

# 2018 DEER HUNTING FORECAST

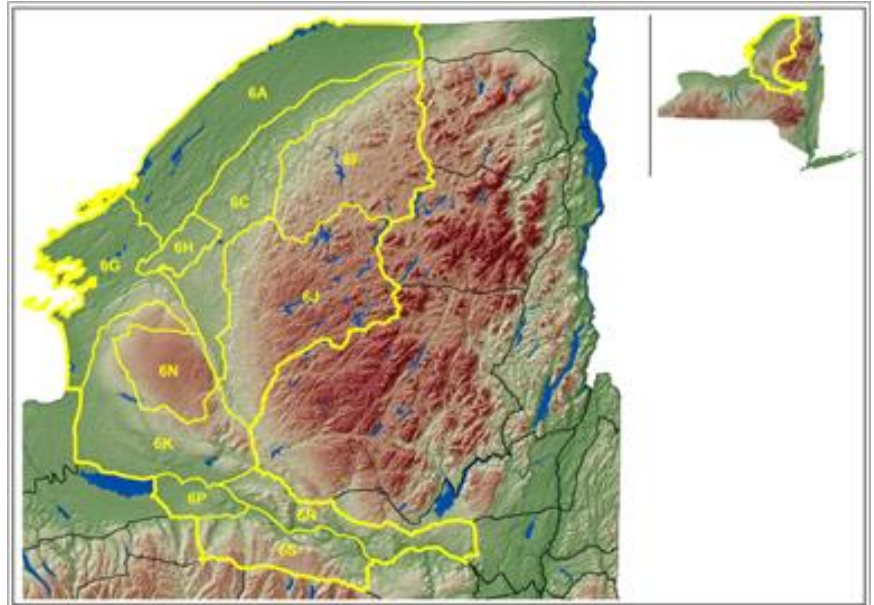


Department of  
Environmental  
Conservation

## Region 6

The 2017 hunting season was characterized by warm weather early on, followed by a significant cold snap starting in early November. Snow conditions were good during the latter half of the season, and hunter comments were generally favorable. Meat cutters were busy until the end of season. Deer numbers continue to rebound throughout the Region, and buck harvest in 2017 increased in most units as anticipated. Staff saw a good number of two-year-old and older bucks, possibly indicating multiple strong year classes as well as hunters choosing to [Let Young Bucks Go and Watch Them Grow](#).

However, antlerless harvest was lower in many units, despite higher numbers of Deer Management Permits (DMPs) issued. The reasons for that lower harvest are unclear. The very wet summer and mild fall may have affected deer behavior and reduced harvest opportunities.



The 2017-18 winter was relatively mild, with frequent thaw periods throughout the season. Areas prone to lake-effect events were hit with snow and record cold in December. Despite significant thaws occurring in January, the southern part of Region 6 experienced significant snowfall events throughout the month of March, with snows extending well into the month of April, particularly in areas of elevation. Some fawn loss was reported and observed in areas of the Mohawk Valley and southern Adirondacks.

With most units having deer populations at or very close to their objectives, the management direction will be primarily to maintain population trends and continue to address WMUs like 6G, where populations remain stubbornly high. The outlook for 2018 looks mixed, with some units outside of Tug Hill and the Adirondacks having good hunting, while snow-prone areas will see fewer deer this fall.

## Unit Summaries for the 2018 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 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 6A

Area = 1,472 mile<sup>2</sup>

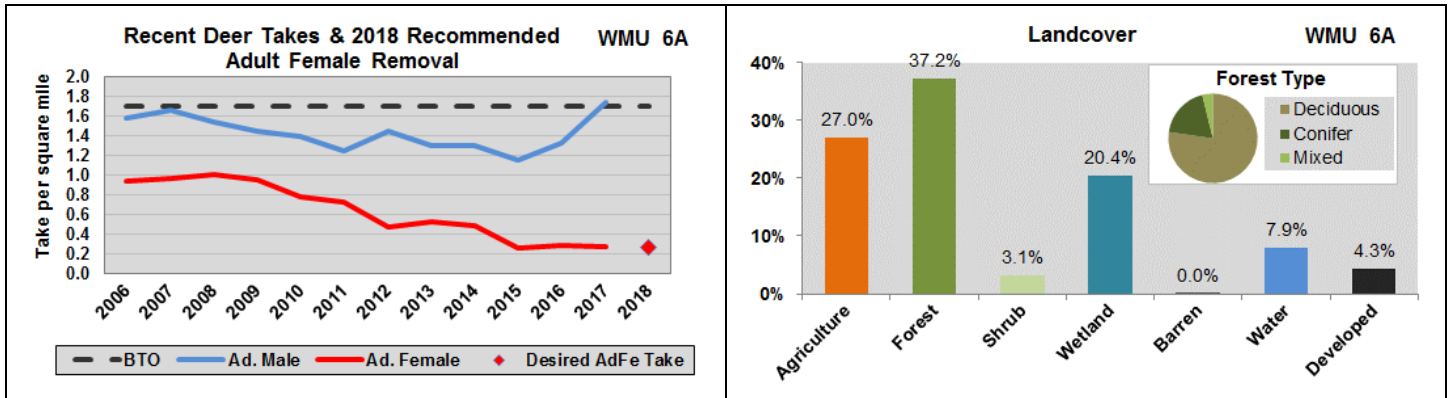
2017 Buck Take = 1.7 bucks harvested per mile<sup>2</sup>

BTO = 1.7 bucks harvested per mile<sup>2</sup>

2017 Total Deer Take = 2.1 deer harvested per mile<sup>2</sup>

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. After record high deer numbers in the mid-1990s through the early 2000s, management has solely been directed at increasing the population over the past 10+ years. The harvest increased in 2017, and for the first time in a decade has hit the buck take objective.

In 2018, DMPs will not be issued for the unit, and this will be the fourth year with take of antlerless deer prohibited during the October portion of the muzzleloader season. Adult female harvest was cut almost in half through the changes in muzzleloader take, and while the unit is now at objective, demand for hunting antlerless deer has been traditionally high in this unit. Not issuing DMPs in 2018 will allow the population another year of growth. If harvest continues to increase, additional antlerless harvest will be considered for future seasons. The 2017-18 winter was considered mild, which will only benefit deer numbers.



## WMU 6C

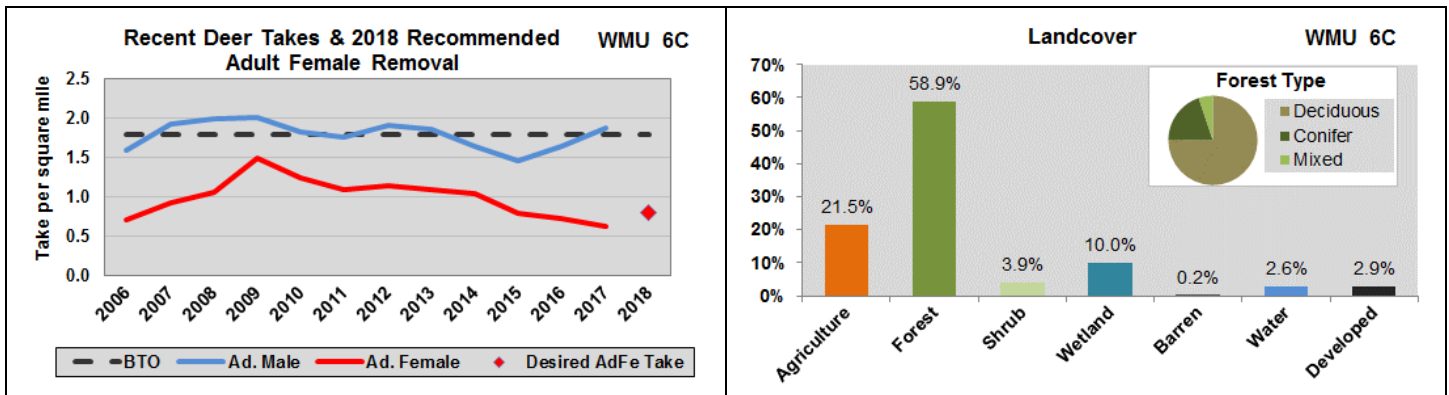
Area = 977 mile<sup>2</sup>

2017 Buck Take = 1.9 bucks harvested per mile<sup>2</sup>

BTO = 1.8 bucks harvested per mile<sup>2</sup>

2017 Total Deer Take = 2.7 deer harvested per mile<sup>2</sup>

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. After significant increases in deer numbers during the 1990s, this herd declined in the early 2000s. The buck take has remained remarkably stable for the past 10 years, although the take dipped slightly in 2015-16. The 2017-18 winter conditions in the unit were relatively mild, and deer numbers should continue to increase. Because the deer population in this WMU is essentially at the objective, DMP numbers have been increased slightly to maintain herd stability. Demand is strong for permits, so only preference point holders will be able to get them.



## WMU 6F

Area = 1,213 mile<sup>2</sup>

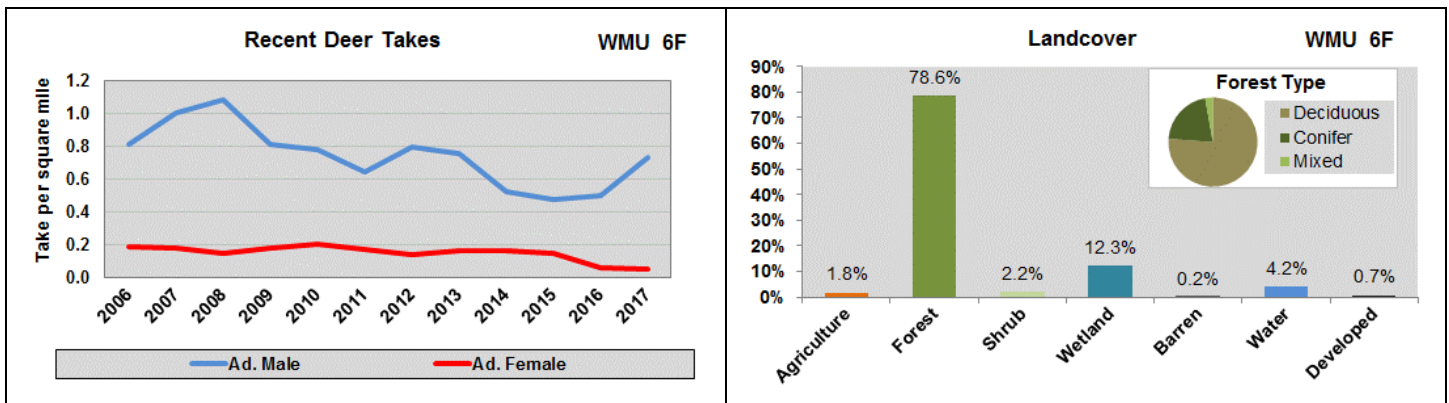
2017 Buck Take = 0.7 bucks harvested per mile<sup>2</sup>

BTO = None

2017 Total Deer Take = 0.8 deer harvested per mile<sup>2</sup>

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 is the major factor affecting annual deer abundance. The remote nature of this WMU restricts hunter access 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. Antlerless deer harvest was eliminated in the early muzzleloader season in 2016 out of concern that the deer herd in the unit was not rebounding. The harvest of females was reduced over the next two seasons, and the unit experienced mild winters during that same time frame. Both factors may have contributed to the higher buck take that was achieved last fall. Rules will remain the same in 2018, but if harvest continues to rise, it may be possible to reinstate antlerless take during the October muzzleloader season. While there is no BTO for this unit, current management is aimed at increasing the deer population modestly.



## WMU 6G

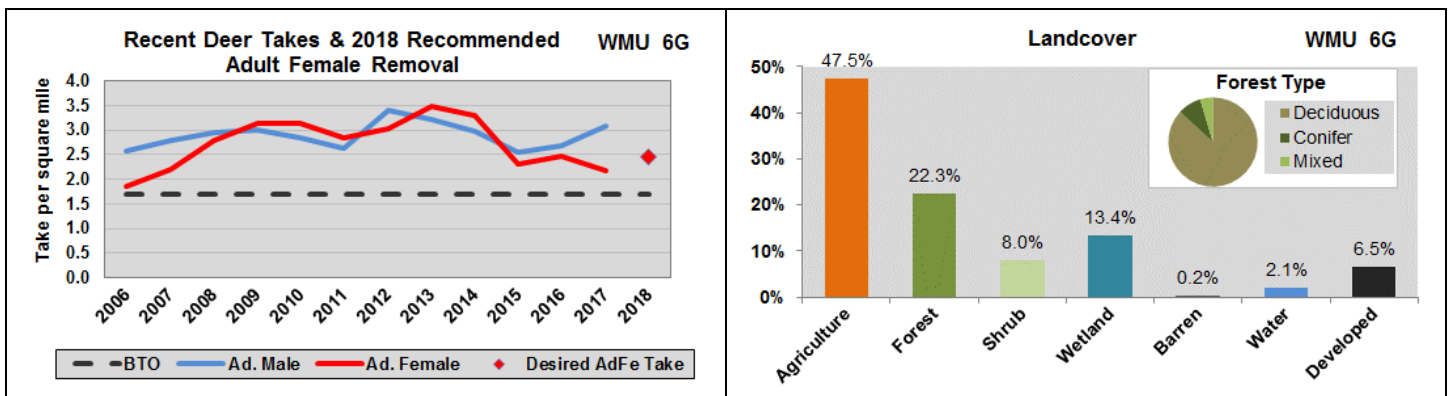
Area = 933 mile<sup>2</sup>

2017 Buck Take = 3.1 bucks harvested per mile<sup>2</sup>

BTO = 1.7 bucks harvested per mile<sup>2</sup>

2017 Total Deer Take = 6.0 deer harvested per mile<sup>2</sup>

Unit 6G is located along the eastern Lake Ontario plain in Jefferson and Oswego Counties. The dominant land use is agriculture. Deer herds in this unit continue to remain well above objective, despite concerted efforts to reduce deer numbers through increases in DMP allocations and liberal muzzleloader opportunities. Buck take increased in 2016 and again in 2017. WMU 6G has the highest harvest per square mile of any unit in the Region. The 2017-18 winter was the third mild winter in a row, which will promote even higher deer numbers. DMP allocations will remain the same for 2018, as there is concern that issuing additional permits will not significantly increase antlerless deer take. The unit is currently flush with doe harvest opportunity. All applicants will receive a permit.



## WMU 6H

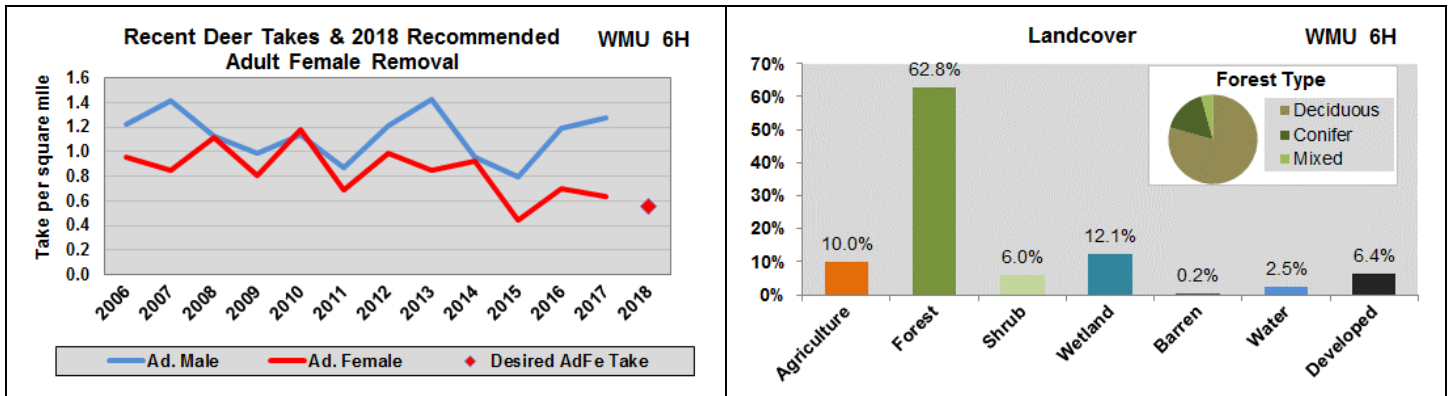
Area = 173 mile<sup>2</sup>

2017 Buck Take = 1.3 bucks harvested per mile<sup>2</sup>

BTO = None

2017 Total Deer Take = 2.1 deer harvested per mile<sup>2</sup>

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 day and season. A Ft. Drum permit must be obtained to hunt on military property. Deer numbers in this unit are best described as moderate, and annual harvest varies according to available access. The deer take outside of the Cantonment Area in 2017 remained virtually the same as in 2016 and consistent with past harvests. The winter of 2017-18 was the third mild winter in a row. WMU 6H has no BTO established, because DEC works with Ft. Drum managers to allocate permits. As in past years, 700 DMPs will be available in 2018. Resident hunters have a medium chance of receiving a first permit.



## WMU 6J

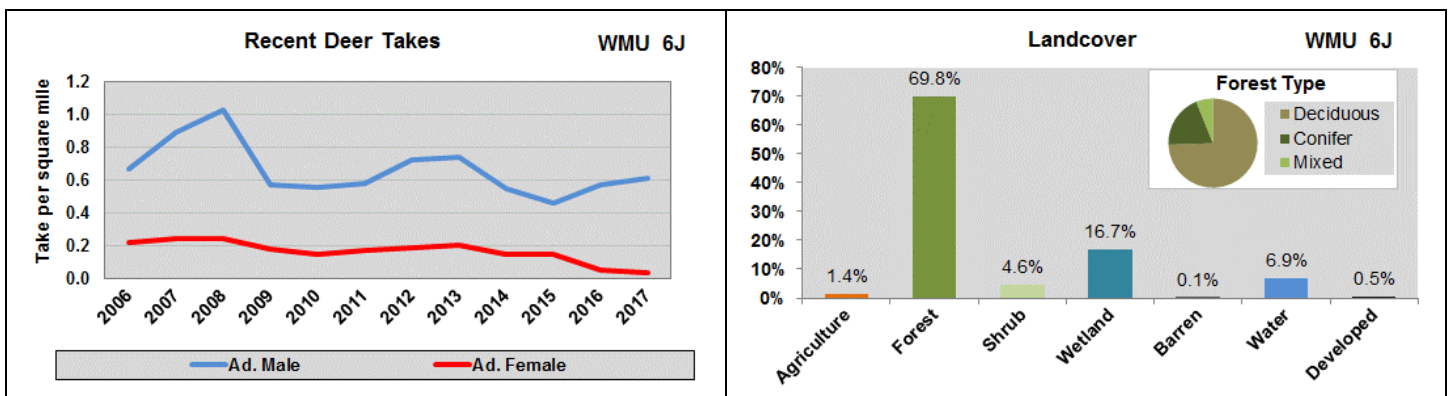
Area = 1,576 mile<sup>2</sup>

2017 Buck Take = 0.6 bucks harvested per mile<sup>2</sup>

BTO = None

2017 Total Deer Take = 0.7 deer harvested per mile<sup>2</sup>

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 are generally low in most of the unit. Winter conditions are the strongest influencing factor on deer numbers in this area, and the winter of 2017-18 was classified as moderate to severe. DEC eliminated antlerless deer take during the October muzzleloader season in 2016; that closure was still in effect in 2017 and will continue in 2018. That change reduced antlerless take significantly. Buck take remained essentially the same last fall as in 2016. Based on last winter's conditions and the significant March snows that persisted through April, the outlook for this fall's hunting is concerning. It is anticipated that buck take will decline despite the reductions in antlerless deer harvest. No DMPs are available in WMU 6J.



## WMU 6K

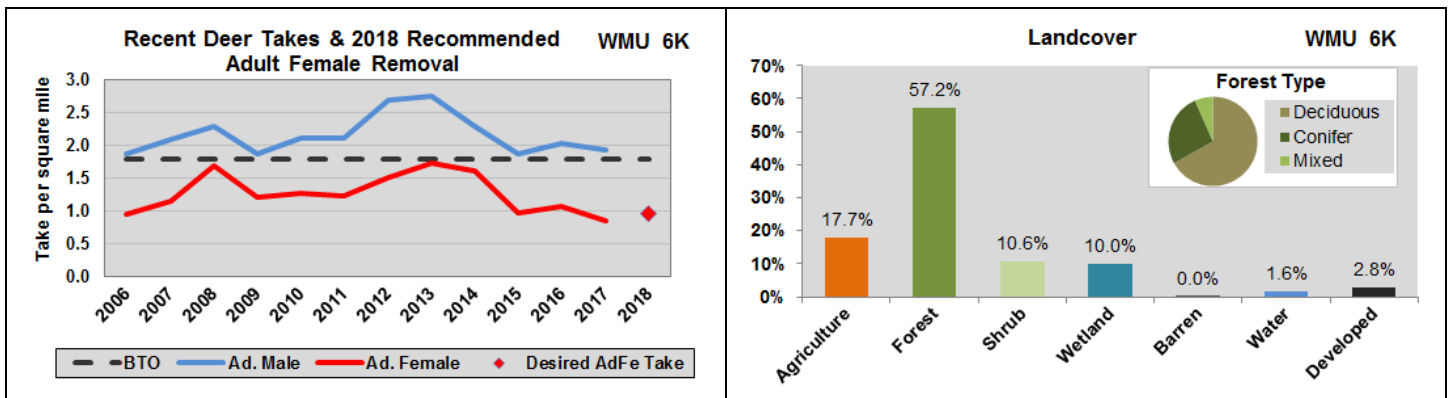
Area = 1,161 mile<sup>2</sup>

2017 Buck Take = 1.9 bucks harvested per mile<sup>2</sup>

BTO = 1.8 bucks harvested per mile<sup>2</sup>

2017 Total Deer Take = 3.1 deer harvested per mile<sup>2</sup>

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 varied widely during the 2017-18 winter. There were some significant thaw events, but the unit was hit hard with successive March snowstorms, and the snow in much of the unit persisted well into April and early May. Both buck take and total deer kill dropped slightly in 2017. DMP success also dropped in 2017, mirroring a similar trend in other Region 6 units. The buck take in this unit remains essentially at the objective, so the harvest goal for 2018 is to maintain the deer herd with a slight decrease in DMPs. Hunter interest in DMPs in this unit is high; hunters can expect a low probability of receiving a permit.



## WMU 6N

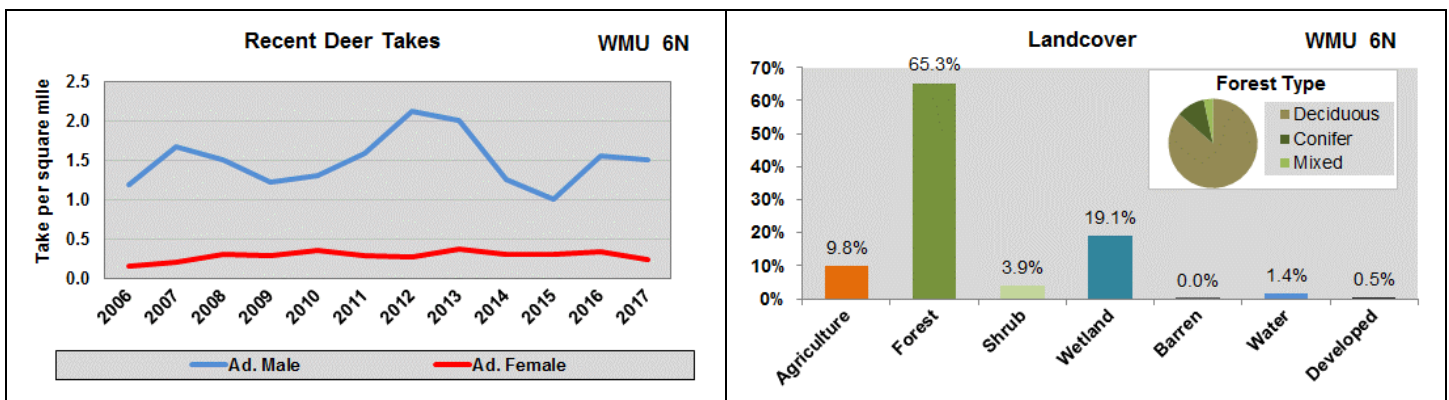
Area = 491 mile<sup>2</sup>

2017 Buck Take = 1.5 bucks harvested per mile<sup>2</sup>

BTO = None

2017 Total Deer Take = 1.8 deer harvested per mile<sup>2</sup>

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 almost entirely influenced by winter severity. Hunter success is also heavily dependent on fall conditions and how early winter snows arrive. Buck take dropped slightly in 2017 to 1.5 bucks per square mile. The winter conditions in WMU 6N in 2017-18 were very severe. Portions of the unit were hit with successive March snowstorms, creating snow pack that held through April and into early May, which hurt fawn survival in some areas. Hunters will likely encounter fewer deer in the unit this fall than they did last year.



## WMU 6P

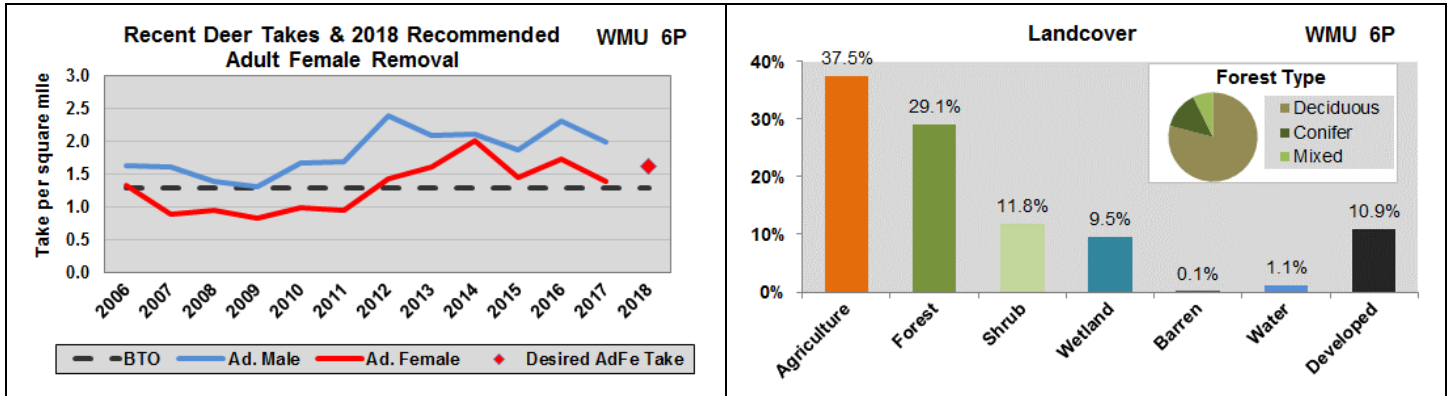
Area = 203 mile<sup>2</sup>

2017 Buck Take = 2.0 bucks harvested per mile<sup>2</sup>

BTO = 1.3 bucks harvested per mile<sup>2</sup>

2017 Total Deer Take = 4.0 deer harvested per mile<sup>2</sup>

WMU 6P makes up the eastern Oneida Lake plain in Oneida County. Buck take and antlerless take have both remained surprisingly consistent while maintaining a buck take of 2.0+ bucks per square mile for the greater part of the last decade. 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, as hunter numbers remain similar year to year. Early fall conditions in 2017 were very warm, and both buck take and doe take declined slightly. The winter of 2017-18 was also mild, despite heavy snows in March that for the most part did not persist long after falling. January and February included significant thaws that benefited deer greatly. The population in this WMU is well above the objective, and harvest data suggest strong potential to remain so. DMP allocations for 2018 will be high.



## WMU 6R

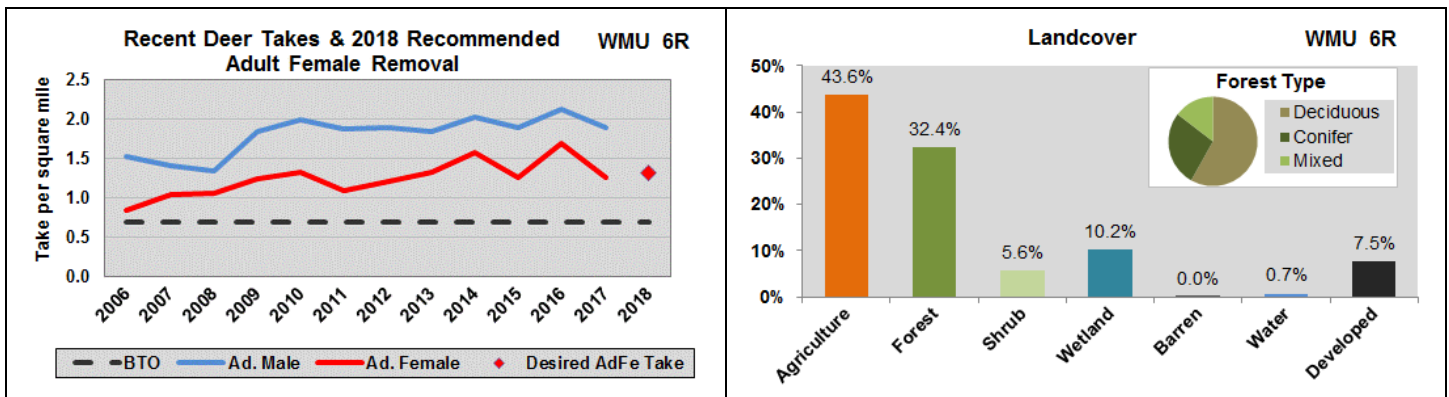
Area = 542 mile<sup>2</sup>

2017 Buck Take = 1.9 bucks harvested per mile<sup>2</sup>

BTO = 0.7 bucks harvested per mile<sup>2</sup>

2017 Total Deer Take = 3.6 deer harvested per mile<sup>2</sup>

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 fairly mild winters. Winter conditions in 2017-18 were relatively mild, despite multiple significant Nor'easter snow events in March. Buck take and antlerless kill both dropped in 2017. This trend was evident throughout the Region, and may reflect the mild fall hunting conditions. DMP allocations were reduced slightly for 2018, although odds remain high for applicants' first choice.



## WMU 6S

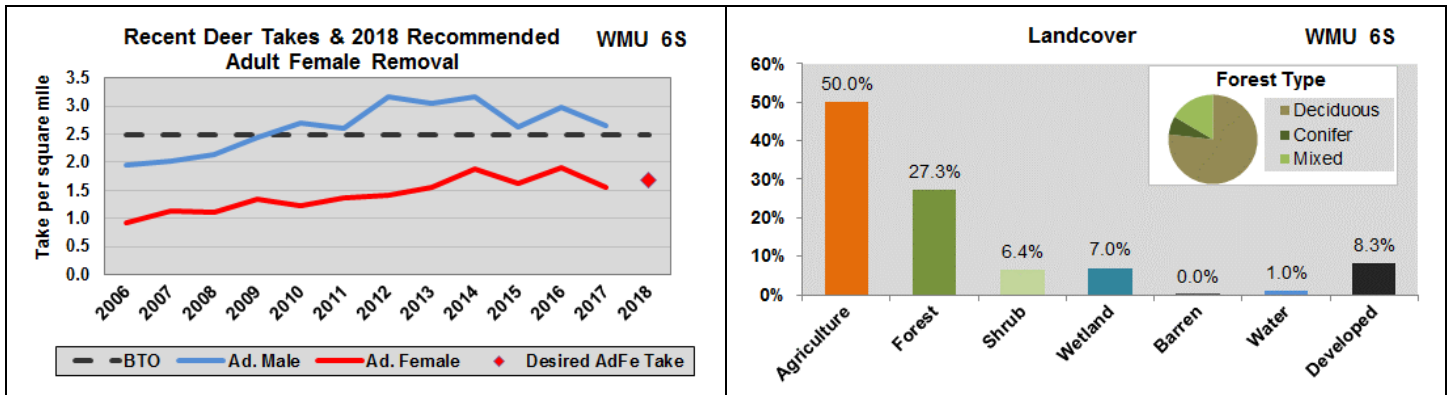
Area = 589 mile<sup>2</sup>

2017 Buck Take = 2.6 bucks harvested per mile<sup>2</sup>

BTO = 2.5 bucks harvested per mile<sup>2</sup>

2017 Total Deer Take = 4.7 deer harvested per mile<sup>2</sup>

WMU 6S is located in the southern Mohawk Valley in Oneida, Herkimer, Otsego, Montgomery and Madison Counties. The landscape includes forested hills as well as significant agriculture along the Mohawk River and the Route 20 corridor. The harvest remains strong, and buck take was very near the objective last fall. Harvest and bowhunter sighting logs for the unit suggest population stabilization, with heavy DMP allocations in recent years likely having the desired effects. Buck take declined last fall, so management and DMP issuance in 2018 are directed toward stabilizing the deer herd. Despite a decrease in DMP allocation, resident and non-resident applicants will have high odds of getting their first permit.



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