



Romaine Robert Quinn

STATE SENATOR • 25TH SENATE DISTRICT

From: Senator Romaine Robert Quinn
To: Senate Committee on Financial Institutions and Sporting Heritage
Re: Testimony on Senate Bill 965
Relating to: the regulation of deer hunting in the northern forest zone
Date: February 14, 2024

Good afternoon chair Stafsholt and members of the committee. I'd like to thank you for the chance to voice my support of Senate Bill 965. I'd also like to thank Representatives Green and Sapik for the work they have done on this legislation in the Assembly.

I support Senate Bill 965 as amended because we need to address the declining deer herd numbers in Northern WI.

This past deer season we saw a decline in our harvest statewide by 17.6% from last year, and down 11% from the 5 year average. The numbers in the northern forest zone, which this bill targets, are much, much worse.

Ashland County -33.7%
Bayfield County -30.2%
Douglas County -27.6%
Iron County -56.1%
Sawyer County -26.7%

Cumulatively in the northern forest zone that is a **30.5%** drop.

By prohibiting open seasons exclusively for hunting antlerless deer and limiting authorizations to kill antlered deer, this bill promotes a crucial balance between conservation efforts and maintaining a healthy deer population in the northern part of our state.

Senate Amendment 1 would authorize hunters under the age of 16 to kill one deer, which can be antlered or antlerless. This would continue to encourage youth participation and offer some relief if there are areas where the doe herd is plentiful.

I urge you to support Senate Bill 965. Let's work together to give our deer herd some much needed relief in northern Wisconsin and preserve our hunting heritage for future generations.

Senator Romaine Quinn

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Romaine Quinn". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a horizontal line.

February 14th, 2024

Testimony on Senate Bill 965

Senate Committee on Financial Institutions and Sporting Heritage

Thank you, Chairman Stafsholt and other Senate committee members, for having a hearing on Senate Bill 965 relating to the regulation of deer hunting in the northern forest zone.

Deer hunting has been a tradition for generations in Northern Wisconsin. But those traditions have been thrown by the wayside because the population of deer has been decreasing for years. This year was no different. When it comes to the harvest totals in the Northern Forest Zone during the gun deer season, buck harvests were down 14.7% compared to the five-year average, and doe harvests were down 27.2% compared to the five-year average. This decline is the largest out of the deer management zones.

According to the DNR handout I gave everyone, out of the about 18 counties that occupy the Northern Forest Zone, about 13 counties need an increase in the deer population.

There could be several factors that could have led to the down deer harvest this year and the need to increase the deer population. The first is the harsh winters we have had for the past two years. The second could be the lack of food sources. The last factor could be the number of predators in Northern Wisconsin compared to the rest of the state. These include bears, coyotes, bobcats, and wolves.

After the miserable deer season up north, Northern Wisconsin legislators have held multiple listening sessions with hunters to figure out what to do to solve this issue. We have also heard from all sorts of hunters that they don't trust the DNR and the local arm of the DNR, which are the CDAC committees, when it comes to deer and other wildlife management. So that is where this bill came about.

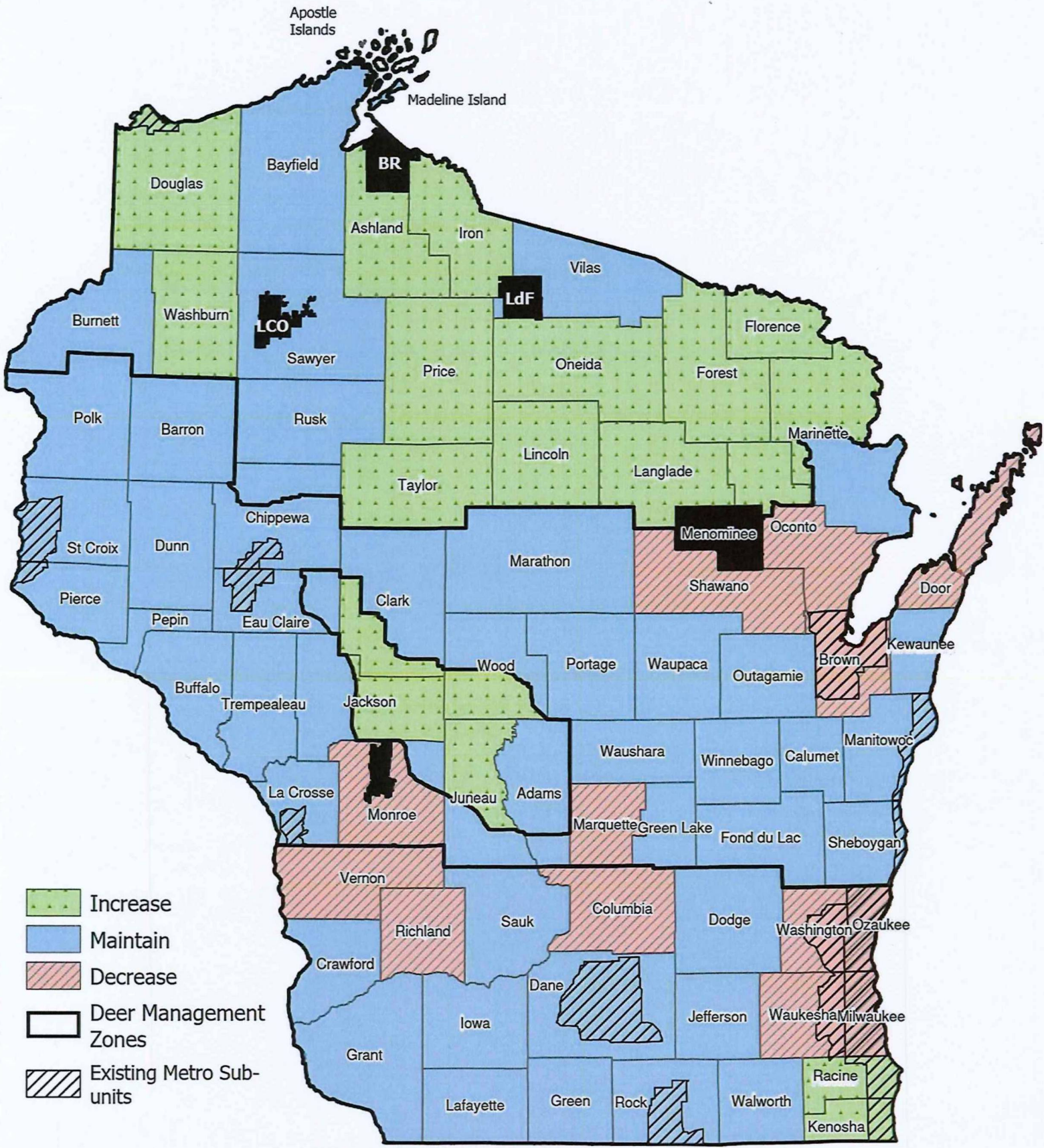
SB 965 does several things:

1. This bill would prohibit the DNR from establishing a hunting season on does in the Northern Forest Zone.
2. This bill would prohibit the DNR from issuing more than two buck tags per person in the Northern Forest Zone, meaning you only get one tag for a muzzle-loading firearm or a regular firearm. Then, you only get one tag for bow and arrow or crossbow.
3. These restrictions would last four years.

The purpose of this legislation is to work with the DNR, all the hunting groups, and the hunters up north over the next four years to put a proper deer management plan in place for Northern Wisconsin. We want future generations to enjoy the tradition of hunting in Northern Wisconsin, and this bill is a good start to making that happen.

I am grateful for the opportunity to work on this bill with my colleague from the Senate, Senator Quinn. Thank you for your time today, and thank you for your consideration of this bill.

Population Objectives, Deer Management Units and Deer Management Zones 2021-2023





Senate Committee on Financial Institutions and Sporting Heritage

2023 Senate Bill 965 *Deer Hunting in the Northern Forest Zone* *February 14, 2024*

Good afternoon, Chair Stafsholt, and members of the Committee. My name is Sam Jonas, and I am the Wildlife Species Section Supervisor for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR). With me today to help answer questions is Eric Lobner, Wildlife Management Program Director. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, for informational purposes, on Senate Bill 965 (SB 965), related to deer hunting in the Northern Forest Zone.

Hunters have a long history of being willing to make sacrifices in current harvest opportunity in order to improve future experiences. The legacy of prohibiting overharvest of our wild game has been honored for decades and appreciated by generations. We believe the intention of the proposed bill is a reflection of that commitment. However, our testimony will highlight several possibly unintended consequences of SB 965.

The bucks plus antlerless quota system has always provided for the option to hold a “bucks only” season on a unit-by-unit basis. It is the unusual year when there are no bucks only units. On occasion much of the north experiences a bucks only season; the most recent being in 2014 when 17 out of 18 units were bucks only. The 2019 harvest generated a similar buck harvest in the north as 2023, yet only Forest County was designated as a bucks only unit the following year. The buck harvest improved over the next 3 years while still providing over 20,000 northern forest deer hunters the opportunity to bring home venison in the form of an antlerless deer.

This bill creates a restriction in deer harvest opportunity without the involvement of our County Deer Advisory Councils (CDACs). Should this proposal become law, there would be multiple tradeoffs and unintended consequences that would occur. These include the following:

- a. Under the Deer Management Assistance Program, (DMAP) the department may issue antlerless permits to a participant to aid them in meeting management goals for their property. In the Northern Forest Zone, many participants enroll in the program because they are concerned about locally overabundant deer numbers but are unable to obtain antlerless permits over the counter. If the intent of the bill is to still allow antlerless permits to be issued to DMAP participants, we can anticipate an overwhelming increase in applications, requiring staffing resources to both process the applications and provide services to program participants. If the bill's intent is to restrict antlerless permits from being issued to DMAP participants, the value of the program would be significantly reduced, which could cause frustration for participants and have an overall negative impact to the program.
- b. The sale of antlerless permits provides nearly all the funding for the wildlife damage claims program, which provides compensation to agricultural producers who experience damage to crops and livestock caused by a variety of wildlife species. The prohibition of antlerless permit sales in the north will reduce funding by hundreds of thousands of dollars annually. This

- reduction in funding could be sufficient to cause us to prorate claims. Proration would impact producers statewide and cause much frustration.
- c. The sale of antlerless permits in CWD-affected counties generate the primary funding to support chronic wasting disease sampling and monitoring,
- d. Currently, the department issues Metro Subunit antlerless permits in Douglas County to help the City of Superior manage conflicts associated with high deer numbers. Under the bill, these permits could no longer be issued.
- e. Surveillance permits issued for enhanced CWD monitoring if needed in a county with a new positive detection would be limited to bucks only.
- f. The Apostle Islands National Lakeshore has a unique deer management strategy and permit authority designed to encourage deer harvest to protect the sensitive vegetation communities on the islands from over-browsing by deer. Additional buck harvest permits are granted to hunters for harvesting antlerless deer as an incentive. This bill would prevent this management strategy on the islands.
- g. Hunters aged 17 and under are issued an antlerless permit that is valid statewide to increase their opportunity to experience success early in their hunting career. This bill would render the Junior Antlerless permit invalid in the Northern Forest Zone for four years. The amendment that was introduced addresses this concern but does not fully resolve it.
- h. CDACs were established to seek public input and make recommendations on antlerless permit availability to the DNR. This bill would significantly reduce the role of CDACs in the Northern Forest Zone for four years.
- i. Antlerless harvest generates an age composition sample that is needed for population modeling. The proportion of the antlerless harvest that is 1.5 years old is a strong indicator of herd productivity. A four-year absence of aging data will significantly compromise the population tracking ability of the northern forest herd.

Additionally, there are some other unintended consequences that may occur. Although the Northern Forest Zone covers a relatively similar landscape dominated by forest, there is a measurable difference between the northern and southern tier counties related to average snow depth and ability to carry deer through the winter. While the northern tier counties hold bucks only seasons relatively often, they are rarely necessary in the southern tier counties. Holding successive bucks only seasons in these southern tier counties will likely allow deer numbers to increase to a level that puts excessive pressure on natural forage, reducing overall herd health and resilience, as well as increasing agriculture damage and deer-vehicle collisions.

Further, while the intention of the bill is directed toward recovery of deer numbers and ultimately recovery of hunter participation, it may have the opposite effect. Perceived lack of harvest opportunity may encourage some hunters to seek new opportunities in other parts of the state or discontinue hunting completely. Over the course of four years, new routines and traditions may become established. Even if harvest opportunity improves in the north, we cannot expect that hunters will return to previous routines.

Much of the dialogue that has occurred in recent years has been focused on recapturing the past with management techniques that were effective in the past. The world of deer hunting has changed over the past three decades. As we continue, our approach and expectations will need to be adjusted accordingly.

On behalf of the Department of Natural Resources, we would like to thank you for your time today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Greg “Kaz” Kazmierski

Past Natural Resources Board Chair

Written Testimony on Senate Bill 965
Committee on Financial Institutions and Sporting Heritage

Thank you Chair Stafsholt and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 965.

Whitetail deer have survived on this earth around 4 million years and have been able to not only sustain but thrive. Deer populations are influenced by many factors beyond those that we mere mortals believe we can regulate, manage or control. With Whitetails track history, the only thing that could jeopardize the future of Whitetail deer would be unsustainable cumulative mortality of female deer through natural causes, predation and hunting. Unregulated hunting brought them to the brink once and I believe on much of our public land in the north, many areas are at the tipping point right now. This is clearly illustrated in Iron Co. where Buck Only Seasons have been the norm for over a decade and the population has not recovered.

Hence the problem, we are not properly managing the one thing we can manage, mortality on females through hunting.

THE PROBLEM IS NOT... CWD, DMU Boundaries, Predation, Baiting, CDAC's, Poor Habitat, Season Dates, or the Kroll plan.

THE PROBLEM IS.... the willful and unlawful lack of execution by the DNR to fully implement the Deer Management Plan which is clearly laid out in Administrative Code. The fundamental change in the Kroll plan is that it is a “Harvest – Response” based quota system(See Chart 1) The management plan also has the ability to manage public land separately from private land. And most importantly, only quantitative data is used to determine population objectives and trends.

But, instead the DNR continues to rely on a population model. The Sex-Age-Kill (SAK) was reluctantly included in the Management Plan until the required metrics were established, despite the fact SAK model was totally discredited in 2006 by a panel of experts selected by the DNR to evaluate the model. The thing that stood out most in that report, paragraph (4) of the executive summary, “ at DMU Levels, the abundance estimates were within +or- 121.9% of the true population level. 95% of the time.” (See Page 2) This page of the handout has the portion of Administrative Code highlighted that pertains to the Sex-Age-Kill model. It is very clear the Dept. SHALL use SAK, and alternative methods of population evaluation must be approved by the NRB and publication in the state newspaper. I discovered several years in that the DNR's population estimate was not tracking with the SAK on my computer. After a meeting with staff they admitted they were no longer using SAK. I can tell you the method they are using today never came before the Board in my 12 years, it never had public scrutiny, passed a legitimate peer review, or was ever published in the state newspaper. The DNR is in direct defiance of

Administrative Code with this reformulated model that is proving itself to be actually worse than SAK.
(See Chart 3-7)

Because the DNR is so dug in on using an inaccurate modeled population estimate, CDAC's are given inaccurate information and are being intentionally misguided to ignore the hard data metrics established in the management plan. Lambda and suggested quotas are calculated based on inaccurate population estimates. Worse yet, Two of the fundamental metrics of the plan (the actual science) are still not being used or even worked on. Herd health which requires necropsies to see if deer are over carrying capacity by checking fat content, fetus production and so on, and probably the most important metric, browse surveys to provide actual data to determine deer's actual impacts on forests rather than anecdotal claims to cover up bad forest management practices, impact from invasives, climate conditions and so-on. Without these two vital metrics it is impossible to validate how many deer are too many deer from a biological perspective. GPS forest mapping was also part of the plan to provide CDAC's data on habitat being lost through ageing out and how much is being gained. Much of the state is using GPS mapping in many different ways while the DNR has yet to complete their mapping.

As for predation, with the Harvest - Response method all predation is accounted for in setting quotas. With the current method, only predation on fawns from May thru July are accounted for in the current system. There is no accounting considered about predation from the end of the gun season until fawns hit the ground in May.

So, the culprit here is the DNR by not complying with the Management Plan as written in Administrative Code. As a matter of fact they are in direct defiance of Administrative Code and making no attempt to conform. The NRB continued to be told we are working on it only to find out they never were.

As hunters we carry some of the responsibility too. There is a very simple solution to the problem. To allow the northern deer herd to recover we have to reduce female mortality...period. We also have to recognize that the easier we make it to kill deer the fewer there will be. Running the crossbow season concurrent with the archery season has resulted over 40% of the bucks harvested now being taken before the gun season begins. We cannot legally control the female mortality caused by wolves, bear, bobcat and even cougars, but we can control mortality caused by coyotes and hunters. Show up at your CDAC meetings and demand action. CDAC's were created to give you a voice and they need to hear from you loud and clear.

I would like to thank this committee and the authors of this Bill for hearing the concerns of hunters, you are the only option deer hunters have left to stop the DNR from the mismanagement of one of this states' most valued resources and cherished traditions.

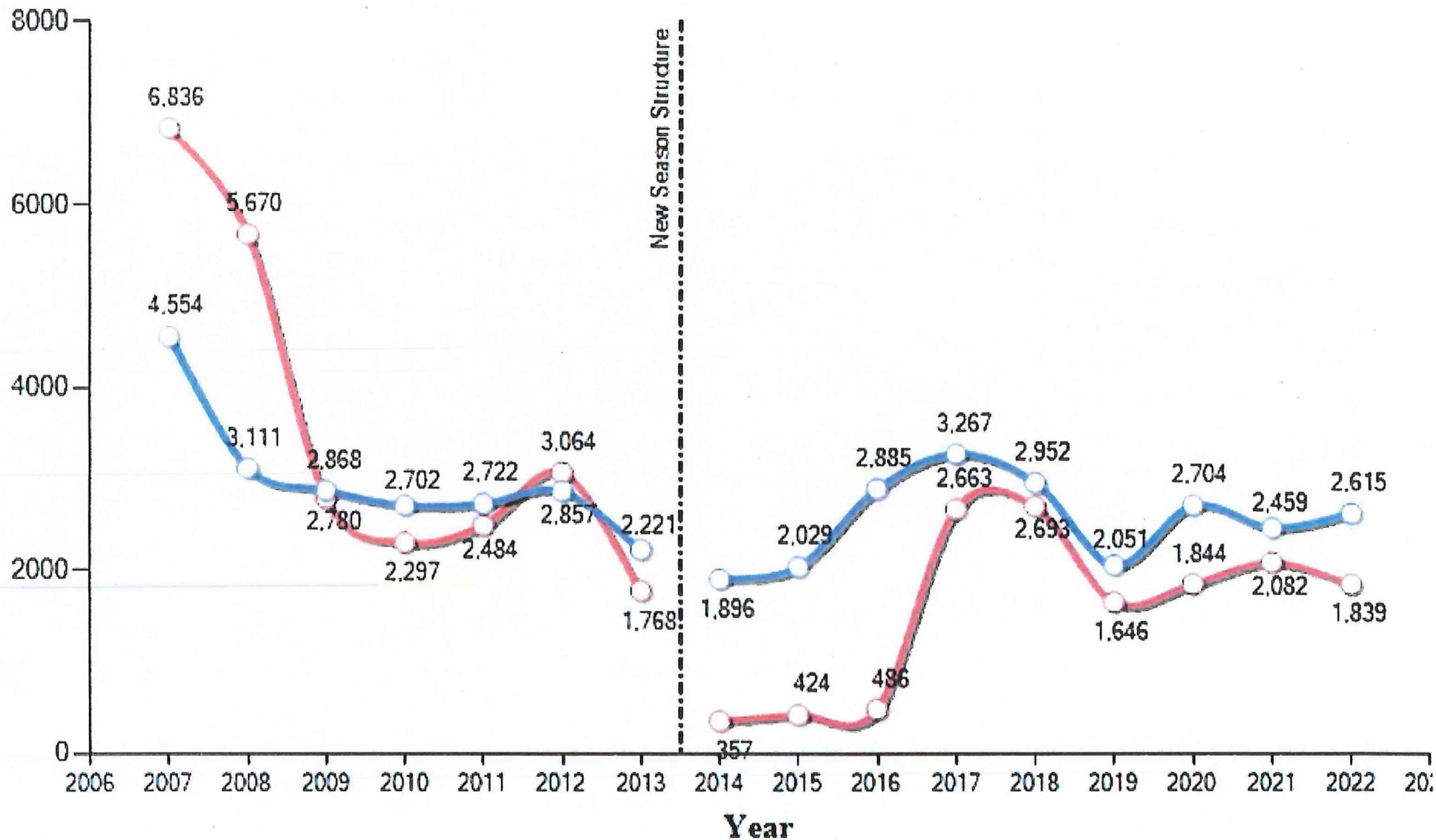
Greg Kazmierski

Bayfield Co.

Total Antlered & Antlerless Harvest

Historic High Buck Kill 6099 Yr 2000

Antlerless Harvest Antlered Harvest



group shall accept or reject Class A bear licenses for all members of their group.

(3) **LICENSE ISSUANCE.** The department shall select successful applicants and issue Class A bear license approval notices no later than February 15 of each year. The department may reissue a Class A bear license if the license is returned or if the applicant fails to or cannot comply with s. 29.184, Stats. Selection shall be by random drawing.

(4) **FEES.** A successful applicant shall submit the appropriate license fee established by s. 29.563 (2) (a) 6. or (b) 4., Stats., to the department before receiving a Class A bear license.

(6) **EDUCATIONAL PERMIT ISSUANCE.** Upon receipt of proper application, the department shall issue an educational permit for bear observation. The applicant shall include the location to the quarter section, times and dates of the activity, name of person and bear eco-tourism business or educational institution they are representing. The educational permit authorizes the permittee to observe or shine bear for educational purposes only pursuant to s. 29.314 (3) (b) 3. and (5) (b) 1., Stats.

(a) No person may be engaged in shining bear for educational purposes without being in possession of an educational permit.

(b) Only the named person on the permit may possess a firearm when participating in the actions authorized by the permit.

(c) The permit is restricted to use in a ground blind or elevated stand.

(d) The permit is not valid during the seasons established in s. NR 10.01 (3) (e) and (g) and the 7 consecutive days prior to those seasons.

History: Cr. Register, June, 1986, No. 366, eff. 7-1-86; am. (1) (a) to (d), Register, July, 1987, No. 379, eff. 8-1-87; am. (1), Register, June, 1988, No. 390, eff. 7-1-88; r. and recr. (1) (a), renum. (1) (b) to (e) and (2) to be (2) to (6), Register, October, 1988, No. 394, eff. 1-1-89; am. (1) (b), Register, September, 1991, No. 429, eff. 10-1-91; am. (1) (d), Register, February, 1993, No. 446, eff. 3-1-93; cr. (1) (e), Register, December, 1993, No. 456, eff. 1-1-94; am. (1) (d), cr. (1) (f), Register, August, 1996, No. 488, eff. 9-1-96; am. (1) (a) to (c), (e) 2., 3., (f), (3) and (4), renum. (2) to be (2) (a), cr. (2) (b), r. and recr. (5) and (6), Register, July, 1998, No. 511, eff. 8-1-98; CR 02-017: am. (1) (d) Register September 2002 No. 561, eff. 1-5-03; CR 02-018: am. (2) (b) and (4) Register September 2002 No. 561, eff. 10-1-02; CR 04-011: am. (4) Register September 2004 No. 585, eff. 11-1-04; CR 05-017: am. (2) (a) Register October 2005 No. 598, eff. 2-1-06; CR 06-012: am. (4), cr. (4m) Register December 2006 No. 612, eff. 2-1-07; CR 07-015: am. (1) (d) Register September 2007 No. 621, eff. 11-1-07; CR 09-024: am. (4m) (c) 2. Register May 2010 No. 653, eff. 6-1-10; CR 13-071: am. (1) (e) 4. Register July 2015 No. 715, eff. 8-1-15; correction in (4) made under s. 13.92 (4) (b) 7., Stats., Register November 2015 No. 719; CR 16-037: r. (5) Register April 2017 No. 736, eff. 5-1-17; CR 19-133: am. (1) (intro.), r. (1) (a), (d), (4m) Register June 2020 No. 774, eff. 7-1-20.

NR 10.103 Deer hunting. (1) HARVEST AUTHORIZATIONS. A harvest authorization shall be issued with each hunting license except when an archer license is issued to a person who has already been issued a crossbow license or when a crossbow license is issued to a person who has already been issued an archer license.

(2) **POSSESSION.** No person may possess a deer carcass in violation of the requirements for registration established under s. NR 10.086.

History: Cr. Register, Register, September, 1983, No. 333, eff. 10-1-83; r. and recr. Register, September, 1985, No. 357, eff. 10-1-85; renum. from NR 10.102, Register, June, 1986, No. 366, eff. 7-1-86; am. (1), Register, October, 1991, No. 430, eff. 11-1-91; am. (2), Register, May, 1993, No. 449, eff. 6-1-93; am. (2), Register, August, 1994, No. 464, eff. 9-1-94; emerg. am. (2), eff. 8-12-96; am. (1) and (2), Register, October, 1997, No. 502, eff. 11-1-97; CR 01-006: am. (1), Register August 2001 No. 548, eff. 9-1-01; EmR1420: emerg. am. (1), eff. 9-12-14; CR 13-071: am. (1) Register July 2015 No. 715, eff. 8-1-15; EmR1613: emerg. am. (1), r. and recr. (2), eff. 3-12-16; CR 17-061: am. (1), r. and recr. (2) Register February 2018 No. 746, eff. 3-1-18; EmR1902: emerg. am. (1) eff. 1-18-19; CR 19-005: am. (1) Register September 2019 No. 765, eff. 10-1-19; CR 20-087: am. (2) Register August 2021 No. 788, eff. 9-1-21.

NR 10.104 Deer population management. (1) DEER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM. The department shall manage the state deer population by all of the following:

(a) Establishing deer management unit boundaries within the state.

(b) Establishing deer population objectives for each deer management unit.

(c) Monitoring the performance of the deer populations within each deer management unit.

(d) Establishing deer hunting seasons and quotas with the appropriate antlerless deer permit levels to move the deer population in the direction of the established deer population objective for each deer management unit.

(2) **DEER MANAGEMENT UNITS; WHERE ESTABLISHED.** The deer management unit boundaries are the boundaries established in s. NR 10.28 (1) except for areas that are subdivided as:

(a) Metropolitan deer management subunits.

(b) Islands of the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore.

(c) Madeline Island in Ashland County.

(d) Being within the exterior boundaries of the Bad River, Lac Courte Oreilles, Lac du Flambeau, Menominee, and Red Cliff reservations.

(3) **THREE YEAR REVIEWS.** The department shall review, and seek public comment, regarding the need to modify the boundaries and population objectives for all deer management units every 3 years. For deer management units in the ceded territory as defined by s. NR 13.02 (1), the department shall also provide the Wisconsin Chippewa bands those opportunities for tribal input described in and required by the parties' stipulations in the case of Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Indians, et al., v. State of Wisconsin, et al., Case No. 74-C-313-C in the United States District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin.

(4) **DEER POPULATION OBJECTIVES.** A deer population objective shall be established for each management unit except for tribal reservation units identified in s. NR 10.28 (1). The department may establish a separate deer population objective and issue unique antlerless permits for areas which are subdivided into metropolitan deer management subunits and lands within the tribal reservation units identified in s. NR 10.28 (1) which are not owned by Indian tribal members or held in trust for the Indian tribe or for members of an Indian tribe. Deer population objectives will be expressed as a goal statement to do one of the following:

(a) Increase the deer population.

(b) Maintain the current deer population.

(c) Decrease the deer population.

(5) **DEER POPULATION MONITORING.** (a) *Metrics.* The department shall monitor progress towards each management unit's objective of increasing, maintaining, or decreasing the deer population. The department shall consider all of the following:

1. Deer health.

2. Deer impacts on natural resources.

3. Deer impacts on society.

4. Deer hunter success.

5. Car killed deer information.

6. Deer population trends and public perception of population trends.

a. In 2014 and continuing until the department determines that evaluation of the metrics are providing information that is comparable, the department shall utilize the sex-age-kill method for calculating deer densities. The sex-age-kill method uses the following quantitative data for each deer management unit: proportion of yearling bucks in the harvest, proportion of yearling does in the harvest, proportion of males and females at birth, the number of fawns seen per doe during the summer, the proportion of total buck mortality due to hunting harvest, and the harvest by sex as registered during the hunting seasons.

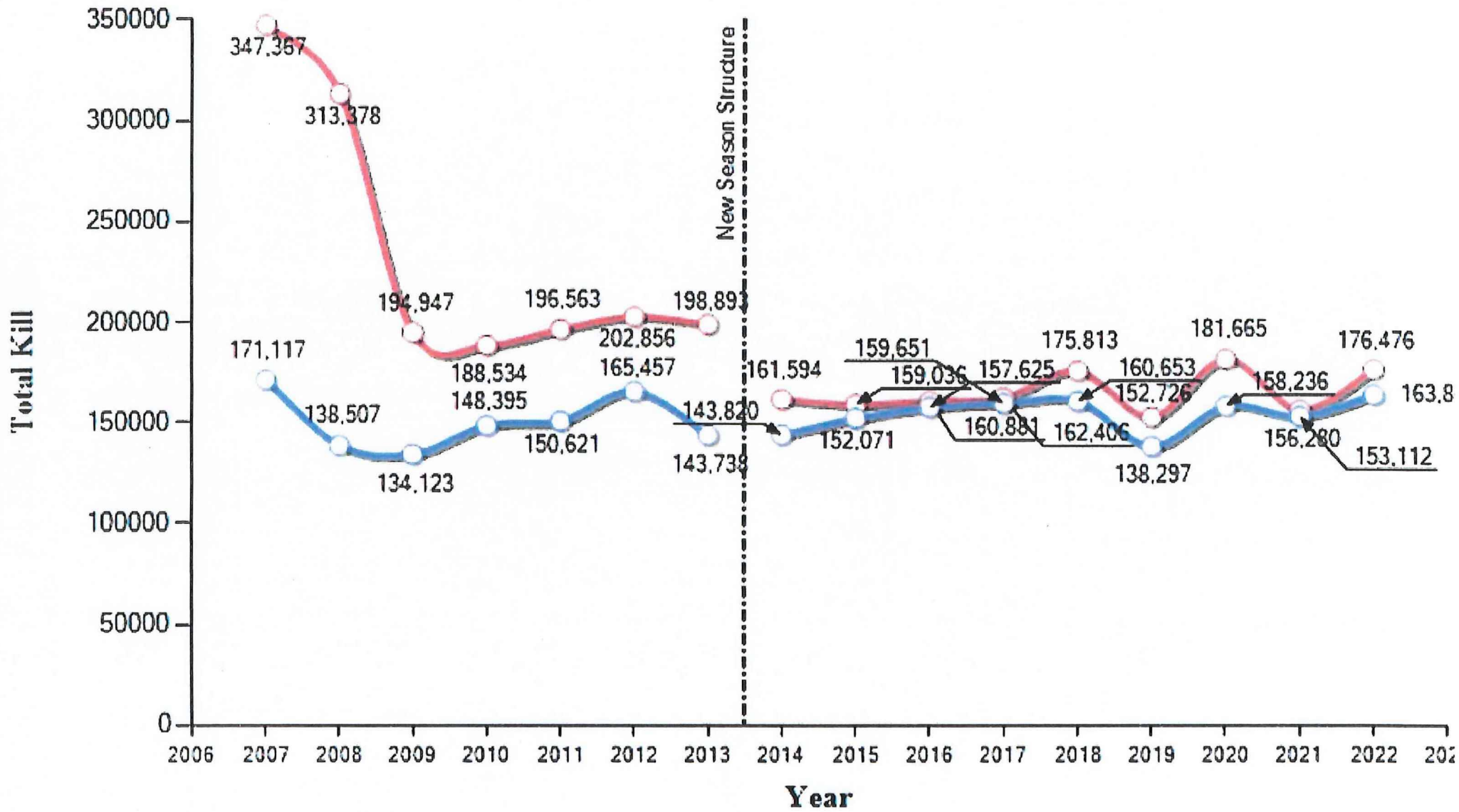
b. The department may make a determination that alternative methods of population evaluation are comparable, which shall become effective in lieu of or in addition to the sex-age-kill method after approval by the Natural Resources Board, and upon issuance of an order and publication in the official state newspaper.

Note: A determination under this paragraph does not prevent continued utilization of the sex-age-kill method as the department determines is valuable or necessary.

(b) *County deer management advisory councils.* The department shall establish county deer management advisory councils for the purpose of seeking comment from members of the public on the status of the deer herd at the county level. The council shall

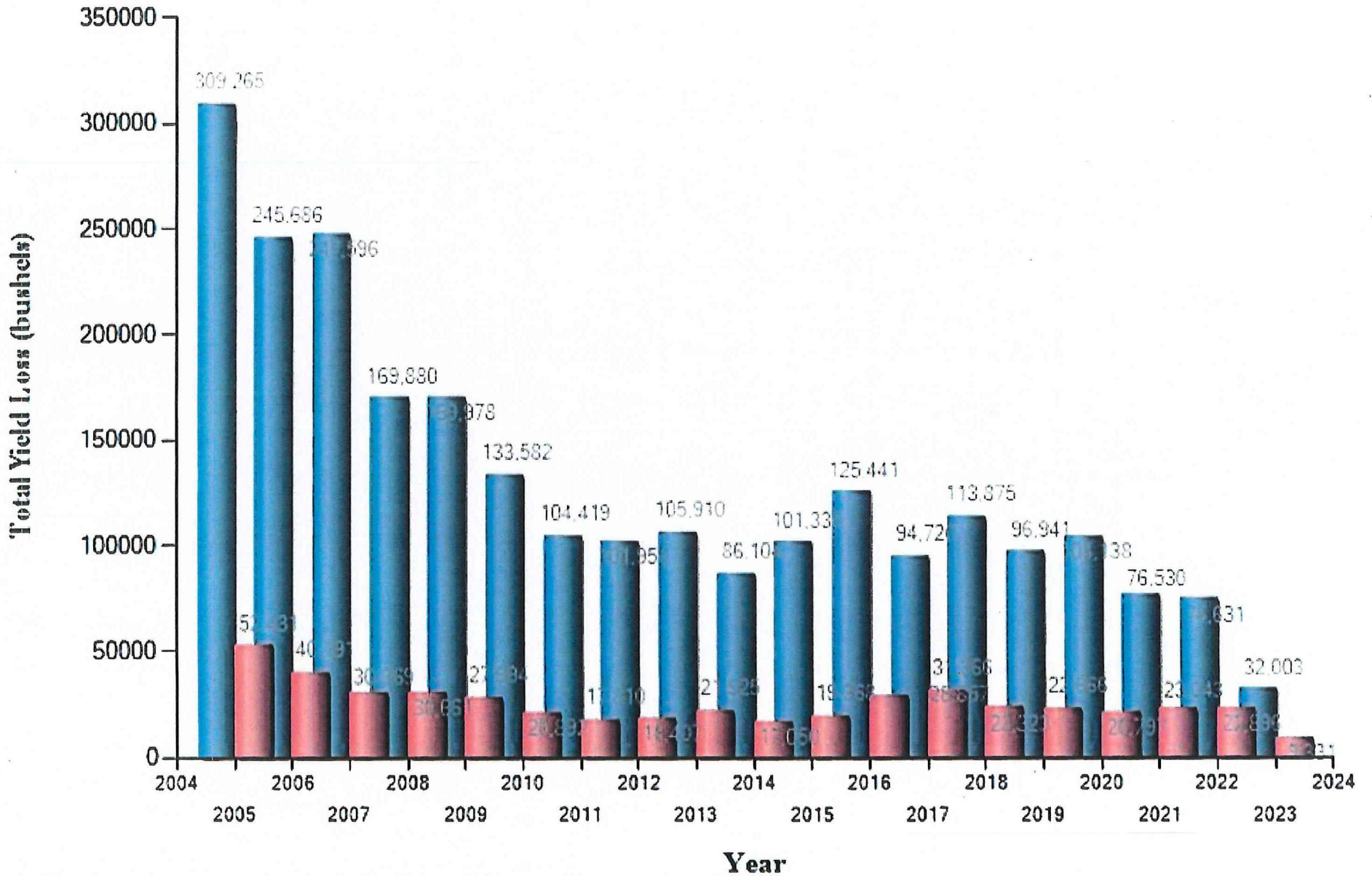
Total Antlered & Antlerless Harvest

Antlerless Harvest Antlered Harvest



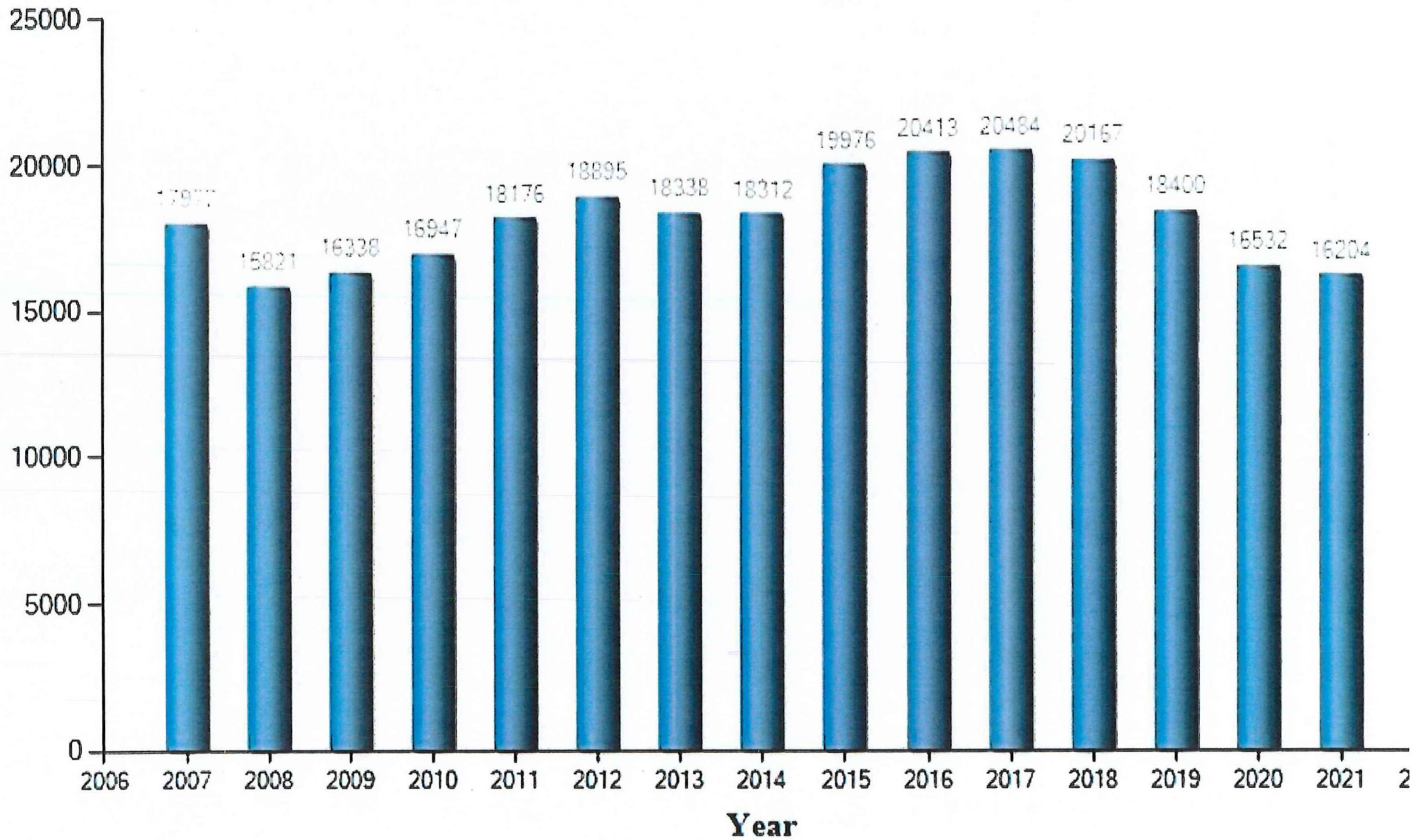
Yield Loss Due to Deer Damage

■ Total Corn Yield Loss (bushels)
 ■ Total Soybeans Yield Loss (bushels)



Deer Vehicle Collisions

■ Deer Vehicle Collisions

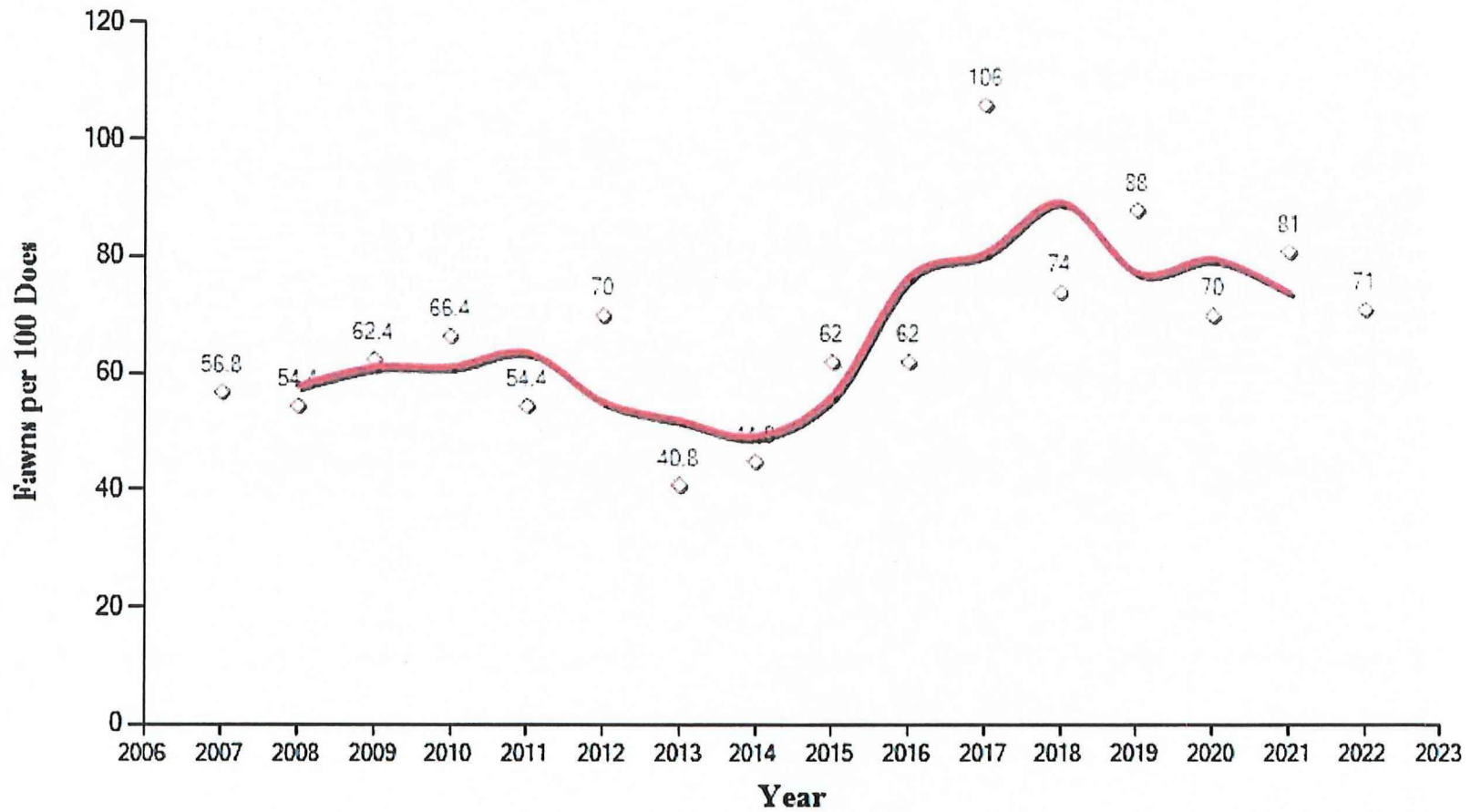


Fawn to Doe Ratio (Group)

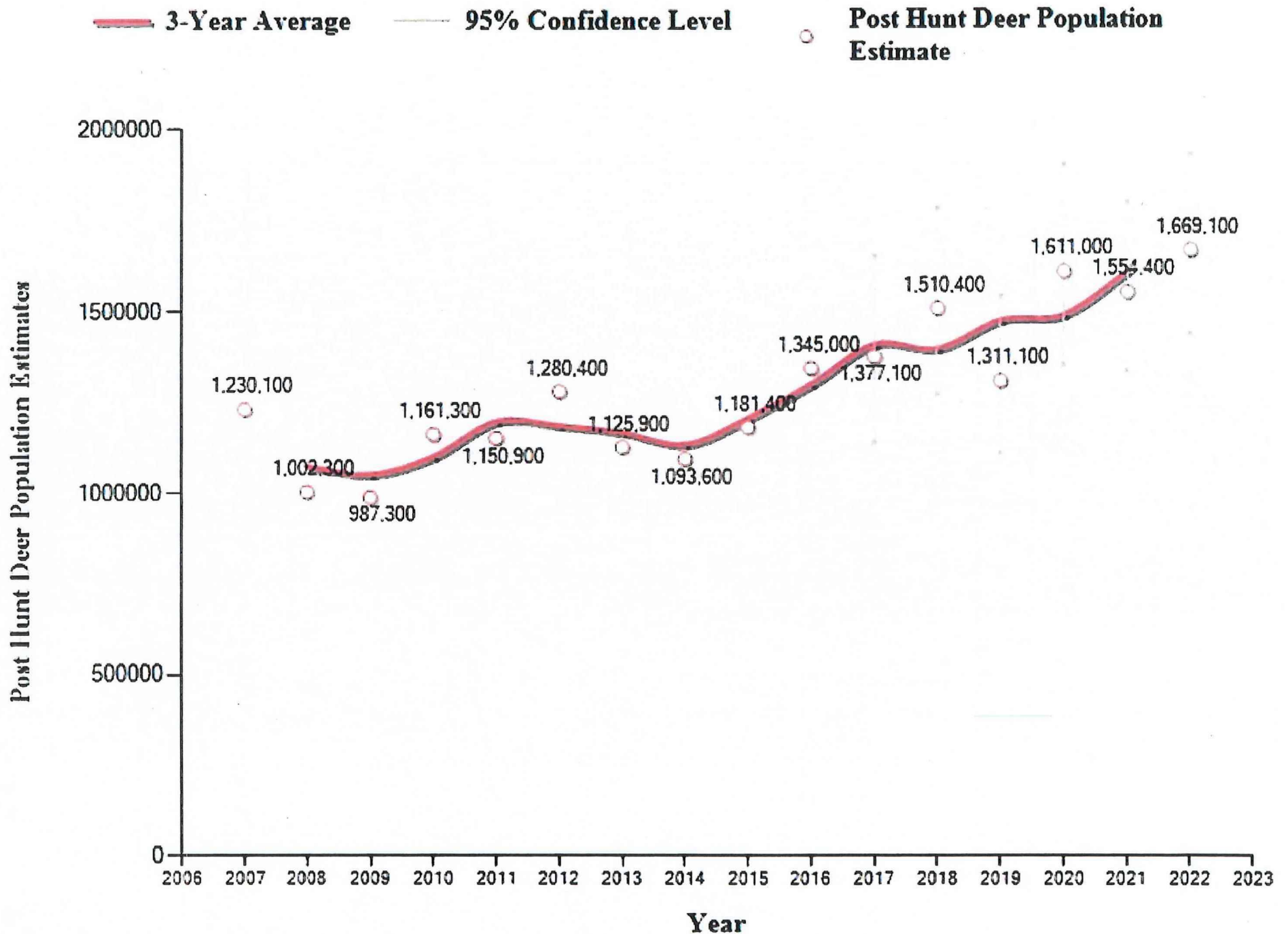
Choose your County Grouping **NE Forest**

Fawns per 100 Does

○ Annual Estimate — 3-Year Average



Post Hunt Deer Population Estimates



FIGURES 4 and 5

Post 2022 Hunt SAK Estimates for Bayfield County

Year	Doe Harvest	Buck Harvest (BH)	Buck Total Mortality Rate (M)*	Buck Mortality Due to Harvest (H)	Pre-Hunt Adult Buck Population (BP= Bucks= BH/(M*H))	Does/Buck Ratio (D/B)	Pre-Hunt Does = (D/B)*(BP)	Fawns/Doe (F/D)	Pre Hunt Fawns= (F/D)*Does	MY MODEL TOTAL DEER PRE HUNT ESTIMATE	TOTAL DEER HARVEST	15% wounding and unreported	MY MODEL POST HUNT HERD ESTIMATE	County wide post hunt 2022 herd size estimate with my SAK estimate	DNR Post Hunt Estimate
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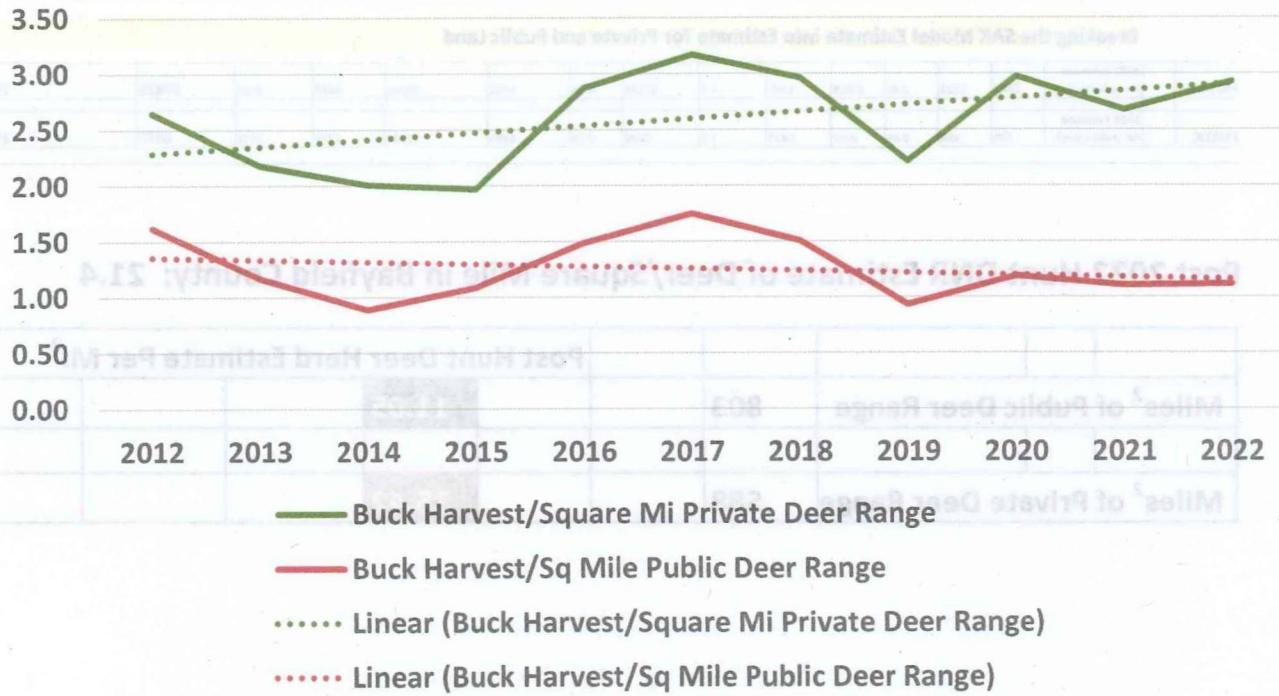
Breaking the SAK Model Estimate into Estimate for Private and Public Land

Model	2022 Estimate for private land	Doe Harvest	Buck Harvest	Buck Total Mortality Rate (M)*	Buck Mortality Due to Harvest (H)	Pre-Hunt Adult Buck Population (BP= Bucks= BH/(M*H))	Does/Buck Ratio (D/B)	Pre-Hunt Does = (D/B)*(BP)	Fawns/Doe (F/D)	Pre Hunt Fawns= (F/D)*Does	MY MODEL TOTAL DEER PRE HUNT ESTIMATE	TOTAL DEER HARVEST	15% wounding and unreported	MY MODEL POST HUNT HERD ESTIMATE	County wide post hunt 2022 herd size estimate with my SAK estimate	DNR Post Hunt Estimate
PRIVATE	1543	1721	0.46	0.553	6741	1.8	12134	0.78	9464	28340	3264	4251	20825	29700	29,700	
PUBLIC	296	394	0.46	0.69	2817	1.8	5070	0.78	3955	11841	1190	1776	8875	29700	29,700	

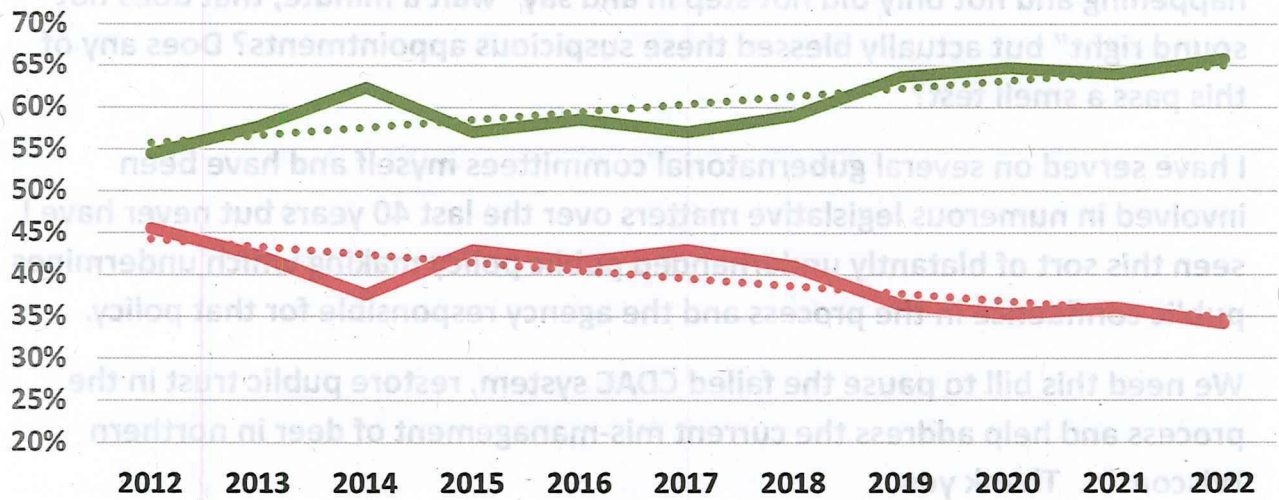
Post 2022 Hunt DNR Estimate of Deer/Square Mile in Bayfield County: 21.4

		Post Hunt Deer Herd Estimate Per Mi ²
Miles ² of Public Deer Range	803	11.05
Miles ² of Private Deer Range	588	35.42

Figure 3:
Buck Harvest /Square Mile of Deer Range: Private
VS Public
with Trend Lines



**Figure 2:
Private VS Public Land Buck Harvest Shares
with Trend Lines**



— Percent of Buck Harvest from Private Land
— Percent of Buck Harvest from Public Land
⋯ Linear (Percent of Buck Harvest from Private Land)
⋯ Linear (Percent of Buck Harvest from Public Land)

outcome of issuing a large number of antlerless tags on the deer depleted public lands?

Even worse, the DNR and the Conservation Congress knew exactly what was happening and not only did not step in and say "wait a minute, that does not sound right" but actually blessed these suspicious appointments? Does any of this pass a smell test?

I have served on several gubernatorial committees myself and have been involved in numerous legislative matters over the last 40 years but never have I seen this sort of blatantly underhanded public policy making which undermines public confidence in the process and the agency responsible for that policy.

We need this bill to pause the failed CDAC system, restore public trust in the process and help address the current mis-management of deer in northern Wisconsin. Thank you.

that would pose a danger to forestry yet the DNR and the Bayfield CDAC continue to issue public land antlerless tags for the county. I think adding this year's harvest data which is not available yet to these graphs will make things look even worse!

Note, the CDAC had all this information before deciding to issue a lot of antlerless tags in each of the last 4 years. Also note, it took a member of the public (me!) to provide this information to the CDAC. The DNR should have but didn't and the CDAC never took it upon themselves to create this information on their own from the DNR's Deer Metrics System which, of course, they could have, and should have, done themselves if they were really interested in doing a good job.

My second and last point is to add more flavor to the failure of the CDAC System as currently designed. It is one thing for the CDAC to ignore the evidence I just presented or to even ignore their own population goal (which they did), it is quite another for them to act purposefully in a manner that undermines public trust and for the DNR to bless the process that undermines public trust.

Do you know that after the initial announcement of the current CDAC membership a few months ago that showed a vacant tourism seat that a responsible pro-hunting resort owner opposed to antlerless tags on public lands applied for the vacant tourism seat? At that time he was the only applicant. But then, just 3 days later, a former member of the CDAC, who always voted for large numbers of antlerless tags on public land when he was on the CDAC (which of course is not in the long run interest of tourism), but who had not applied for his old seat before the new applicant appeared, suddenly, and we are supposed to believe miraculously, applied for the seat and was quickly named to the vacant seat? This speaks loudly to the way the Chair of this CDAC and/or the DNR manipulates its membership to get their favored outcome at the expense of balanced representation and the wishes of the large majority of sportsmen and women who respond to the surveys. That is bad but not as bad as what happened on the CDAC two years ago year when two vacant seats were filled at the last minute (within days of a CDAC meeting requiring a key vote on antlerless tags) with people who admitted they did not know or understand the issues but instead of abstaining quickly voted for the same Chair's preferred

Members of the Committee, I would like to speak in favor of Senate Bill 965 which restricts the harvest of antlerless deer in the northern forest zone.

My name is Jim Johannes. I am from McFarland, WI and I am testifying on behalf of myself on the sad state of deer hunting on public lands in northern Wisconsin and the even sadder manner in which the DNR and CDACs have responded to the deafening public outcry to address this problem responsibly.

I want to do two things in my brief testimony. First, I want to present the evidence, in its boldest form, for the clear secular deterioration of hunting conditions on public lands. I will use Bayfield County as an example, but several other northern counties have similar trends. I would urge the committee to look at the secular evidence and not focus on the tired cyclical excuses routinely offered by the DNR which are not really true in many cases and only serve to furtively divert attention from the severity of the secular problem and the real issues.

Second, I want to identify and highlight the failure of the current CDAC process as one reason for the failure of the DNR to responsibly manage the herd in Bayfield County in a way that gains the public trust.

First, the evidence. The first graph below shows the problem very clearly. The buck harvest on public lands (where the real problem lies and which comprise 58% of deer habitat)) has fallen from 46% of the total buck harvest in the county to only 34% (a 26% drop) over the last 10 years while the private land harvest has increased from 54% of the harvest to 66%.

My next graph (Figure 3) highlights the fact that the big problem is on public land. The buck harvest/square mile on private land has held relatively constant and increased slightly from 2.6 to 2.9 but the buck harvest/square mile on public lands has fallen 32% from 1.6 to 1.1 over the last 10 years.

My third graphs (Figures 4 and 5) utilize the DNR's own SAK Model to once again highlight the public land problem. There are, according to the DNR, 21.4 deer post 2022 hunt per square mile in Bayfield County. But a more granular picture shows that there are only 11 deer per square mile on public lands in Bayfield County and 35 per square mile on private lands! 11 deer/Square Mile on public lands is far below the carrying capacity of that public land or any deer density