



## Deer-hunting changes and decrease in permits

*Utah's deer hunt will occur on 30 units, starting in 2012.*

Mule deer populations are in a long-term decline across the western United States and Canada. This decline is due to a variety of causes, including habitat loss and degradation, highway mortality and predation. The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR) has aggressively implemented new programs to address these problems; however, just as the population decline occurred over many years, the recovery will also take years to accomplish.

In response to the rangewide decrease in deer, the number of general-season buck deer permits was capped at 97,000 in 1994. Permit numbers have remained at that level—or slightly lower—until recently. In 2010, the general-season buck deer hunt was particularly difficult for many Utah hunters. Poor weather and a shorter hunt contributed to lower success, and the DWR and Wildlife Board were very concerned about the lack of deer observed by hunters.



To learn more about what the DWR is doing to help overall deer herd growth, visit [wildlife.utah.gov/muledeer](http://wildlife.utah.gov/muledeer).

### **What did the DWR propose?**

To address the public's concerns—and those expressed by the Utah Wildlife Board—the DWR proposed changes to the deer hunt for 2012. The DWR identified three options to increase the number of buck deer in Utah's deer herds. None of the proposals would increase the overall number of deer in the state because they only address the hunting of bucks. The DWR's preferred option would have continued the regional hunting of bucks, raised the objective for the number of bucks in a region by 20 percent and resulted in a small decrease in general-season buck hunting permits.

### What did the Wildlife Board decide?

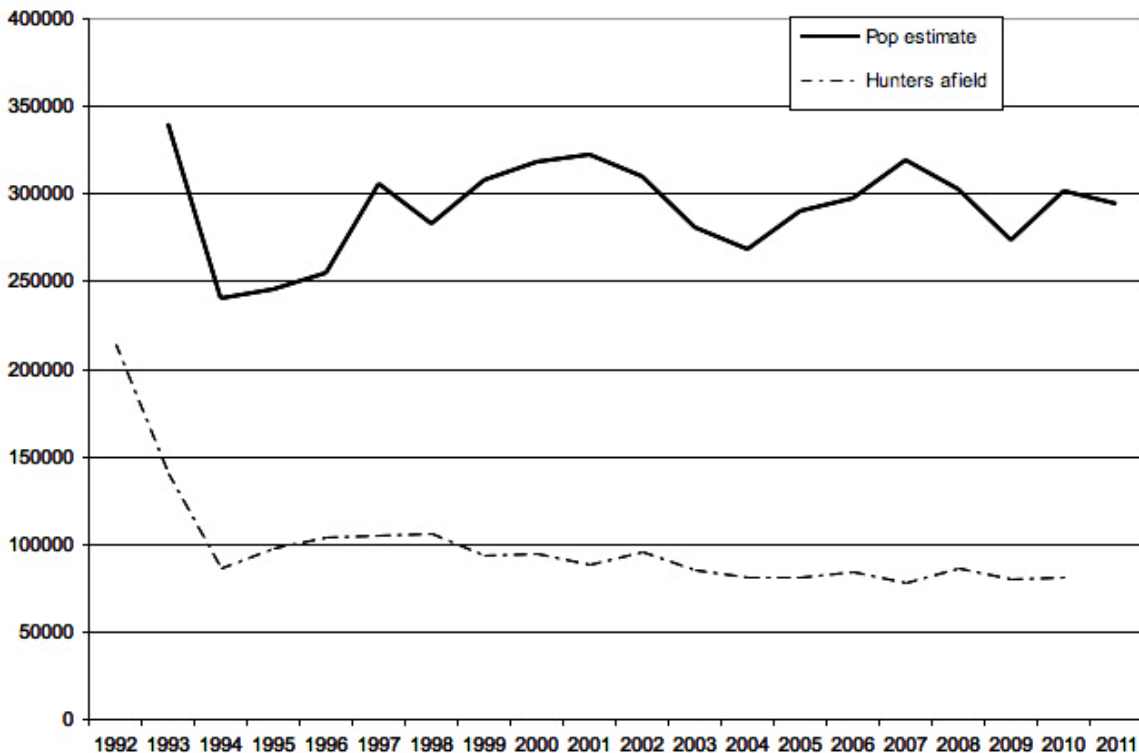
Members of the public were divided in their support for the new deer-hunting options. They participated in public meetings, called their representatives on Utah's regional advisory councils (RACs) and sent hundreds of messages to Wildlife Board members. Two RACs voted for the option preferred by the DWR, but three RACs voted for a more restrictive option that split the state into approximately 30 smaller deer-hunting units for the 2012 season. That option required a larger decrease in the number of general-season deer permits that would be available to hunters.

After considering the DWR proposals and all of the public input, the Wildlife Board selected the more restrictive option in a 4-2 vote.

### Are permit decreases really necessary?

The change to unit-based hunting—and the accompanying mandate to increase buck numbers—required the Wildlife Board to decrease the number of deer permits it issued to hunters for 2011. (Although hunting will not switch to a unit-based approach until 2012.)

As a result, deer permits for the 2011 general season sold out in a few days, rather than weeks after they were offered to the public. The restrictive option will likely require an additional permit reduction for the 2012 deer season, when unit-based hunting is implemented. Hunting bucks is a social decision that will not affect the total deer population.



*This chart compares Utah's deer population estimate and the number of general-season hunters afield.*

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