



# Maine Antlerless Deer Harvest System Overview

Presented at the 131st Maine Legislature  
To the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife  
By Nathan Bieber, Maine Dept of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW)

# Maine Antlerless Harvest System



- Any-Deer Permit History
- Any-Deer Permit Performance
- Permit System Review
- Permit System Changes
- Public Outreach Efforts
- Lottery and Over-the-counter Permit Sales Overview
- Antlerless Deer Permit Performance



# Any-Deer Permit History

# Any-Deer Permit History



- Does drive the population, and regulated harvest of does is our means of tipping the scales.
- Any-Deer Permit system developed in 1986. Permits distributed by lottery, and an Any-Deer Permit allowed a hunter to take either an antlered deer or an antlerless deer.



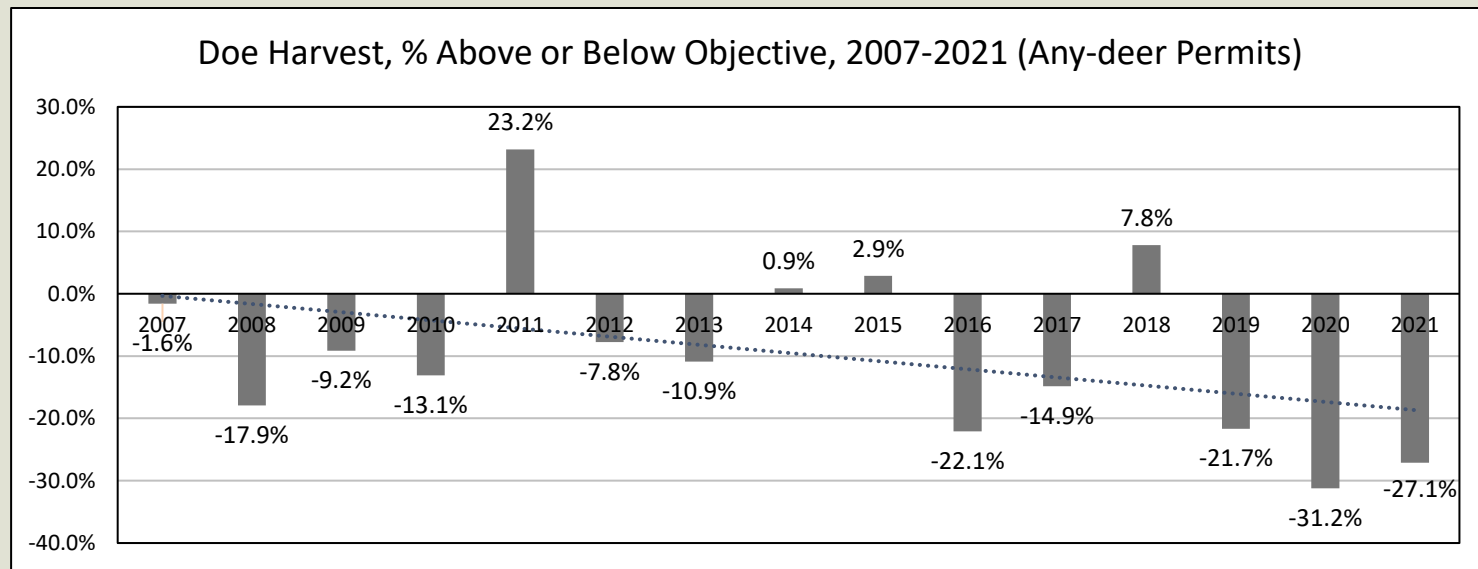


# Any-Deer Permit Performance



# Any-Deer Permit Performance

- Doe harvests on average 9.5% below objective over last 15 years; 18.2% below objective over last 6 years.



- We greatly increased permit numbers over the last several years to try and compensate, but saw severely diminishing returns with increased allocations.



# Permit System Review

# Permit System Review



- Issue discussed within Department dating back several years.
- Per request from the Legislature, we convened a stakeholder group with meetings July and September 2021. Report drafted with recommendations.
- Legislative changes packaged in L.D. 116, passed during the 130<sup>th</sup> Legislature.
- Rulemaking changes passed shortly thereafter.





# Permit System Changes

# Permit System Changes



- Goals:
  - Allow us to more reliably meet doe harvest objectives
    - Make antlerless harvest a more attractive option
    - Get permits into the hands of hunters more likely to use them
  - Provide fair and equitable access to hunters
  - Don't limit buck hunting opportunities
  - Don't cause major shifts in effort
  - Favor simplicity where an option



## Methods for Achieving Doe Harvest Objectives

- Change 1: Allocate permitted antlerless harvest opportunity by issuing antlerless permits instead of any-deer permits.
  - Eliminated choice between taking a buck or an antlerless deer that some hunters have to make with an any-deer permit.
  - Increased permit fill rate and willingness to use permits on antlerless deer.
  - May have encouraged hunters that did not care to apply for an ADP to apply for a permit if it allows for an additional deer.





## Methods for Achieving Doe Harvest Objectives

- Change 2: Grant the Department authority to designate WMDs as open to either-sex hunting on a regular license.
  - Just over ~1/2 of our deer hunters apply for permits in the lottery. If other changes do not result in desired doe harvest in a WMD, this option would allow all licensed hunters the option to take an antlerless deer on their regular license regardless of whether they chose to participate in the lottery.





## Permit Lottery

- Change 3: Limit lottery applicants to selecting two preferred WMDs or subunits for their permit.
  - ~70% of applicants utilized all 3 WMD choices.
  - Reducing the number of preferred units that an applicant may select from should increase the likelihood that applicants applied for permits in areas they were most likely to hunt.





## Permit Lottery

- Change 4: Eliminate permit swaps and transfers.
  - This limited the ability of hunters to collect more permits than they intended or were likely to use, and disincentivized applying for permits in WMDs with little intent to use them. One hunter, one application.
  - Eliminating swaps and most transfers relieved a significant administrative and law enforcement burden.



# Permit Lottery



- Change 5: 2.5% of permits to super pack applicants in WMDs with 2,000+ permits.
  - With a change to antlerless permits, fewer permits overall are issued. This proposal was intended to ensure the WMDs that currently have super pack permits will continue to have them.



# Permit Fees



- Change 6: Charge a \$12 fee for each permit received via the lottery, plus a \$2 agent fee.
  - Placed an appropriate value on permit allowing for the take of a 2<sup>nd</sup> deer.
  - Increased the likelihood that permit applicant is serious about taking antlerless deer.
  - Fee consistent with current expanded archery antlerless permit fee.
  - Generated income for deer management fund and efforts to acquire and manage deer wintering areas in northern, western, and eastern Maine.





# Permit Fees



- Change 7: Distribute excess permits “over the counter” for \$12 (plus \$2 agent fee) rather than distributing them as bonus permits through additional rounds in the permit lottery.
  - Provided opportunity to acquire a permit for applicants that are not successful or do not participate in the lottery.
  - Provided opportunity for hunters that use their permits to get another.
  - Generated income for deer management fund and efforts to acquire and manage deer wintering areas in northern, western, and eastern Maine.



# Youth Day



- Change 8: Allow Commissioner to designate which WMDs will allow either-sex hunting without a permit during Youth Day rather than coupling this with the issuance of permits. Initially, statewide.
  - More tailored approach.
  - At least initially, made regulations simpler to understand by designating all WMDs open.





## Archery and Crossbow Hunting

- Change 9: Allow Commissioner to designate which WMDs will allow either-sex hunting without a permit during October archery rather than coupling this with the issuance of permits. Initially, WMDs 12, 13, 15-18, 20-26, and 29.
  - More tailored approach.
  - Focused archery and crossbow antlerless harvest on WMDs with highest doe harvest needs.
  - Initially cautious with designations until we have a better handle on how popular crossbow hunting will be in each WMD.





## Accommodations for Different Demographics

- We also considered a number of other options for different groups (seniors, landowners, youths, etc.).
- Little common ground amongst stakeholders and staff, so we left these items untouched.
- Necessary to consider how these types of proposals would influence what's available for regular applicants. Increasing allotments for one group will typically result in lower allotments for another.



# Public Outreach Efforts

# Messaging Overview



- Launched a comprehensive communications campaign in late May. Information shared on social media and directly to users via email linking back to a landing page that included information about the permit system changes. By December, this landing page reached 367,685 unique users.
- Lottery reminders were deployed three times on social media and by email.
- August- FAQ list sent out by email.

## Deer Hunting Bag Limit + Permit Needs

**2022 Firearms + Muzzleloader Seasons**

May not exceed annual white-tailed deer bag limit

Firearms: Oct 31-Nov 26 (Oct 29 Maine residents only) | Muzzleloader: Nov 28-Dec 10 (Dec 5-10 in select WMDs) | Crossbow and muzzleloader hunters must have associated permit

Antlered Deer Bag Limit	Antlerless Deer Bag Limit	License or Permit Type
STATEWIDE 		<b>YOU NEED</b> • Big Game Hunting License
STATEWIDE 	+ PERMIT DESIGNATED WMD/SUBUNIT 	<b>YOU NEED</b> • Big Game Hunting License AND • 1 Antlerless Deer Permit
STATEWIDE 	+ PERMIT DESIGNATED WMD/SUBUNIT 	<b>YOU NEED</b> • Big Game Hunting License AND • 2 Antlerless Deer Permits
STATEWIDE 	OR STATEWIDE 	<b>YOU NEED</b> <b>On Youth Day 2022 (Oct 22)</b> Licensed youth hunters may harvest an antlerless deer without an Antlerless Deer Permit statewide

**YOUTH DAY** If youth hunters have an Antlerless Deer Permit, they may harvest two antlerless deer on Youth Day (one permit in designated WMD/Subunit, one statewide). If youth hunters do not have an Antlerless Deer Permit, their season bag limit is 1 deer.

WMDs subject to change. May not exceed annual white-tailed deer bag limit. Deer harvested during regular archery and crossbow, firearms, and muzzleloader seasons count toward the same annual bag limit.



# Messaging Overview

- September- initial notice sent with lottery results and 3 reminders sent during permit payment period with deadlines. Over 90% of selected applicants claimed and paid for their permit by the deadline.
- Late September- began sharing info on permits purchasable through website (“over-the-counter” permits).
- Additional TV, Facebook, radio, etc. coverage before, during, and after the hunting seasons.

### Deer Hunting Bag Limit + Permit Needs

2022 Regular Archery/Crossbow Season 

May not exceed annual white-tailed deer bag limit Crossbow hunters are required to have a valid Crossbow Permit along with a valid hunting license. They can hold either the firearms license or the archery license.

Antlered Deer Bag Limit	Antlerless Deer Bag Limit	License or Permit Type
STATEWIDE 	PERMIT DESIGNATED WMD/SUBUNIT 	<b>YOU NEED</b> • Archery Hunting License AND • Antlerless Deer Permit
STATEWIDE 	OR WMDs 12, 13, 15-18, 20-26, 29 	<b>YOU NEED</b> • Archery Hunting License
WMDs 12, 13, 15-18, 20-26, 29 	PERMIT DESIGNATED WMD/SUBUNIT 	<b>YOU NEED</b> • Archery Hunting License AND • Antlerless Deer Permit

 Those hunting the Expanded Archery Season must use Expanded Archery Deer Permit(s). Learn more at [mefishwildlife.com/expanded](http://mefishwildlife.com/expanded).  
*WMDs subject to change. May not exceed annual white-tailed deer bag limit. Deer harvested during regular archery and crossbow, firearms, and muzzleloader seasons count toward the same annual bag limit.*

# Customer Support Service



- Customer service provided 8:00 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday by our Info Center staff.
- Additional staff member hired specifically to field calls related to deer permit system changes.
- Seven staff members answering phones for first 2 days of permit sales through website; lowered to five staff members when call volume slowed.
- Additional customer service coverage available when 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> permits were made available for sale as well.





# Lottery and Over-the-counter Permit Sales Overview

# Lottery and Permit Sales Process



- 1 round lottery with 30 days to claim and pay for permit.
- Leftover permits in districts with more permits than applicants as well as permits not paid for in the 30-day window made available for purchase through website “over-the-counter (OTC)”.
- Initially limited to 1 OTC permit per customer with additional permits offered at intervals throughout the seasons.

# Lottery and Permit Sales Process



- First day of permit sales, excess demand overloaded website, so this was rescheduled.
- On rescheduled date, early applicants put into a waiting room and released per random number once permit sales opened. Day 2 went smoothly.
- Permit sales now feed directly into the registrations database in real time, which has improved data quality, registration station experience, and enforceability of permits.



## Lottery and Permit Sales Frequently Asked Questions

- Q: Is there a benefit to getting in the line/queue earlier?
- A: No. Everyone in the waiting room is let into the purchasing website randomly. Someone that joins the waiting room 2 hours early is no better off than someone that joins 1 minute early.
  
- Q: Why were customers allowed 4 transactions in one purchasing session?
- A: This was to accommodate families where 1 head of household would handle payments for the household, and this was still 1 permit per hunter. The alternative was to require the head of household to monitor multiple browsers or have multiple people monitoring browsers.
  
- Q: Do I have to pay for my permit transaction with a credit/debit card?
- A: Yes, if this is an obstacle, enlist the help of a friend or family member or consider purchasing a disposable/pre-paid card.



## Lottery and Permit Sales Frequently Asked Questions

- Q: Do super pack license holders that win a permit have to pay for it?
- A: No, not if the super pack license holder won a super pack antlerless deer permit. If the super pack applicant was not successful at winning a super pack antlerless permit, they could still be selected as a regular applicant for an antlerless deer permit, and then they would have to pay.
- Q: Why did some hunters get 2 permits in a district when I got none?
- A: This could happen if a hunter was successful in the lottery and also successful getting through the queue to purchase a leftover (unpaid) permit through the website but another hunter was not successful in either the lottery or at getting a permit through the website. Next year, we intend to require payment information entered at the time of application with applicants only being charged if drawn. This should result in no permits being “unclaimed” or “unpaid”.



# Antlerless Deer Permit Performance



# Antlerless Deer Permit Performance

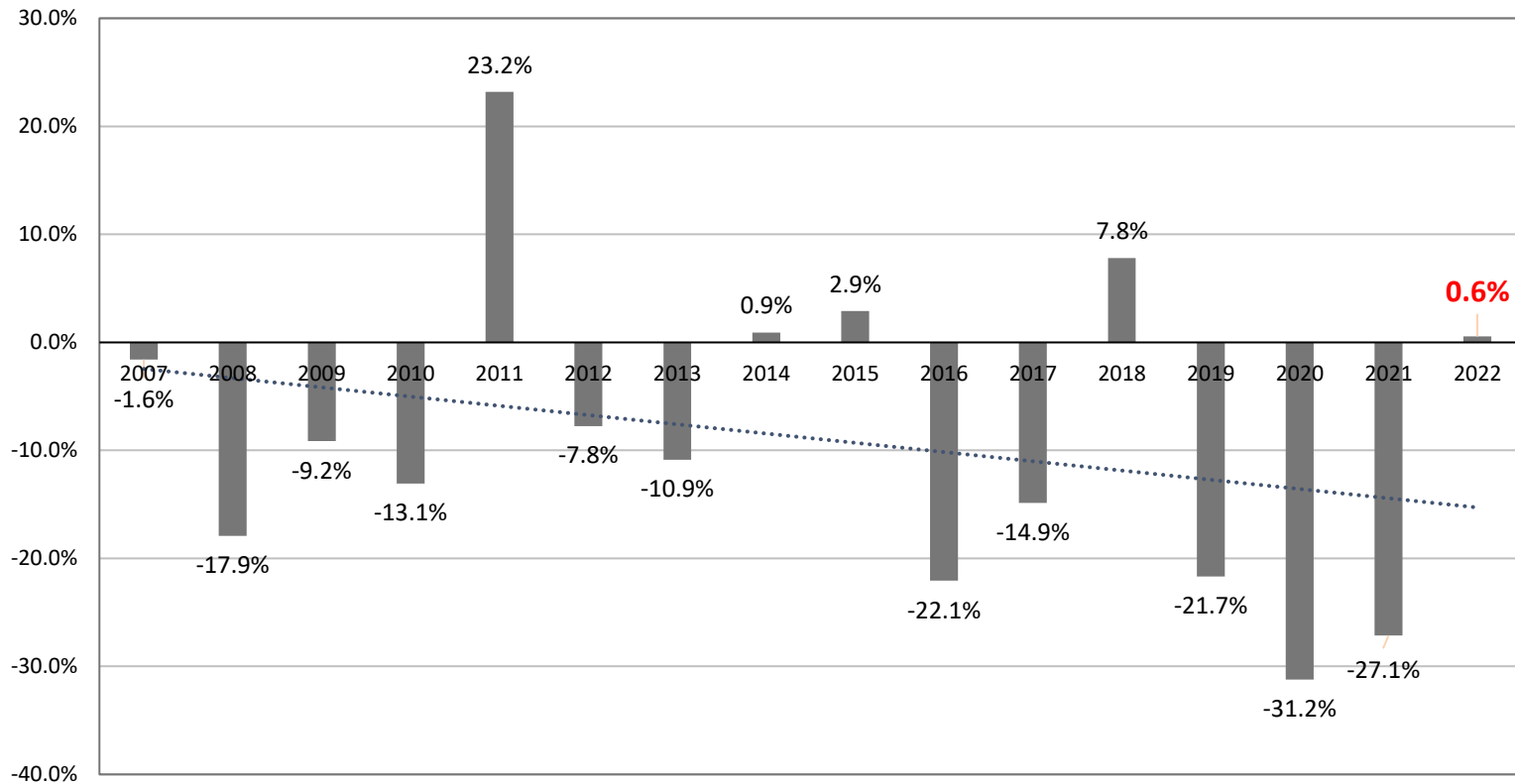
- Statewide, performance was very good.

WMD	22 Doe Harvest Objective	22 Doe Harvest	WMD	22 Doe Harvest Objective	22 Doe Harvest
1	0	2	17	1,860	1,917
2	0	8	18	103	97
3	5	17	19	10	29
4	0	0	20	745	746
5	0	3	21	1,265	1,340
6	53	81	22	1,371	1,345
7	146	92	23	1,821	1,918
8	73	61	24	719	657
9	16	7	25	1,606	1,456
10	13	12	26	813	682
11	58	46	27	178	168
12	115	153	28	0	24
13	144	134	29	307	452
14	98	71	25a	51	-
15	1,170	1,208	26a	81	-
16	988	1,157	Statewide	13,807	13,883



# Any-Deer Permit vs. Antlerless Deer Permit Performance

Doe Harvest, % Above or Below Objective: 2007-2021 Any-Deer Permits and 2022 Antlerless Deer Permits







# Antlerless Deer Permit Performance

- WMD-by-WMD, some calibration is needed.
- In some WMDs we overshot...

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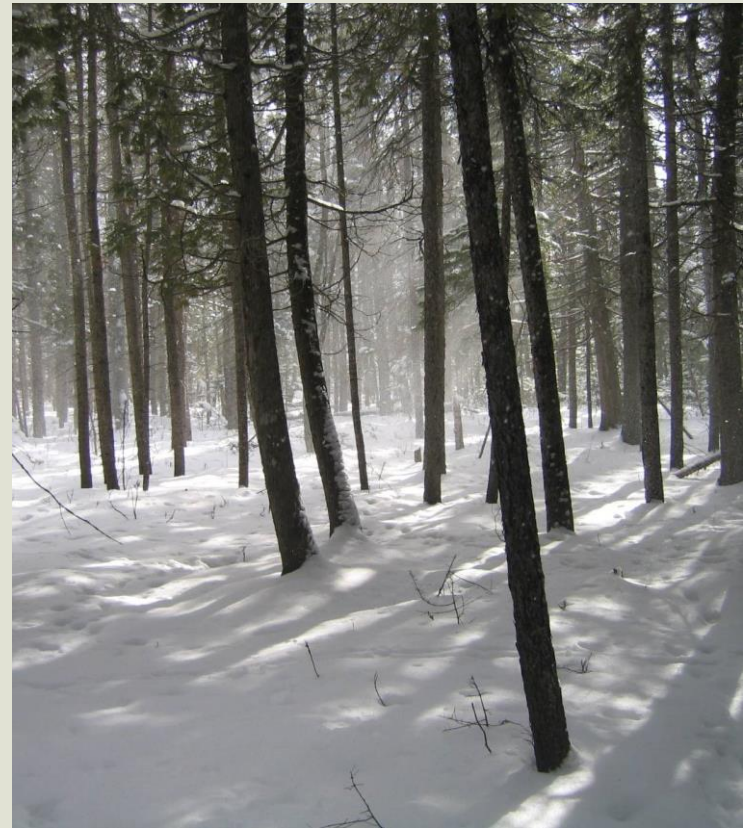
- ... and in some WMDs we undershot.
- This calibration just requires adjustments to expansion factors.

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14	98	71	25a	51	-
15	1,170	1,208	26a	81	-
16	988	1,157	Statewide	13,807	13,883

# Antlerless Deer Permit Performance



- 58,306 permits claimed and paid for that were distributed by lottery.
- 29,345 permits purchased “over-the-counter” through the website.
- Just over \$1,000,000 revenue generated for Deer Management Fund for deer habitat acquisition and management.



## Our Mission

*Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife* protects and manages Maine's fish and wildlife and their habitats, promotes Maine's outdoor heritage, and safely connects people with nature through responsible recreation, sport, and science.



# Overview

*Maine Department of Inland Fisheries of Wildlife (MDIFW)* preserves, protects, and enhances the inland fisheries and wildlife resources of the state. Established in 1880 to protect big game populations, MDIFW has since evolved in scope to include protection and management of fish, non-game wildlife, and habitats, as well as restoration of endangered species like the bald eagle. In addition to its conservation duties, MDIFW is also responsible for enabling and promoting the safe enjoyment of Maine's outdoors — from whitewater rafting to boating, snowmobiling, hunting, fishing, and wildlife observation. The agency's constituents include the fish, wildlife, and people who call Maine home, as well as the visiting outdoor enthusiasts and ecotourists who call Maine Vacationland and contribute hundreds of millions of dollars each year to the state's economy.

