Region 8 is home to some of the best deer hunting opportunities in New York State due to the diverse habitat, a substantial amount of public land, and plentiful deer. This region includes 11 counties in the eastern half of Western New York, extending from Lake Ontario to the Pennsylvania line, and comprises two broad ecological areas. The northern half of the region (the Lake Plains ecozone) is characterized by productive flat-to-rolling agricultural land interspersed with small woodlots and contains higher levels of residential areas and road development. The southern portion of the region (the Appalachian Plateau ecozone) has higher elevations with hilly terrain, larger tracts of woodlands, farmland restricted to the valleys and hilltops, and less development. With the better soils and correspondingly higher percentage of agriculture in the north, food supplies are generally more plentiful there, and winters are usually relatively mild. The southern half of the region, with its higher elevations, generally has harsher winters, and its poorer soils and lower percentage of agriculture make for less abundant deer food and slightly poorer deer habitat.

Region 8 continues to be a tale of two ecozones: deer populations are over objective in the north, and below objective in the south. Although actual deer densities are quite similar in both areas, higher human density and associated activities in the north compared to the south result in different social tolerances for deer, which in turn necessitates different population objectives.

The total 2018 deer harvest in Region 8 was 59,547, a 10.8% increase from 2017 with an increased harvest in all 15 Wildlife Management Units (WMUs). Compared to the 2017 season, the adult buck take rose 2.1%, and the antlerless harvest increased 17.9%. While the total buck harvest was up in nine units, down in five units, and essentially unchanged in one unit, the decline in the number of yearling bucks harvested in all units indicates that more hunters are voluntarily letting young bucks go to watch them grow. This should lead to an increased harvest of 2 ½-year-old and 3 ½-year-old bucks this fall. Even with the increased antlerless harvest last year, the fourth mild winter in a row should continue the trend of good numbers of does and yearlings. An unusually wet spring delayed planting for many farmers, so standing corn during the hunting season will provide cover for deer and make deer harvest a bit more challenging in some areas.

Regional allocation of Deer Management Permits (DMPs) will increase by about 1% for the 2019 hunting season. On November 1, leftover DMPs will be available on a first-come, first-served basis in several WMUs.

Unit Summaries for the 2019 Season

The following summaries for each Wildlife Management Unit in Region 8 include a review of the deer population, harvest expectations, a harvest graph, and a landcover graph. Included in the summary is a term called the Buck Take Objective (BTO), which is the number of antlered bucks expected to be harvested per square mile when the deer population within the WMU is at the desired level as determined by a Citizen Task Force (CTF). The BTO is not the estimated take for the coming season, but rather is the objective of management efforts. The annual buck harvest and other indices are used as a gauge of population size within each WMU, and its relationship to the desired population level. The DEC is currently transitioning to a new survey-based public input process which will incorporate the input of citizens throughout New York State to help biologists set deer population objectives. Because some portions of the counties in Region 8 fall within WMUs managed by other regions (7R, 7S, 9H, 9P), please read the forecasts of other DEC regions if you are interested in hunting there.
WMU 8A

Area = 419 mile²  
2018 Buck Take = 3.6 bucks harvested per mile²  
BTO = 2.1 bucks harvested per mile²  
2018 Total Deer Take = 9.1 deer harvested per mile²  

WMU 8A is situated primarily in northern Orleans and Monroe Counties and contains very little public land, except for a small portion of Braddock Bay Wildlife Management Area, where shotgun and archery hunting for deer is allowed. The terrain is mostly flat to gently rolling and has an abundance of agriculture interspersed with small woodlots, making for excellent habitat and large deer. The total adult buck take hit another new high (12.6% increase over 2017) and the deer population remains well above objective. We will offer an increased number of DMPs in 2019, and all categories of applicants will have a high chance of selection for both first- and second-choice permits.

WMU 8C

Area = 138 mile²  
2018 Buck Take = 0.9 bucks harvested per mile²  
BTO = None  
2018 Total Deer Take = 2.2 deer harvested per mile²  

WMU 8C is a small “bow hunting only” unit surrounding the City of Rochester in Monroe County and has historically harbored a high deer population relative to the associated human development. Archery hunting is allowed on the Braddock Bay Wildlife Management Area. Deer harvest in 8C is governed largely by land access, not number of permits available, and there is no shortage of deer for those willing to hunt the fringes of “suburbia”. Chances of selection for DMPs will be high for all categories of applicants for both first- and second-choice permits. Because hunting access is limited, applicants are advised to secure a hunting location before applying for DMPs. It is also a good idea for hunters to check local ordinances regarding the discharge of bows. Deer hunters in this unit must have passed a Bowhunter Education course, and the only legal hunting implement for all big game seasons is bow and arrow. No crossbows may be used to hunt deer in 8C.
WMU 8F

Area = 733 mile

2 2018 Buck Take = 3.6 bucks harvested per mile

BTO = 2.0 bucks harvested per mile

2018 Total Deer Take = 9.2 deer harvested per mile

WMU 8F occupies most of Wayne and a portion of Monroe County and contains a good deal of agriculture, including significant orchard acreage. The terrain is flat to rolling in the northern portion of the unit, with numerous drumlins (glacially carved hills) in the south. Large wetlands and significant forest cover exist, particularly in the northeast portion of the unit. There is ample public hunting land in eastern 8F, including Lake Shore Marshes Wildlife Management Area and portions of Northern Montezuma Wildlife Management Area. Harvest increased in 2018, but even with liberally allocated DMPs, the unit’s deer herd remains substantially over objective. WMU 8F is great deer habitat and there will be no lack of deer for hunters in the unit. Chances of selection for DMPs will be high for all categories of applicants for both first- and second-choice permits.

WMU 8G

Area = 686 mile

2 2018 Buck Take = 4.3 bucks harvested per mile

BTO = 2.3 bucks harvested per mile

2018 Total Deer Take =11.2 deer harvested per mile

WMU 8G comprises most of Genesee County and the southern portion of Orleans County. It contains a large expanse of state and federal land in the western part of the unit, including Oak Orchard and Tonawanda Wildlife Management Areas, John White Wildlife Management Area, and Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge. This unit has some of the region’s best agricultural land, and the deer habitat here is among the most productive in the state. Land is flat to gently rolling, with small woodlots interspersed with farms and wetlands. WMU 8G has seen a steady increase in buck harvest the past two years, and the antlerless harvest increased in 2018 after a decline in 2017. The unit is still substantially over-objective and in need of herd reduction. DEC is seeking feedback from hunters on taking more antlerless deer in 8G because DMP issuance has reached the limit of its effectiveness. Chances of selection for DMPs will be high for all categories of applicants for both first- and second-choice permits.
WMU 8H

Area = 574 mile²  
BTO = 2.8 bucks harvested per mile²  
2018 Buck Take = 4.3 bucks harvested per mile²  
2018 Total Deer Take = 12.1 deer harvested per mile²

WMU 8H includes parts of Livingston, Monroe, and Ontario Counties and has a limited amount of public land accessible for hunting at Honeoye Creek Wildlife Management Area and Rush Oak Openings Unique Area. This is a typical Lake Plains unit with an ideal mix of habitat resulting in large, healthy deer and a productive population that has resisted our efforts at herd reduction. The supply of available DMPs in 8H continues to exceed demand by hunters; therefore, additional means of taking antlerless deer in 8H are clearly needed. The buck harvest in 2018 remained the same as 2017, but the antlerless harvest increased from the previous fall. Hunters in this unit should expect to find plenty of deer again this hunting season. We will increase the number of DMPs available in 8H this year and chances of selection for DMPs will be high for all categories of applicants for both first- and second-choice permits.

WMU 8J

Area = 712 mile²  
BTO = 2.1 bucks harvested per mile²  
2018 Buck Take = 2.7 bucks harvested per mile²  
2018 Total Deer Take = 6.5 deer harvested per mile²

WMU 8J includes portions of Seneca, Wayne, Ontario, and Yates Counties, with a moderate amount of public hunting land available at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, Cayuga Lake Unit of Northern Montezuma Wildlife Management Area, Galen Wildlife Management Area and Canoga Marsh Wildlife Management Area. The row crops grown in this WMU help to produce large and healthy farmland deer. The buck take in 8J fluctuated a bit in recent years, but the buck harvest in 2018 remained the same as the previous fall. The antlerless harvest increased from the previous year, but the population continues to remain above objective. We will offer slightly fewer DMPs in 2019, but the chances of selection for DMPs will remain high for all categories of applicants for both first- and second-choice permits.
WMU 8M

Area = 307 mile²
BTO = 3.9 bucks harvested per mile²
2018 Buck Take = 5.0 bucks harvested per mile²
2018 Total Deer Take = 12.3 deer harvested per mile²

WMU 8M is situated primarily within southern Livingston County and holds plenty of public land, including Conesus Inlet Wildlife Management Area, Sonyea State Forest, and Letchworth State Park. A transitional unit between our Lake Plains and Appalachian Plateau ecozones, it contains both open agricultural land to the north and higher wooded hills to the south. The deer population has risen steadily in the last decade and remains above objective. The buck harvest decreased slightly in 2018, but antlerless harvest has been rising steadily. The strategy in this unit is to continue to apply pressure to bring the deer population back toward objective. DMP supply has not exceeded demand in 8M, so the tools to accomplish the necessary antlerless harvest are available. Hunters in 8M this season should see very similar numbers of deer in the woods as last year. Chances of selection for DMPs will be high for all applicants for both first- and second-choice permits.

WMU 8N

Area = 314 mile²
BTO = 4.6 bucks harvested per mile²
2018 Buck Take = 5.6 bucks harvested per mile²
2018 Total Deer Take = 15.9 deer harvested per mile²

WMU 8N includes southern Ontario and smaller portions of Livingston and Yates Counties. Many diverse public hunting lands are available in this largely wooded and hilly Western Finger Lakes unit, including Hemlock-Canadice State Forest, High Tor Wildlife Management Area, Honeoye Inlet Wildlife Management Area, Stid Hill Wildlife Management Area, and Bare Hill Unique Area. The deer population in 8N may have dropped slightly over past years, but it is still higher than objective. The buck take decreased slightly in 2018, but antlerless harvest increased after a decline in 2017. High doe removals in past years have failed to bring the population down to objective, so we will offer a record number of DMPs this fall. Fortunately, lack of demand for DMPs has not been a problem in this unit. WMU 8N continues to have one of the highest buck harvest per square mile of any unit in the state, and that trend is expected to continue. Chances of selection for DMPs will be high for all categories of applicants for both first- and second-choice permits.
WMU 8P

Area = 356 mile²  
2018 Buck Take = 3.5 bucks harvested per mile²  
BTO = 4.2 bucks harvested per mile²  
2018 Total Deer Take = 6.0 deer harvested per mile²

WMU 8P is located in northern Steuben County and contains a fair amount of public land for hunting, including Cold Brook Wildlife Management Area, Pigtail Hollow State Forest, and Urbana State Forest. The terrain is rolling to hilly, with a balanced mix of both farmland and forest. The deer population in 8P has been substantially below objective for well over a decade and has resisted our efforts to raise it through conservative DMP issuance and low removal of does. The buck take has been slowly and steadily increasing the past four years, which may indicate the population is moving toward the current objective. However, the objective may be unrealistically high given current conditions in the unit, and the objective may be altered in the future after evaluation of public input surveys. Hunters this fall should expect similar numbers of deer sightings to last year, and DMP allocation will remain stable. As in 2018, residents will have a medium chance of getting a first-choice DMP, but no other permits will be available.

WMU 8R

Area = 270 mile²  
2018 Buck Take = 5.3 bucks harvested per mile²  
BTO = 4.2 bucks harvested per mile²  
2018 Total Deer Take = 16.1 deer harvested per mile²

WMU 8R includes most of Yates County, as well as parts of Steuben and Schuyler Counties, and has a fair amount of public hunting land, including Italy Hill State Forest. Large rolling hills predominate, with an ample amount of farmland in the valleys and on hilltops, including significant vineyard acreage. The buck harvest increased in 2018, after a decrease in 2017, and this unit continues to be among the top in the state in terms of buck harvest density. The deer numbers in this unit remain over objective; therefore, we will offer an increased number of DMPs this fall. Chances of selection for DMPs will be high for all categories of applicants for both first- and second-choice permits.
WMU 8S

Area = 256 mile²  
BTO = 2.8 bucks harvested per mile²  
2018 Buck Take = 3.1 bucks harvested per mile²  
2018 Total Deer Take = 6.9 deer harvested per mile²

WMU 8S includes portions of Schuyler and Seneca Counties and is home to the Finger Lakes National Forest, a large tract of federal land open to hunting. Texas Hollow State Forest and Willard Wildlife Management Area are also available for deer hunting. Topography is flat in most of the unit except for the southwest corner. The buck harvest in 2018 remained at 3.1 per square mile as in 2017, and the antlerless harvest increased, as it had in the previous 3 years. Management efforts will be centered on keeping the population stable and we will offer the same amount of DMPs this year as in 2018. The chances of DMP selection will be high on first-choice permits for all applicants and medium on second-choice permits for residents. No second permits for non-residents will be available.

WMU 8T

Area = 385 mile²  
BTO = 4.8 bucks harvested per mile²  
2018 Buck Take = 4.5 bucks harvested per mile²  
2018 Total Deer Take = 8.4 deer harvested per mile²

WMU 8T is in central Steuben County and has ample public hunting land available throughout the unit, including Burt Hill State Forest, Cameron Mills State Forest, Cameron State Forest, Erwin Mountain State Forest, Erwin Wildlife Management Area, Helmer Creek Wildlife Management Area, Tracy Creek State Forest, and West Cameron Wildlife Management Area. This southern tier unit is hilly, with a mix of agriculture in the valleys and forested slopes. WMU 8P remains below objective despite low doe removals for many years. The buck harvest in 2018 remained the same as the previous year, while the antlerless harvest increased. Although recent winters have been very mild and have not had a major impact on deer survival, we will reduce DMP availability this year to bring the population toward objective. As in 2018, chances of DMP selection will be low on first-choice permits for residents and no other permits will be available.
WMU 8W
Area = 439 mile²  2018 Buck Take = 3.1 bucks harvested per mile²
BTO = 3.8 bucks harvested per mile²  2018 Total Deer Take = 5.4 deer harvested per mile²

WMU 8W contains portions of Chemung, Schuyler and Steuben Counties and has abundant public lands for hunting, including Beaver Dams State Forest, Birdseye Hollow State Forest, Catharine Creek Marsh Wildlife Management Area, Catlin State Forest, Cinnamon Lake State Forest, Coon Hollow State Forest, Dry Run State Forest, Erwin Hollow State Forest, Goudry Hill State Forest, Meads Creek State Forest, Moss Hill State Forest, Mount Washington Multiple Use Area, South Bradford State Forest, Sugar Hill State Forest, and West Hill State Forest. WMU 8W is one of the most forested units in Region 8, but open farmland does exist in the north and east portions of the unit. The buck harvest in 2018 remained the same as the previous fall, but it continues to be lower than objective. Because the population has not moved toward objective, even after years of low doe harvests, DMP allocation will continue to be conservative this year following an increase in antlerless harvest in 2018. Chances of DMP selection will be low on first-choice permits for residents. No other permits will be available.

WMU 8X
Area = 401 mile²  2018 Buck Take = 4.9 bucks harvested per mile²
BTO = 4.1 bucks harvested per mile²  2018 Total Deer Take = 10.9 deer harvested per mile²

WMU 8X is located within southwestern Steuben County, with a small portion in Allegany County (Region 9). This unit has a fair amount of public land available, including Canacadea State Forest, Greenwood State Forest, McCarthy Hill State Forest, Rock Creek State Forest, and Turkey Ridge State Forest. The unit is comprised of hilly topography, with the highest elevations and most forest cover in the northern portion of the WMU. A good deal of farmland occurs in the southern valleys, particularly along portions of the New York-Pennsylvania border. The deer population in WMU 8X is currently just above target. Both the buck and antlerless harvests increased slightly in 2018, after a drop in 2017. The harvest has remained relatively steady over past years, which makes predicting the response of the deer population to DMP issuance much easier. The management strategy for this unit is to maintain stability, so we will slightly increase DMP availability this year from last year’s amount. Chances of selection for DMPs will be high on first-choice selections for both residents and non-residents, and medium on second-choice permits for residents. Second permits will not be available for non-residents.
WMU 8Y

Area = 354 mile²  
BTO = 4.5 bucks harvested per mile²

2018 Buck Take = 3.6 bucks harvested per mile²
2018 Total Deer Take = 6.8 deer harvested per mile²

WMU 8Y occupies the southern half of Chemung and a small portion of Steuben County, with public land limited to Maple Hill State Forest. This unit is heavily forested, with 20% of the unit being agriculture lands and 10% is developed due to the cities of Corning and Elmira. Both buck and doe harvests have been trending together for the past decade, but the deer population has failed to rise to objective. It is likely that the objective is higher than what is realistically achievable, and public input surveys may alter the objective in the future. Antlerless harvest was up slightly in 2018, and buck harvest decreased slightly. The management strategy in 8Y is to maintain steady doe harvests to allow prediction of future buck takes. We will offer similar DMP availability as in 2018 and hunters can expect a season similar to last fall. As in 2018, chances of DMP selection will be high on first-choice permits for all applicants and low on second-choice permits for residents. No second permits will be available for non-residents.

Robin Phenes
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