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Deer season looking pretty good, as usual

Deer hunters should have success this year.

That's according to the state Department of Environmental Conservation, which expects the statewide buck harvest to be similar or even larger than it was in 2019.

And the same is true for antlerless deer. DEC increased the number of Deer Management Permits, expecting that harvest to jump by 10 percent over last fall.

Factors leading to a larger deer population include the mild 2019-20 winter across much of New York, which means deer survival should have been very strong.

Also, DEC noted:

"The forage base greened up well in spring, and conditions were great during fawning season," an unusual condition compared to the past couple of springs.

But much of the state was dry in

July, and DEC reported if those conditions continued and became even worse, fawn weights would be lower, and adult male antler sizes would be lower than average this fall.

"Still," DEC continued, "hunters should anticipate great deer hunting opportunities throughout New York State."

DEC is again asking hunters to follow the Let Young Bucks Go and Watch Them Grow effort, which encourages the taking of older bucks.

In 2019, for the second year in a row, 60 percent of adult bucks harvested were 2.5 years or older, setting another record in the total number of bucks taken in the harvest.

Let Young Bucks Go is an advantage to hunters because the average two-year-old buck generally yields 25 to 30 percent more meat and carries antlers twice as large as

the average yearling.

DEC divides the state into regions and also Wildlife Management Units. Our area is in Region 4, which includes Schoharie, Otsego and Delaware counties and portions of others. Region 4 covers nearly 4 million acres.

WMU 4G

This includes much of Schoharie County and in 2019 had 2.1 bucks and 3.6 total deer harvested per square mile. It's 317 square miles.

The Schoharie Valley runs right through the unit, and the terrain consists of forested hills and farms in the valley. There are thousands of acres of state land available for hunting, including Burnt Rossman

Continued on next page.

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Deer season

Continued from
previous page.

Hills State Forest.

WMU 4A

The area spans northern Schoharie County, eastern Montgomery County and western

Schenectady County. Hunters harvested 2.1 bucks and 3.9 deer per square mile in 2019. The unit is 430 square miles.

There is a fair amount of agriculture and two large areas for public hunting, Charleston State Forest and Rural Grove State Forest.

WMU 4F

WMU 4F includes most of Otsego

county and consists of rolling forested terrain and some farming in the valleys. In 2019, there were 3.4 bucks and 6.1 deer taken per square mile. The unit is a large one, 1,161 square miles.

There are many areas of state land available for hunting, including Arnold Lake State Forest, Basswood Pond State Forest, Bear Swamp State

Forest and Hartwick State Forest.

WMU 4P

This unit is in eastern Delaware County and consists of active and abandoned farms and forested areas. The terrain is moderate to steep. Hunters took 2.4 bucks and 3.7 deer per square mile in 2019. It is 361 square miles.

Relay State Forest and Plattekill

State Forest are public lands with hunting access.

Also, the New York City Department of Environmental Conservation has public land for hunting around the Pepacton Reservoir.

WMU 4R

This area is in Greene and Delaware counties in the northern Catskills. Hunters took 1.9 bucks and 2.9 deer per square mile in 2019. The area is 290 square miles.

The terrain is moderate to steep, and is a mix of forested mountains and farming.

Areas available for hunting include Bearpen Mountain State Forest, Huntersfield State Forest and several forest preserve lands. This is an antler restriction unit.

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Hunters should target older bucks

Every year, tens of thousands of New York hunters enjoy the opportunity to bring home a handsome 2.5-year or older buck, while about half of the antlered bucks taken in New York are only 1.5 years old (yearlings).

Yearling bucks generally weigh about 20 percent less and have 50 percent smaller antlers than they would as a 2.5-year-old.

According to DEC, the primary reason New York doesn't have more older, larger-antlered bucks in the harvest is because many get taken as yearlings.

Hunters can continue to push the harvest ratio solidly toward older bucks simply by choosing to let young bucks go.

For New York bucks to get bigger bodies and larger antlers, they simply need to get older, DEC stresses.

Older bucks are more challenging to hunt and yield more meat for the successful hunter.

These bucks create more rubs and scrapes and vocalize more – all things that add to the hunting experience.

As more hunters choose to pass

young bucks, all hunters will enjoy the opportunity to see and take more older bucks.

What can you do to see more older bucks?

- Choose to let young bucks walk.

- Improve the habitat by creating young forest and enhancing natural forage and cover for deer.

- In many areas, taking an antlerless deer instead of a young buck would help meet overall management goals and bring the deer population into better balance with the habitat, which in turn improves deer condition.

- Work with your neighbors and hunting partners to cooperatively reduce harvest of young bucks, meet your antlerless harvest goals, and improve habitat conditions.

Nearly all bucks in New York with four points or less are only 1.5 years old.

In Central and Western New York or other high quality habitat areas, about 30 percent of yearlings have five-six points and 15 percent have seven-eight antler points.

However, the overall size and

shape of their antlers remains small, with antler spreads generally less than 12 inches, well inside the ear tips.

While many hunters want the opportunity to take bigger bucks, the bucks frequently shown in magazines, on TV shows and on hunting-related products are rare in the wild.

To help hunters better understand what buck populations look like in New York and have realistic expectations of what they might encounter afield, in 2015 and 2016, DEC collected additional antler mea-

surements from 2,176 bucks across the state.

The picture is clear; when hunters choose to let young bucks go, they do grow – with antlers nearly doubling in size from 1.5 to 2.5 years of age.

In recent years, some hunters have expressed strong interest in increasing the number of older, larger-antlered bucks in our deer population.

This could be accomplished through a variety of regulatory and non-regulatory approaches.

New York hunters have divided opinions about buck hunting and many greatly value having the freedom to choose what type of buck to harvest.

DEC worked with experts at Cornell University to evaluate various buck hunting strategies (e.g. mandatory antler point restrictions, 1-buck-per-hunter rule, shorter season, voluntary restraint) in a way that accounted for regional variation in hunter values and the impacts on harvest, population management and hunter satisfaction.

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Deer numbers, town by town

Hunters last year harvested 224,190 deer, down a bit from the 2018 figure of 227,787.

Of the 2019 total, 120,403 were adult males, 11,139 were male fawns, 82,176 were adult does and 10,472 were female fawns.

Town-by-town totals follow, with first figure adult bucks and the second, total take. The first group of figures is 2019; the second, for comparison, is 2018:

Schoharie County
Blenheim, 40, 82; 49, 114.
Broome, 62, 108; 80, 134.
Carlisle, 86, 160; 62, 145.

Cobleskill, 89, 142; 80, 144.
Conesville, 67, 110; 76, 114.
Esperance, 62, 99; 63, 116.
Fulton, 127, 197; 107, 195.
Gilboa, 139, 251; 142, 276.
Jefferson, 154, 287; 192, 336.
Middleburgh, 169, 279; 168, 286.

Richmondville, 107, 167; 136, 242.

Schoharie, 90, 142; 116, 208.
Seward, 85, 166; 98, 170.
Sharon, 124, 220; 130, 243.
Summit, 123, 189; 129, 228.
Wright, 57, 104; 50, 88.
 Totals in 2019: 1,581 and 2,703.

Totals in 2018: 1,678 and 3,039.

Otsego County

Burlington, 184, 355; 180, 383.
Butternuts, 216, 384; 207, 338.
Cherry Valley, 113, 198; 113, 237.

Decatur, 46, 86; 56, 95.
Edmeston, 191, 354; 208, 420.
Exeter, 137, 280, 130, 305.
Hartwick, 170, 305; 178, 362.
Laurens, 160, 286; 219, 373.
Maryland, 161, 285; 178, 327.
Middlefield, 113, 217; 144, 278.
Milford, 184, 300; 169, 348.
Morris, 176, 327; 190, 415.

New Lisbon, 178, 287; 182, 336.
Oneonta, 145, 243; 160, 290.
Otego, 195, 302; 158, 261.
Otsego, 138, 246; 145, 292.
Pittsfield, 133, 240; 94, 208.
Plainfield, 86, 160; 86, 196.
Richfield, 130, 243; 106, 226.
Roseboom, 62, 107; 82, 172.
Springfield, 135, 225; 114, 239.
Unadilla, 159, 258; 162, 286.
Westford, 82, 131; 97, 162.
Worcester, 151, 264; 144, 287.
 Totals for 2019: 3,445 and 6,083.
 Totals for 2018: 3,502 and 6,836.

Delaware County
Andes, 254, 403; 272, 409.

Bovina, 93, 133; 88, 138.
Colchester, 222, 322; 221, 329.
Davenport, 175, 277; 156, 252.
Delhi, 217, 333; 191, 275.
Deposit, 108, 159; 90, 153.
Franklin, 294, 434; 277, 406.
Hamden, 165, 263; 164, 243.
Hancock, 458, 685; 399, 625.
Harpersfield, 116, 227; 176, 311.

Kortright, 157, 250; 176, 253.
Masonville, 141, 216; 109, 165.
Meredith, 190, 283; 187, 240.
Middletown, 196, 292; 161, 256.

Roxbury, 168, 240; 191, 288.
Sidney, 130, 207; 117, 168.
Stamford, 90, 131; 95, 146.
Tompkins, 174, 255; 145, 219.
Walton, 253, 405; 253, 376.
 Totals for 2019: 3,601 and 5,515.
 Totals for 2018: 3,468 and 5,252.

Greene County

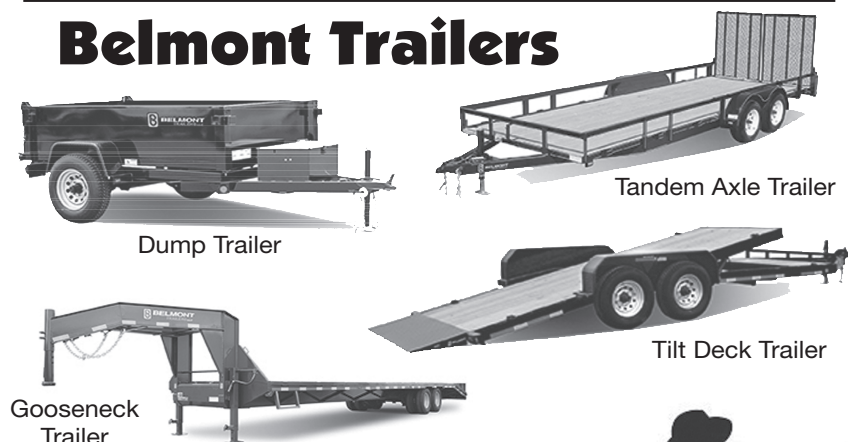
Ashland, 47, 76; 53, 82.
Athens, 92, 148; 83, 180.
Cairo, 153, 216; 121, 177.
Catskill, 134, 205; 136, 247.
Coxsackie, 84, 131; 118, 184.
Durham, 127, 213; 173, 290.
Greenville, 157, 268; 174, 285.
Halcott, 28, 46; 33, 63.
Hunter, 64, 70; 90, 105.
Jewett, 84, 116; 70, 100.
Lexington, 98, 117; 82, 108.
New Baltimore, 90, 136; 98, 164.

Prattsville, 56, 84; 49, 71.
Windham, 67, 84; 78, 115.
 Totals for 2019: 1,281 and 1,910.
 Totals for 2018: 1,358 and 2,171.

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Small game offer plenty of chances

New York's autumn gets going in a big way when several small game seasons open October 1.

"Public and private lands across the state present a diverse array of small game hunting opportunities," Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Basil Seggos said.

"Pursuing small game is a great way to introduce someone to hunting, and in addition to our youth hunting seasons, DEC is offering waterfowl hunts this year specifically for active military and veterans.

"I encourage experienced hunters across the state to take advantage



Squirrel season opened September 1.

of these opportunities, bring a new hunter afield and follow hunter safety requirements to have a rewarding experience this fall."

Season dates, bag limits, and other regulations for small game are available in DEC's Hunting and Trapping Regulations Guide, available from a licensing agent, or on DEC's website.

Ruffed Grouse

Ruffed grouse season runs from October 1 through the last day of February in most of New York.

An excellent growing season, except a bit dry in late summer, means the food supply was plentiful for ruffed grouse and other small game.

DEC wants ruffed grouse hunters to participate in the grouse hunting log program. Under this program, hunters send in feathers from harvested birds to determine recruitment, or the number of young birds produced by an adult female grouse. Hunters should visit the DEC website for more details.

Pheasant

DEC is releasing pheasants for the regular season.

All release sites for pheasants are provided by state-funded programs and are open to public hunting.

Pheasants will be released on state-owned lands before and during the fall hunting season, and at a

number of sites on New York City Watershed lands thanks to a partnership with the NYC Department of Environmental Protection.

Pheasant hunting opportunities have been augmented private landowners that have opened their lands to public hunting.

In Schoharie County:

- Conesville, on Bear Kill Road.
- Richmondville, Lape Road.
- Richmondville, Beards Hollow

Road.

In Otsego County

- Middlefield on County Routes 43 and 35.

• Milford, Route 28 south of Milford.

In Delaware County:

- Colchester, Bear Spring Mountain, East Trout Brook Road.

• Delhi/Franklin, off Route 357 across from Merrickville Road.

• Roxbury, West Settlement Road.

• Stamford/Bovina, Scutt Mountain Road.

Squirrel, rabbit and hare

Squirrels and rabbits abound, and many opportunities await hunters of the thousands of acres of state land in Schoharie, Otsego and Delaware counties.

Squirrel season opened September 1, and rabbit season opens October 1.

Squirrel and rabbit hunting, DEC advised, are great ways to introduce young people to hunting.

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DEC expects the upcoming deer season to be a good one.---Photo by Jim Poole.



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Stunning views from this 29.41 acre lot in Middleburgh. Sitting high on a hill with views all around, pond and plenty of logging trails throughout the property. Feel like you are in the middle of nowhere with total privacy, yet this lot is only about one mile from the village of Middleburgh & schools.
\$87,000.

Beautiful 5.71 acre lot with all utilities at the site, ready and waiting for your new home. This is the site of a house fire and house has been torn down. This lot has amazing views, circular driveway, septic, well and electric in place. Hurry, won't last. **\$65,000.**

INVESTOR ALERTS:

Don't miss this spacious fixer upper. It is almost 2000 square feet with 6 bedrooms, 2 baths, 2 living rooms, 2 kitchens, porch and detached garage. It was previously a two family now a one family perfect for extended family. Live in one side while remodeling the other. Two electric panels, two kerosene furnaces, two hot water heaters, 3 non working fireplaces that can easily be put back or changed to wood stoves. Beautiful half acre of property. Great opportunity here. **\$59,900.**

Great opportunity with many possibilities. This property includes 3 buildings. I don't want to say "I told you so" if you miss out on this one, especially at this price. There is a 2 bedroom, 1.5 bath ranch with updated furnace, electric, municipal water, hardwood floors and enclosed rear porch overlooking farm land. There is a large detached 2-4 car garage and an additional 28 x 50 building. Property is located just at the beginning of the south end of the village with great exposure. Can be private home with home-based business, office space, work shop, day care, show room, gym...so many possibilities. **\$125,000.**

MOVE-IN READY HOMES:

This Middleburgh village charmer is 1800 square feet with many updates. It is 3 bedrooms, 1.5 baths with updated kitchen, breakfast bar, built-ins, wood stove to help with heating costs. Roof done in 2008, siding and windows done in 2011, Driveway paved in 2016 and front and side porches done in 2017. Private back yard and a 1-car detached garage. It is municipal water and sewer too. All for **\$119,000.**

Attention hunters and/or full timers. This is the perfect getaway or full time chalet and it is sure to please. It is a meticulously kept 2 bedroom plus sleeping loft, 1 bath home on 44 gorgeous acres with additional state land just down the road. It has a 36 x 24 detached garage built in 2005 with electric and water hook up, partially furnished too. Just move in and enjoy!
\$220,000.

Slide continues?

Turkey take down, but birds still there

Will the steadily-declining turkey-take numbers continue to drop this fall?

Maybe. Maybe not.

Statewide, the turkey harvest in fall 2019 was 1,600 birds, according to the state Department of Environmental Conservation. That 1,600 is well below fall 2018, 2,300 birds, and less than the 2015-18 average, about 2,000, according to DEC

And from 2009 to 2019, the total statewide take fell from just over 7,000 to 1,600.

The decrease from 2018 to 2019 stemmed, according to DEC from poor reproductive success, and the

average of 2.3 poults per hen was the lowest since DEC began its survey.

From 2018 to 2019, DEC saw a decrease in turkey harvest in more than 70 percent of the 56 counties open to fall turkey hunting.

Our local counties were among the 70 percent:

Schoharie, from 46 birds in 2018 to 38 last year.

Otsego, from 80 to 46.

Delaware, from 153 to 86.

Greene, from 36 to 21.

The decline stems from factors other than reproductive success. A DEC press release reports:

"Fall take has been relatively flat over the last five years (1,300 to 2,000 birds), similar to spring harvest. This is partially a reflection of turkey numbers but is also a function of the relative stability of fall turkey hunting over this period.

"Fall [hunter] participation has been steadily declining over the past two decades, but this decline seems to be leveling off since around 2013."

Nonetheless, hunters can still find success on vast state lands,

Continued
on next page.



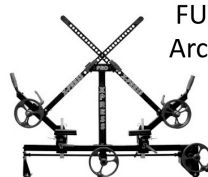
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Even with COVID, hunter ed continues

With the cancellation of in-person courses earlier this year during New York's response to COVID-19, DEC quickly innovated to help prospective hunters planning to take cancelled in-person hunter safety courses and created a new online Hunter Education course.

The results were dramatic, more than doubling certifications from 2019, with more than 76,800 people registered for the online Hunter Ed course and 40,278 completions.

Nearly 70 percent of those com-

pleting the online course are 21 or over and almost 40 percent of participants are women. The new online Bowhunter Ed course has seen more than 20,980 registered participants and 10,934 have completed the course. Both courses can be accessed at DEC's website. The online courses have been extended indefinitely.

As all of New York has now entered Phase 4 of reopening in-person Hunter Education, Bowhunter Education, and Trapper Education courses are resuming.

While the popularity of the online

Hunter Ed and Bowhunter Ed courses has been unprecedented, some potential new hunters want to take the traditional course, which offers a field day component. Social distancing, health and safety, and disinfectant protocols have been put in place to ensure courses are conducted in a way that minimizes risk to participants.

The online courses will remain available for those who prefer an online course. For more information about taking a traditional field-based course, visit DEC's website.

DEC also encourages outdoor

enthusiasts to consider purchasing a Habitat & Access Stamp each year. Support for the Habitat Stamp has also skyrocketed this year, with a nearly 300 percent increase – 7,337 in 2020 compared to 2,559 in 2019 in sales over the first two weeks to big game license sales.

Funds from the \$5 Habitat & Access Stamp support projects to conserve habitat and improve public access for fish and wildlife-related activities.

This year's Habitat & Access Stamp features a northern leopard frog. Last year's stamp featured a bull moose and was the most popular stamp in DEC history, with more than 25,000 sold.

Through initiatives like NY Open for Hunting and Fishing and Adventure NY, DEC is making strategic investments to expand access to healthy, active, outdoor recreation, connect more New Yorkers and visitors to nature and the outdoors, protect natural resources, and boost local economics.

Turkey season

Continued from previous page.

overgrown orchards, oak stands and brushy areas.

Hunters who go home with a bird use a variety of calls—box calls, slate calls, mouth calls—to bring a bird within gun range, usually about 30 yards.

Full camouflage helps hunters stay undetected prior to the shot.

Some hunters are tempted to try to stalk a wild turkey, but this rarely works because it's difficult to approach a turkey undetected.

As with all hunting, safety is paramount. DEC offers these tips:

- Identify your target before shooting. Don't shoot until you clearly see the whole turkey and know its sex.
- Don't stalk. More than half of turkey hunting injuries happen when one hunter stalks another.
- Assume any call or footsteps you hear are from another hunter.
- If you see another hunter, talk to him or her but don't move. Don't use a turkey call to alert another hunter.
- Turkeys are tough. You need to be close to get a clear head or

neck shot. Don't try to shoot them in the body when they're flying.

- Smaller shot, numbers 4, 5, and 6 work better than larger shot because of a denser shot pattern.
- When calling, sit still with your back against a large tree to hide yourself from turkeys and stalkers.
- Wear hunter orange when going into or out of the woods.
- When sitting still waiting for a turkey, put hunter orange on a tree near you.



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DEC sees record sales of licenses

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Basil Seggos recently reported that DEC is experiencing record-breaking sales of hunting and trapping licenses for upcoming seasons.

Sales for big game hunting and trapping licenses and Deer Management Permits (DMPs) were nearly triple prior years' sales on opening day, more than double on the second day and nearly double the first two weeks.

DEC also announced that in-person Hunter Education, Bowhunter Education, and Trapper Education courses have resumed with appropriate social distancing and other precautions to limit the community spread of COVID-19. DEC transformed the Hunter Ed program at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic to offer online certification, resulting in a dramatic 105 percent increase in participants completing the course compared to the traditional in-person courses offered in 2019.

"With New Yorkers looking for more ways to enjoy the outdoors during the COVID-19 pandemic, we are seeing tremendous interest in outdoor recreation and in the sports of fishing, hunting, and trapping, including record sales of big game hunting and trapping licenses," said Commissioner Seggos.

"New York is home to some of the best hunting and fishing opportunities in the nation. DEC's efforts to make sure hunters and anglers are able to purchase fishing, hunting, and trapping licenses and take hunter safety courses from the comfort of their homes, are making the outdoors even more accessible and we will continue to offer our new online courses as we transition back to offering in-person courses."

DEC launched the state's new automated system for selling fishing, hunting, and trapping licenses in July, and on August 10, the system was activated for big game license sales and DMPs. The new DEC Automated Licensing System

(DECALS) includes user-friendly information to help locate vendors, receive instant copies of a license, enter and view harvest information, and more.

On the first day of big game sales this year, DEC reported \$922,444 in sales, compared to \$347,103 in 2019. Over the first two weeks of license sales, sales have reached more than \$6.2 million compared to approximately \$3.5 million for the first two weeks in 2019.

Purchasing a hunting or trapping license helps to support DEC conservation projects and ensures natu-

Continued
on next page.



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Record sales

Continued from
previous page.

ral resources are protected for
generations to come. Through the
purchase of New York sporting li-

censes, hunters and anglers help
generate an estimated \$75 million
to help conserve fish and wildlife,
enhance habitat, and protect natu-
ral resources.

Hunting and fishing build a sense
of stewardship of fish and wildlife
resources and habitats, provide an
opportunity for experienced hun-
ters and anglers to share their
knowledge with others, and pro-
mote participation in hunting, fish-
ing, and recreational shooting
through the mentoring of young
hunters and anglers.

New York's hunters and anglers
contribute an estimated \$4.9 billion
to the economy in spending, which
supports more than 56,000 jobs
and \$623 million in state and local
taxes.

Licenses and permits can be pur-
chased at any one of DEC's li-
cense-issuing agents, online, or by
telephone at (866)933-2257. The
new hunting and trapping licenses
are valid from September 1, 2020,
through August 31, 2021, while
annual fishing licenses are valid for
365 days from date of purchase.
DMPs are also available at all li-
cense-issuing outlets, by phone, or
online through October 1, 2020.

DMPs are used to manage the
deer herd and are issued through
an instant random selection pro-
cess at the point of sale. The 2020
chances of selection for a DMP in
each Wildlife Management Unit are
available online, through license
issuing agents, or by calling the
DMP Information Hotline at 1-
(866)472-4332. Detailed informa-
tion on Deer Management Permits
and this fall's Deer Season Fore-
cast is available on DEC's website.
DEC reminds hunters that lifetime
license tag sets for the 2020-21 li-
cense year are currently being
mailed and should be received by
all hunters by September 1. Hun-
ters do not need tags in hand to ap-
ply for DMPs or to purchase addi-
tional privileges. Lifetime informa-
tion is stored in the DECALS data-
base.

The new Hunting and Trapping
Regulations Guide, an easy-to-read
compendium of pertinent rules
and regulations, is available on the
DEC Hunting Regulations
webpage. A summary of hunting
and trapping regulations is cur-
rently available at license issuing
agents, and copies of the full hunt-
ing and trapping regulations guide
are also available at license issuing
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DEC releases proposal for holiday deer hunt

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has released a proposal to potentially expand deer hunting opportunities in the Southern Zone in the future.

The proposed regulations would create additional bowhunting and muzzleloader hunting opportunities from December 26 through January 1, and would only apply to New York's Southern Zone.

The new season would provide an additional seven days of late season hunting with bows and muzzleloaders. Hunters must purchase the bowhunting or muzzleloading privilege to participate in the late bow or muzzleloader seasons and may use all deer carcass tags valid during those seasons.

This proposal to expand the hunting season is only for the Southern Zone. In the Northern Zone, deer may already be moving to wintering areas by late December. Hunting seasons that occur when deer are migrating or are already concentrated in wintering areas could result in localized overharvest.

This proposed, additional hunting opportunity does not impact when snowmobile trails may open. Snowmobile trails are opened after the end of the regular big game hunting season, subject to adequate snow cover and local agreements.

Details of the proposal are published in the September 9 New York State Register. DEC encourages the public to comment on the proposed regulations through November 8, 2020.

Comments may be submitted by email or in writing to: Jeremy Hurst, NYSDEC Bureau of Wildlife, 625 Broadway, 5th Floor, Albany, NY 12233-4754.

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