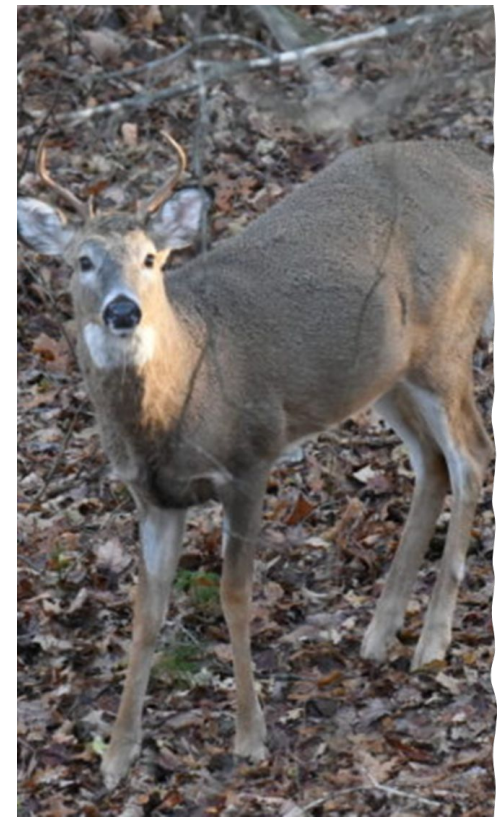




MASSWILDLIFE

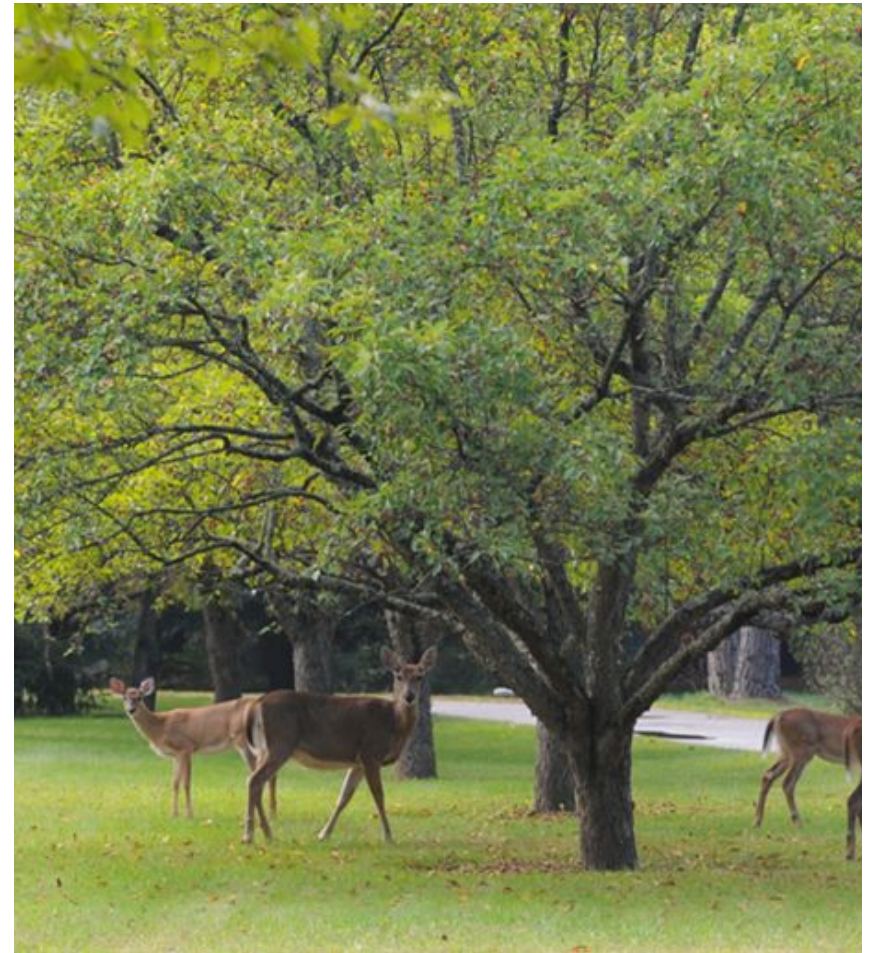


Collaborative Deer Management in Massachusetts

Susan McCarthy
Wildlife Biologist

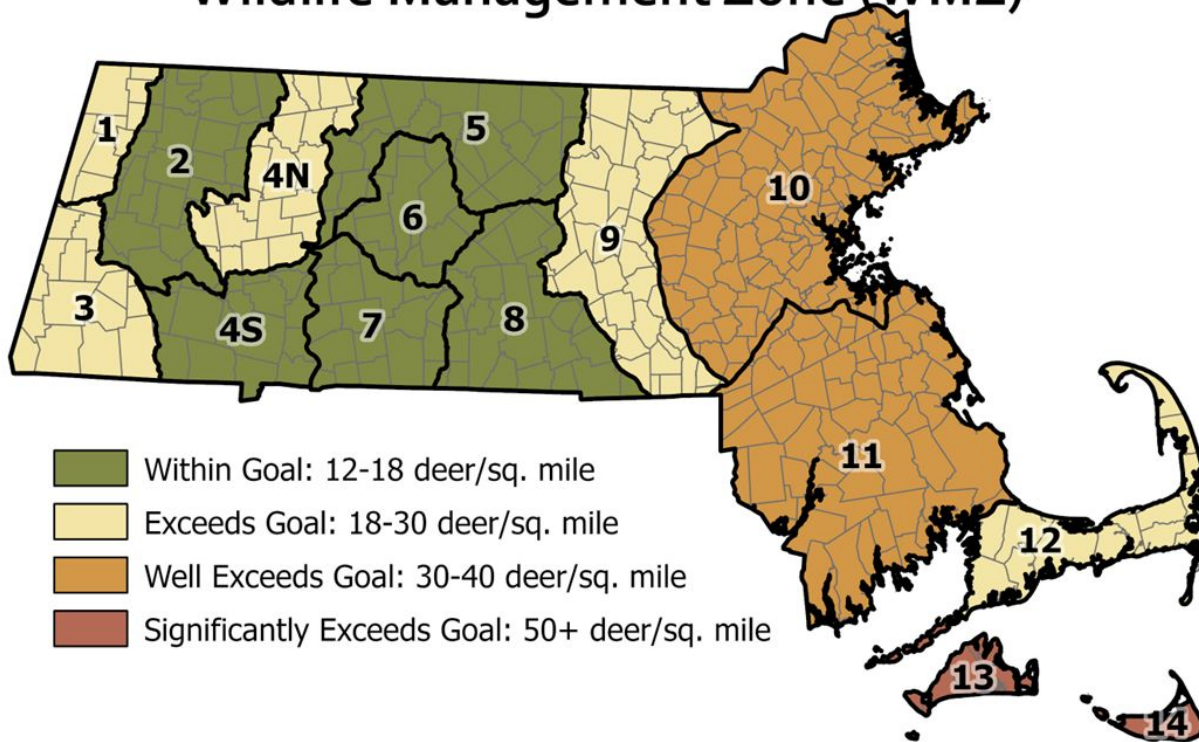
White-tailed Deer in Massachusetts

- Common & abundant throughout
- Habitat generalists
 - Very successful in suburban areas
 - Ample high-quality habitat
 - High survival & reproductive rates, low mortality



Deer Management & Monitoring

Deer Abundance by Wildlife Management Zone (WMZ)



- 15 Wildlife Management Zones
- Regulated hunting
- Issue antlerless deer permits (females)
- Goal to keep densities of 12-18 deer/mi² of forest

Goal management range of 12-18 deer/mi² of forest statewide.

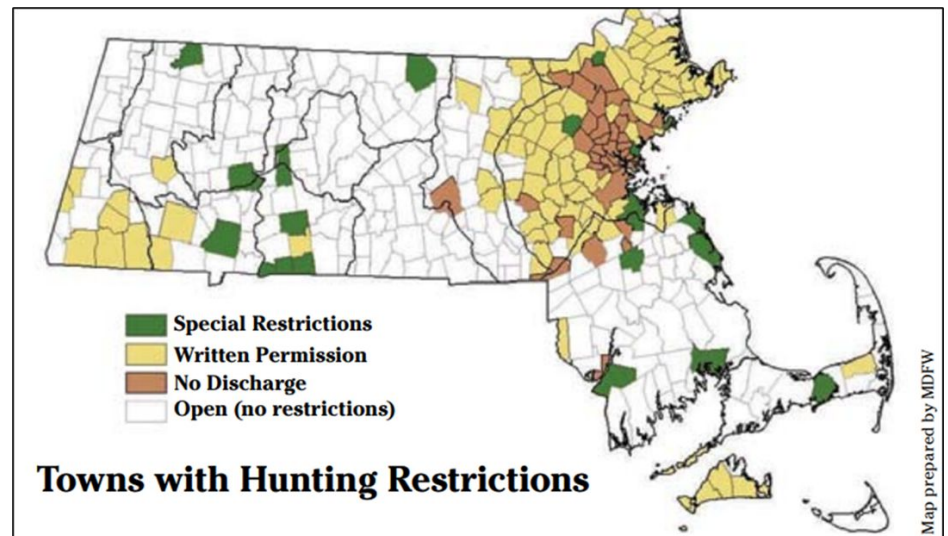
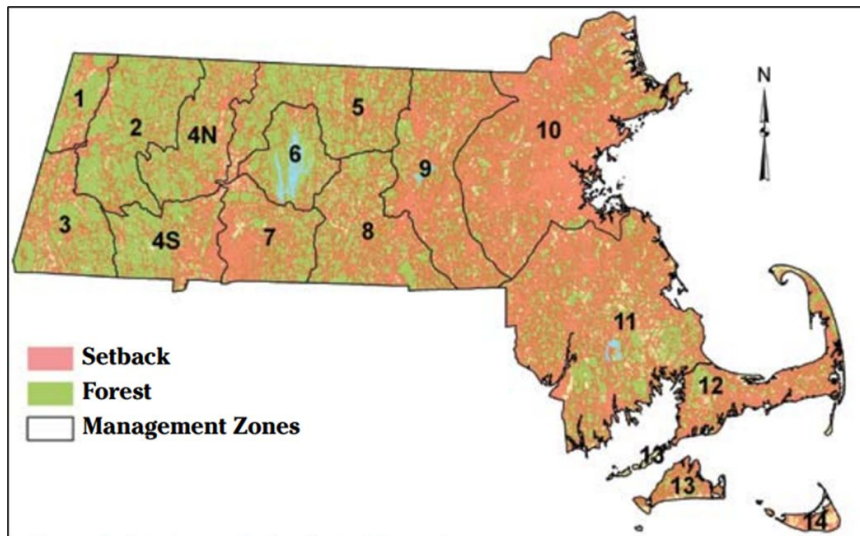
Why Hunting?

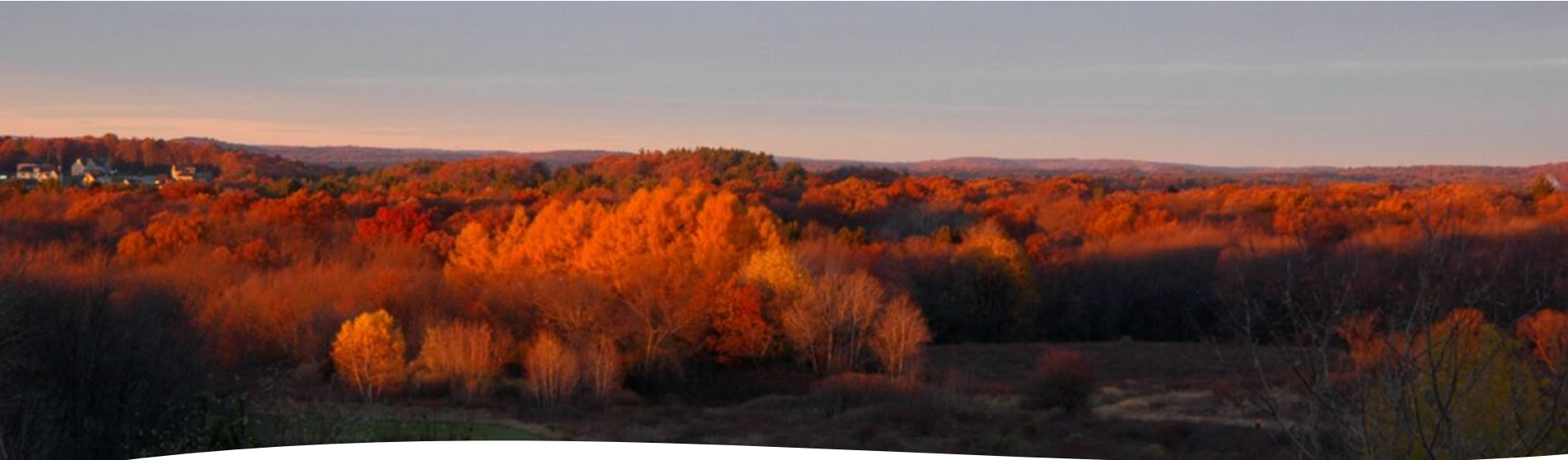
- The only method of population management that is
 - Effective
 - Permissible
 - Practical
- Every state in the country relies on hunting to manage deer abundance
- Incredible Safety Record in MA
 - 0 Non-hunters have been killed by hunting
 - 0 Non-hunters have been injured by archery hunting



Management Limitations

- Regulated hunting is only impactful in areas with hunting access
- Lots of suitable habitat is closed to hunting statewide
- Firearms and archery discharge setbacks
- Local bylaws further restrict hunting





Deer Overabundance

- Above management goals
 - Exceeded ecological carrying capacity
 - Exceeded cultural carrying capacity

What ecological damage?

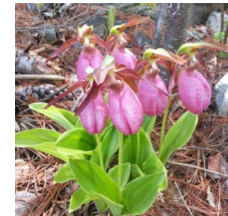
Deer diet and browse behavior

- What they eat
- How they eat



Ecological Impacts

- Negatively impact ecosystem @ ~20 deer/mi²
- Decrease in plant diversity
- Increase in most invasive plants
- Decreased forest regeneration
 - Reduced understory
- Soil erosion, siltation, reduced water quality
- Wildlife habitat degradation
 - Reduced biodiversity










Credit: Sudbury Valley Trustees

Addressing Deer Overabundance



Expanding Collaborative Efforts

- Support one another
- Share stories & experiences
- Communicate effectively about hunting



Deer Hunting in Massachusetts


Hunting is safe for both hunters and non-hunters

There have been 0 non-hunters killed due to hunting in Massachusetts.
There have been 0 non-hunters injured in Massachusetts from archery hunting.

- Hunting is a highly regulated, safe activity and all hunters must be properly licensed.
- All first-time hunters are required to complete a Hunter Education course that teaches safety and laws.
- Hunting laws are strictly enforced by the Massachusetts Environmental Police.
- Deer hunting typically occurs in the early morning hours in the fall and winter when fewer other people are outdoors.
- Hunting and other outdoor recreation activities like birdwatching and hiking have taken place concurrently throughout Massachusetts for decades without issue.

Hunting is an important conservation tool

- Deer are common and abundant in Massachusetts.
- In areas where hunting is limited, deer populations exceed management goals set by biologists.
- Many towns in eastern Massachusetts have more deer than the habitat can sustainably support.
- Without population management, deer become overabundant, increasing habitat damage and risks to public safety from vehicle collisions.
- Each year, approximately 1 out of every 115 drivers is involved in a deer-vehicle collision in Massachusetts. Far more human injuries and deaths occur from deer-vehicle collisions than from hunting.
- Every state in the country relies on legal, regulated hunting to manage deer populations.
- Revenue from hunting licenses is used to conserve all wildlife species and their habitats.



When there are too many deer on the landscape, they overbrowse tree saplings and seedlings. This degrades forest health and negatively impacts many other kinds of wildlife and plants.

Hunting provides food for families

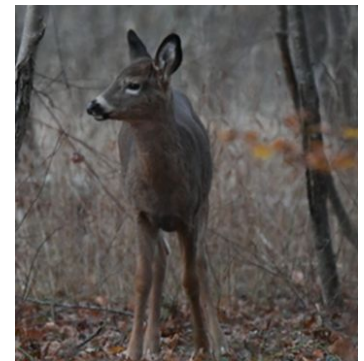
- Deer are harvested for a legitimate purpose and do not go to waste.
- Free range, organic venison is a healthy protein with a low carbon footprint that feeds many families.

MASSWILDLIFE

Massachusetts' Hunters Share the Harvest Program

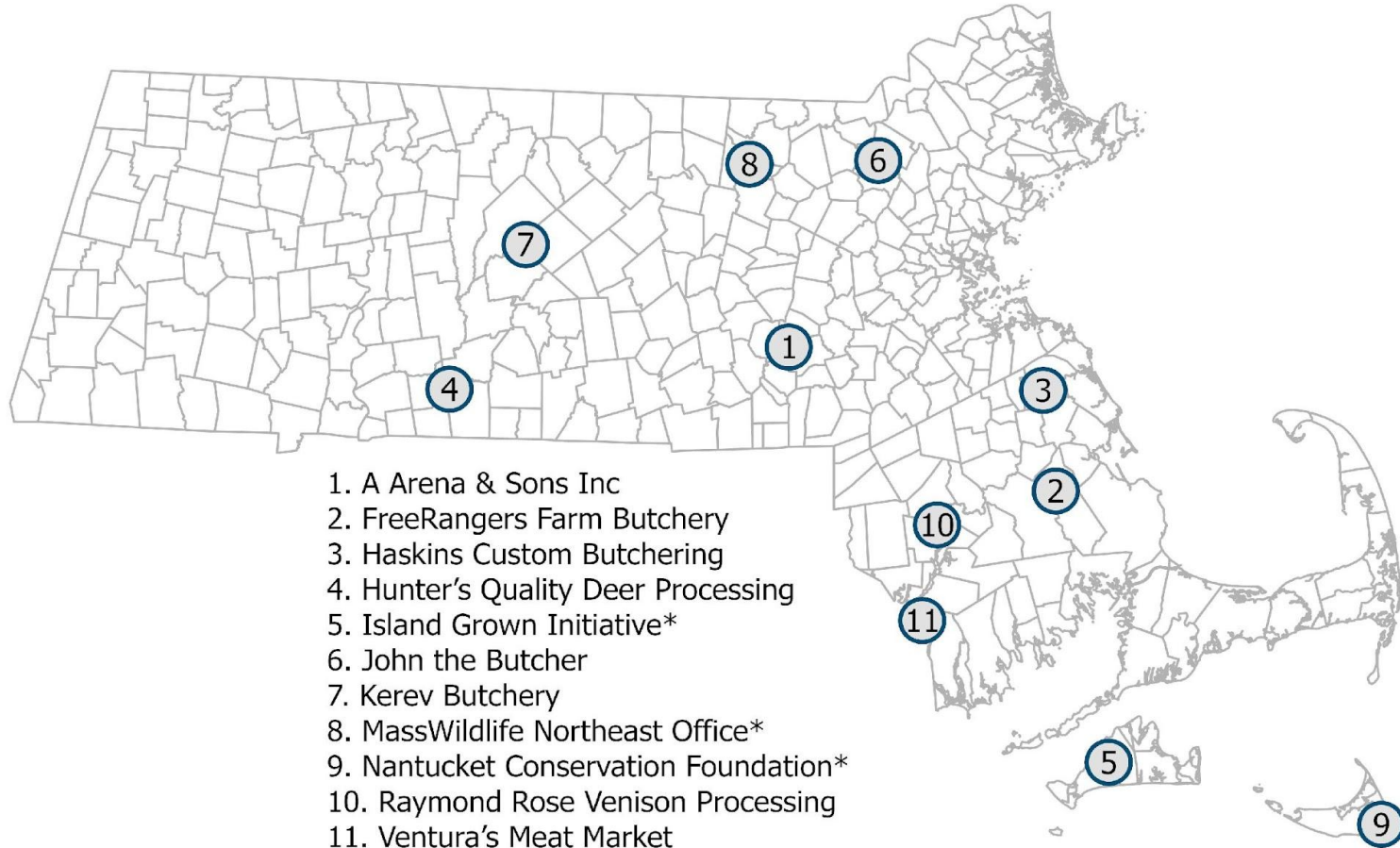


Collaboration with Mass Audubon & Daniel's Table



2024 MassWildlife's Hunters Share the Harvest Processor/Drop Off Locations

*As of 10/8/2024




1. A Arena & Sons Inc
2. FreeRangers Farm Butchery
3. Haskins Custom Butchering
4. Hunter's Quality Deer Processing
5. Island Grown Initiative*
6. John the Butcher
7. Kerev Butchery
8. MassWildlife Northeast Office*
9. Nantucket Conservation Foundation*
10. Raymond Rose Venison Processing
11. Ventura's Meat Market

* Whole Deer Donation Only

Expanding the Program's Impact

1. Mass Military Support Foundations' Food4Vets
2. Nantucket Food, Fuel, & Rental Assistance
3. Food Bank of Western Massachusetts
4. Daniel's Table
5. Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe
6. Wampanoag Tribe of Aquinnah
7. IGI Island Food Pantry
8. Kinship Heals
9. Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry
10. Ludlow Veterans Center
11. Worcester County Food Bank
12. Northampton Survival Center

Massachusetts
Hunters for the Hungry
Program
508-389-6300



Ground Venison
Contents: 90% Venison, 10% Pork

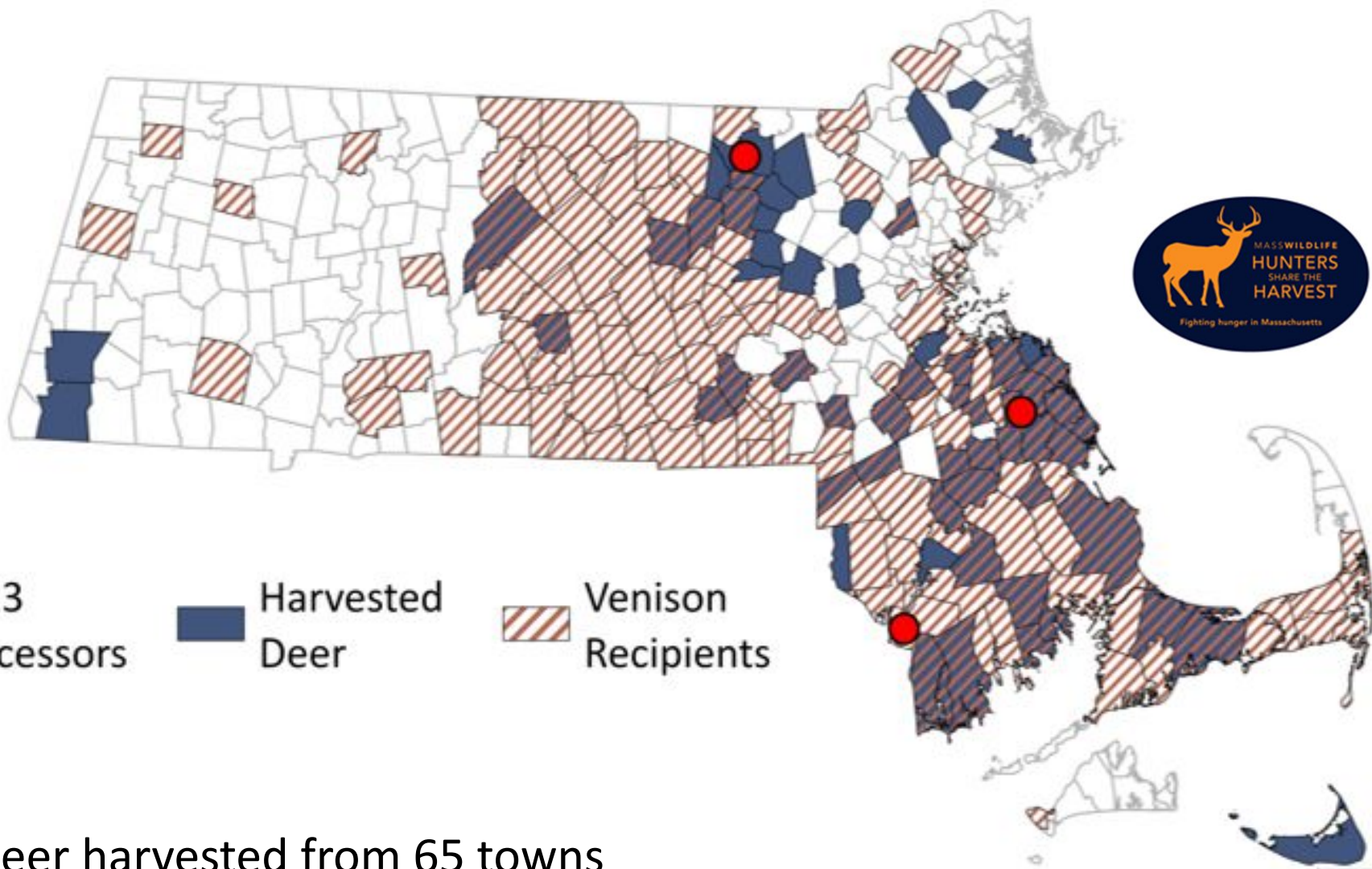
Safe Handling Instructions:

- Keep refrigerated or frozen; thaw in the refrigerator or microwave.
- Keep raw meat separate from other foods. Wash work surfaces, utensils, and hands after touching raw meat.
- Cook ground venison to 160°F (71°C). Refrigerate leftovers immediately.

Processed by Haskins Custom Butchering
308 Silver Street, Hanover MA

Weight _____ Batch _____





- Deer harvested from 65 towns
- Distributed to >5,200 families from 157 towns

Points for Discussion

- Advice to offer
- Identify barriers preventing hunting access
- What do you need to affect change?
 - Specific resources, tools, or assistance
 - From whom?
- Communication and messaging
 - How to effectively communicate about hunting
 - Who is the appropriate messenger?
 - What's the message?

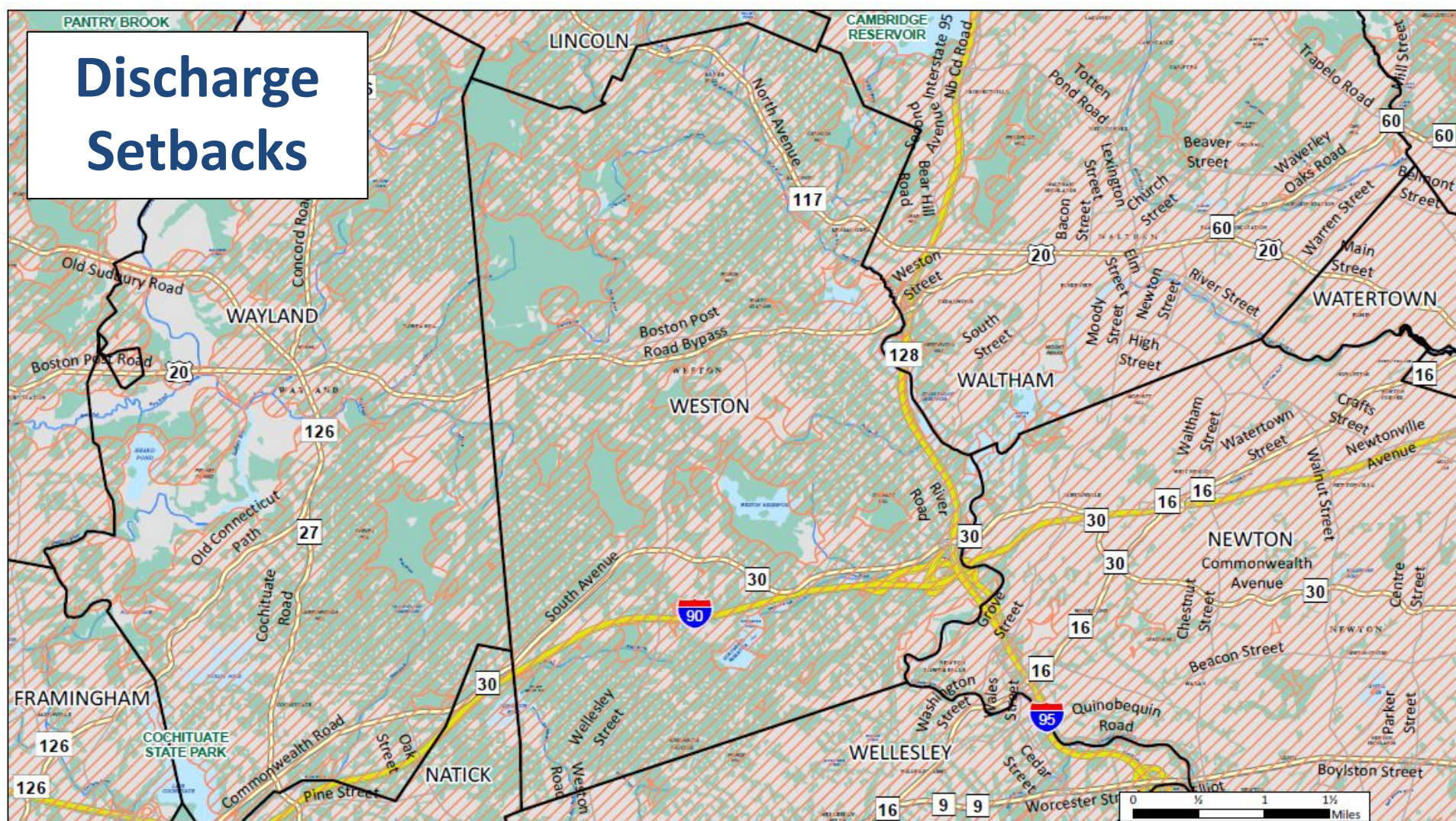









Deer Management Key Messages

- Regulated hunting is the most effective method
 - More restrictions = less effective
- It's a long-term commitment
- It doesn't have to be expensive, complicated, or time-consuming
- It may be controversial
- The more careful, planning, coordination, and communication, the better

Discharge Setbacks



Setbacks Weston

-  500-foot Setback
-  Water
-  Forest
-  Non-forest/development
-  Town/City boundary

Setbacks: A person shall not discharge any firearm or release any arrow upon or across any state or hard surfaced highway, or within one hundred and fifty feet, of any such highway, or possess a loaded firearm or hunt by any means on the land of another within five hundred feet of any dwelling in use, except as authorized by the owner or occupant thereof. (M. G. L. Ch. 131, Sec. 58).

Source: Map information is from 2005 land use, 2017 structures, and 2013 MassDOT roads.

Note: Subsequent land use development may have changed Setbacks, and actual Setback may depend on town/city bylaws. Visit the areas in which you have an interest to confirm the current Hunting Setback status and where hunting may be allowed or prohibited.

Weston 500-foot Setback

Total town/city acres -	11,092
Forested acres -	6,192
Forested acres in Setback -	5,149
Forested acres not in Setback -	1,043
Percent forest not in Setback -	17%

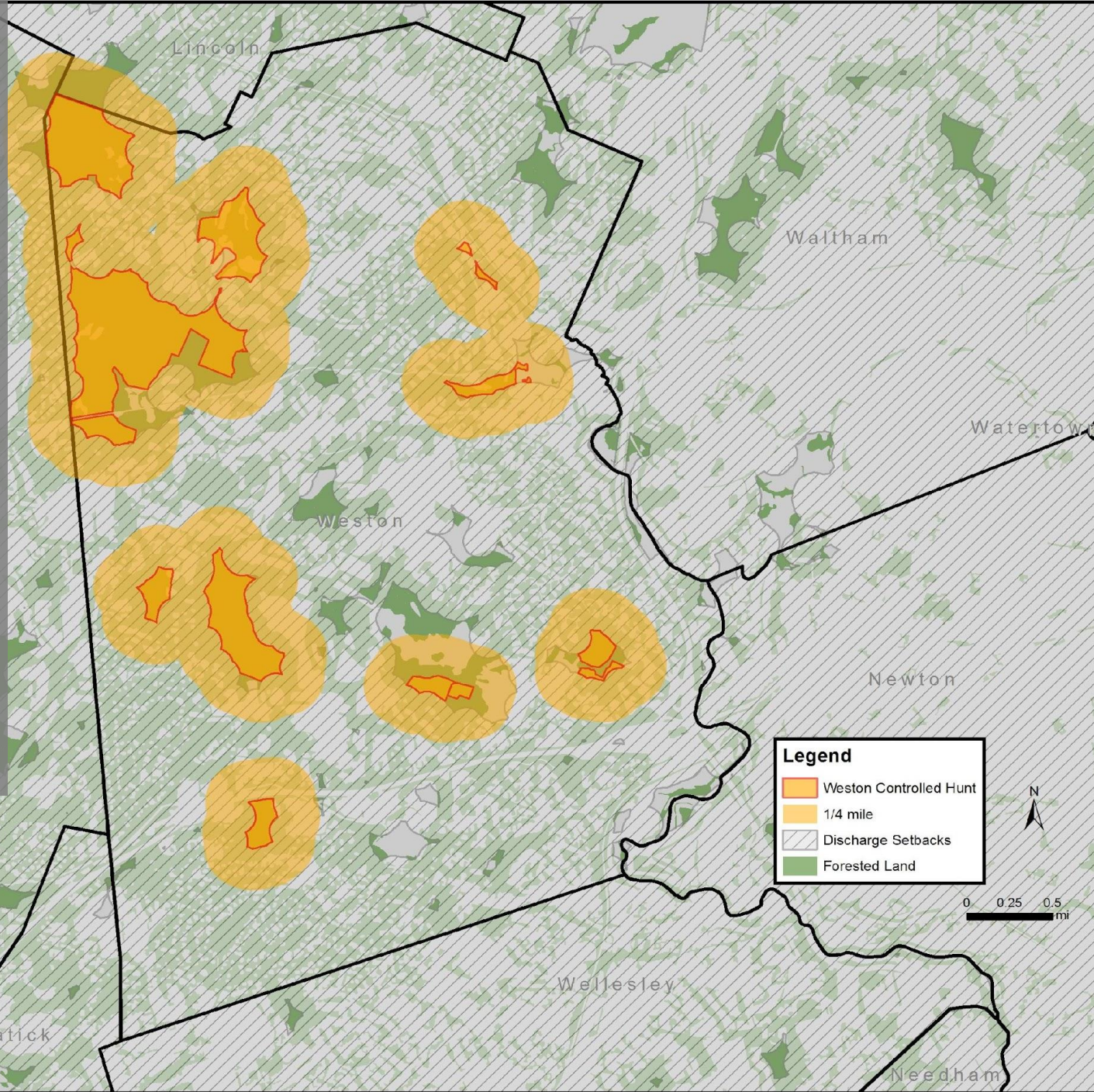


Weston:

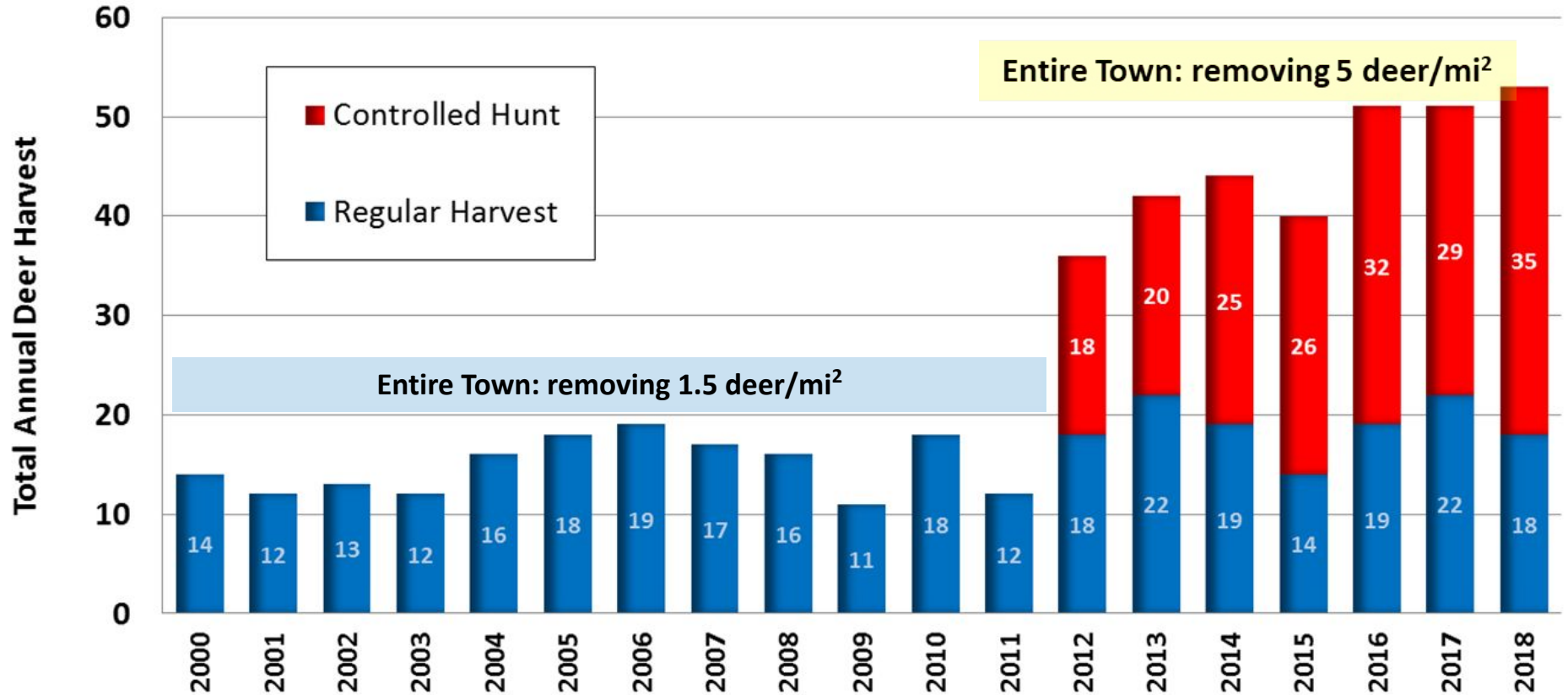
Saw increasing deer numbers, moderate impacts to forest, increasing vehicle collisions, etc.

Opened town lands to archery hunting

Nearby landowners have given permission to hunters to be within 500ft.



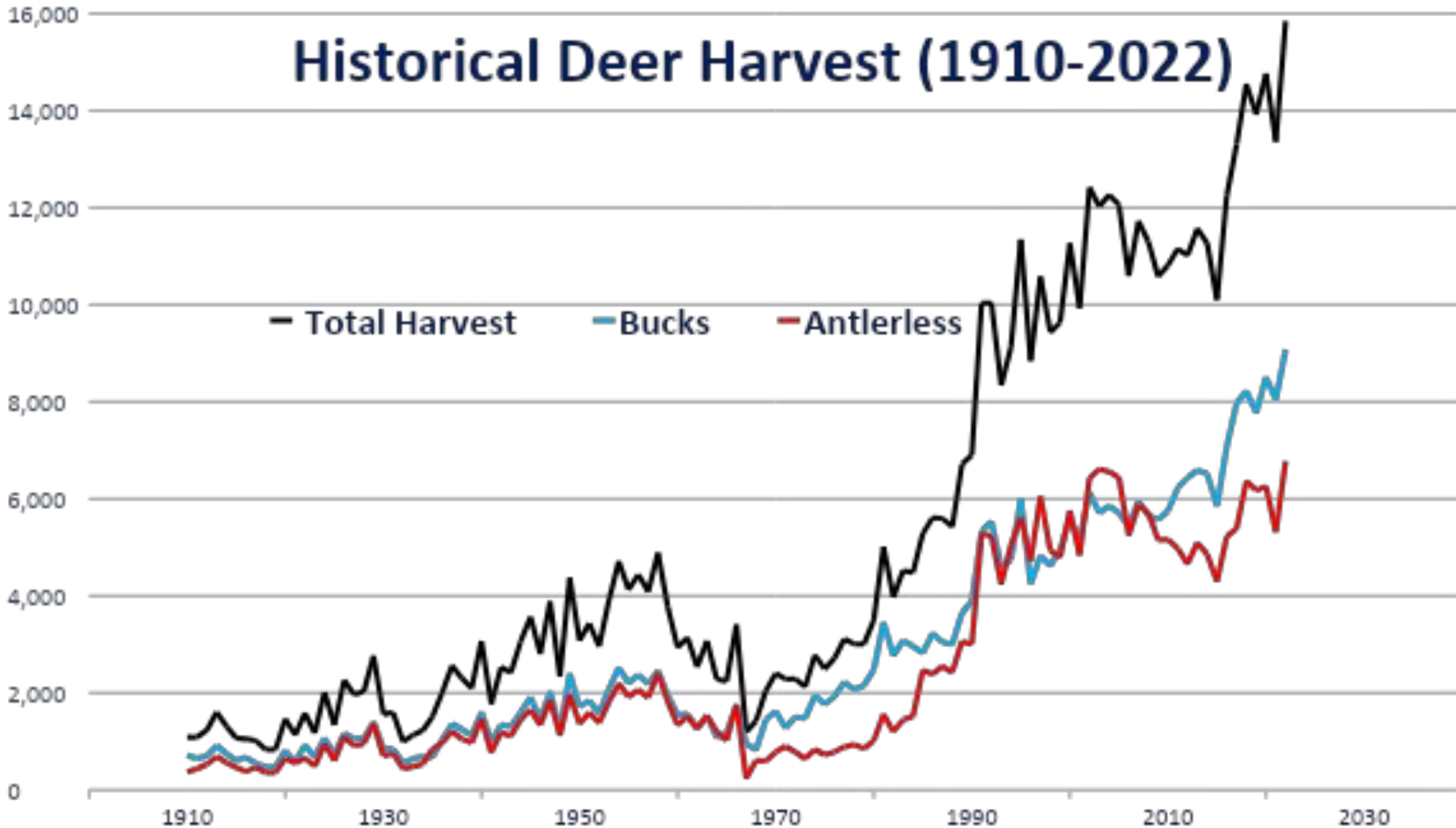
Total Annual Deer Harvest: Weston



Historical Deer Harvest (1910-2022)

Deer Harvested

— Total Harvest — Bucks — Antlerless



Are there any non-lethal options?

- **Contraception**

- Surgical Sterilization
 - Near 100% effective at preventing pregnancy
- Chemical contraception
 - Near 80% effective at preventing pregnancy with boosters



- **Research conclusions**

- Can be effective at preventing pregnancy
 - May not be feasible (difficult and expensive to treat all females)
- Does not reduce deer numbers because deer have to die
 - Adult females can live over 10-20 yrs
 - Research in MA found adult female survival rates above 90%
 - Not shown to significantly reduce high deer numbers
 - Can potentially stabilize deer numbers if you can keep out new deer