



# 2017 Deer Forums

## Hunter Survey Results and Potential Management Options

### Purpose of these Forums

**This is not a public hearing; management options discussed are ideas, not proposed regulations.** Staff Biologists will present survey results and discuss potential management options. Development of proposed regulations will be based on all information gathered through this multi-year evaluation. If developed, they will be presented at public hearings in January 2018, and if approved by the Commission will be effective for the 2018/19 season.

### Evaluation of Deer Herd

Presented at Public Deer Forums in 2015. The condition of the herd can be improved by varying degrees across the state by **1)** reducing young buck harvest, **2)** shifting the timing of buck harvest later, and **3)** adjusting doe harvest rates. [www.ncwildlife.org/deerstudy](http://www.ncwildlife.org/deerstudy)

### Evaluation of Deer Hunter Desires

**2016 Survey of Deer Hunters: 196,770 contacted, 33,750 responded (17%)**

Antlered Buck Management:

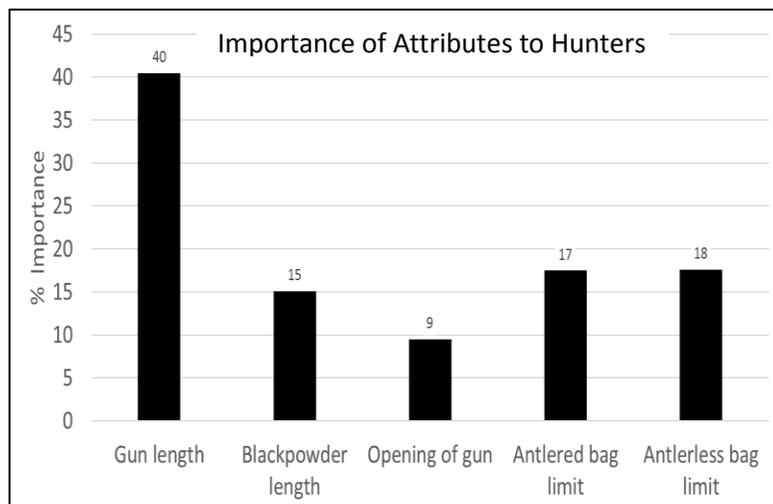
- 88% hunt on <1,000 acres; minimum needed to meet their objectives
- 68% believe we have too few mature bucks (2.5+ years of age)
- 55% oppose further restricting buck harvest on private lands

Doe Management:

- Many hunters believe deer numbers have declined in parts of the state
- Hunters want deer numbers to increase (48%) or remain stable (31%)
- Support for reducing doe harvest to increase/stabilize deer numbers unclear

Support for Change:

- Hunter satisfaction has declined
- 81% of hunters are willing to make changes
- What trade-offs are hunters willing to make to improve herd condition?



Gun Season Length – Most important to hunters; trade-offs using this attribute limited

Antlerless Bag Limit –Statewide bag limit of 4 could help address hunter’s desire to stabilize/increase deer numbers in areas

Antlered Bag Limit – Bag limit of 2 is preferred and aligns with biological improvements in East

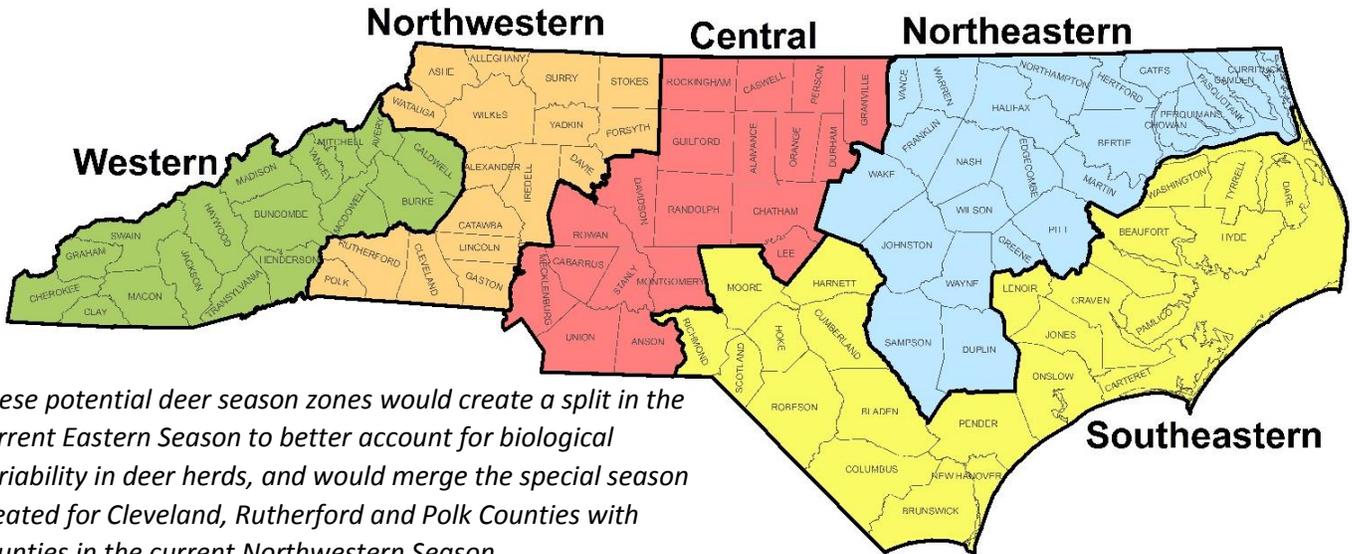
Blackpowder – 1-week season is a viable trade-off to improve timing of harvest relative to peak breeding

Opening of Gun – Least important to hunters; small shifts to open later would improve harvest timing

## Potential Management Options

Using the best available science, a balanced option was developed for five potential season zones. This balanced option increases the number of biological objectives met for a “well managed herd” from 33-50% to 66-100% while minimizing negative trade-offs to hunting opportunities and traditions. The balanced option could help stabilize/increase deer herds and improve the buck age structure in parts of the state. The balanced option would improve timing of the harvest relative to peak breeding across the state, which not only has numerous biological benefits, but can magnify overall rutting activity and improve hunter experiences.

### Potential Deer Season Zones



*These potential deer season zones would create a split in the current Eastern Season to better account for biological variability in deer herds, and would merge the special season created for Cleveland, Rutherford and Polk Counties with counties in the current Northwestern Season.*

### Potential Balanced Options

SEASON ATTRIBUTE	Potential Deer Season Zones (Peak Breeding Dates)				
	Western (Dec. 2 <sup>nd</sup> )	Northwestern (Nov. 25 <sup>th</sup> )	Central (Nov. 15 <sup>th</sup> )	Northeastern (Nov. 7 <sup>th</sup> )	Southeastern (Oct. 27 <sup>th</sup> )
Opening of Blackpowder	Saturday before Thanksgiving	2 Saturdays before Thanksgiving	3 Saturdays before Thanksgiving	Saturday nearest Oct. 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Saturday nearest Oct. 15 <sup>th</sup>
Length of Blackpowder	1 week	1 week	1 week	1 week	1 week
Opening of Gun	Saturday after Thanksgiving	Saturday before Thanksgiving	2 Saturdays before Thanksgiving	Saturday nearest Oct. 29 <sup>th</sup>	Saturday nearest Oct. 22 <sup>nd</sup>
Length of Gun	6 weeks	7 weeks	8 weeks	10 weeks	11 weeks
Closing of Gun	1st Sunday in January	1st Sunday in January	1st Sunday in January	1st Sunday in January	1st Sunday in January
Antlerless Bag	4	4	4	4	4
Antlered Bag	2	2	2	2	2