The 2019 Wisconsin deer hunting seasons are shaping up to be excellent. With an estimated 1.8 million deer on the landscape statewide, more and longer hunting opportunities than ever and an abundance of antlerless harvest opportunities, this should be a great year.

Despite some areas of deep snow and cold temperatures across northern reaches of the state, Wisconsin’s winter didn’t really settle in until late January in 2019. While some winter losses are experienced every year, they were not known to be significant, making the fall outlook simply excellent. The rest of the state saw a relatively mild winter overall despite short periods of snow and cold, and the effects did not have significant impacts on the herd.

For the first time in 10 years, no deer management unit will be restricted to buck-only deer seasons, and even the far northern counties have at least some limited antlerless hunting opportunities.

For a complete overview of all deer hunting rules, including changes for this season, please see page 11 and check the 2019 Wisconsin Deer Hunting Regulations available online, at hunting license vendors and at DNR Service Centers. For additional information, visit dnr.wi.gov and search keyword “deer.” There, you will find an abundance of helpful information including FAQs, maps, resources to help find a place to hunt and more.

Kevin Wallenfang, big game ecologist, 608-261-7589, Kevin.Wallenfang@Wisconsin.gov
Matthew Gross, assistant big game ecologist, 608-261-7588, Matthew.Gross@Wisconsin.gov
Dan Adams, assistant big game ecologist, 608-264-6023, Daniel.Adams@Wisconsin.gov

Photo: Linda Freshwaters Arndt
2019 DEER HUNTS

ARCHERY AND CROSSBOW SEASONS
Sept. 14 – Jan. 5, 2020

EXTENDED ARCHERY AND CROSSBOW SEASON**
Jan. 6 - 31, 2020

YOUTH DEER SEASON
Oct. 5 – 6

GUN DEER HUNT FOR HUNTERS WITH DISABILITIES*
Oct. 5–13

TRADITIONAL NINE-DAY GUN DEER SEASON
Nov. 23 – Dec. 1

METRO SUB-UNIT GUN DEER SEASON
Nov. 23 – Dec. 11

MUZZLELOADER SEASON
Dec. 2-11

DECEMBER STATEWIDE FOUR-DAY ANTLEERLESS-ONLY SEASON
Dec. 12–15

ANTLEERLESS-ONLY HOLIDAY HUNT**
Dec. 24 – Jan. 1, 2020

*On sponsored properties only
**Select DMUs (see page 44 for details)

Photo by Linda Freshwaters Arndt
2019 Deer Season Structure and Management Zones

Statewide: Bucks plus antlerless by harvest authorization

- **Antlerless Only Holiday Hunt Dec 24- Jan 1**
- **Antlerless-only Holiday Hunt + either-sex Extended Archery and Crossbow (through Jan. 31, 2020)**
- **Metro Sub-units**
- **Non-quota Area: no harvest authorizations issued by the DNR**
Extended Archery And Crossbow Seasons

Archery and Crossbow seasons extended through January 31, 2020

Forest Zone

NOTE: Archery and Crossbow Season Extension can only be recommended in DMUs with a Holiday Hunt
CDACs formed in 2014 to increase local involvement in deer management decisions. Councils are comprised of representatives from local hunting or conservation clubs, forestry, agriculture, tourism and local governmental interests. Each council is led by local Wisconsin Conservation Congress delegates. In addition, a team of three liaisons from the DNR’s wildlife, forestry and law enforcement programs attend CDAC meetings to present data and offer professional perspectives. Each county’s council members directly participate in reviewing and setting population objectives, antlerless harvest quotas and antlerless harvest authorization levels (formerly called deer tags). Members also provide recommendations on various season structure options that affect the deer seasons. These include whether to implement the Dec. 24 - Jan. 1 antlerless-only “Holiday Hunt” or to extend the archery and crossbow seasons through January 31st.

For more information regarding County Deer Advisory Councils, visit dnr.wi.gov and search keyword “CDAC.”

Wisconsin is broken into four Deer Management Zones (DMZs), which are divided into 77 Deer Management Units (DMUs). Several modifications and new DMUs were created in fall 2017 through a DMU review conducted by CDACs. DMUs follow county boundaries in most cases, and ten DMUs are split by zone boundaries.

GO WILD LICENSING SYSTEM

Through Go Wild, hunters can purchase their deer hunting licenses, select their antlerless harvest authorization(s) and print all their documentation from the convenience of home at no cost. There are still over 1,000 license agents that hunters can visit to purchase licenses. To find a license agent, hunters may visit dnr.wi.gov, and search keywords “license agent.”

Now that hunters may print licenses at home, DNR expanded allowable forms of proof of license that hunters may carry in the field beginning in 2017. As proof of license, hunters may present a paper copy of their license printed from Go Wild, their DNR-authenticated Wisconsin driver’s license, a department-issued Conservation Card or a department-approved PDF of the license displayed on a mobile device. Read more about Go Wild at gowild.wi.gov.
DEER HARVEST AUTHORIZATIONS

Since September 2017, hunters are no longer required to validate or physically tag a harvested deer. However, hunters must carry proof of their harvest authorizations (formerly called tags). Forms of proof include an original paper harvest authorization, a reprint, a Go Wild Conservation Card, a DNR-authenticated Wisconsin driver’s license or a department-approved digital file displayed on an electronic device. Hunters can continue to use paper copies that they have printed, and should keep in mind that they will need to use their unique harvest authorization number to register deer. A hunter may only hold a single copy of any individual harvest authorization when afield.

To replace a paper harvest authorization, the easiest option is to log onto Go Wild and reprint from home for free. Having a harvest authorization printed at a DNR service center is also free, but there is a $2 processing fee for having harvest authorizations reprinted at a license agent.

GAMEREG - ELECTRONIC HARVEST REGISTRATION

More than 330,000 deer were registered electronically by phone or online in 2018. Wisconsin deer hunters have adapted to the electronic GameReg system. Hunters are experiencing few problems with 97 percent managing to register their deer with no assistance during the opening weekend of the gun deer season. The other three percent were assisted by a Customer Service agent.
Hunter compliance to electronic registration is measured annually using several methods including warden field checks and hunter surveys. Results showed that approximately 94 percent of deer hunters have registered their deer as required during the past two seasons. This level of compliance is estimated to be similar to compliance rates when registering in person.

Successful deer hunters will register their deer either online (fastest and easiest method) or by phone. They also have the option of registering electronically at a participating walk-in registration station. For a list of participating businesses offering walk-in registration, visit dnr.wi.gov and search keywords “registration stations.”

To register a deer electronically, hunters will visit gamereg.wi.gov or call 1-844-426-3734 (1-844-GAME-REG). To start, the electronic registration system will prompt hunters to enter the unique deer harvest authorization number for the harvest authorization they have filled as well as their date of birth. Next, hunters will be prompted to enter harvest information including the DMU in which the deer was harvested, age (adult or fawn), sex (buck or doe) of the deer and weapon type used to harvest the animal. Once hunters have provided this information, they will receive a unique 10-character confirmation number. This number is no longer required to be written on a deer harvest authorization, but hunters are encouraged to record it.

All deer harvested during any deer season must be registered by 5 p.m. the day after harvest. For more information, visit dnr.wi.gov and search keyword “GameReg.”
* The Dec. 24 - Jan. 1 antlerless-only holiday hunt will be offered in 29 counties. For more information, see page 5.

* Baiting and feeding regulations have changed in several counties. For more information, visit dnr.wi.gov and search keywords “baiting and feeding regulations”.

* Bonus antlerless harvest authorizations went on sale Aug. 19 and can be purchased at a rate of one per person per day. Sales began each day at 10 a.m. during the first four days of sales. They were sold by zone:

August 19 - (Northern Forest and Central Forest Zone)

August 20 - (Central Farmland Zone)

August 21 - (Southern Farmland Zone).

August 22 - All remaining harvest authorizations may be purchased until the unit sells out or the deer hunting season ends.

* A new Antlerless Deer Hunting Guide is now available. This document provides important information regarding the availability of antlerless harvest authorizations that include both Farmland Zone and bonus antlerless harvest authorizations. Hunters may pick up a copy at license vendors or a DNR Service Centers.
2019 DEER HUNTS

ARCHERY AND CROSSBOW

The archery and crossbow seasons run concurrently from Sept. 14 to Jan. 5, 2020. Seasons have also been extended through January 31 in 22 counties including Brown, Crawford, Dane, Iowa, Jefferson, Juneau (Farmland Zone only), Kewaunee, La Crosse, Lafayette, Milwaukee, Oconto (Farmland Zone only), Outagamie, Ozaukee, Pepin, Pierce, Richland, Sauk, Sheboygan, Vernon, Walworth, Washington, and Waukesha counties. The archery/crossbow seasons in all metro sub-units also run through Jan. 31, 2020. See map on page 7.

TRADITIONAL STATEWIDE NINE-DAY GUN DEER SEASON

The traditional nine-day gun deer season opens annually on the Saturday before Thanksgiving. In 2019, the hunt occurs Nov. 23 to Dec. 1.

MUZZLELOADER SEASON

The muzzleloader season occurs annually during the 10 days immediately following the nine-day gun season. In 2019, the season will run Dec. 2-11 and is open statewide. There is no separate muzzleloader license, and any gun harvest authorizations that were not filled during previous 2019 gun seasons may be filled.

DECEMBER STATEWIDE FOUR-DAY ANTLERLESS-ONLY SEASON

The four-day December antlerless-only deer season is open statewide and will occur Dec. 12-15. The season is restricted to antlerless deer only for all weapon types, and no antlered deer may be harvested during this period. Therefore, all hunters must possess (or be in a group with someone who possesses) an unfilled antlerless deer harvest authorization valid for the zone, DMU and land type in which they choose to hunt. With the exception of waterfowl hunters, all hunters are required to meet highly visible (blaze orange or florescent pink) clothing requirements.

ANTLERLESS-ONLY HOLIDAY HUNT

The antlerless-only holiday hunt is open to all weapon types from Dec. 24 – Jan.1, 2020. This hunt is restricted to select Farmland (Zone 2) DMUs including: Brown, Buffalo, Crawford, Columbia, Dane, Door, Green Lake, Iowa, Jefferson, Juneau (Farmland Zone only), Kewaunee, La Crosse, Lafayette, Marinette (Farmland Zone only), Marquette, Milwaukee, Oconto (Farmland Zone only), Outagamie, Ozaukee, Pepin, Pierce, Richland, Rock, Sauk, Sheboygan, Vernon, Walworth, Washington, and Waukesha counties.
Hunters must possess an antlerless deer harvest authorization valid for the zone, DMU and land type in which they choose to hunt during this season. No antlered deer can be harvested, with any weapon type, in a DMU where a Holiday Hunt is in progress. (Note: archery and crossbow hunters NOT hunting in one of the above units may continue to hunt for antlered deer during this time).

All hunters within the area of this hunt, with the exception of waterfowl hunters, are required to meet highly visible clothing (blaze orange or florescent pink) requirements. See map on pg. 5.

**YOUTH FIREARM DEER HUNT**

The youth firearm deer hunt will be held statewide from Oct. 5-6. This special hunt was established to provide youth hunters with an opportunity to hunt with the guidance of a mentor during a period with little hunting pressure and more comfortable weather conditions.

The youth deer hunt will be held in all DMUs statewide. Resident and non-resident youth hunters under the age of 16 who possess a valid gun deer hunting license may participate. It is important to note that youth hunters must be accompanied by an adult parent or guardian during this hunt, even if the youth hunter holds a hunter education certificate. Qualified youth hunters may harvest one buck deer with their gun buck deer harvest authorization and one antlerless deer to fill their statewide junior antlerless deer harvest authorization(s).
Youth hunters may harvest additional antlerless deer through the purchase of bonus antlerless deer harvest authorization(s), where available, and/or with any Farmland (Zone 2) antlerless deer harvest authorization included with a license. Note that these harvest authorizations are not valid statewide and are specific to the zone, DMU and land type.

Youth hunters must be within arm’s length of an adult mentor. No more than two youth hunters may be accompanied by a single mentor. Supervising adults may not hunt deer with a firearm while accompanying or mentoring a youth deer hunter during this hunt. All hunters, with the exception of waterfowl hunters, are required to meet highly visible (blaze orange or florescent pink) clothing requirements during the youth gun deer hunt.

GUN DEER HUNT FOR HUNTERS WITH DISABILITIES

The gun deer hunt for hunters with disabilities will be held Oct. 5–13. This special hunt was established to provide more opportunities for hunters with disabilities to participate in Wisconsin’s deer hunting traditions. Disabled hunters with a valid Class A, C or D disabled permit, or a Class B permit that is issued for longer than one year (and authorizes hunting or shooting from a stationary vehicle) may participate.

The gun deer hunt for hunters with disabilities is not a statewide season; it is only authorized on lands specifically enrolled in the disabled hunt program. Disabled hunters may harvest a buck in any DMU statewide during this hunt. They may also harvest one antlerless deer in any DMU statewide using a Farmland (Zone 2) antlerless deer harvest authorization. Please see page 11 of the 2019 Deer Hunting Regulations for more details.

Landowners or managers interested in sponsoring lands for the 2020 hunt must submit an online application before June 1, 2020. Qualified disabled hunters must contact sponsors before Sept. 1 to participate. For a list of sponsors for the 2019 season, visit dnr.wi.gov and search keywords “disabled deer hunt.”
Further Valuable Information For The 2019 Wisconsin Deer Seasons

METRO SUB-UNITS

Seventeen counties containing eight metropolitan sub-units provide additional hunting opportunity through extended gun, archery and crossbow seasons. Season dates for archery/crossbow in metro sub-units are Sept. 14 – Jan. 31, 2020. Season dates for gun hunting in metro sub-units are Nov. 23 – Dec. 11, following the same season dates for all other firearm deer seasons (four-day antlerless, holiday hunt, etc.)

Hunters wishing to pursue antlerless deer in a metro sub-unit must do so using a valid antlerless deer harvest authorization designated for the zone, DMU and land type within the sub-unit where they intend to hunt. Some local municipalities may have weapons restrictions – hunters are encouraged to check local ordinances before hunting in metro sub-units.

Certain metro sub-units offer a metro sub-unit antlerless deer harvest authorization, which will be issued upon request to any hunter who purchases a deer hunting license. Metro sub-unit antlerless deer harvest authorizations are only valid within the zone, DMU, metro sub-unit and land type specified.

Also, select metro sub-units are offering bonus metro sub-unit antlerless deer harvest authorizations at a cost of $12 for residents, $20 for non-residents, and $5 for youth. These authorizations are only valid for harvesting an antlerless deer in the zone, DMU, metro sub-unit and land type designated on the harvest authorization. All bonus metro sub-unit antlerless deer harvest authorizations went on sale using the same schedule as other bonus antlerless deer harvest authorizations, starting Aug. 19.

DEER MANAGEMENT ZONES AND DEER MANAGEMENT UNITS

All deer hunters should be familiar with the zone, DMU and land type (public access or private) in which they plan to hunt. Hunters will need this information before selecting and using all antlerless harvest authorizations which must be filled in the zone, DMU and land type designated on the harvest authorization.

For registration purposes, it is important that hunters properly enter the information regarding where they harvested the deer. For example, if a hunter shot an antlerless deer in Taylor County, the deer would be registered in
the Northern Forest (Zone 1), the Taylor DMU and the land type where the deer was shot (public or private).

TRANSPORTATION

While afield, no person may possess or transport another hunter’s deer, even after it has been registered, unless accompanied by the person for whom the deer harvest authorization was issued. However, anyone may transport another person’s deer on a public road or possess it at a residence, camp or business. The person transporting another hunter’s deer carcass must be able to provide the registration confirmation number or, if the deer has not yet been registered, the hunter’s DNR Customer ID number or name and address.

USE OF BOWS AND CROSSBOWS

All hunters using a crossbow to hunt deer must purchase a crossbow license, or a crossbow upgrade after first purchasing an archer license. Hunters may also hunt with a bow or crossbow under the authority of a gun deer license, but only during a firearm season. Laws regulating the use of bows and crossbows for hunting within cities or villages are under the authority of the municipality and may change annually. Check with city or village authorities for local ordinance restrictions.

PUBLIC ACCESS LANDS

Public lands include state, federal and county properties open to hunting, stewardship and utility properties, Managed Forest Law and Forest Crop Law lands (in whole or in part) designated as open for public hunting; and Voluntary Public Access lands leased for public hunting. Private lands include all lands not listed above. It is important to remember that hunters must have permission to access all private lands. Check out the Public Access Lands Atlas by visiting dnr.wi.gov, keyword “Maps”.

Photo: Ben Pierson / DNR
WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT DEER HUNTING IN WISCONSIN?

Hunters are encouraged to check out the Frequently Asked Questions for additional information at [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov), keyword “deer.” The FAQ document provides brief responses to a wide variety of deer hunting questions, ranging from DMU boundaries to antlerless deer harvest authorizations.

GET INVOLVED IN WISCONSIN’S DEER MANAGEMENT

There are many opportunities available to play an active role in the management of white-tailed deer in Wisconsin:

**DEER HUNTER WILDLIFE SURVEY**

Help monitor the relative abundance and distribution of deer and other wildlife species in Wisconsin. Use an online form to record your experiences and submit information you collect during your time in the field. To submit your observations, visit [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) and search keywords “deer hunter wildlife.”

**OPERATION DEER WATCH**

Help monitor deer reproduction in Wisconsin. Keep a tally sheet in your car, or go online, and record all deer sightings from Aug.1 to Sept.30. DNR biologists are interested in all buck, doe and fawn sightings. Operation Deer Watch data is combined with DNR staff observations to help estimate fawn-to-doe ratios and deer population estimates. For more information regarding Operation Deer Watch, visit [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) and search “operation deer watch.”

Dylan shows off his Green County buck from the 2018 season. Photo: Scott Reinmann

Willy harvested this Shawano County buck during the 2018 season. Photo: Katie Brucks
Get Involved in Wisconsin’s Deer Management
There are many opportunities available to play an active role in the management of white-tailed deer in Wisconsin

TRAIL CAMERA PHOTOS
Do you have a trail cam photo of a rare or unusual animal? Trail cameras are a valuable resource for documenting more elusive wildlife, including species that are endangered in Wisconsin. Send in your trail camera photos during any season. To submit photos, visit dnr.wi.gov and search “deer hunter wildlife.”

COUNTY DEER ADVISORY COUNCILS AND ONLINE PUBLIC INPUT OPPORTUNITIES
Annual deer herd forums take place each spring at local County Deer Advisory Council meetings where antlerless harvest quotas and various season structures are set. These meetings are open to the public, and comments are gathered during a public comment period. CDAC meetings also provide an opportunity to interact with DNR wildlife biologists and learn more about deer biology and management, population objectives, and harvest statistics in each county. Those interested in providing feedback on preliminary quota and bonus antlerless deer harvest authorization recommendations can also comment online. To provide input, search keyword “CDAC.”

CONSERVATION CONGRESS SPRING HEARINGS
Annual Wisconsin Conservation Congress meetings, held in each county statewide on the second Monday in April, give citizens the opportunity to comment and vote on proposed fish and wildlife rule changes and submit resolutions for future rule changes. This opportunity is unique to Wisconsin and helps play a significant role in determining how you enjoy your time in the outdoors. For more information, search keywords “spring hearings.”

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL BIOLOGIST
Wildlife biologists are available to speak with you and to answer questions, address any concerns you have and to gather input when setting the upcoming deer season framework. To get in touch with your local wildlife biologist, search keyword “contact.”

DEER MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
DMAP is a cooperative effort between the DNR, landowners and hunters to provide habitat and deer management assistance to those interested in managing their property for wildlife. For more information, visit dnr.wi.gov and search keyword “DMAP.”
CWD SAMPLING IN WISCONSIN

During the 2019 deer hunting season, chronic wasting disease (CWD) surveillance will occur throughout northern Wisconsin in areas around wild and captive positive detections and in counties with low volume sampling in recent years. This is part of a multi-year rotation conducting surveillance in west central, northern, and northeast Wisconsin. The DNR will also continue to sample deer within the Southern Farmland Zone and at select locations in other CWD-affected counties. The department will sample deer around wild CWD positive detections in Adams, Juneau, Portage, Eau Claire, Lincoln, Oneida, and Marquette counties, as well as in the wild deer herd surrounding CWD positive captive deer facilities in Marathon, Eau Claire, Oneida, Shawano, Waupaca, Marinette, and Oconto counties. The DNR will continue to provide hunter service testing, free of charge, for adult deer anywhere in the state. Exact sampling locations will be available on the department’s webpage prior to the 2019 archery and crossbow season.

There are currently 56 CWD-affected counties due to wild and captive CWD positive detections. During the 2018 calendar year, Buffalo, Chippewa, Dunn, Pepin, Trempealeau, La Crosse, Fond du Lac, Marinette, Florence, Lincoln, & Langlade were added as CWD-affected counties. Green Lake County was added as CWD-affected on March 1, 2019 due to a wild CWD positive detection in adjacent Marquette County.
BAITING & FEEDING
IN WISCONSIN

Under state statute 29.336, Wis. Stats, the DNR is required to prohibit baiting and feeding of deer when one of three criteria is found to exist: a county lies within a designated CWD control zone, a CWD or bovine tuberculosis (TB) positive wild or captive deer is found within the county, or a portion of a county is within a 10-mile radius of the positive location of a wild or captive deer. If the department determines a county meets at least one of these three criteria, a secretary’s order is issued designating that county as a county where baiting and feeding deer is prohibited.

In August 2017, an Act signed into law to amend current state statute did the following:

* removed deer baiting and feeding prohibitions in counties where 36 months have passed since any confirmed positive test for chronic wasting disease or bovine tuberculosis within the county; and

* removed deer baiting and feeding prohibitions in adjacent counties where 24 months have passed since any confirmed positive test for chronic wasting disease or bovine tuberculosis within a 10-mile radius of the county.

With this new legislation, the 24/36-month period starts over again with each new positive test result as they are confirmed. Please check the DNR baiting and feeding webpage frequently for updates, as new baiting and feeding bans may be enacted or removed during 2019 and beyond.
WHITE-TAILED DEER RESEARCH

There is a variety of interesting and exciting deer research projects taking place in Wisconsin. The largest current project is the Southwest Wisconsin CWD, Deer, and Predator Study, which stems from former governor Scott Walker’s commitment to reevaluating chronic wasting disease in Wisconsin. For this project, we’re examining the primary factors that could impact deer survival and population growth in southwestern Wisconsin. Those include chronic wasting disease, predation, habitat suitability, and hunter harvest. To this end, researchers have tagged over 900 deer in Grant, Iowa and Dane Counties. With fall approaching, we want hunters to know that collared deer are legal to harvest. We simply ask hunters to treat collared deer exactly as they would any other. Collars don’t indicate anything about the deer’s health or age. If you would normally harvest the deer, go for it. If not, let the deer pass. If you harvest a deer with a collar, it is vital that you call the number on the collar so the research staff can record that deer’s information. When spring arrives, we’ll be looking for volunteers to help us with our spring fawn survey. To learn more and get involved, visit dnr.wi.gov and search keyword “CWD research.” From there, you can keep up to date on the project by subscribing to our project newsletter. For specific questions, contact Daniel Storm, deer and elk research scientist, at (715)-365-4712 or DNRDEERRESEARCH@wisconsin.gov.
Across the Southern District, wildlife biologists are very optimistic about the 2019 deer season. Although last winter brought frigid temperatures and lasting snow cover, hunters should still expect to see strong deer numbers. Below recommended antlerless harvests and highly productive habitat have led to increased populations throughout much of the Southern Farmland Zone. DNR staff as well as the general public have been seeing deer frequently this summer, especially in the evenings, including an abundance of fawns. In fact, the Southwest CWD, Deer and Predator Project captured and collared a record number of fawns despite public concerns regarding the cold weather conditions that much of the state experienced over winter. With gun deer seasons impacted by less-than-ideal weather conditions during some of the past few years, lower-than-average antlerless harvests have occurred leaving more deer for the following year, and a population increase is projected in most counties compared to last fall. However, it is important for hunters to keep in mind that there is great variation in the quality of the habitat across the landscape and, as a result, the number of deer between individual...
properties can vary significantly. County Deer Advisory Councils (CDACs) are offering, on average, more antlerless deer harvest authorizations and additional seasons in response to the expected increase in deer numbers.

The Southern District encompasses a wide range of deer habitat types. They range from the high wooded ridges and coulees in the southwest to the flatter, urbanized landscape of Waukesha, Racine and Kenosha counties along the Illinois border. We also have the rolling southern kettles in the east and the extensive wetland and woodland areas of Dodge, Jefferson and Columbia Counties. This high level of variation in habitat types and conditions results in local deer numbers that can vary dramatically from one square mile to the next. Deer numbers tend to be relatively higher in the western portion of the District, but excellent opportunities to harvest multiple deer can be found in all counties that make up the Southern Farmland Zone.

Early season natural food sources appear to be doing well despite a cool spring and will provide plenty of opportunities for hunters to locate deer that take advantage of the hard and soft mast crops. Agricultural crops are also looking good despite being a few weeks behind compared to previous years due to the high and frequent rainfall events that occurred during field prep times. Hunters should keep in mind that once these seasonal foods are no longer available, deer will start to expand their range looking for alternatives. In areas where deer numbers are the highest, you can expect to see the quality of habitat decrease, resulting in deer traveling further looking for other sources of food. This is where the appropriate habitat and herd management practices can assist in your success throughout the hunting season.

I encourage people interested in learning more about habitat and herd management to sign up for the Deer Management Assistance Program at dnr.wi.gov, keyword “DMAP.”

Most deer within the district are harvested on private property, which makes up more than 90 percent of the landscape. However, excellent deer hunting can also be found on the tens of thousands of acres of county, state and federally owned lands open to deer hunting in southern Wisconsin.

Eddie Shea, wildlife biologist for Grant and Richland Counties, says that a variety of local deer metrics suggests that the
2019 deer population in both Grant and Richland Counties has grown compared to last year. While population growth in Richland County is more uniform, the increasing trend in Grant County may be most evident in the northern third of the county. Several recent timber harvests along the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway should provide quality deer habitat and thus, attract deer. Eddie also suggests that hunters consider visiting state fisheries areas in both counties, many of which contain stands of oak woodlands that tend to receive low hunting pressure. In addition, both Grant and Richland’s CDACs approved similar season structures as last year. Hunters can utilize the DNR’s web mapping tool to locate public hunting land or they can download the DNR’s free Hunt Wild WI mobile app to learn more about public lands in these, and other, counties.

Wildlife biologist Nancy Frost says that much of the public land in Sauk County, including Dell Creek Wildlife Area, the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area, Devil’s Lake State Park, and the Baraboo Hills Recreation Area to name a few, have had timber sales occur during recent years which have created young forest vegetation that provides both cover and a high-quality food source that deer seek out. In addition, the Sauk County deer herd has increased during the past few years and the deer have been very visible. As a result, the Sauk CDAC is offering four Farmland (Zone 2) antlerless deer harvest authorizations with each deer hunting license purchase and will also offer the Holiday Hunt and extended archery and crossbow seasons for 2019.

Travis Anderson, wildlife biologist for Iowa and Lafayette counties, states that the deer herd in Iowa County has been on the upswing over the last five years and is higher than the CDAC would like to see. To address over-population concerns, the Iowa CDAC will be offering the Holiday Hunt this year. There are many public land hunting opportunities, such as Blackhawk Lake Wildlife Area, which completed a large timber sale last winter. Hunters will find additional opportunities at Trout Creek and Love Creek Fisheries Areas, the Lower WI State Riverway and three state parks (Governor Dodge, Blue Mound, and Tower Hill State Park), all of which support quality habitat and high deer numbers. Be sure to check the WI DNR web page for further information when hunting state parks (https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/hunt). In addition, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) manages hundreds of acres in Iowa County which are also open for public hunting. Maps and information on lands they manage can be found here: https://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/wisconsin/hunting-opportunities/index.htm.

Additionally, Travis also expects excellent hunting in Lafayette County this fall. He said that like Iowa County, deer numbers are in excess of desired levels and the Lafayette CDAC recommended the Holiday Hunt as one method of addressing it. Although most of the county is in private ownership, Yellowstone Wildlife Area boasts strong deer numbers and is a great location in Lafayette County for hunters to take advantage of this additional hunting season. Also, two state parks offer additional hunting opportunity within the county: Yellowstone Lake State Park (embedded within the Yellowstone Wildlife Area) and Belmont Mound State Park.

The increasing to stable population trend continues as we move to Columbia County, where wildlife biologist Sara Kehrli says the deer herd is very robust. Anecdotal observations from both DNR staff and the general public indicate that there are more deer this year
Confirmed Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) cases have been on the rise with five new townships reporting positive detections last year. In addition, three townships were intensively tested for bovine tuberculosis, and thankfully, all deer tested came back negative for the disease. Required testing for TB will continue during the 9-day gun deer season in 2019 in nine townships in Dane and Columbia counties. Go to dnr.wi.gov and search “bovine TB surveillance” for more information and to find out if you are in the required testing area.

Columbia County hunters can benefit from the large amount of public land throughout the county. The deer population is generally highest along the northern tier of townships, where French Creek, Pine Island, Jennings Creek and Peter Helland Wildlife Areas all provide excellent opportunities to see and harvest deer. Voluntary Public Access (VPA) lands and properties enrolled in the agricultural damage program are great hunting options as well.

In Dane County, the deer herd is projected to increase yet again in 2019. The crops seem to be slightly behind due to a very wet spring, but deer sightings have been quite frequent in alfalfa and soy bean fields. Wildlife biologist Julie Widholm says that she has heard multiple reports of twin fawns this year. Again for 2019, there will be bovine tuberculosis testing during the 9-day gun deer season for six northern Dane County townships. Go to dnr.wi.gov and search “bovine TB surveillance” for more information and to find out if you are in the required testing area. Many DNR wildlife areas in the county see high hunting pressure, but Julie says that several larger properties can offer plenty of opportunities for deer hunting including Brooklyn, Lodi Marsh, and Goose Lake. The Dane County Park system also opens some properties to public hunting. In addition, Julie and her team have also been conducting pre-timber sale work on the Anthony Branch Fishery Area as well as at Hook Lake. Each of these properties are showing signs of deer use, and hunters looking for new ground may want to
check them out following the timber sales that are slated to start this winter.

The Green County deer herd appears to be trending towards an all-time high according to population estimates and hunters should expect to encounter more deer during the 2019 season. Jason Cotter, wildlife biologist for Green and Rock Counties, says there are excellent opportunities to harvest deer across nearly 4,500 acres of various state managed lands in Green County, and especially Albany, Liberty Creek, and Brooklyn Wildlife Areas. These properties are intensively managed as a mix of oak uplands, bottomland hardwood forest, prairie, and marsh habitat that deer utilize heavily throughout the hunting seasons. Green County offers multiple contiguous tracts of land, as well as isolated pockets of prime deer habitat where hunters can seek out and find seclusion from others.

In Rock County, Jason says all signs indicate that the deer population is increasing rapidly in recent years. Various deer metrics and his personal observations lead him to believe there will be great opportunities to see deer during the upcoming seasons. Even though much of the county is private land, there are nearly 8,000 acres of state-owned land and over 9,000 acres of leased public hunting lands that are intensively managed and contain everything from prairies to marshland and oak forests to ag fields. The four largest properties include Avon Bottoms, Lima Marsh-Storrs Lake, Footville, and Evansville Wildlife Areas. All contain quality deer habitat and good deer numbers which should lead to plenty of opportunities this fall.

Sam Jonas, wildlife biologist for Jefferson County, is seeing the same increasing population trend in Jefferson County. Sam says that the buck harvest has continued to increase each year for 5 years and is a good indication that the overall deer herd is increasing, so hunters can anticipate great deer numbers this fall. The Jefferson CDAC has responded to this increasing trend and has recommended two Farmland (Zone 2) antlerless deer harvest authorizations be included with the purchase of each deer license. They also recommended additional bonus antlerless deer harvest authorizations on public land.
where there are abundant opportunities to hunt with approximately 20,000 acres of state-owned lands open for public use. The Jefferson CDAC has also recognized that time to get out in the woods to provide the opportunity to successfully harvest an animal is important and further recommended an antlerless-only Holiday Hunt and extended archery/crossbow seasons. Each state-owned wildlife area in the county is suitable for deer hunting though Jefferson Marsh and Waterloo Wildlife Area contain very large continuous acres which allow for great deer movement and opportunities for hunters to scout and get away from other hunting pressure.

Dodge County wildlife biologist Paul Samerdyke says that the county’s deer herd continues to increase, which has been the objective of the Dodge CDAC. Fawn production appears to be excellent and there should be plenty of opportunities to see and harvest deer within the county. While most land in Dodge County is in private ownership, there are four state wildlife areas, including the Horicon Marsh, Shaw Marsh, Mud Lake, and Sinissippi along with federal lands and smaller state properties which are open to public hunting. Each contain diverse, quality habitat that supports high deer numbers and offers good deer hunting opportunities. Hunters should pay attention to upland sites which are often managed for

Wisconsin’s deer need your help.

Submit your deer for CWD sampling
oak regeneration and attract a variety of game species, especially deer. The edges of large marshes are often good places to find deer that may be using the cattails as escape and thermal cover. These edges provide a good chance to see deer as they move to and from cover to seek out hidden food sources. Those who plan to deer hunt in Dodge County will again receive one Farmland (Zone 2) antlerless deer harvest authorization with each deer license purchase and will have the opportunity to purchase additional bonus antlerless deer harvest authorizations if desired. CWD sampling options will be available again to successful hunters and sampling of all harvested deer is encouraged.

Continuing to the southeast portion of the state, the wildlife biologist for Waukesha and Walworth Counties, Nathan Holoubek, states that deer numbers are projected to show a moderate increase this year due to a good growing season and a relatively low antlerless harvest in 2018. Urban nuisance deer, agricultural damage, and car-deer collisions continue to be major concerns, especially around urban areas. CWD is present in the county and prevalence appears to be increasing, with the most recent positive detections in the Delafield area. While most hunting opportunities are on private land, there are great places to hunt on public lands such as the Southern Kettle Moraine State Forest, Vernon Wildlife Area, and Paradise Valley Wildlife Area. The Waukesha CDAC has recommended the same deer season structure as last year, which includes the antlerless-only Holiday Hunt and extended archery/crossbow seasons.

Nathan also mentions that Walworth County is expected to maintain or see a slight increase in deer numbers compared to last year even though quality habitat is spotty in this agriculturally-dominated county. Suitable year-round habitat is one of the major factors that limits herd growth within the county. CWD was detected in several deer scattered throughout the county last year and is a growing concern for herd health. New for this year, Walworth CDAC has approved both the antlerless-only Holiday Hunt and extended archery/crossbow seasons in hopes of increasing antlerless harvest where needed. Those interested in hunting Walworth County should look for public land hunting opportunities on the Southern Kettle Moraine State Forest and the Turtle Valley, Troy, and Bloomfield Wildlife Areas. These public hunting areas offer diverse, quality deer habitat and plenty of room for hunters to roam.
Wildlife Biologist Marty Johnson feels that the deer herd in the Kenosha and Racine is continuing to see an increasing trend. Public comments and DNR staff observations have indicated that more deer are being seen in the two counties. The New Munster Wildlife Area, a 1,682-acre property in Kenosha County, provides good deer hunting opportunities with a mixed landscape consisting of agriculture fields, oak-hickory woodlands, and wetlands. There are also two VPA properties associated with New Munster; a 33-acre piece on HWY KD and a 37-acre parcel a little over a mile west of Fox River on the north side of HWY 50. The Tichigan Wildlife Area, a 1,580-acre property in Racine County, also provides good deer hunting opportunities with a similar landscape and has a 98-acre VPA property east of Marsh Road. A recent thinning of an oak woodland area by the half circle parking area off Marsh Road has opened the woodland area improving foraging areas for deer (i.e., woody browse, mast production, etc.) and providing better access for hunters.

Along with the opportunities in Racine and Kenosha counties, there are many other properties in the more urbanized southeast that provide great opportunities during the deer season such as the Big Muskego Lake and Vernon Wildlife Areas within Milwaukee and Waukesha Counties. Wildlife biologist Dianne Robinson says both properties provide a mix of wetland, grassland and oak woodland habitats that hold large numbers of deer, all within a short drive of Milwaukee and its suburbs. Theresa Wildlife Area also provides a variety of natural habitat types nestled among agricultural fields, yielding high deer numbers among these excellent food sources. Theresa and Jackson Marsh Wildlife Areas, both in Washington County, are not far from urban centers in Milwaukee and Ozaukee Counties, making these parcels prime spots for a bow hunting trip after work or on weekends close to home.

Eric Kilburg, wildlife biologist for Washington and Ozaukee Counties, says deer populations in both counties remain high for 2019. The CDAC in both counties has approved the issuance of three Farmland (Zone 2) antlerless deer harvest authorizations to be included with each license purchase as well as the antlerless-only Holiday Hunt and extended archery/crossbow seasons. Also, public hunting access is available on more than 12,000 acres of DNR managed land including Allenton, Jackson, and Theresa Wildlife Areas, the Loew Lake Unit and Northern Unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest and the Cedarburg Bog State Natural Area. These public hunting lands offer a diverse mix of grassland, farmland, wetland, and upland and lowland forest. In addition to the DNR managed lands, Ozaukee-Washington Land Trust allows deer hunting on 18 preserves totaling more than 1,300 acres. Interested hunters should visit their website (http://owlt.org/hunting) for more information and to apply to hunt. Likewise, a subset of Milwaukee Metro Sewerage District (MMSD) Greenseams properties are available for hunting. Interested hunters are advised to regularly check their website (https://www.mmsd.com/about-us/hunt-green) for hunting availability as changes in ownership occur frequently.

Clearly, there is an abundance of opportunity all across the Southern District to hunt on public lands that hold good numbers of deer. Check out the DNR website at dnr.wi.gov, keywords “public hunting lands.” And if you are looking to hunt on private lands, get out well in advance of deer season to meet with landowners and seek permission. Remember to get out early to scout the areas you plan to hunt throughout the fall
and familiarize yourself with the seasonal behavior of the local deer. Keep an eye out for those natural food sources that attract deer and pattern their movements to and from feeding areas.

Another important aspect for Southern District deer hunters to keep in mind is that CWD continues to increase in prevalence and geographic area. In 2017, CWD positive animals found in Dodge County (wild deer positive), Milwaukee County (wild deer positive) and Washington County (captive deer positive) put into effect a baiting and feeding ban in those counties. In addition, Racine and Kenosha Counties have been added to the 2019 baiting and feeding ban due to detected CWD positives located within a 10-mile buffer of their county lines. As a result, baiting and feeding is now only allowed in Ozaukee County within the Southern District. Successful hunters are encouraged to get their deer tested for CWD and can go to one of the many cooperative CWD sample stations or self-service kiosks that will be posted on the DNR website prior to the season opener. Last year, the DNR rolled out its Adopt-A-Dumpster (AAD) program which placed 11 deer waste disposal dumpsters across the Southern District, with the hope of providing carcass disposal options for those hunting in CWD affected areas. These dumpsters were funded and monitored by members of the public and resulted in over 62.5 tons of properly-disposed-of deer waste. Hunters can expect to see deer waste disposal dumpsters back on the landscape for 2019 and are encouraged to dispose of their deer waste in these locations when possible rather than throwing carcasses out on the landscape and possibly encouraging further spread of CWD. For more information on CWD, please visit the DNR website, keyword search CWD, CWD - Wisconsin DNR. This year, as in years past, hunters can also contact the local wildlife biologist to get their deer sampled. You can find their contact information by going to dnr.wi.gov and searching the DNR Staff Directory - Wisconsin DNR.
In summary, 13 counties within the Southern District offer the antlerless-only Holiday Hunt and are a great way to enjoy some family time during the holiday season. Those counties include Columbia, Dane, Iowa, Jefferson, Lafayette, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Richland, Rock, Sauk, Walworth, Washington and Waukesha. In addition to the Holiday Hunt, all of these same counties except Columbia and Rock are providing the extended archery and crossbow seasons through Jan 31, 2020. Hunters are strongly encouraged to take advantage of these extra opportunities. Not only is it a great way to spend time with family and friends one last time before the seasons officially close, but it’s critical in helping to manage our large deer herd and slow the spread of CWD.

We anticipate another excellent deer season in the Southern District in 2019 and wish everyone a safe and successful hunt!

West Central District Forecast

Kris Johansen, Program Manager, 715-839-3736, kris.johansen@wisconsin.gov

The landscape of west-central Wisconsin offers some of the most productive white-tailed deer habitat in the United States with its rolling valleys, fertile farmland, big rivers, and wooded ridgetops. This region provides an ideal setting for hunters to reconnect with their passion for the outdoors, whether sitting alone in a tree stand or going out together with family members. There are many reasons that draw hunters to west-central Wisconsin: for some, it is the opportunity to pursue world-class bucks, while for others, it is simply about getting outside and making new memories.

As snowfall records were broken throughout the winter of 2018-19, many hunters worried about possible impacts on their local deer herd. For example, the Eau Claire area set new records for the all-time snowiest month in February (53.7”) and the highest total snow accumulation during a full winter (73”). Luckily, the snow never developed a top crust that would impede a deer’s foraging ability. Winter stress was relieved when
temperatures warmed in mid-March and snow melted rapidly; south facing slopes began to open up, exposing bare ground and making food sources available. By the end of March, snowcover was nearly gone across most of the west-central district. Winter impacts on the deer herd appear to have been minimal.

A cold, wet spring does not appear to have impacted fawn production. Going into the fawning season, carcass assessments showed that pregnant does retained plenty of fat reserves and were in excellent condition. As fawns were born, reports of twins and triplets in farmland areas have been common. While persistent rainfall prevented many farmers from getting into their fields during planting season, natural vegetation has been abundant enough to provide adequate food supplies for lactating females.

In follow up to last year’s district-wide CWD surveillance effort, testing services will continue to be offered to hunters in 2019 in all 19 counties across the west-central district. Testing is offered at no additional cost to hunters. Sampling stations will be set up during the archery and gun seasons in every county, utilizing self-service kiosks and a network of cooperating taxidermists and meat processors. Hunters can visit the DNR website and keyword search “CWD sampling” to identify sampling locations prior to their hunt and then make the trip to a sampling station part of their 2019 hunt plans.

The West Central District’s landscape is diverse with excellent deer habitat across the 19 counties. Much of the western border of the district is within the “driftless area” of Wisconsin, characterized by steep oak and hickory dominated hillsides and fertile ridges and valleys that are generally cropped with alfalfa, corn and soybeans. This area has some of the highest deer densities in the state and is also known for exceptional antler growth with some of the greatest numbers of Boone and Crocket and Pope and Young entries year in and year out due to an older age structure of bucks.

The district also has a great mix of public lands within the Central Forest Zone counties where deer populations are not as high as the western and eastern fronts, but hunters can still expect to find ample quality hunting opportunities. On the eastern side of the district, deer are abundant as well with most counties seeing an increasing deer population. The mix of agriculture and woodlots within this landscape provides excellent deer habitat with opportunities for hunters to fill their antlerless harvest authorizations and have a good chance of harvesting a buck with nice antlers.

In Dunn and Pepin counties, deer populations are stable to increasing. According to wildlife biologist Missy Sparrow, “Spring and summer conditions have been great for deer habitat. We have received more reports this year on the number of deer being seen on the landscape over previous years.” There are reports of fewer twin fawns being seen which could be attributed to winter impacts. Both counties will offer two antlerless harvest authorizations with each deer hunting license. Pepin County hunters will have additional opportunities during the antlerless-only Holiday Hunt and extended archery and crossbow seasons through January 31, 2020.

According to Buffalo and Trempealeau County biologist Mark Rasmussen, “Both Buffalo and Trempealeau county’s deer populations are very strong. DNR staff have been seeing deer regularly in both counties, and at all hours of the day, feeding in fields and along roads, including
numerous does with fawns.” Hunters in Buffalo County will have the opportunity to harvest antlerless deer during the Holiday Hunt.

According to wildlife biologist Dan Goltz, conditions during the 2018 hunting season were almost perfect in Vernon and Crawford counties. That, combined with an abundant deer herd, resulted in the highest harvest in years. “I think there will be many opportunities for hunters to see and harvest deer this fall. If the weather provides challenging hunting conditions, the harvest may be slightly lower than last year, but there are plenty of deer on the landscape now,” said Goltz. Vernon and Crawford CDACs both increased their antlerless quotas and will include ample antlerless tags (four) with each license. In addition, both counties chose to have the Holiday Hunt and extended archery/crossbow season.

In Pierce and St. Croix counties, hunters will also have good opportunity to harvest deer. “By managing forests and habitat on your property to provide abundant natural browse, deer will have the food resources they depend on, regardless of the crop rotation and timing,” said local biologist Jed Hopp. Both counties will once again offer two antlerless harvest authorizations per license. Pierce County will be participating in the Holiday Hunt and extended archery/crossbow season.

According to hunter observations, the number of deer in La Crosse and Monroe counties has been increasing steadily since 2015. Fawn-to-doe ratios have increased in both counties between 2017-2018. Due to this population increase, local CDACs in La Crosse and Monroe recommended one and two antlerless harvest authorizations with each license, respectively.

Hunters within the central Wisconsin counties of Wood and Portage may experience more deer sightings from their tree stand this year, too. Population estimates and observations suggest the local herd is growing. “While driving throughout the southern half of Portage County, I frequently observe does with one to two fawns” reports wildlife biologist
Lesa Kardash. Portage County will offer two antlerless harvest authorizations with each license purchased.

The Central Forest Zone of the West Central District contains extensive forested tracts of public land and offers a wild and remote hunting experience. The deer densities are not as high as in counties dominated by agriculture and more fertile soils, but hunters who go the extra mile to scout new locations away from roadways are often rewarded with both solitude and success. Deer numbers in the Central Forest have steadily increased since 2014 and hunters should expect another good deer hunting season this fall. Hunters in the Central Forest Zone are reminded that each county has a limited antlerless quota for public and private lands, so hunters should be prepared to purchase their antlerless harvest authorizations when they go on sale starting on Aug. 19 at 10 a.m. Some counties are likely to sell out quickly.

In the farmland portion of Marathon County, the wet spring delayed planting of crops which could impact harvest and potentially lead to more crops still standing during the 2019 fall deer hunting seasons. For hunters who prefer to hunt public land, there are plenty of opportunities, “The Marathon County forest system is comprised of nine scattered forest units totaling close to 31,000 acres of quality deer hunting land,” explained wildlife biologist Brandon Stefanski. “The McMillan Marsh Wildlife Area and parts of the Mead Wildlife Area contain a wide array of habitat types that ultimately provide exceptional hunting opportunities. Wildlife biologist Erin Grossman expects that winter conditions will not negatively affect population growth in Juneau and Adams counties. “The mid-April snow storm dumped several inches of snow but within a week to 10 days most areas were snow free and the late snow had negligible impact. However, persistent wet
weather has caused flooding and abnormally high water levels in the northern portions of the counties, which may affect where deer are spending time. Hunters in Juneau County will have the antlerless-only Holiday Hunt and the extended archery/crossbow seasons.

“Mild winters and reduced antlerless harvest in recent years have contributed to hunters experiencing more deer sightings and buck harvest opportunities in Clark and Jackson counties,” says biologist Scott Roepke. “Deer should be abundant during the fall of 2019.” The hunting season structure in both Clark and Jackson County will be very similar to previous years. Both counties will offer some antlerless harvest opportunities county-wide, but without additional seasons such as the Holiday Hunt or extended archery/crossbow seasons. As a reminder, the Forest and Farmland Zone boundary in Clark County changed in 2018 and hunters must be aware of which zone they are hunting in.

Public lands hunters in Eau Claire and Chippewa County should be encouraged by the reports and observations of rebounding deer herd numbers in the Eau Claire and Chippewa county forests. County forestry staff are working to sustainably manage timber on the forest which produces excellent deer habitat as regenerating saplings provide ample food for deer. Public land hunters should focus on recent timber harvests, including clear cuts and oak shelterwoods, during their scouting efforts. This year, a modest number of antlerless hunting opportunities will be available in the Forest Zones, with an emphasis on private lands.

For those hunters who have the good fortune to participate in managed hunts on the Sandhill Wildlife Area, wet seasonal conditions may create some unique challenges and opportunities. “Significantly higher than average precipitation has fallen over the past two years and many of the marshes and wetlands are fully saturated. If these conditions persist into hunting season, hunters will again have difficult access to many of the isolated and remote areas of Meadow Valley and Wood County Wildlife Areas,” suggested wildlife biologist Darren Ladwig. “However, these conditions help funnel deer into the small, sandy oak ridges that connect bedding areas to feeding areas. Up until the 1st of July we experienced a rather cool and damp start to the growing season, and vegetation...
growth was delayed slightly, but is rebounding with the onset of warm and humid summer weather” said Ladwig.

All the staff in the West Central District want to wish everyone a safe and enjoyable time afield this fall with family and friends. They also urge experienced hunters to consider introducing someone new to the rich and time-honored tradition of Wisconsin deer hunting so a new hunter can enjoy that tradition as well.

Northeast District Forecast

By Bryan Woodbury, Wildlife Biologist, 920-832-1804 Bryan. Woodbury@wisconsin.gov

Hunters should be optimistic with the upcoming 2019 deer hunting season. Most of the district experienced another mild winter. This is the fifth consecutive mild winter which has contributed to strong fawn production throughout northeast Wisconsin. Many DNR staff and the general public have reported seeing deer frequently this summer and a high number of fawns. This has been a wetter than normal spring which has delayed agricultural production by 12-20 days. The wet conditions are forcing farmers to leave fields fallow or plant them to cover crops instead of the traditional corn or soybeans.

During the 2017 County Deer Advisory Council (CDAC) meeting, Marinette County modified the boundary split between the Forest Zone (Zone 1) and the Farmland Zone (Zone 2). In addition, Manitowoc and Sheboygan counties created a new Metro Sub-unit. Hunters should check out boundary and season structures at dnr.wi.gov, keyword “DEER”, to verify they are hunting in the proper zone for the harvest authorizations they possess.

Marinette and Oconto counties are each split into two Deer Management Units (DMUs) by the boundary of the Northern
Forest and Central Farmland Zones. The northern forest units registered “moderate” levels on the Winter Severity Index for the winter of 2018-2019. CDACs in both counties slightly decreased their Forest Zone quota and antlerless deer harvest authorizations in recognition of a harder winter this year. The deer population in both counties’ forest zones is still increasing and an antlerless harvest is warranted. Bonus antlerless deer harvest authorizations for the northern forest portions of the counties are likely to sell out quickly. The CDACs in both counties are looking to increase the antlerless deer harvest in the Central Farmland portions of their counties. Marinette will be issuing three Farmland (Zone 2) antlerless deer harvest authorizations with each license and Oconto will be issuing three Farmland (Zone 2) antlerless deer harvest authorizations. These harvest authorizations can only be used in the Central Farmland Zone portion of the county. Both counties are providing additional hunting opportunities in the Central Farmland Zone with a Holiday Hunt and Oconto is extending the archery and crossbow seasons in their Central Farmland Zone.

Many of the CDACs in the Central Farmland counties within the Northeast District are concerned about achieving an adequate harvest of antlerless deer. Their current harvest objective is to either maintain or decrease the size of the herd in these counties. As the deer herd continues to grow above desired levels, these counties are offering multiple antlerless harvest authorizations with each license, an antlerless-only firearm Holiday Hunt and extended archery and crossbow seasons through January. CDACs in the Farmland Zone are utilizing all the available tools to control deer populations. Many of these councils have discussed the need for additional options, besides the socially unacceptable antlerless-only season. “If you are hunting in a county that is offering two to six additional antlerless deer harvest authorizations with each license, the message is: shoot more antlerless deer” suggests Jeff Pritzl, Wildlife Supervisor for the Northeast District.

Shawano County is issuing six Farmland (Zone 2) antlerless deer harvest authorizations per license, double the number issued in 2018. “Extreme deer browsing to hardwoods is
causing forest regeneration issues that will reduce quality habitat and is affecting the overall condition of the deer,” notes Kay Brockman-Mederas, wildlife biologist for Shawano County.

Door County is offering five Farmland (Zone 2) antlerless deer harvest authorizations per license again this year. Kewaunee and Marquette increased their offering to four per license, up one harvest authorization compared to 2018 as a way to emphasize the overpopulation of deer in these counties. Marinette Farmland Zone increased their antlerless deer harvest authorizations to three per license compared to two last year and Oconto Farmland, Waupaca and Green Lake counties will continue to issue three antlerless authorizations per license. Outagamie, Brown, Manitowoc, Sheboygan, and Waushara will provide two antlerless harvest authorizations per license. These CDACs want to give hunters with access to higher deer densities the ability to harvest additional deer. Each of these counties also will offer bonus antlerless authorizations for sale to those hunters wishing to harvest even more deer than the above levels provide.

Additionally, many CDACs wanted to provide their hunters with more hunting opportunities. Outagamie, Brown, Kewaunee, Door, Sheboygan, Green Lake, Marquette and the Farmland zones in Oconto and Marinette are offering the antlerless-only firearm Holiday Hunt. Outagamie, Sheboygan, Kewaunee, Brown and Oconto Farmland Zone have also extended the archery and crossbow seasons through January 31 to provide more hunting opportunity. However, it is important for hunters to keep in mind that there is great variation in the habitat type as well as the quality of the habitat across the landscape and as a result, the number of deer between individual properties can vary significantly.

The group of counties around Lake Winnebago tends to have abundant deer numbers, but the habitat is patchy and fragmented, and hunting pressure is relatively high for the available cover. As a result, overall deer numbers across the area aren’t as robust, so hunters in Calumet, Fond du Lac and Winnebago counties are limited to one Farmland (Zone 2) antlerless deer harvest authorization included with each license.

However, there should be adequate numbers of bonus antlerless deer harvest authorizations available for sale. The first free-ranging deer testing positive for chronic wasting disease (CWD) in the Northeast District was detected in eastern Marquette County in 2018. CWD has also been detected just over the border from Marinette County in the U.P. of Michigan. Additionally, it has been detected in several captive cervid farms within and adjacent to the district. CWD sampling goals are established for all affected areas at a level that should detect the presence of the disease. Hunters are encouraged to submit their adult deer head for disease sampling.

Monitoring the health of our deer is an important CWD management strategy. The DNR will be collecting deer heads for CWD testing around the focus area in Marinette and the two focus areas in Shawano County and the adjacent portion of Oconto County. Check the DNR CWD Sampling website for sample locations, phone numbers and hours of availability at dnr.wi.gov, keyword “CWD”. The DNR offices near you are also equipped
to receive samples. Please call ahead if you need assistance or have questions.

Good luck this hunting season, and we wish everyone a safe and enjoyable fall.

Northern District Forecast

By Curt Rollman, DNR Deer Biologist, 715-369-9399 Curtis. Rollman@Wisconsin.gov

Northern Wisconsin continues to see good deer numbers across many portions of the region. This is evident by increased hunter sightings in the field, increases in antlerless harvest quotas as recommended by local County Deer Advisory Councils, and increasing harvest totals in many areas over the previous years. Pending favorable hunting conditions, hunters can expect similar deer sightings as compared to last year. The 2018/19 winter had a winter severity index of “severe” across most of the north, which marks it as the first region-wide severe winter since 2013/14. This winter may have slowed population growth but did not cause large population decline.

The 2018/19 winter started out very mild and did not have any meaningful severity until record snowfall occurred in February. The high snowfall amounts impacted deer movement and feeding. However, deer largely prepare for winter during the previous spring, summer and fall by building up large fat reserves to carry them through a Wisconsin winter. The early mild winter left deer with most of their fat reserves going into the most severe period in February. A quick snow melt and timely spring green up helped many deer before their fat reserves were fully depleted. Biologists across the north walked through deer yards and noted increased use but little winter mortality. The observations suggest that the snow was deep enough to move deer into traditional deer yards, which is another strategy of deer to make it through winter, but not deep for long enough to cause widespread mortality. The deer they found dead were largely fawns in their first winter or very old adults with deep tooth wear, which are the age classes expected to have a harder time during rough winters. Prime age adults (2-8) are very hardy and can withstand most whatever a Wisconsin winter can throw at them. While population growth rates may be impacted, overall the northern herd came out of winter in good condition, which
is a sign of a balanced deer herd that has enough habitat to support them through a more severe winter.

This will be the first year of negative or only moderate population growth in the northern herd after four years of high growth rates as populations experienced four consecutive mild winters. Many deer metrics suggest deer are fully utilizing quality habitat and are saturating areas of high-quality habitat. To keep the herd in balance with the habitat, County Deer Advisory Councils (CDACs) recommended an antlerless harvest in every deer management unit (DMU) across the north, with multiple CDACs recommending higher antlerless quotas than last year. These recommendations came after review of deer metrics, public reports, and biologist analysis. Deer metrics can be found for any deer management unit (DMU) at dnr.wi.gov, keywords “Deer Metrics”.

Reports of fawns have been coming in across the north suggesting average to above average fawn numbers, however sightings of twins appear to be down in a few areas which may be an artifact of the winter. The winter could also impact antler growth as adult bucks will take more time to replenish their body before having energy to put into antler development. The growing season has been particularly good, leaving the woods lush with green vegetation which may make up the difference for the bucks. The lush vegetation is also welcome for lactating does and fawns looking for cover. Also, many hay fields have been left un-cut due
to heavy rains, which leaves additional cover and forage for deer later into the summer.

As with any year, deer are not evenly distributed on the landscape. They favor areas of high-quality habitat which leads to a patchy distribution as they find the best pockets of habitat. It is important for hunters to do their scouting early and keep an eye out for any changes from the previous hunting season. In the north, the largest changes occur around timber harvests and acorn production. Hunters can scout around their hunted area for aspen that has been cut within the last five years which will provide good forage in early fall and good escape cover during the hunting seasons. Hunters can also scout acorn production in late summer by walking oak ridges to look for developing acorns at the tops of oaks.

Hunting near acorns is most effective in the early bow season but can be productive throughout the entire deer season if it is a large acorn crop. As always, it is important for hunters to scout and stay mobile to maximize their opportunities this hunting season. Enjoy the time outdoors and remember to have fun!

DNR Wildlife Biologist County Reports

Sawyer County – Laine Stowell

Sawyer County had a long, late fall in 2018 and deer were heavy with fat going into winter. Sawyer County snow accumulation during the winter of 2018/2019 began to make deer watchers anxious when depths exceeded 18 inches in Mid-February, maxing out at 28 inches in March. However, from March 11th through March 14th snow depths dropped drastically with a major warm up with rain. By the end of March there remained only six inches of snow in most areas of the county. Though the month of deep snow put stress on last year’s fawns, the quick meltdown saved most of them, and the severe winter didn’t have time to make a major drain on the condition of pregnant does. All in all, we had good survivorship of deer through the winter. Early indications say that fawn production has been good this spring and deer will be abundant going into the 2019 hunting season. Sawyer County deer hunters should see a satisfying number of deer during the fall.

Iron County – Jenna Malinowski

The 2019 deer hunting seasons should bring greater hunting opportunities this year for Iron County—weather dependent. After observing an increase in Iron County’s deer herd, 100 antlerless harvest authorizations will be available in 2019, making it the first antlerless hunt in the county since 2013. More deer are being observed in the wild, in backyards and along roadsides. Deer populations seem to be rising with promising fawn recruitment. Last year’s fawns have been sighted with fawns of their own this spring—a good indicator of quality habitat and solid recruitment.

Herd health assessments conducted early this spring indicated fat reserves were still available to individual deer, however less fat than previous years. Deer yards were surveyed and few dead deer found. Although winter severity indices were high, the balanced deer population may have helped the total population survive the winter.
Burnett County – Bob Hanson

Hunters in Burnett County should see good numbers of deer this season. Last winter had a short timeframe of hard weather, but overall winter was moderate. The impacts on deer appear to be minimal, and fawns are being seen in good abundance. Early indications show oak acorns beginning to form and current weather patterns suggest a good acorn crop. Early fall hunters might consider hunting in oak stands. Acorns mixed with other forest and field crops should have deer hitting the fall in prime condition. If normal hunting haunts show few deer, mobility will still be important to find areas of focused deer activity. Hunters hoping for a public land antlerless harvest opportunities should be ready to purchase their harvest authorizations the day they go on sale (August 19th) as supplies are limited and likely to sell out.

Douglas County – Greg Kessler

Overall, the deer herd in Douglas County is in good shape, with some areas that have very few deer, while others have more than the desired number. Despite this past winter being relatively long, the deer appear to be in good condition with many residents reporting more fawns than they have seen in recent years. The CDAC did recommend a slight decrease in antlerless hunting opportunities for the county in response to a slight, but unexpected, decrease in the 2018 buck harvest. Hunters looking for their best opportunities should focus on the northern and eastern areas of the county where deer numbers are greatest whereas the south and western areas have fewer deer but offer a quality big woods hunting experience with fewer hunters. Frequent spring rains combined with no late frosts have provided plentiful forage, and another good year of native nuts and berries is possible. Douglas County has a very active forest management program on county, state, and timber company lands that offer a wide variety of habitats and accessibility options for hunters that range from very accessible areas in the sandy soils in the southern and central parts of the county to very remote and
difficult access in the lowland swamps in the west-central part of the county. Despite the positive outlook for a great fall, hunters must still exercise their basic planning and scouting skills to find areas that have the deer sign to provide the hunt they hope for.

Price County - Derek Johnson

This fall Price County should see increased deer numbers and have more opportunities to harvest a deer. This past winter was one of the mildest on record in the county until we reached the deep snow of February. Luckily that stretch of bad weather only lasted a few weeks, during which the deer were able to stay put in sheltered areas and ride out the worst of the weather. After the snow receded, deer were observed moving around more. The deer that were observed this spring appeared to be in good condition and very few deer were reported as starving or found dead during winter health assessments. There have been many reports of fawns this summer with most does observed with at least one fawn.

The modest antlerless quota of 2018 allowed the herd to slightly increase this year. The quota this fall will help our herd stabilize for future years and allow our buck population to grow a bit older. This should mean more mature bucks being harvested this fall and more each year after, barring future severe winters. This fall, the quota is set to harvest 1,500 antlerless deer throughout the
county. The majority of the antlerless harvest will be on private lands but still allowing some opportunity for public land hunters.

There has been a lot of timber sale and habitat improvement activity on public lands in Price County in recent years. Public land hunters should look for recently managed parcels that will have the young forage deer will be seeking out this fall. Since the corn and soybean crops were planted in late, look for deer to be less frequent in open fields this fall if the majority of the corn is chopped for silage. Seek out thickets of desirable forage in the woods for some of the best hunting this year.

I look forward to hearing your stories of the hunt and the fruits of your effort! Good luck to all hunters this year and be safe!

Lincoln and Langlade counties – Janet Brehm

Both archers and gun hunters can look forward to good deer numbers this fall in Langlade and Lincoln Counties. This has been noted by members of the public as well as area foresters working in the area. As for reproduction, does with one fawn are commonly being seen, a few twin fawns as well. The winter started out very mild, with virtually no snow December and January, but started to cool down in January. In February and March, deep snow and cold temperatures caused the Winter Severity Index to accumulate points quickly. Lincoln County hit the “severe” winter category and Langlade County was still considered a “moderate” winter overall. The WSI this past winter seemed severe at times, but overall it wasn’t close to the “very severe” winter of 2013-2014.

Winter/spring deer health assessments looked at fat content and pregnancies from car-killed deer to see how they coped with the winter. Our assessments indicated that most deer carried sufficient fat content, and a few does were pregnant with singles and twins. Minimal losses were thought to have occurred, knowing only a portion of the winter experienced harsh weather. Population levels have been rising over the last several years in Lincoln County, resulting in a predicted population for this year being about the same as last year. Langlade County is predicted to see an increase in deer from last year.

We’ve had a good growing season of lush browse, further helping deer reach prime condition going into fall. The acorn crop looks to be moderate. Both counties have antlerless harvest opportunities, offering 7,625 bonus antlerless harvest authorizations for sale in Langlade County (3,050 public, 4,575 private lands), and 6,400 available (1,900 public, 4,500 private lands) in Lincoln County. Langlade and Lincoln Counties have increased public land harvest authorizations over last year, especially in Langlade, allowing for greater availability of antlerless harvest authorizations. Overall, I expect hunter satisfaction to be very good in each county.

Vilas County – Michele Woodford

Hunters should have similar deer sightings as last year in Vilas County. Like other counties in the north weather was mild well into January and deer could forage on ground vegetation. There were some extreme sub-zero temperatures at the end of
January and in February, but the snow depths were minimal until late-February when snow accumulations exceed three feet going into March. At times, snow crusts (which can inhibit deer movement) were firm enough to allow deer to travel on top of the snow, and browse on woody browse higher than they can normally reach.

With concerns that repeated bucks-only season structures were putting pressure on yearling bucks and resulting in few older-aged bucks, the local CDAC issued antlerless harvest authorizations for the second straight year after a concerted effort to rebuild the herd. Offering a limited antlerless harvest is expected to maintain the current population size and help prevent deer from over-browsing important deer habitats. This added hunting opportunity should allow hunters to pass up smaller bucks and buck fawns.

Look for new hunting spots in and around newly harvested timber that provides nearby thick cover and plenty of hiding places and diverse forage for deer. Also consider archery hunting on public lands near subdivisions where deer congregate to browse on ornamental plants. Doing your homework and knowing the local ordinances in and around residential areas can gain you access to additional hunting opportunities.

Forest and Florence Counties
- Tom Carlson

The upcoming deer season in Forest County should be about the same as last year. This past winter hit the “severe” range on the Winter Severity Index scale, with 81 points being recorded. Hunters can expect that the population will remain relatively stable compared to last year.

Hunting in Florence County has been very productive the past several years and that trend is expected to continue during the 2019 seasons following a "moderate" winter. Seventy-one points were recorded on the Winter Severity Index scale. To accommodate for the effects of this past winter on the population, antlerless harvest authorizations will be lower than last year.

Maintaining the population at the current level is the 3-year objective set by the Florence County Deer Advisory Council (CDAC). 1,100 bonus antlerless harvest authorizations will be available for sale including 700 for private lands and 400 for public lands. Additional harvest is expected from military, disabled and agricultural damage permits in 2019. The total expected antlerless harvest is about 400.

The current three-year population objective set by the local CDAC is to increase the population. Limited antlerless harvest will help meet this objective while still providing harvest opportunity where appropriate. 300 bonus antlerless harvest authorizations will be available for sale to the public for use on private lands throughout the county.

No bonus authorizations are available for public land this year. Antlerless harvest opportunities will again be available to youth this year. Additional harvest is expected from military, disabled and agricultural damage permits. The total antlerless harvest quota is 700 deer.
Washburn County -  
Nancy Christel

Hunters reported seeing more deer in 2018 than the previous year and should expect conditions to be just as good, if not better, in 2019. Antlerless hunting opportunities for 2019 are similar to 2018. Fall 2018 provided ample acorns and mild conditions so the deer could go into the winter in good condition. Although there were severe conditions later in the winter, the first half of winter was very mild. We are seeing a lot of deer in the fields, woods and along the roadsides. There are high populations throughout much of the county. As is the case everywhere, some parts of the county will have more deer than others. The northeast portion generally has fewer deer than the rest of the county, although within that area there are still pockets of high deer numbers. Timber harvesting has been occurring regularly on the public lands which is critical for continuing to provide good deer habitat.

Enjoy the hunt and your time in the woods. Each year is a new adventure and new memories. There are more than 150,000 acres of public land in the county, to take the time and explore this great resource! Please remember to submit your deer head to the DNR for CWD sampling this year. We have conveniently placed 24/7 CWD kiosks throughout the county and neighboring counties.

Rusk and Taylor Counties -  
Josh Spiegel

Although the 2018-19 winter was more severe than the two previous, all indications are that the deer appeared to fare well and will provide good hunting opportunity this year. Like much of the north, local deer herds endured a mid- and late-winter period of frigid cold and deep snow at the same time, thanks to abundant natural crops that had deer entering winter in great condition. That same body condition prevailed into spring and helped to provided what appears to be an abundant fawn crop. Deer have been extremely active at the onset of the growing season, with no shortage of food sources and natural cover for protection. We expect an overall increase in deer numbers in both counties, although this will vary locally. A great mix of agricultural land blended into the northern forests provides great hunting opportunities in both Rusk and Taylor Counties. Both CDACs are using local data and have concluded that the population is continuing to increase and, therefore, are providing an increase in antlerless hunting opportunities for 2019. In Taylor County, 675 public land and 5600 private land bonus antlerless deer harvest authorizations will be available for purchase. Rusk County provided similar opportunity with 950 public land and 3,825 private land antlerless authorizations.

Barron and Polk counties -  
Kevin Morgan

Hunters should find plenty of deer when they head to the mixed field and forest habitat of Barron and Polk County this fall. After a winter rated as moderate in severity, winter effects on deer survival and reproduction are expected to be minimal. Observed fawn production appears to vary widely, with some does have been seen with one or no fawns and others with two and even three fawns. There was a major wind event in both counties in July and there is concern by the public
over wildlife mortality. We are still seeing deer in these areas and any losses are expected to be minimal and should not have an effect on this fall’s hunt. However, some public lands were affected by storm damage and some areas may have reduced access due to downed trees and salvage operations. Get out there and check your spots early to be sure they are accessible when hunting season comes around. Winter stress on bucks can affect their antler development, but last winter’s moderate conditions were likely to provide good conditions for antler development in mature bucks, and most yearling bucks will have forked antlers. Yearling buck percentages have been around 60% over the last 5 years, which means approximately 40% of the harvested bucks are 2 ½ years or older. With abundant food, fertile farmland soils, and good genetics, these two counties produce plenty of trophy bucks and provide entries every year in the Pope and Young and Boone and Crocket record books.

Along with mature bucks, these counties produce good numbers of deer for those that want to fill the freezer. Polk County is consistently in the top 10 counties for total harvest and, although it does not have as many deer as its neighbor to the west, Barron County cracked the top 10 in total harvest in 2018.

The deer population in these counties is trending upward, but with abundance comes some challenges. There has been a continued increase in deer/vehicle collisions in both counties, and the number of nuisance complaints for ornamental flowers, shrubbery, and gardens has increased. Agricultural damage is increasing and forest regeneration is being affected in some areas.

Managing deer populations to remain in balance with these environmental and social factors will require a substantial antlerless harvest. In both counties, two Farmland Zone antlerless harvest authorizations will be issued with each deer hunting license, and there will be additional bonus antlerless harvest authorizations available for purchase and can be bought over the counter at any license vendor or on-line. Overall, it looks like a great fall for hunting in Barron and Polk County for whatever kind of deer that interests you, whether you are looking for that trophy buck or just want to fill the freezer.