

# **Fish and Wildlife Board Meeting Minutes**

## **Wednesday, January 17, 2024**

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board held an in-person meeting at 5:00 pm on Wednesday, January 17, 2023, at the National Life Dewey Conference Room, 1 National Life Drive, Montpelier, VT 05620. A recording of the meeting is available on the department's YouTube channel.

### **Agenda**

1. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (December 14, 2023)
2. Public Comments (Limited to 2-minutes per speaker)
3. Review of 2023 Deer Hunting Season
4. Executive Session (the Chair added the Executive Session to the meeting)
5. Commissioner's Update

**Board Members Present:** Brian Bailey, Michael Bancroft (Acting Chair), Nicholas Burnham, Allison Frazier, Robert Patterson, Martin Van Buren

**Virtual:** David Deen, Neal Hogan, Brad Ferland, Michael Kolsun, Bryan McCarthy, Paul Noel, Jay Sweeny

**Absent:** Jamie Dragon

**Department Staff Present:** Wildlife Director John Austin, Game Warden Colonel Justin Stedman, Game Warden Major Sean Fowler, Wildlife Management Program Manager David Sausville, Game Warden Lieutenant Wes Butler, Game Warden Bella Kline, Deer and Moose Project Leader Nick Fortin, Fish & Wildlife Scientist Toni Mikula, Game Warden Trainee Chase Reagan, Game Warden Trainee Kody Rhodes, Game Warden Trainee Christopher Floreani, Principal Assistant Abigail Connolly

**Virtual:** Commissioner Christopher Herrick, Director of Outreach Alison Thomas

**Members of the Public Present:** Rod Coronado, Heather Furman, Dave Furman, Tovar Cerulli, Mario Heitmann

**Virtual:** Brian Bird, Anne McKinsey, Bill Dell'Isola VHCB, Brian O'Gorman

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm

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### **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

Board Member Patterson moved to approve the December 14, 2023 meeting minutes. Board Member Bailey seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve the minutes (12-0-1), with Board Member Deen abstaining.

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## **Public Comment Period**

Rod Coronado, Orange, regarding coyote hunting with dogs  
Dave Furman, Jericho, regarding the ability to field quarter deer and bear in Vermont  
Tovar Cerulli, Marshfield, regarding the ability to field quarter deer in Vermont  
Brian O'Gorman, Readsboro Falls, regarding set backs on private land for trapping

The Board Members asked questions and Commissioner Herrick and Colonel Stedman clarified that quartering deer and bear in the field is allowed if the carcass is reported and the packages are labeled. The carcass can be deboned once it is reported.

[The recording of the public comments and the meeting can be viewed here.](#)

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## **Review of 2023 Deer Hunting Season**

Nick Fortin reported that the 2023 moose season harvest was 78 moose, less than the expected 100, probably due to weather. Nick Fortin presented the 2023 deer harvest summary. The presentation and summary can be seen below, please note that these are preliminary numbers and will change. The Board Members asked questions about the consistency of the rifle season versus the inconsistency of archery season and the downward trend in youth licenses. Nick Fortin discussed the regulation timeline for deer hunting and what items need to be looked at in future regulations. The Board Members asked questions about rifle season, how the department measures the size of bucks on the landscape, and winter tick populations on moose.

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## **Executive Session**

Board Member Van Buren moved to enter executive session to discuss pending civil litigation, to which the Board is a party. Board Member Bailey seconded the motion. The Board voted to go into executive session (13-0) at approximately 6:15 pm.

Board Member Ferland moved to exit executive session. Board Member Frazier seconded the motion. The Board voted to exit executive session (13-0) at approximately 6:45 pm.

Board Member Ferland moved to have the Commissioner lead all communications with the Attorney General's Office in consultation with the Chair of the Fish & Wildlife Board on all pending actions against the Board. Board Member Frazier seconded the motion. Board Member Deen clarified that it should be specific to this action against the Board not all action. Board Member Ferland revised the motion to have the Commissioner lead communications with the Attorney General's Office in consultation with the Board Chair on actions against the current furbearer rule. Board Member Frazier seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve the motion (12-1), with Board Member Bailey voting no.

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**Commissioner's Update**

Commissioner Herrick welcomed the three new game wardens and advised the Board that there are bills to pay attention to in the Legislature.

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**Motion To Adjourn:**

The Board voted to adjourn the meeting at approximately 6:50 pm.

# DEER PROJECT UPDATE

Fish & Wildlife Board meeting – January 17, 2024



# 2023 Moose Harvest

## Archery Season:

10 moose

(all bulls)

43% success rate (10/23)

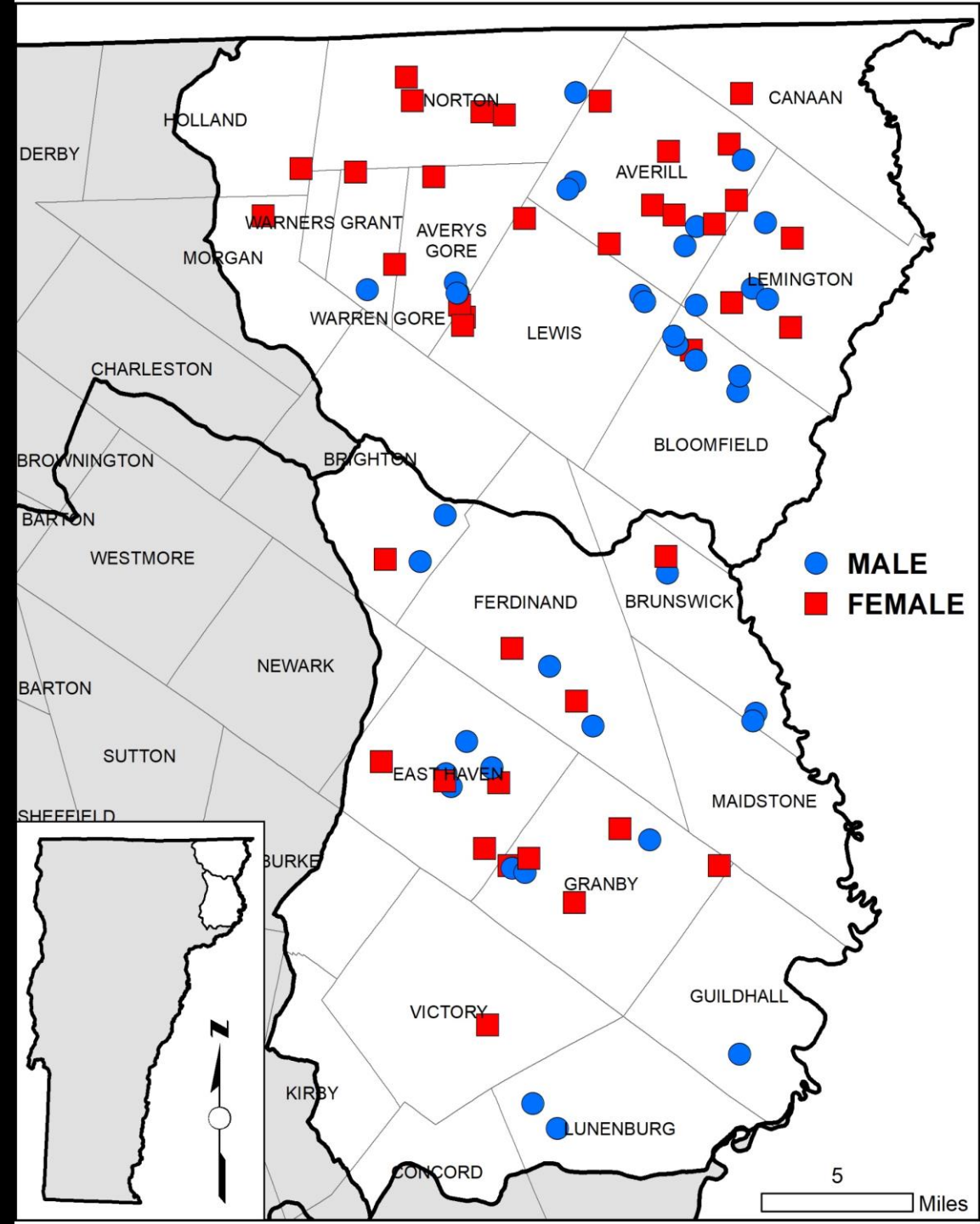
## Regular Season:

68 moose

(27 bulls/38 cows/3 calves)

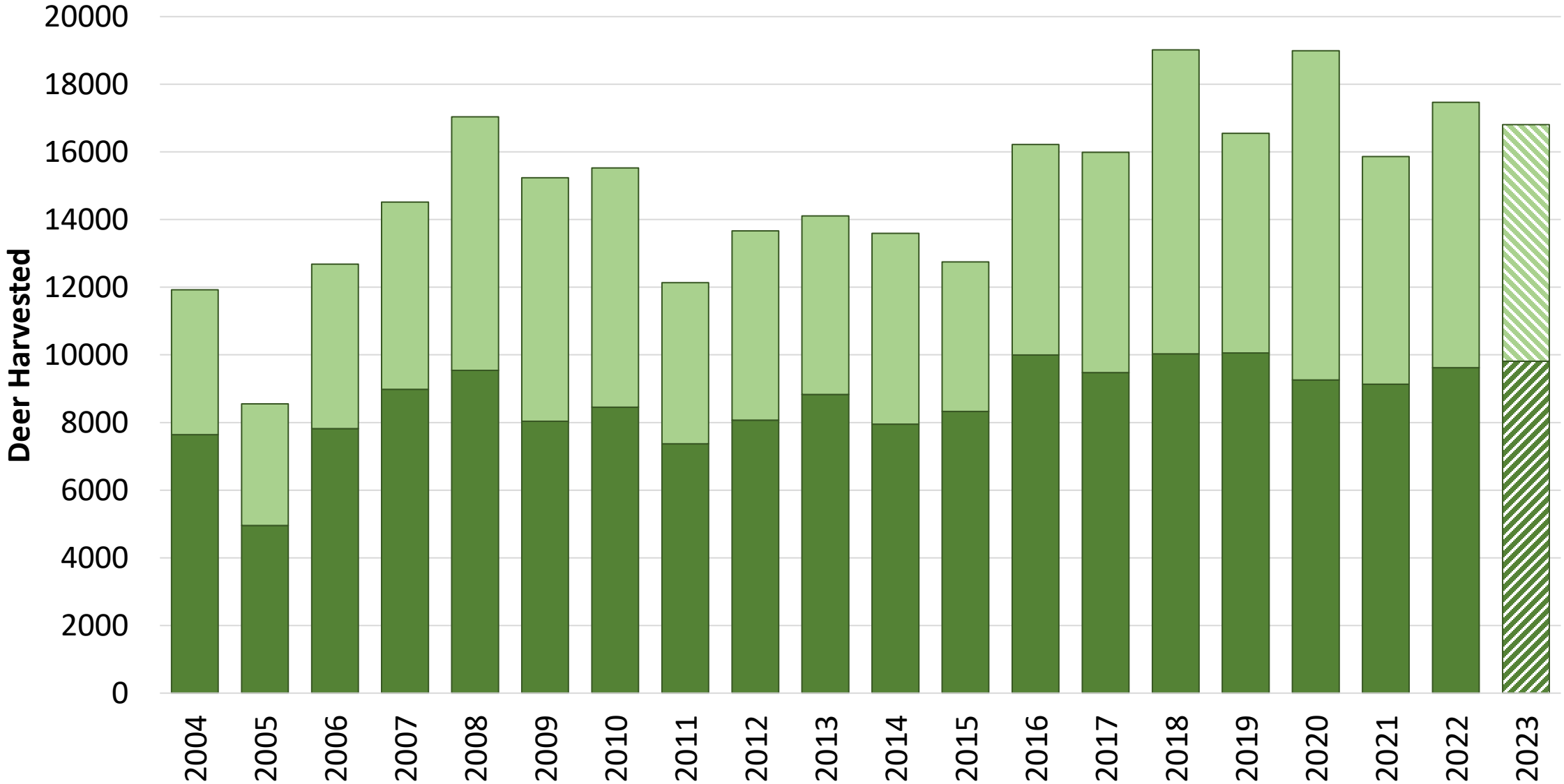
54% ES success rate (31/57)

37% AO success rate (37/100)



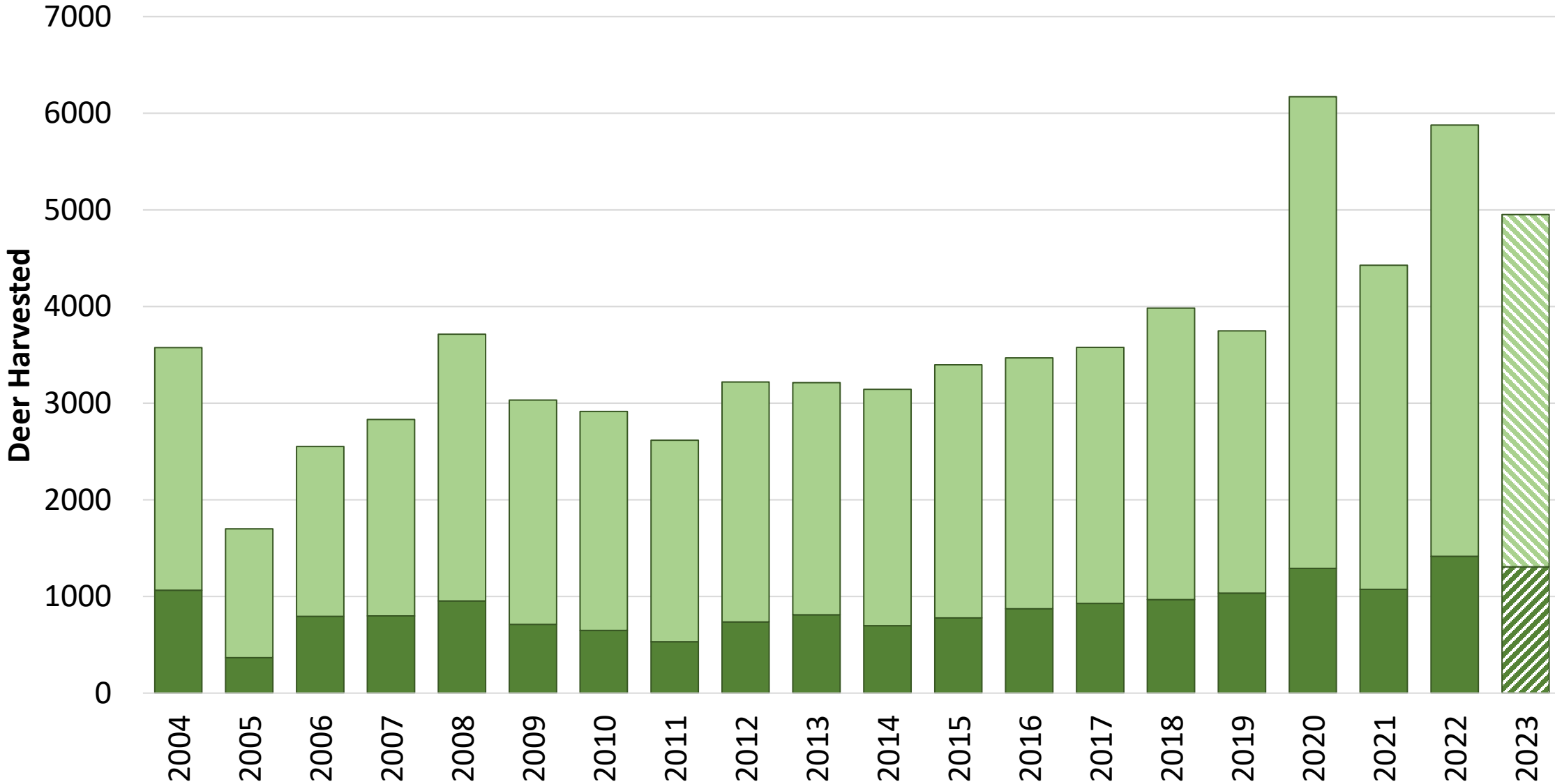
# 2023 Deer Harvest: Total

■ Bucks ■ Antlerless



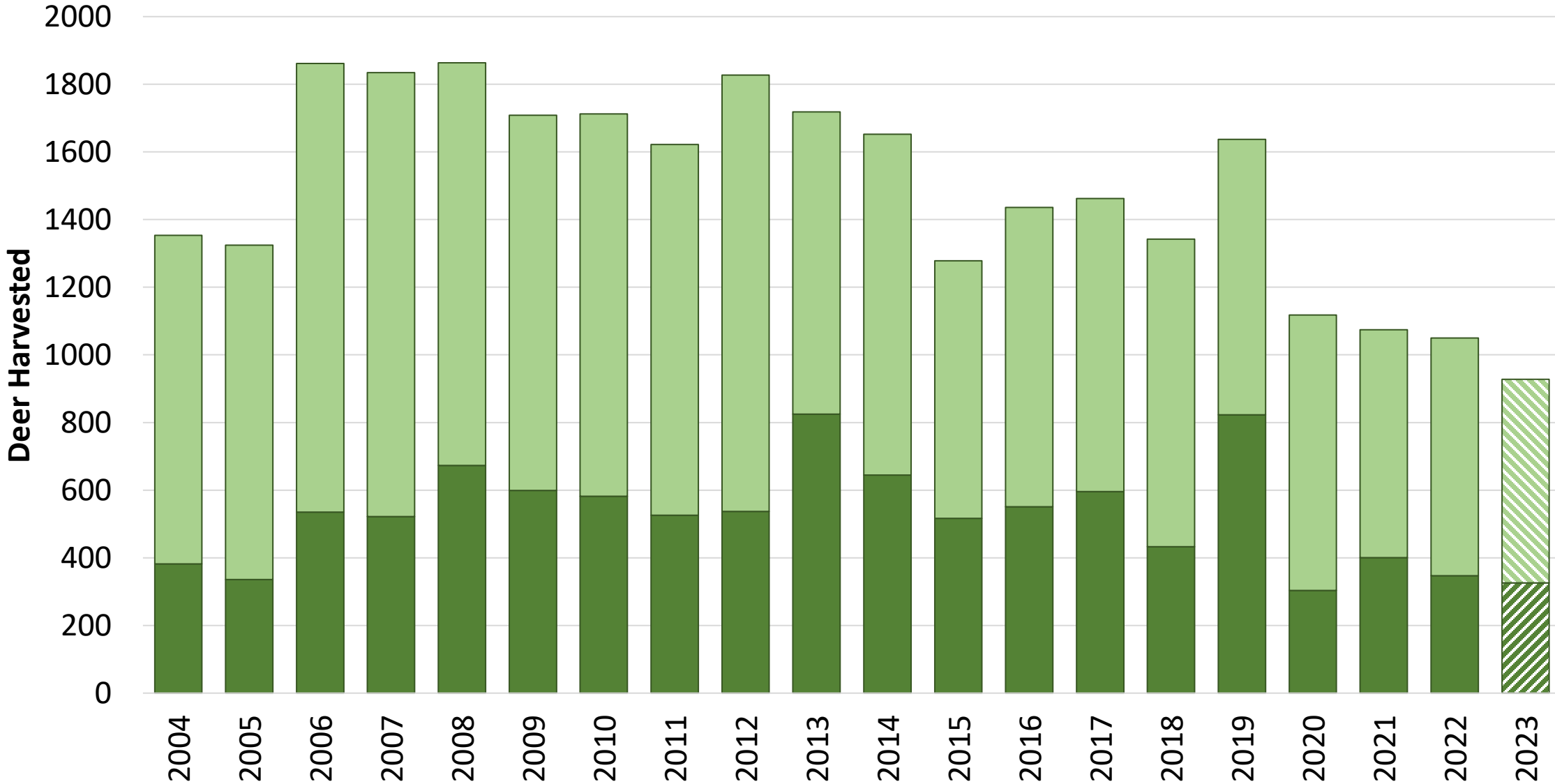
# 2023 Deer Harvest: Archery

■ Bucks ■ Antlerless



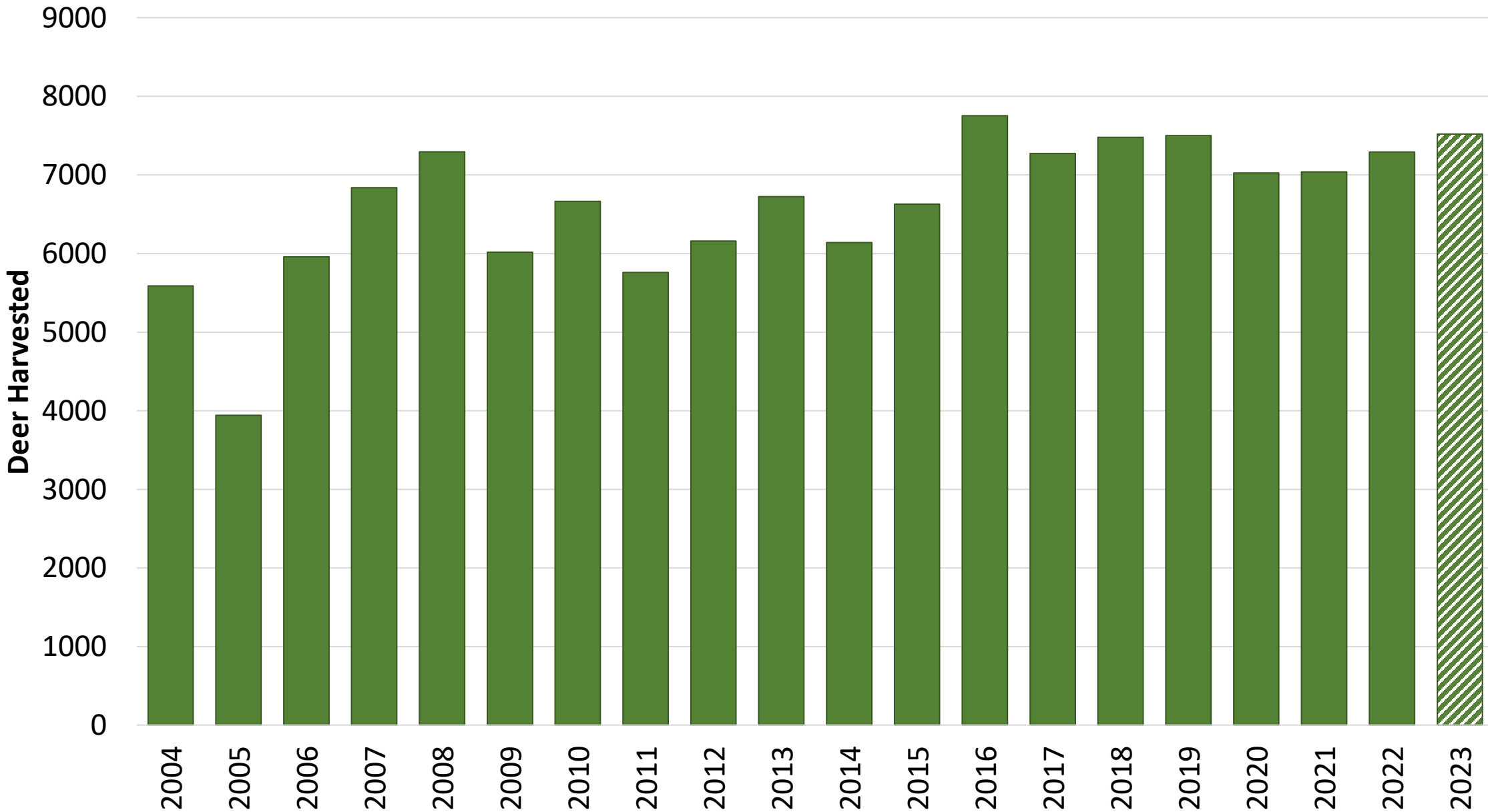
# 2023 Deer Harvest: Youth

■ Bucks ■ Antlerless

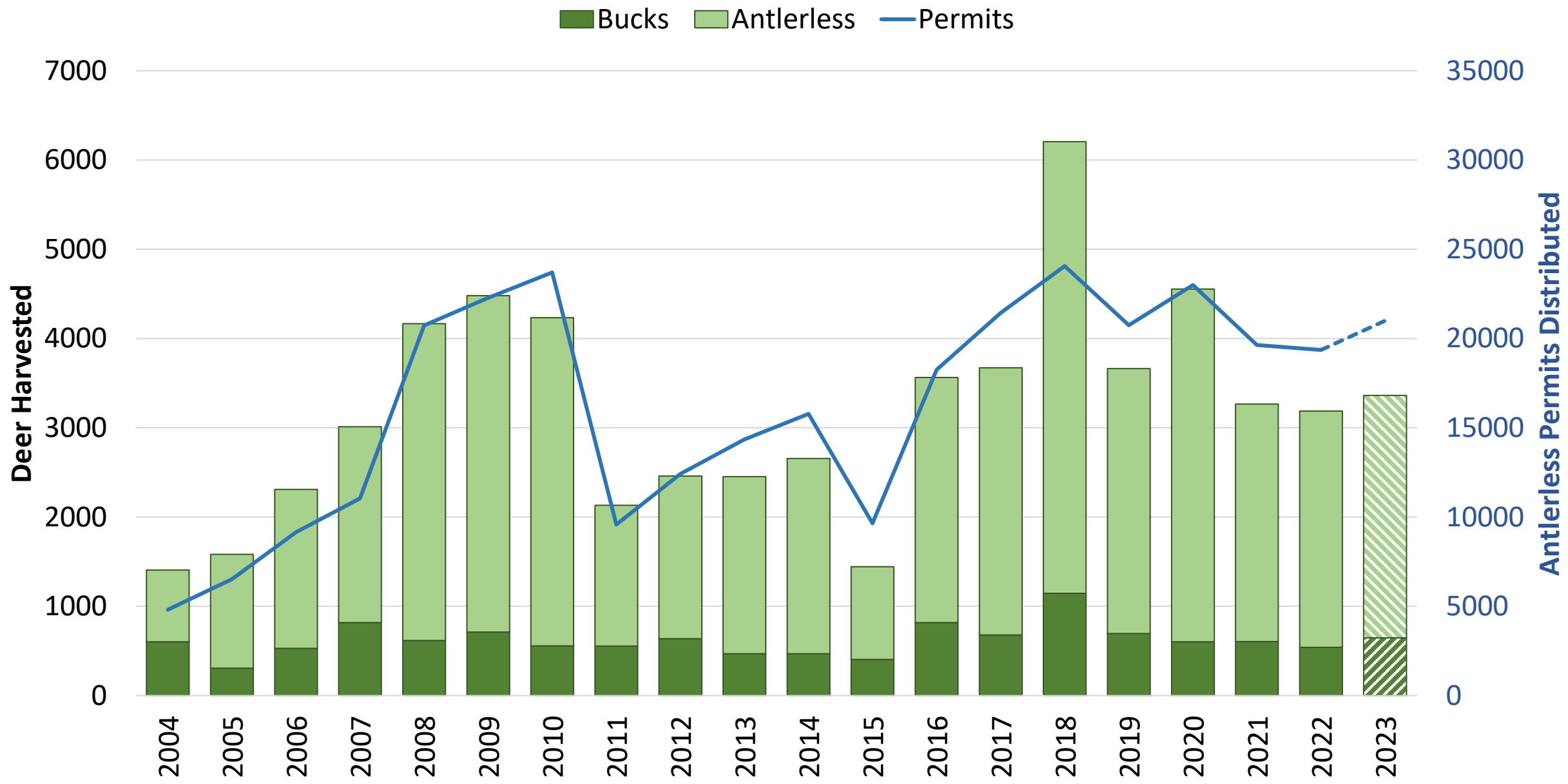




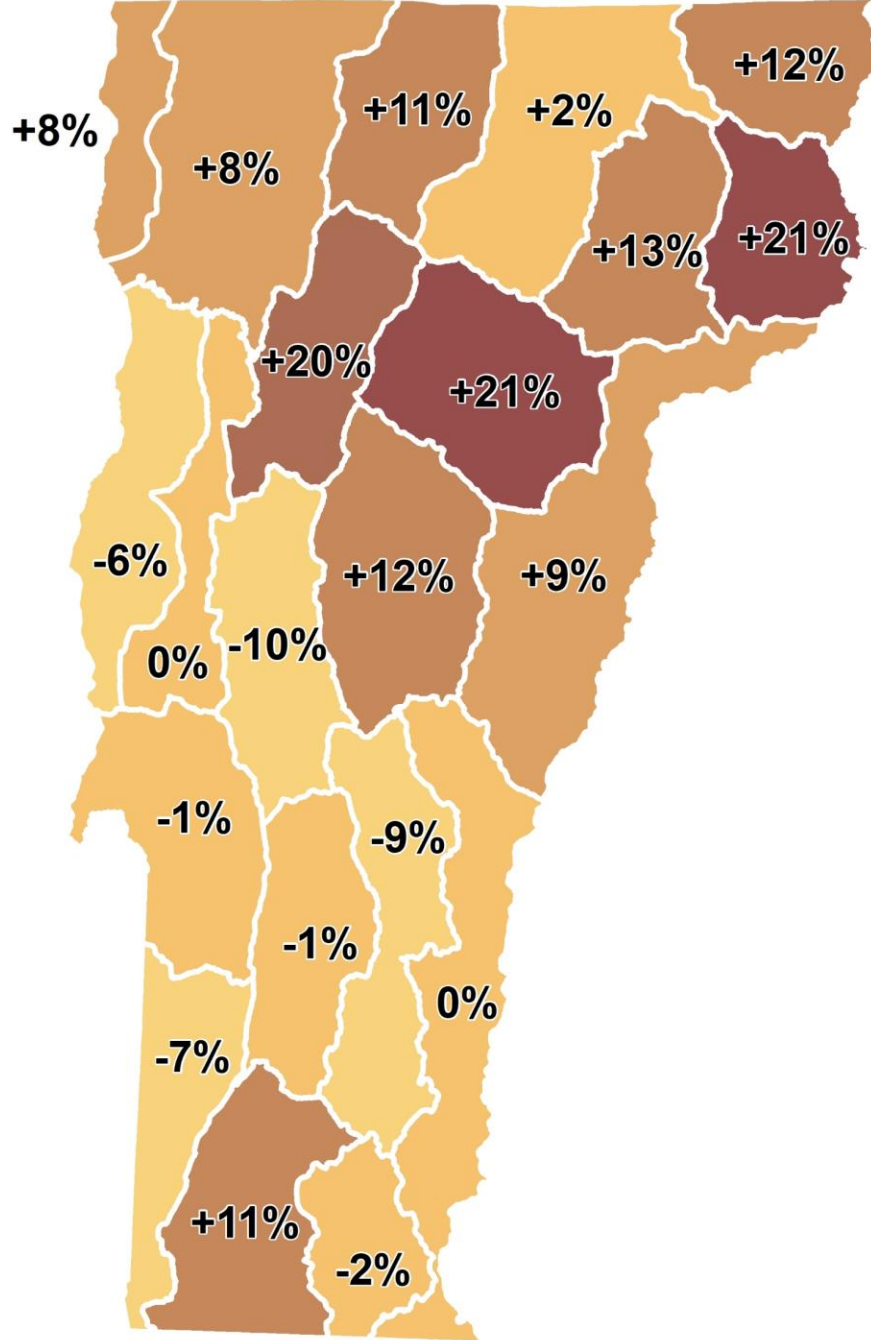
# 2023 Deer Harvest: Regular



# 2023 Deer Harvest: Muzzleloader



# Change in Buck Harvest from 2020-22 Average



**Looking Forward...**



# Regulation Change Timeline

2019

Regulation changes passed

Board & Dept. agreed to no further changes for 5 years

2020

Regulation changes took effect

Covid-19 Pandemic

2021

2022

2023

2024

2025

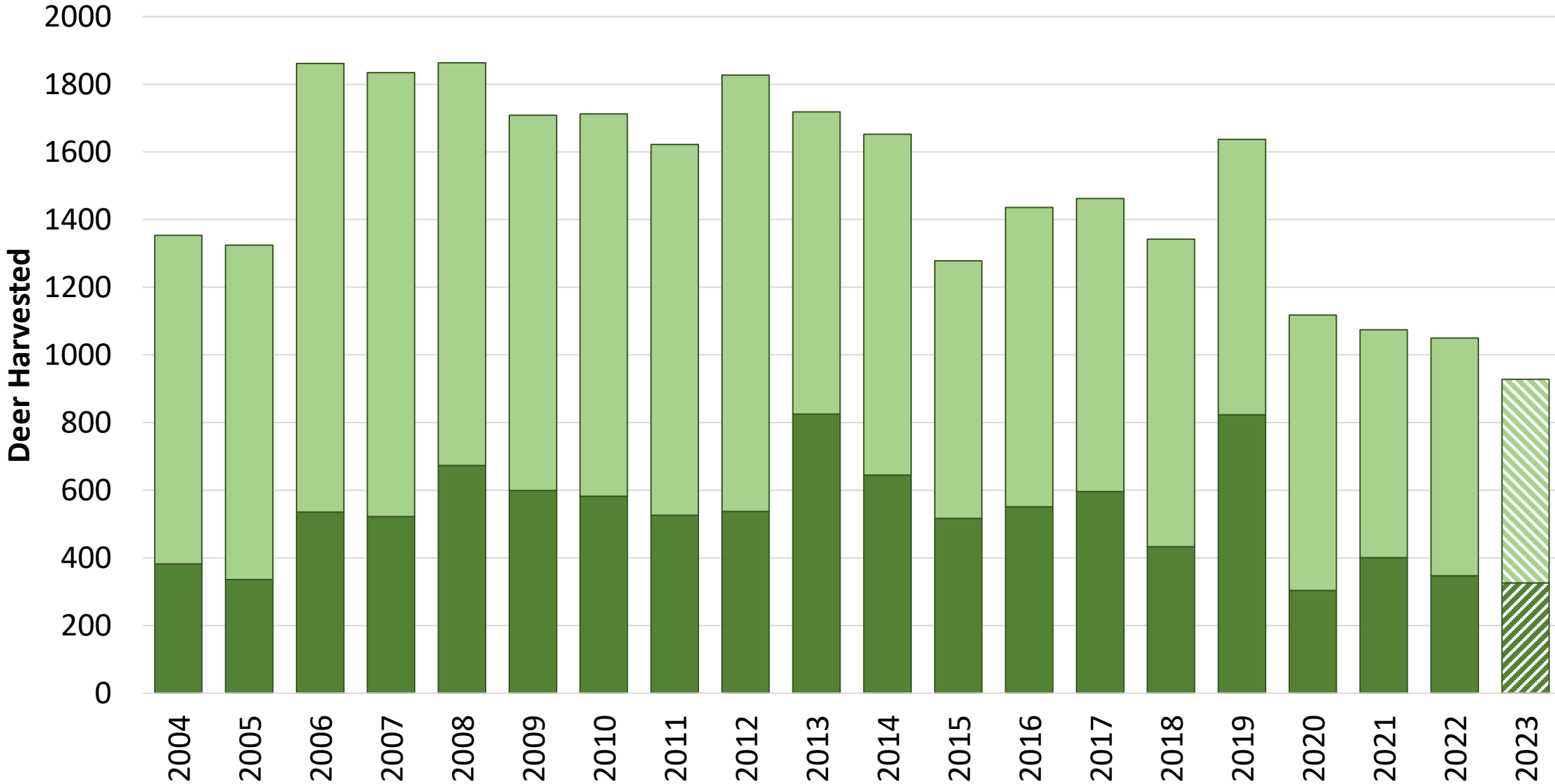
Review & update regulations

# Items to Consider in 2025...

**Should we move Youth/Novice weekend back?**

# 2023 Deer Harvest: Youth

■ Bucks ■ Antlerless



# Items to Consider in 2025...

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**Where should we establish Expanded Archery Zones?**



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**How do we harvest more antlerless deer in some WMUs?**

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Where should we establish Expanded Archery Zones?

How do we harvest more antlerless deer in some WMUs?

**Do we need to limit buck harvest in some WMUs? If so, how?**

# ***From the 2020-2030 Big Game Management Plan...***

## **Buck Age Structure Objective:**

***“Ensure there are enough older bucks on the landscape to provide hunters a reasonable chance of seeing one.”***

***“...maintain at least the 2018 proportion of mature bucks (3+ years old) in the population in each WMU.”***

# ***From the 2020-2030 Big Game Management Plan...***

## **Buck Age Structure Objective:**

***“Ensure there are enough older bucks on the landscape to provide hunters a reasonable chance of seeing one.”***

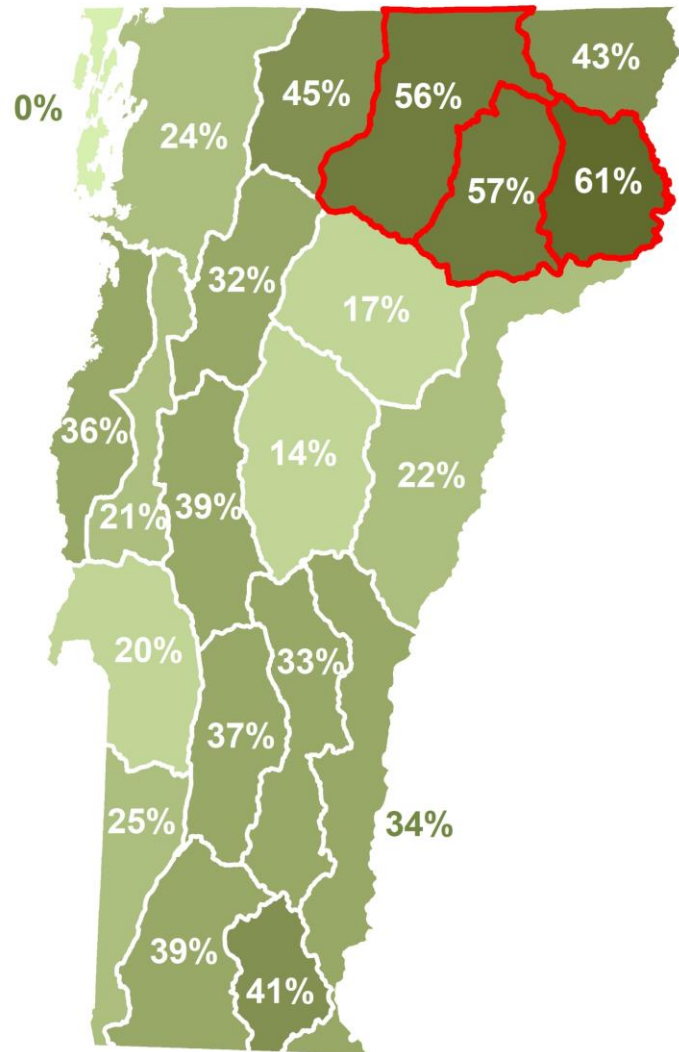
***“...maintain at least the 2018 proportion of mature bucks (3+ years old) in the population in each WMU.”***

## **Strategy:**

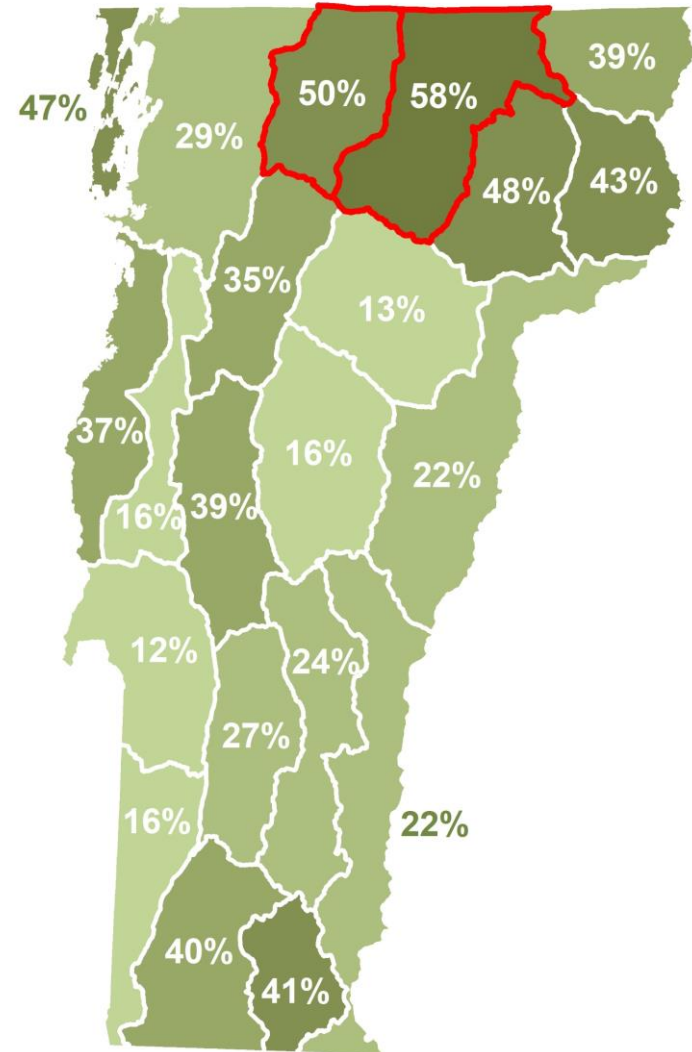
***“Ensure that the proportion of yearlings in the total buck harvest not exceed 50% in any WMU.”***

# Percent yearlings in buck harvest

**2021**



**2022**



**2023**



# Items to Consider in 2025...

Should we move Youth/Novice weekend back?

Where should we establish Expanded Archery Zones?

How do we harvest more antlerless deer in some WMUs?

Do we need to limit buck harvest in some WMUs? If so, how?

Other opportunities?

# 2023 Deer Seasons Summary

(preliminary numbers through 1/16/24 – likely to change)

**TOTAL: 16,805**

**Bucks: 9,814**

Up 2% from 9,619 in 2022

Up 5% from 2020-22 average (9,336)

**Antlerless: 6,991**

Down 11% from 7,842 in 2022

Down 14% from 2020-22 average (8,101)

**Archery: 4,951**

down 16% from 5,877 in 2022

down 6% from 2020-22 average (5,290)

**Youth: 928**

down 12% from 1,050 in 2022

down 16% from 2020-22 average (1,081)

*lowest since became a 2-day season in 2002*

**Novice: 42**

down 24% from 55 in 2022

down 47% from 2020-22 average (78)

**October Muzzleloader: 820**

down 27% from 1,114 in 2022

down 37% from 2020-22 average (1,299)

**Rifle: 7,521**

up 3% from 7,293 in 2022

up 6% from 2020-22 average (7,119)

**December Muzzleloader: 2,543**

up 23% from 2,072 in 2022

up 7% from 2020-22 average (2,369)

## Change in Buck Harvest from 2020-2022 Average

