

We also detected some differences between hunters who spent the most time hunting in the Southeastern BMZ and hunters in some other BMZs. Specifically, hunters using the Southeastern BMZ most often:

- were more likely than hunters from the Southern Tier BMZ to view further reduction of young bucks in the harvest as very important (Table 15).
- were more likely than hunters from the Southern Tier BMZ or the Northwestern BMZ to accept some limitations on opportunity to further reduce the proportion of young bucks in the harvest (Table 16).
- were more likely than hunters from the Southern Tier BMZ, the Adirondack BMZ, and the Northwestern BMZ to accept some limitations on freedom to take any buck in order to achieve further reduction in the proportion of young bucks in the harvest (Table 17).

Table 15. Importance hunters placed on further reducing the proportion of young bucks in the harvest, by buck management zone hunted most often.

Importance	Buck Management Zone					
	Mohawk Valley	Southern Tier	Southeastern	Lake Plains	Adirondack	Northwestern
	(n=210)	(n=659)	(n=639)	(n=253)	(n=147)	(n=158)
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Not important (0)	23.3	25.2	20.2	20.6	25.8	27.8
1	8.1	7.5	8.8	9.1	7.5	8.9
2	19.5	16.8	12.5	15.4	15.0	12.7
3	16.7	20.0	17.8	20.1	21.1	21.5
Very important (4)	26.7	23.5	34.7	25.7	23.8	24.1
Unsure	5.7	7.0	6.0	9.1	6.8	5.0

Table 16. Hunter willingness to accept some limitations on buck hunting opportunity to achieve a reduction in harvest of young bucks, by buck management zone hunted most often.

Willingness	Buck Management Zone					
	Mohawk Valley	Southern Tier	Southeastern	Lake Plains	Adirondack	Northwestern
	(n=212)	(n=661)	(n=639)	(n=253)	(n=147)	(n=158)
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Not willing (0)	22.1	25.0	19.1	18.2	29.3	32.3
1	14.2	11.8	8.5	9.1	10.9	7.0
2	12.7	13.6	12.2	14.6	10.9	13.9
3	17.5	17.2	20.3	22.9	14.3	14.6
Very willing (4)	29.7	28.2	35.7	32.4	30.5	28.5
Unsure	3.8	4.2	4.2	2.8	4.1	3.7

Table 17. Hunter willingness to accept some limitations on freedom to take any buck to achieve a reduction in harvest of young bucks, by buck management zone hunted most often.

Willingness	Buck Management Zone					
	Mohawk Valley	Southern Tier	Southeastern	Lake Plains	Adirondack	Northwestern
	(n=210)	(n=663)	(n=641)	(n=253)	(n=147)	(n=158)
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Not willing (0)	24.8	28.4	21.4	24.9	34.0	31.0
1	13.8	10.0	8.3	11.1	11.6	9.5
2	11.0	13.0	12.5	13.0	9.5	13.9
3	19.5	19.0	20.1	16.6	13.6	15.8
Very willing (1)	29.0	25.5	33.9	32.4	26.5	26.6
Unsure	1.9	4.1	3.8	2.0	4.8	3.2

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The primary purpose of this study was to obtain data on hunter satisfactions needed for a quantitative analysis that will evaluate strategies for reducing harvest of yearling bucks. Each strategy has implications for hunter satisfaction, deer population growth, and costs for deer program administration. Our findings support the assumption that deer hunter satisfaction in New York is determined by a range of factors. For example, many deer hunters reported that keeping the current number of days and weekends in the regular firearms deer season, continuing to have the opportunity to take any buck they choose, seeing more deer, and seeing and having a chance to take more large-antlered deer were all important to their level of satisfaction with deer hunting in New York.

Statewide, “opportunity to take at least one deer” was ranked as the most important dimension of hunter satisfaction. Opportunity to take a big-antlered buck and opportunity to take any buck one chooses were ranked second in importance; non-buck satisfaction (i.e., overall hunting opportunity, complexity of regulations) ranked third in importance. The finding that “opportunity to take a big-antlered buck” and “opportunity to take any buck I choose” were ranked similarly reflects the division of opinion about these topics in the hunter community. Findings on these topics are similar to those from the 2010 statewide survey of New York deer hunters (Enck et al. 2011), which found that the hunter population was about evenly split on whether they favored freedom to choose any buck, versus restricting freedom of choice to increase the odds of encountering and shooting a big-antlered buck.

The findings indicate high interest in opportunity to see and shoot more big-antlered bucks, especially in the Southeastern BMZ, but a mix of views on whether those opportunities are worth tradeoffs in personal freedom to take any currently-defined legal buck.

Study Limitations

The fact that a portion of respondents did not correctly complete the question where they were asked to rank seven dimensions of deer harvest satisfaction from most important (rank #1) to least important (rank #7) raises questions about using ranking items in future deer hunter surveys. In this case, we are confident that the ranking information is an accurate reflection of respondents’ views, because findings from the ranking analysis are generally consistent with those found when we analyzed how respondents rated the 16 individual elements of deer hunting satisfaction. Nevertheless, in future studies of hunter satisfaction, we recommend that respondents be asked to rank fewer dimensions of satisfaction.

A portion of respondents did not report the WMU where they had hunted deer most often over the previous five years. That reduced sample size available for analysis of results by BMZ. Moreover, sample sizes were reduced further because the original sampling strategy was selected without knowledge of the boundaries that would later be set for BMZs. Some BMZs were over-sampled and others were under sampled. Though we were able to assess ratings and rankings of hunter satisfaction components within and between BMZs, varying sample intensity precluded comparison between hunter groups by BMZ on multiple variables (e.g, importance rankings by self-reported hunter identity, interest in harvesting antlerless deer, or DMP application history).

Next Steps

Results from analysis of the satisfaction ranking data were provided to NYCFWRU researchers and are being used as inputs for a quantitative decision-making framework. The framework involves a process of modeling the effects that implementing any of several deer management alternatives would have on three fundamental objectives for deer management (i.e., maximizing hunter satisfaction, minimizing the impact on DEC's ability to monitor and control deer populations, and minimizing program administration costs to DEC). NYCFWRU researchers are currently finalizing their analysis, in collaboration with a DEC project contact team. DEC staff will present results of that analysis to hunters in various venues.

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13. How often would you voluntarily pass up a shot at a small-antlered buck under the following conditions? (Check [X] one box per line.)

(Never = 0% of time; Rarely = less than 25% of the time;
 Sometimes = less than half the time; Often = more than half the time; Very often = more than three-fourths of the time)
 Always = 100% of the time.)

How often would you pass up a shot at a small-antlered buck if...	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often	Always	Unsure
Most other hunters were also voluntarily passing up shots at small-antlered bucks	<input type="checkbox"/>						
It was the last day of hunting season and you had not taken <u>any deer</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>						
It was the last day of the hunting season and you had not taken <u>a buck</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Voluntary restraint was promoted (by DEC or local hunting organizations) to result in more big-antlered bucks in the area you hunt most often	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Deer density was low with few buck encounters	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Deer density was high with frequent buck encounters	<input type="checkbox"/>						

PART V:

YOUR VIEWS ON THE PROPORTION OF YEARLING BUCKS IN THE TOTAL BUCK HARVEST

Note: In recent years, yearling bucks (1.5 year olds that average about 4 total antler points) have comprised just over half (57%) of the total buck harvest in New York (excluding pilot antler restriction areas), down from over 70% in the 1990s. In other words, older bucks (≥ 2.5 years old that average about 7 total antler points) have increased in the population and in the harvest.

14. How important is it to you that the proportion of young bucks in the harvest be reduced further? (0= “not important” and 4 = “very important.” Check [✓] one box.)

Not important				Very important	Unsure
0	1	2	3	4	
<input type="checkbox"/>					

15. How willing are you to accept some limitations on your buck hunting opportunity to achieve an overall reduction of yearling bucks in the harvest? (Please check [✓] one box.)

Not willing				Very willing	Unsure
0	1	2	3	4	
<input type="checkbox"/>					

16. How willing are you to accept some restrictions on your freedom to shoot a buck of any age or size to achieve an overall reduction of yearling bucks in the harvest? (Please check [✓] one box.)

Not willing				Very willing	Unsure
0	1	2	3	4	
<input type="checkbox"/>					

APPENDIX B (CALCULATION OF WEIGHT FACTORS)

Table B1. Calculation of stratum weight factors.

Stratum label	Responses	Non respondents	Total	% of licenses	Respondents in proportion	Weight Factor
Nassau/Suffolk/ Westchester	331	637	968	0.07	190	0.575
Adirondack	377	599	976	0.08	217	0.576
Northwestern	401	559	960	0.08	215	0.536
Remainder of NYS	1610	2215	3825	0.77	2096	1.302
Total	2719	4,010	6,729		2719	

APPENDIX C (RESPONDENT – NONRESPONDENT COMPARISONS)

Table C1. A comparison of respondents to the 2013 deer hunter survey to a sample of nonrespondents on number of years deer hunting.

	n	Respondents	Non-respondents
		2659	260
Mean number of years hunted		32.2	21.9
Median number of years hunted		34.0	20.0
Range		0 – 75 years	0 – 65 years

Table C2. A comparison of respondents to the 2013 deer hunter survey to a sample of nonrespondents.

	Respondents (n=2656)	Nonrespondents (n=241)	χ^2	P value
Have hunted deer in NY in the last 5 years				
Yes	92.7	90.0	2.165	NS
No	7.3	10.0		

Table C3. Number of days per year respondents and nonrespondents typically hunted deer during archery, regular firearms, or muzzleloader seasons, during the last 5 years. (Note: includes only those who reported having hunted deer sometime in the last 5 years.)

Deer hunting seasons	n	Number of days hunted/year				χ^2	P value
		0	1-2	3-7	8+		
Archery seasons							
Respondents	1957	39.1	6.9	17.6	36.3	43.959	<0.001
Nonrespondents	217	59.9	5.1	12.9	22.1		
Regular firearms seasons							
Respondents	2425	0.9	6.0	28.3	64.9	41.735	<0.001
Nonrespondents	217	2.3	9.7	30.4	57.6		
Muzzleloader seasons							
Respondents	1988	34.8	17.2	31.2	16.9	43.836	<0.001
Nonrespondents	217	53.9	18.0	19.8	8.3		

Table C4. Comparison of respondents and nonrespondents on self-reported hunter type. (Note: includes only those who reported having hunted deer sometime in the last 5 years.)

I consider myself primarily a...	Respondents (n=2405)		Nonrespondents (n=216)		χ^2	P value
	n	%	n	%		
Bowhunter	218	9.1	25	11.6	4.501	NS
Gun hunter (regular firearms season)	1105	45.9	112	51.9		
Muzzleloader hunter	15	0.6	2	0.9		
Multi-season hunter	1067	44.4	77	35.6		

Table C5. Level of hunter satisfaction with current hunting conditions in the WMU where they hunted most often in 2012.

	n	Satisfied	Neither	Dissatisfied	χ^2	P value
			(%)			
Overall opportunity to be in the field						
Respondents	2491	81.8	10.9	7.3	7.470	0.024
Nonrespondents	241	85.9	5.4	8.7		
Opportunity to take at least 1 deer (any kind)						
Respondents	2479	65.3	18.3	16.3	27.554	<0.001
Nonrespondents	241	81.3	7.1	11.6		
Opportunity to take at least 1 buck (any size)						
Respondents	2487	61.0	20.9	18.1	31.122	<0.001
Nonrespondents	241	77.6	7.5	14.9		
Deer hunting rules/regulations						
Respondents	2494	58.7	24.9	16.4	37.771	<0.001
Nonrespondents	241	74.3	7.5	18.3		
Buck hunting rules/regulations						
Respondents	2492	58.4	24.8	16.8	46.303	<0.001
Nonrespondents	241	80.5	9.1	10.4		
Opportunity to take more than 1 buck						
Respondents	2469	45.2	33.5	21.4	31.750	<0.001
Nonrespondents	241	58.1	15.8	26.1		
Opportunity to take a big-antlered deer						
Respondents	2493	41.6	32.9	25.8	40.138	<0.001
Nonrespondents	241	61.0	15.8	23.2		