

2018 DEER HUNTING FORECAST

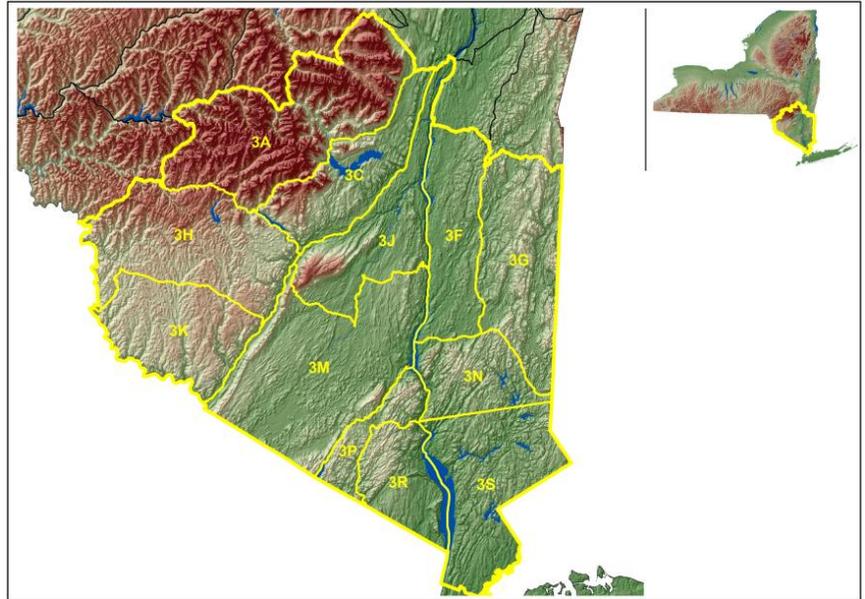


Department of
Environmental
Conservation

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 in other parts of the region. Outside of the Catskills, public hunting opportunities exist on DEC-owned land in [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 [Westchester County Parks](#).



The highest deer densities in the Region can be found in WMU 3M, which covers primarily Orange County in the Hudson River Valley. However, public hunting opportunities are limited in this 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 there was 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 by winter severity.

Unit Summaries for the 2018 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 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 a 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

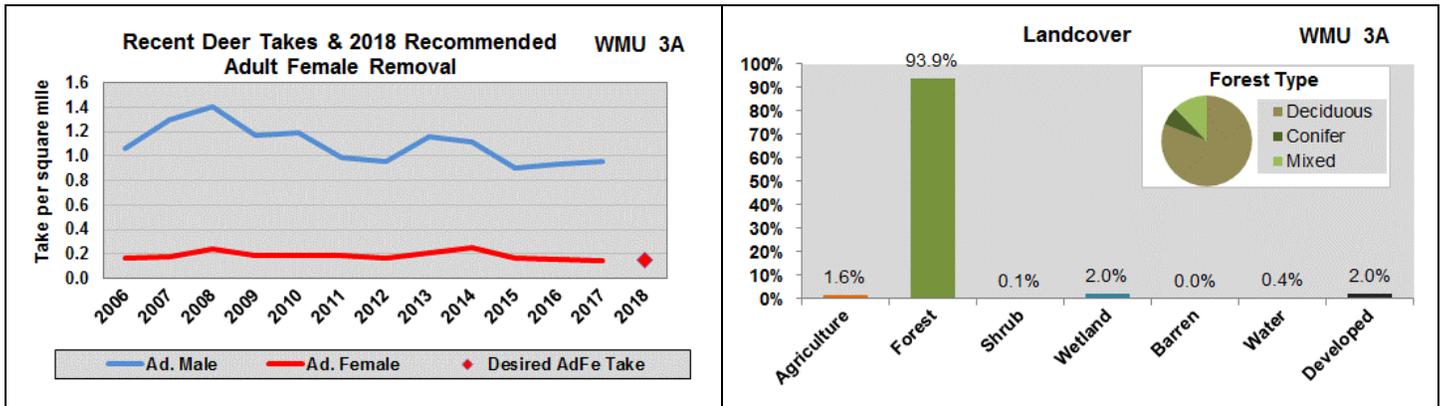
Area = 694 mile²

2017 Buck Take = 1.0 bucks harvested per mile²

BTO = antler restriction unit

2017 Total Deer Take = 1.2 deer harvested per mile²

WMU 3A is located in the northwestern portion of Region 3. This unit is characterized by the 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 consequently protected from timber harvest and similar land management activities. This being said, hunters who do choose to pursue deer in this unit enjoy the largest tracts of undeveloped land in Region 3. Areas such as [Slide Mountain Wilderness](#), [Big Indian Wilderness](#), and [Balsam Lake Mountain Wild Forest](#) all afford a hunter the ability to hunt all day without ever encountering a posted sign. A map of additional public hunting areas in the Catskills can be found [here](#). 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. Although this unit did experience significant snowfall last winter, deer likely benefited from an abundant beech nut crop. With little ability for population growth in 3A, primarily due to habitat limitations, expect the 2018 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

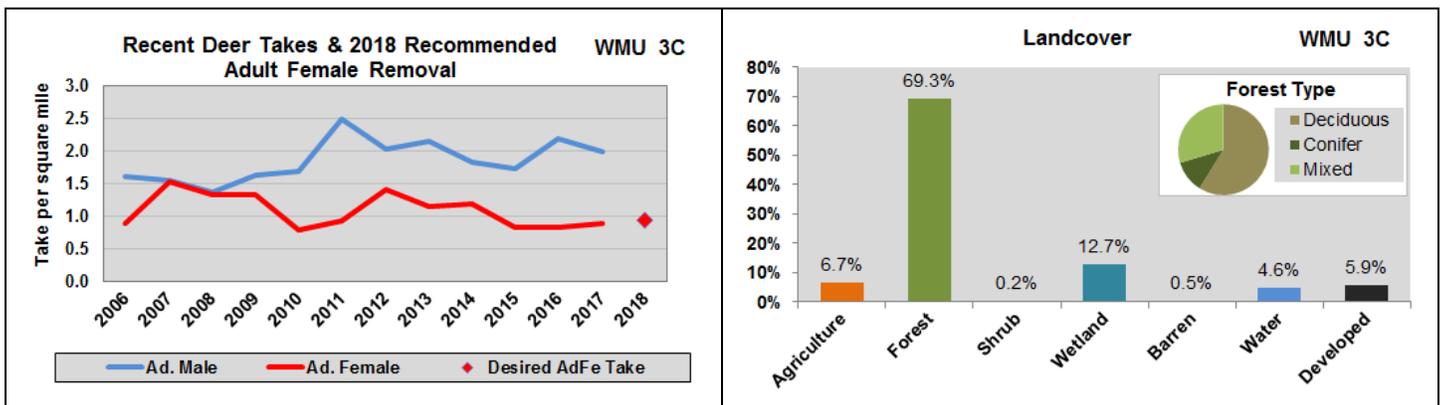
Area = 316 mile²

2017 Buck Take = 2.0 bucks harvested per mile²

BTO = antler restriction unit

2017 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 comprises a mix of agricultural lands - primarily along Route 209 - and forested habitats, with scattered residential communities. Lower-elevation areas of this unit contain rich mineral soils, capable of producing lush vegetation for deer browse. There are some public hunting opportunities in the higher-elevation, forested portions of the unit in [Sundown Wild Forest](#), [Bluestone Wild Forest](#), and [Vernooey Kill State Forest](#), but deer densities are generally lower there than in the agricultural areas. After a slight dip in buck take in 2015, it is likely that deer populations are now near desired levels. DMP issuance will remain similar to last year. Residents will have medium odds of obtaining a first permit in this unit. No second permits will be available, nor will permits be available for non-residents.



WMU 3F

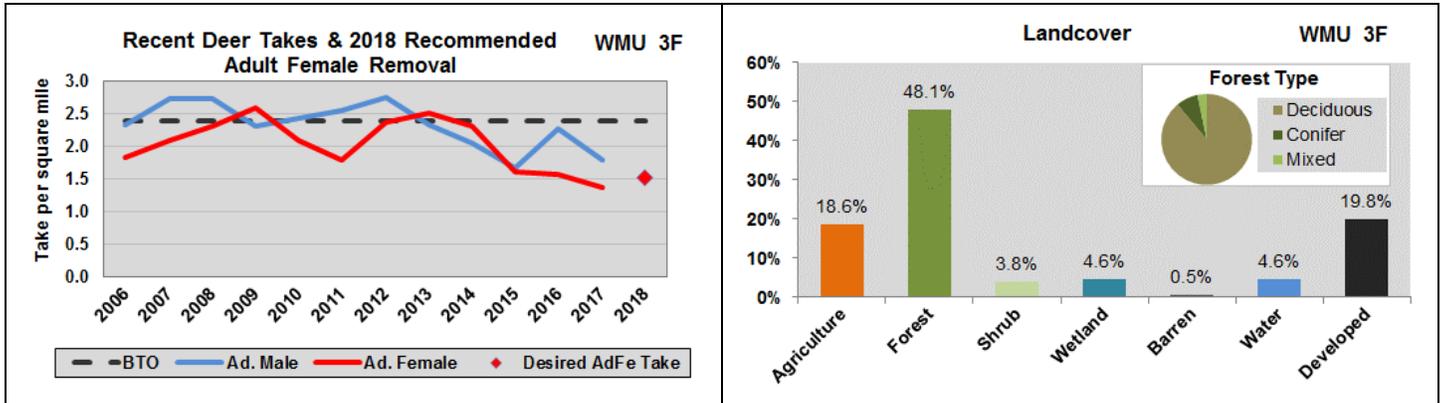
Area = 332 mile²

2017 Buck Take = 1.8 bucks harvested per mile²

BTO = 2.4 bucks harvested per mile²

2017 Total Deer Take = 3.6 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. Public lands open to hunting in this unit include [Tivoli Bays Wildlife Management Area](#) and [Baxtertown Woods Wildlife Management Area](#). After buck take briefly returned to objective in 2016, it once again dipped below desired levels in 2017. This may be due to more hunters showing selectivity in what buck they choose to harvest. With 63% of harvested bucks in this unit being 2 ½ years of age or older, many hunters in 3F are voluntarily choosing to [Let Young Bucks Go and Watch Them Grow!](#) To facilitate a modest increase in population, DMP issuance will be slightly reduced. This being said, chances for first permit selection will remain high for both residents and non-residents. Chances of selection for second-choice permits will be medium for residents. Second permits will not be available to non-residents.



WMU 3G

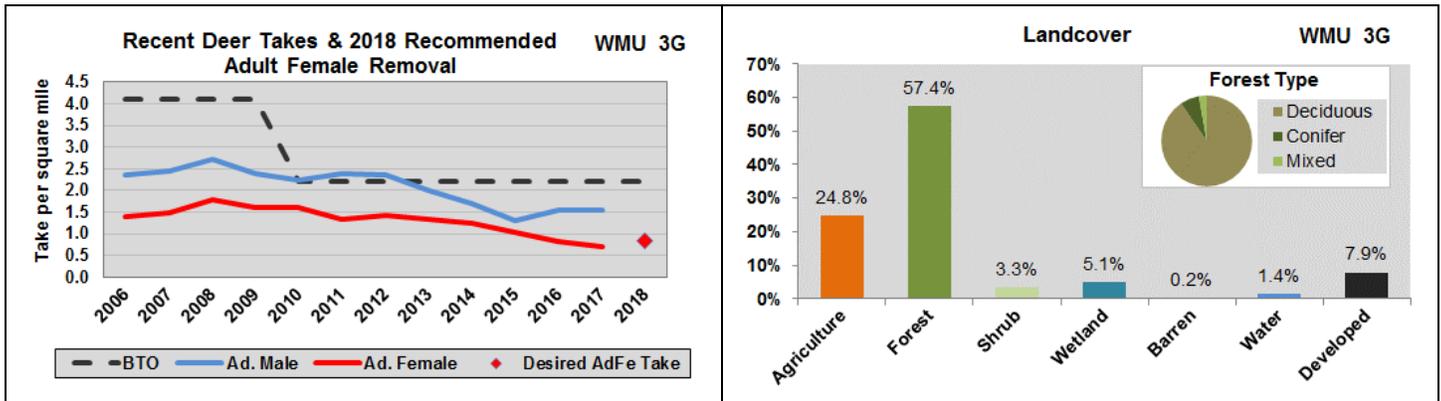
Area = 457 mile²

2017 Buck Take = 1.5 bucks harvested per mile²

BTO = 2.2 bucks harvested per mile²

2017 Total Deer Take = 2.5 deer harvested per mile²

WMU 3G is located 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 creates excellent deer habitat. Public hunting opportunities in this unit can be found at [Lafayetteville Multiple Use Area](#), [Wassaic Multiple Use Area](#), [Taconic Hereford Multiple Use Area](#) and [West Mountain State Forest](#). Concerns with 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 but may be heavily influenced by hunter selectivity, given that 74% of bucks harvested last year were at least 2 ½ years old. This is another unit where many hunters are making the choice to [Let Young Bucks go and Watch Them Grow!](#) Over the last few years, buck take has been stable or gradually increasing. To allow this trend to continue, first-choice permits will be available only for resident hunters in 2018, and hunters will have low odds for obtaining those permits.



WMU 3H

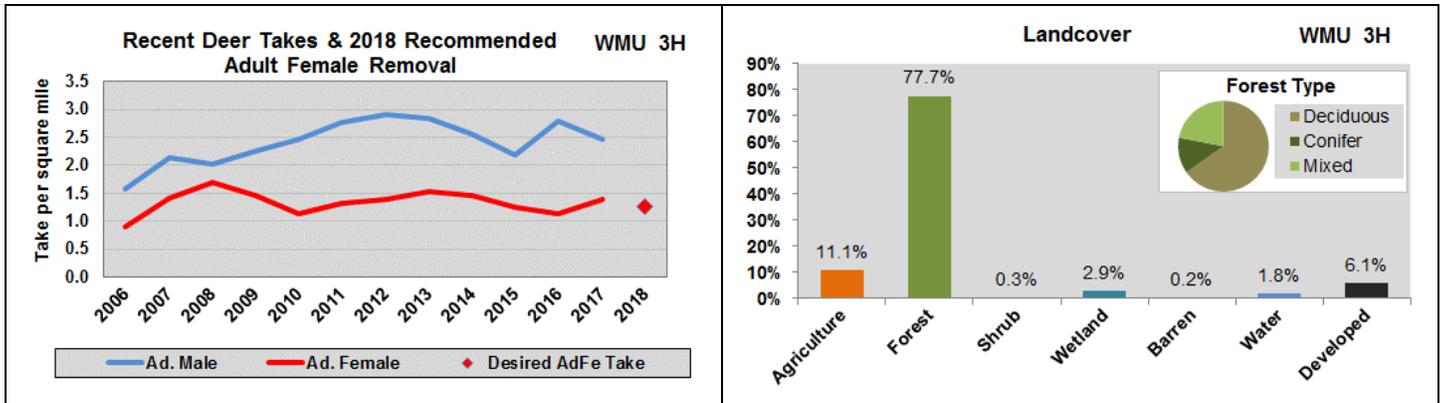
Area = 554 mile²

2017 Buck Take = 2.5 bucks harvested per mile²

BTO = antler restriction unit

2017 Total Deer Take = 4.3 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 does 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. Public hunting opportunities in this unit can be found in [Crystal Lake Wild Forest](#), [Lake Superior State Park](#) and multiple [NYC Department of Environmental Protection](#) properties. After a steady decline for a few years from the peak of post-antler-restriction buck take in 2012, take has increased. In order to maintain current population levels, DMP issuance will be similar to last year's. Only residents can obtain DMPs in 3H in 2018. Preference points will be required for a first permit. No second permits will be available.



WMU 3J

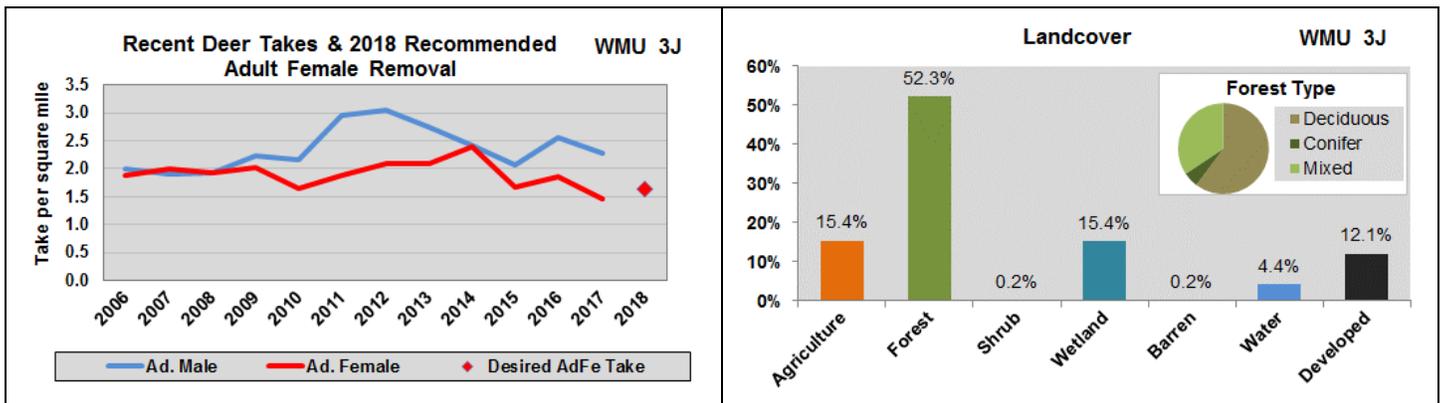
Area = 356 mile²

2017 Buck Take = 2.3 bucks harvested per mile²

BTO = antler restriction unit

2017 Total Deer Take = 4.2 deer harvested per mile²

WMU 3J is located on the western edge of the Hudson Valley and contains agriculture, primarily orchards, with increasing housing developments and large estates, many of which do not allow hunting. This unit has rich mineral soils, which, combined with the matrix of agriculture, fields and woodlots, create excellent habitat for producing some quality deer. Public hunting access is available at [Black Creek State Forest](#) and by special permit at [Minnewaska State Park Preserve](#). 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 harvest would remain that high, and it declined steadily to 2.1 in 2015, but rebounded over the last two years. Although the previous buck take objectives no longer apply in AR units, indices suggest that the deer population in 3J is near desired levels. DMP issuance will remain similar to last year's to allow a modest increase in deer populations within the unit. For both resident and non-resident hunters, chances of obtaining a first-choice DMP will be high in 2018. Residents will have a low probability of obtaining a second-choice DMP; no second-choice permits will be available to non-residents.



WMU 3K

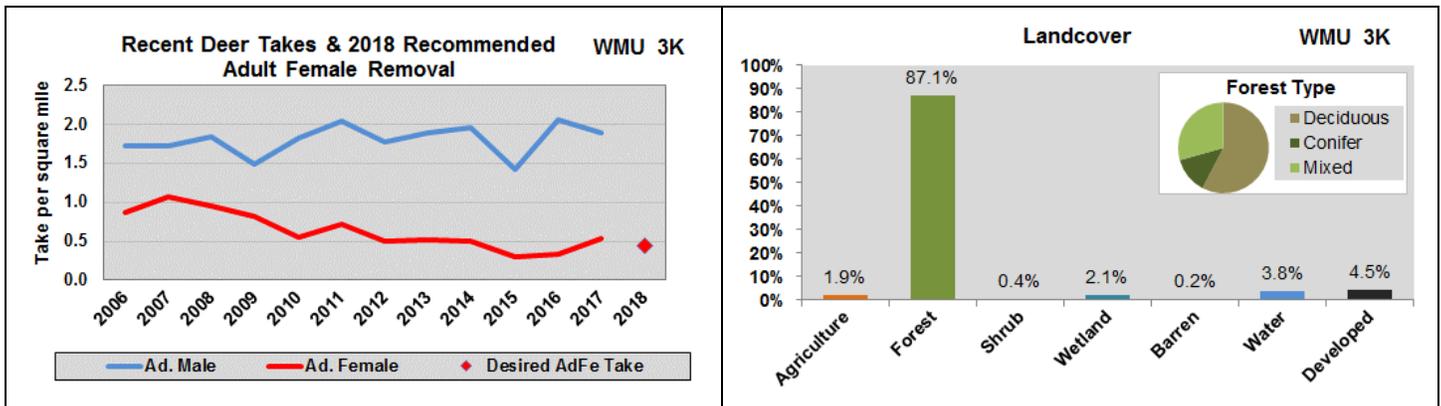
Area = 381 mile²

2017 Buck Take = 1.9 bucks harvested per mile²

BTO = antler restriction unit

2017 Total Deer Take = 2.6 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 contains 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. Public hunting opportunities in 3K include [Hickok Brook Multiple Use Area](#), [Mongaup Valley Wildlife Management Area](#), [Neversink River Unique Area](#) and [Wolf Brook Multiple Use Area](#). Unlike the other antler restriction units in Region 3, buck takes in WMU 3K have not noticeably increased since the program's inception in 2006, but have remained fairly stable. This is likely due to habitat being the major limiting factor on deer population growth. After a dip in 2015, buck take rebounded nicely in 2016 and remained near that level last year. DMP availability will be similar to last year's. Preference points will be required for residents applying for their first choice. No DMPs will be available to non-residents.



WMU 3M

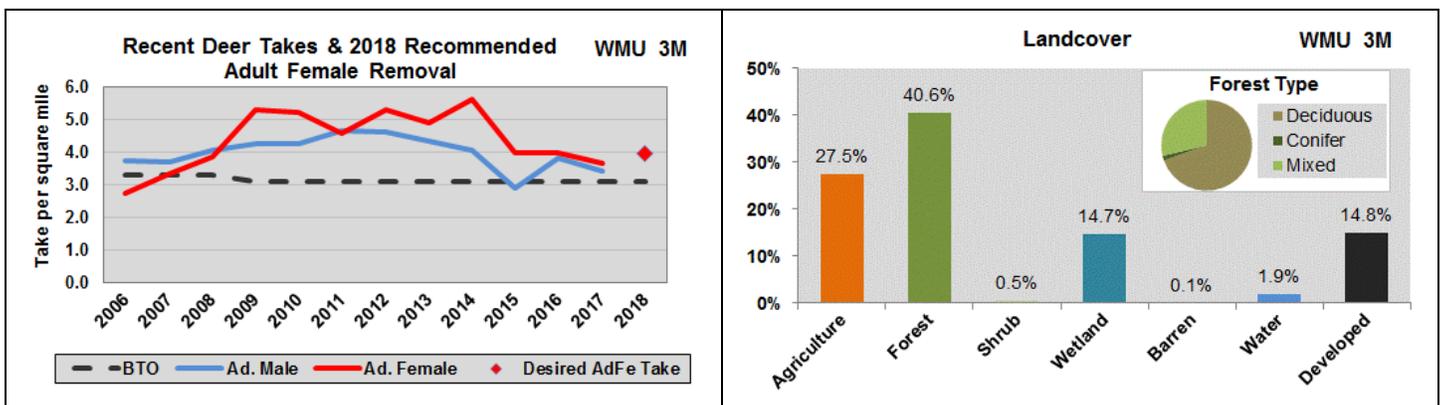
Area = 749 mile²

2017 Buck Take = 3.4 bucks harvested per mile²

BTO = 3.1 bucks harvested per mile²

2017 Total Deer Take = 8.2 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. This being said, areas open to public hunting include [Stewart State Forest](#), [Huckleberry Ridge State Forest](#), [Pochuck State Forest](#) and by special permit, [Schunemunk State Park](#). Because this unit is well above objective, DMP availability will remain high for both first and second choices for both residents and non-residents in 2018. First-come-first-served DMPs will also be available on November 1.



WMU 3N

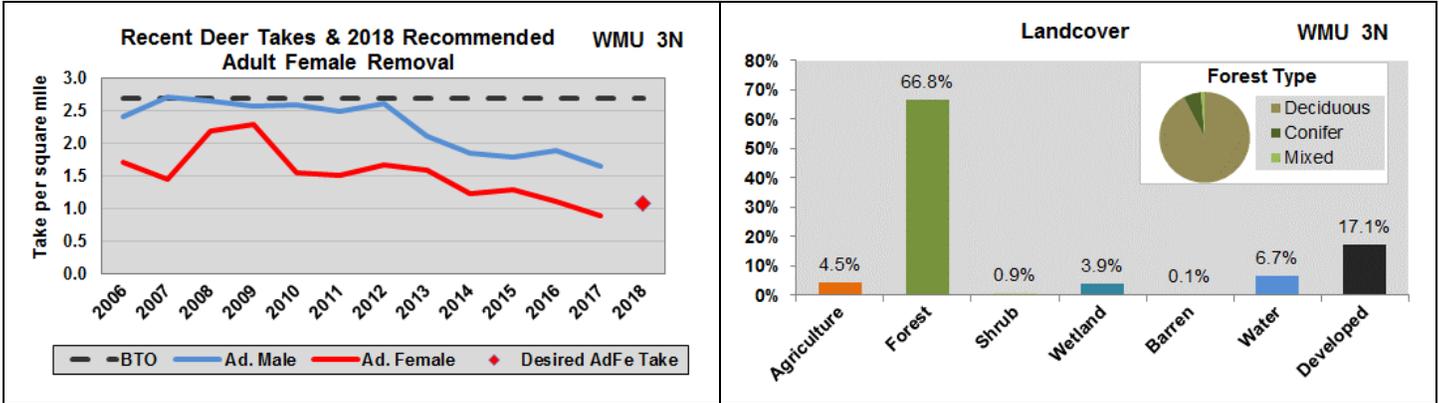
Area = 223 mile²

2017 Buck Take = 1.6 bucks harvested per mile²

BTO = 2.7 bucks harvested per mile²

2017 Total Deer Take = 2.8 deer harvested per mile²

WMU 3N is located primarily within Putnam County. This unit is characterized by 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 decline in 2013. A continual reduction in doe harvest over the last five years seems to have slowed the decline in buck take. To allow for a gradual population increase, DMP issuance will remain similar to last year's. Chances will be high for residents and non-residents to obtain first-choice permits. Second permits will be available only to residents, and odds of obtaining one will be low.



WMU 3P

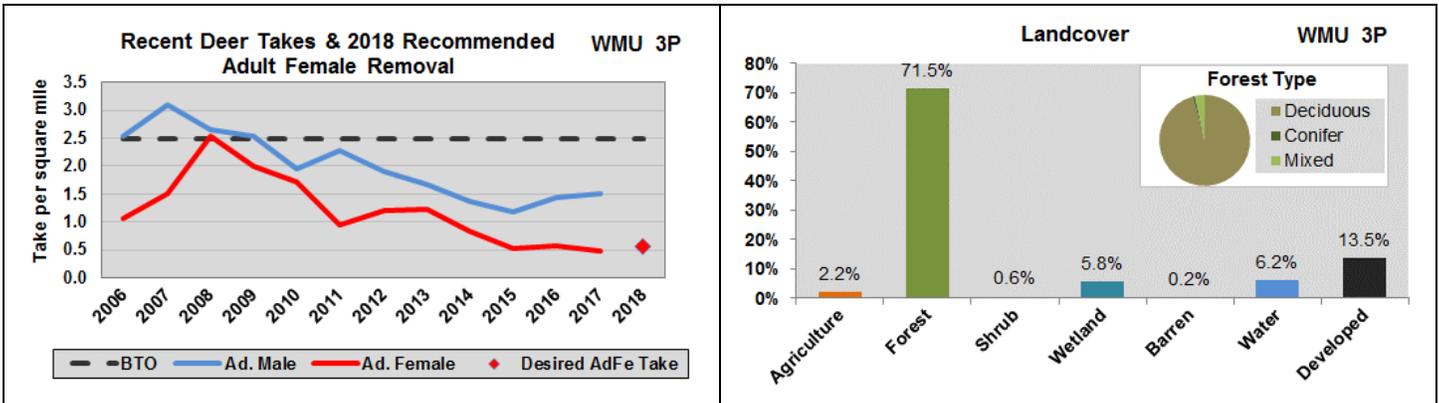
Area = 125 mile²

2017 Buck Take = 1.5 bucks harvested per mile²

BTO = 2.5 bucks harvested per mile²

2017 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 mountainous, with steep slopes and valleys and maturing forests. [Sterling Forest State Park](#) (public hunting by special permit), Black Rock Forest and West Point Military Academy represent a large proportion of the land in this unit. Much of the other land has been developed for commercial and residential use. The past two hunting seasons have seen the buck take begin to recover from its low in 2015. The age structure of the buck population has been shifting toward older males, possibly indicative of hunters targeting older-aged bucks or reduced hunting pressure. To allow for further population growth, DMP availability will remain similar to last year's, with permits available only as the first choice for resident hunters. The odds of obtaining one of these permits will be low.



WMU 3R

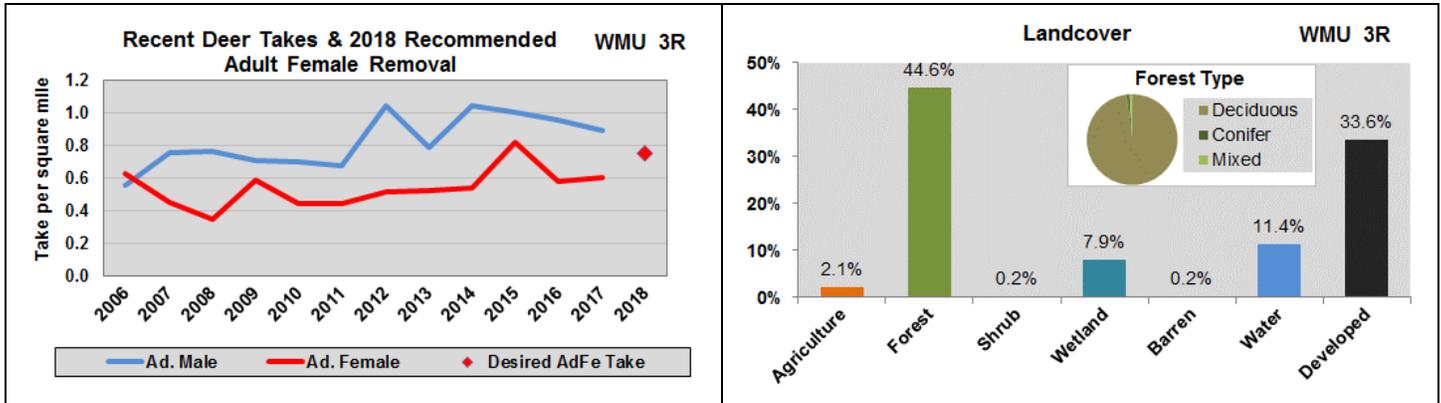
Area = 206 mile²

BTO = None

2017 Buck Take = 0.9 bucks harvested per mile²

2017 Total Deer Take = 1.7 deer harvested per mile²

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 constitute one-third of this unit on its western side, and the rest is heavily developed. 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 three years. Expect deer numbers to be similar to past years. 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. Because so 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 non-residents to obtain two permits.



WMU 3S

Area = 431 mile²

BTO = none

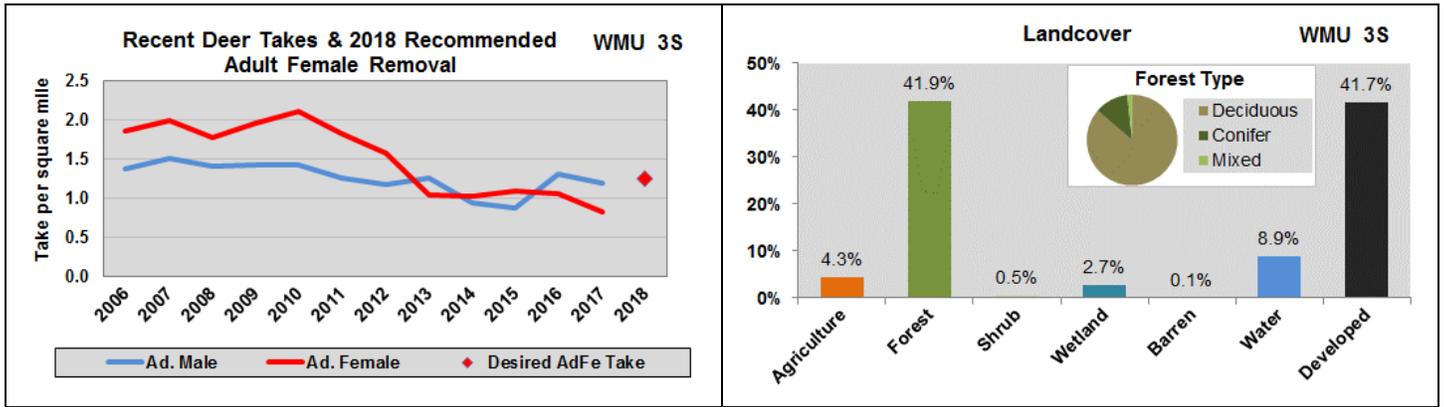
2017 Buck Take = 1.2 bucks harvested per mile²

2017 Total Deer Take = 2.5 deer harvested per mile²

WMU 3S encompasses Westchester County only. This unit is characterized by 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 has been fairly stable over the past four years, fluctuating between 1.1 and 0.8 per square mile. Those harvests appear lower than other units because of the issue of limited access to hunting lands, even though many of those lands hold high deer densities. Some additional opportunities have been created in this WMU through the opening of some [Westchester County Parks](#) and [New York City Department of Environmental Protection](#) properties to hunting. 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 trend could signal modest declines in deer populations on huntable lands, which we believe is unlikely, or it 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 8.7% in 2017. Also, applications for and use of [Bonus DMPs](#) have declined in recent years.

As in 3R, we have not set a specific population objective for WMU 3S but rather seek to maximize harvests to reduce deer-human conflicts. Therefore, DMPs will again be readily available to all interested applicants in 2018. Resident and non-resident 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.



Jonathan Russell
 Region 3 Big Game Biologist