during any given season. A Ft. Drum permit is required to hunt on military property. Deer numbers in this unit are best described as moderate, and annual harvest varies according to available access. The buck take fell to a new low in 2015 as did the adult female harvest. The population in 2016 should be improved due mainly to the mild winter conditions of 2015-16. WMU 6H has no BTO established, as DEC works with Ft. Drum managers to allocate tags. As in past years, 700 DMPs will be available in 2016. Resident hunters have a medium chance of receiving a first permit.



WMU 6J

Area = 1576.3 mile²
 BTO = None
 2015 Buck Take = 0.5 bucks harvested per mile²
 2015 Total Deer Take = 0.7 deer harvested per mile²

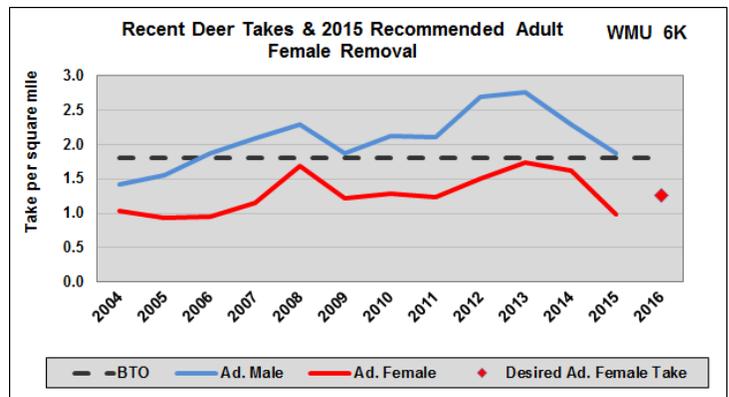
WMU 6J is primarily an Adirondack unit. It includes parts of Lewis, Herkimer, Hamilton, Oneida, and St. Lawrence counties. Deer populations are relatively abundant along the eastern fringe of the Black River Valley but generally low in most of the unit. Winter conditions are the strongest influencing factor on deer numbers in this area. The deer population in this unit has experienced declines in buck take compared to harvests in the mid-late 2000s. The magnitude of declines are not great and hunter effort and hunting conditions dictate harvest in any given year. The conditions during the 2015-16 winter were incredibly mild and should increase deer numbers that were impacted during the hard winters of 2013-14 and 2015-16. Winter fawn loss should have been at or near zero. While the buck take in 2015 was not the lowest ever experienced, DEC closed the take of antlerless deer during the early muzzleloader season in October to promote herd growth. No DMPs are available in WMU 6J.



WMU 6K

Area = 1,161 mile²
 BTO = 1.8 bucks harvested per mile²
 2015 Buck Take = 1.9 bucks harvested per mile²
 2015 Total Deer Take = 3.1 deer harvested per mile²

Unit 6K is situated in portions of Lewis, Oswego, Oneida, and Jefferson counties and makes up the southern, northern, and western fringe of the Tug Hill Plateau. Habitat varies from agriculture in the west and south to mature forest along the boundary with Tug Hill. The unit receives abundant snowfall, and deer populations fluctuate in response to winter conditions. Snow conditions through the 2015-16 were almost non-existent, and staff did not document any deer mortality. While this herd remains slightly above objective, the harvest over the last couple of seasons indicates declining abundance. Harvest in 2015 was down primarily due to the moderate to severe winter

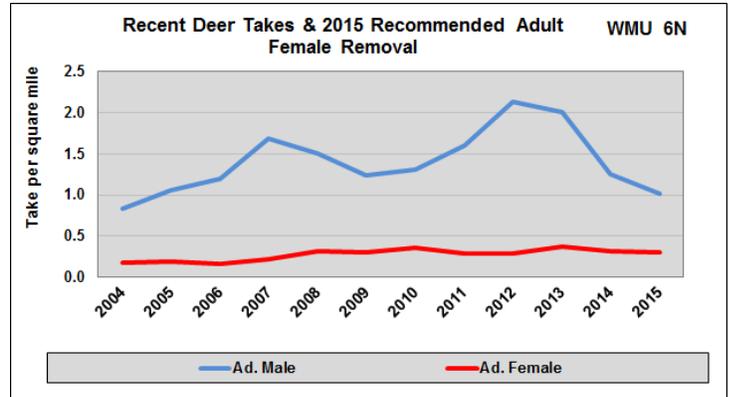


conditions experienced the previous two winters and a reduction of DMPs last season. With the unit near objective, DMPs will be allocated to maintain abundance, but not allow significant herd expansion. Hunters in this unit continue to be willing to take does with DMP success rate above average (>20%).

WMU 6N

Area = 491 mile²
 BTO = None
 2015 Buck Take = 2.0 bucks harvested per mile²
 2015 Total Deer Take = 2.5 deer harvested per mile²

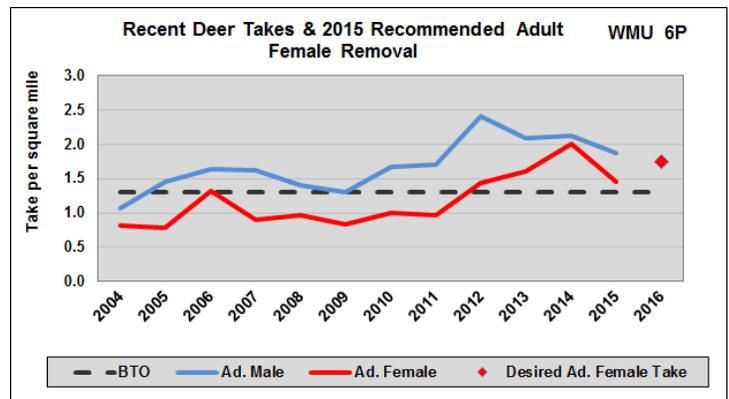
WMU 6N is the core of the Tug Hill Plateau in Lewis, Oswego, and Jefferson counties. Due to its location downwind of Lake Ontario, this region experiences the highest annual snowfall in the eastern United States, and deer populations are heavily influenced by frequent severe winters. Hunter success is also heavily dependent on fall conditions and how early winter snows arrive. Buck take dropped in 2015 to 1.0 bucks per square mile, indicating the population is about half as large as it was three years ago, a result of the very severe winter conditions experienced in 2013-14 and 2014-15. WMU 6N remains a “buck only” unit during the muzzleloader season and no DMPs are issued for the unit. While not desirable, WMU 6N is a good example illustrating that significant declines in deer numbers do occur despite a lack of antlerless deer harvest. The Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) continues to be the primary tool used to take antlerless deer with most animals being taken along the agricultural fringe. The winter conditions in 2015-16 were incredibly mild by Tug Hill standards with early spring conditions prevailing. Hunting should be better in 2016 if weather conditions remain typical for the season.



WMU 6P

Area = 203 mile²
 BTO = 1.3 bucks harvested per mile²
 2015 Buck Take = 1.9 bucks harvested per mile²
 2015 Total Deer Take = 3.9 deer harvested per mile²

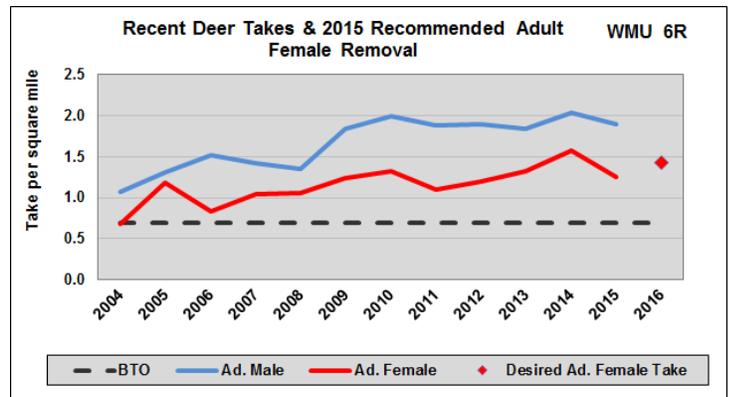
WMU 6P makes up the eastern Oneida Lake plain in Oneida County. Both buck and antlerless take have remained surprisingly constant although increasing over the last decade plus. Lack of significant public lands and private land use patterns may have a greater role in determining deer harvest than the number of deer available. Adult female harvest peaked in 2014 and declined in 2015. The winter of 2014-15 was hard on deer throughout the Region and was no exception in 6P. Last year's mild winter conditions should stem any further declines and DMP allocations will be similar to 2015 with hunters having a high chance to receive a permit.



WMU 6R

Area = 542 mile²
 BTO = 0.7 bucks harvested per mile²
 2015 Buck Take = 1.9 bucks harvested per mile²
 2015 Total Deer Take = 3.5 deer harvested per mile²

WMU 6R makes up the northern Mohawk Valley in portions of Oneida, Herkimer, Fulton, Montgomery, Saratoga, and Schenectady counties. Largely rolling hills and agricultural in nature, the unit typically experiences relatively mild winters. Winter conditions in 2014-15 were considered severe, but harvest did not drop that significantly. Buck take has remained very stable for the past decade plus. Antlerless deer removal rates are strong and demand for DMP remains high from hunters. The availability of DMPs will increase in 2016 to maintain pressure on a herd that remains above objective.



WMU 6S

Area = 589 mile²

BTO = 2.5 bucks harvested per mile²

2015 Buck Take = 3.0 bucks harvested per mile²

2015 Total Deer Take = 5.3 deer harvested per mile²

WMU 6S is located in the southern Mohawk Valley in Oneida, Herkimer, Otsego, Montgomery, and Madison counties. The landscape includes forested hills with significant agriculture along the Mohawk River and in the valleys. The harvest continues to remain strong, although buck take declined in 2015 as anticipated from fawn loss in the winter of 2014-15. Deer damage complaints vary and are not high by southern zone standards. DMAP harvest and nuisance take have slowly risen, though that is more reflective of local trends and interest, particularly in the southern portion of the unit along State Route 20. Management and DMP issuance remains directed toward reducing the population. Resident applicants will have high odds of getting their first permit.

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