



Michigan Department of Natural Resources

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HUNTERS HELPING LANDOWNERS 2016 PROGRAM DATA

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ABSTRACT

Public Act 241 of 2012 created the Hunters Helping Landowners Program. Accordingly, the Department of Natural Resources, “the Department,” designed an online form which gives hunters the opportunity to voluntarily enroll and indicate two counties where they would like to hunt antlerless deer on private lands. Hunters without Internet access could also enroll by calling or visiting a Department operations service center. Landowners were able to request from the Department a list of volunteer hunters, with associated contact information, for the county where they own land. In 2016, over 1,500 hunters voluntarily enrolled in the program. Lapeer County was selected the most by hunters with a combined first and second choice total of 173 volunteers. Washtenaw was the second most often selected county with a total of 159 volunteers. All of the 20 most selected counties were located in Michigan’s Lower Peninsula and in Hunting and Trapping Zone 3 except Midland County which is split between Hunting and Trapping Zones 2 and 3. Eight landowners requested a list of hunters.

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BACKGROUND

Due to Public Act 241 of 2012, the Department created the Hunters Helping Landowners Program, “the program”, and began collecting information in August of 2012. By completing an online form, hunters voluntarily enrolled in the program and indicated two counties where they would like to hunt antlerless deer on private lands. Hunters without Internet access could enroll by calling or visiting a Department operations service center. Landowners were able to participate in the program by requesting from the Department a list of volunteer hunters, with associated contact information, for the county where they own land. Reasons why landowners may have needed additional antlerless deer harvested on their property, included:

- Deer were regularly damaging crops on their property
- Deer were causing extensive damage to landscaping
- More hunters could benefit from harvest opportunity on their property

As per statute, at the end of each year, all volunteer information must be deleted and the survey is reset. Because data cannot be carried over from one year to the next, the Department cannot compare the number of new volunteers to repeat volunteers.

For the year 2016, there were 1,572 hunters who volunteered for the program as compared to 1,642 hunters who volunteered in 2015 (Figure 3); 1,943 hunters who volunteered in 2014; 1,844 hunters who volunteered in 2013; and 1,644 who volunteered in 2012. Lapeer County was selected the most by hunters with a combined first and second choice total of 173 volunteers and also in 2015 with a combined total of 189 volunteers. In 2014, the top combined choice was Washtenaw County with 201 volunteers, Oakland County was the top combined choice in 2013 with 186 volunteers, and Lapeer County was the top combined choice in 2012 with 185 volunteers. Washtenaw County was the second most often selected county with a total of 159 volunteers in 2016, with Oakland County acquiring the third most choices at 154 (Figure 2). Oakland County was most selected as the first choice for volunteer hunters with 86 (Figure 1) as compared to its first choice ranking with 96 in 2015, 116 in 2014, 124 in 2013, and 94 in 2012. Kent and Washtenaw counties were next with 85 and

77 volunteers and then Lapeer County with 76 in 2016 (Figure 1). All of the 20 most selected counties in 2016 (Figure 2) were located in Michigan's Lower Peninsula and in Hunting and Trapping Zone 3 except for Midland County which is split between Hunting and Trapping Zones 2 and 3. These counties accounted for over 60 percent of the total county choices selected by volunteer hunters. This is also the most densely populated area of Michigan and has the least public land available for hunting. Keweenaw and Luce Counties were not selected as a first or second choice by volunteer hunters. Every other county in Michigan was selected at least once as a first or second choice.

A total of eight landowners requested a volunteer hunter list for their county in 2016 (Figure 3). In 2015 and 2014, 10 landowners signed up to receive a county list. There were four landowners in 2013 and in 2012 there were 12 landowners. The 2016 requests were for Cheboygan, Ingham, Kent, Oakland, St. Joseph, Washtenaw, Wayne, and Wexford counties. Six requests came for counties in Hunting and Trapping Zone 3 and two for counties in Hunting and Trapping Zone 2. There were no requests for counties in Hunting and Trapping Zone 1.

PROGRAM RULES

Public Act 241 of 2012 required several provisions for the program specific to the Department, the landowners, and the volunteers.

The Department was instructed to:

- create a mechanism for hunters willing to harvest antlerless deer to submit their top two county choices and contact information;
- notify any participating landowners requesting a list that the Department has not verified that volunteers possess valid licenses;
- indicate on all forms and information about the program that participation in the program is voluntary;
- delete all information obtained during the previous year on January 1 of the following year; and
- make available on the DNR's website a list of all the deer hunting licenses and permits available in Michigan, the criteria for qualifying for each of these licenses or permits, and where to obtain these licenses or permits.

Volunteer hunters are:

- not allowed to register to harvest antlerless deer under the program in more than 2 counties; and
- are responsible for ensuring they are properly licensed to harvest antlerless deer.

Under the program, all landowners:

- May request a contact list for all the volunteer hunters who indicated that they would be willing to harvest antlerless deer in the owner's or lessee's county.

The program is repealed effective January 1, 2017.

SUMMARY

The intention of Public Act 241 of 2012 was to allow for the creation and maintenance of a list by the Department for farmers and other landowners to use to contact additional hunters when deer are doing damage or to have an additional tool to aid in deer management on private property in Michigan. Although hunters volunteered for 98% of Michigan's counties, only eight landowners requested a volunteer hunter list in 2016 (Figure 3) with only 10 requesting a list in 2015 and in 2014. In 2013, four landowners requested a list and 12 landowners requested a list in 2012. The proportion of volunteer hunters to landowners was about 197 to 1 in 2016. The participating landowners only represented eight counties or about 10% of the possible selections. Due to a lack of landowner participation, it is unlikely that a significant portion of volunteers were contacted.

FIGURE 1: VOLUNTEER HUNTER COUNTY CHOICES IN THE YEAR 2016

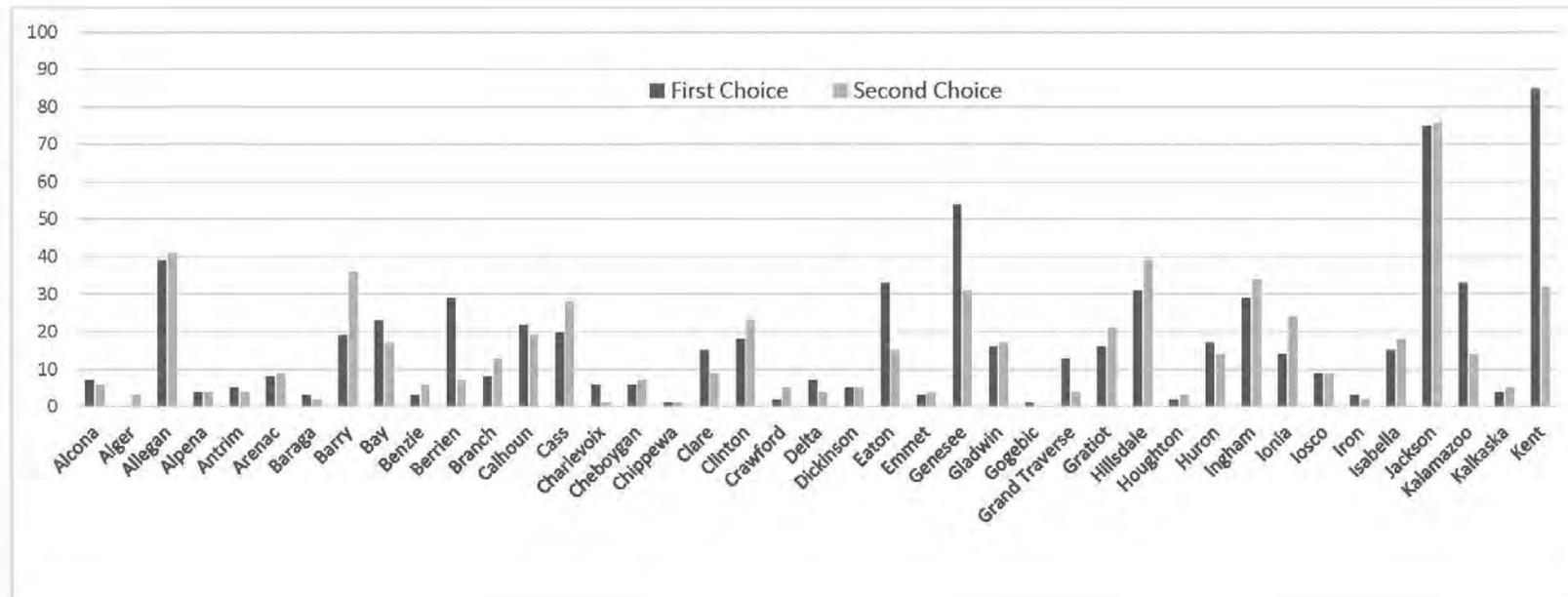


FIGURE 1 CONTINUED: VOLUNTEER HUNTER COUNTY CHOICES IN THE YEAR 2016

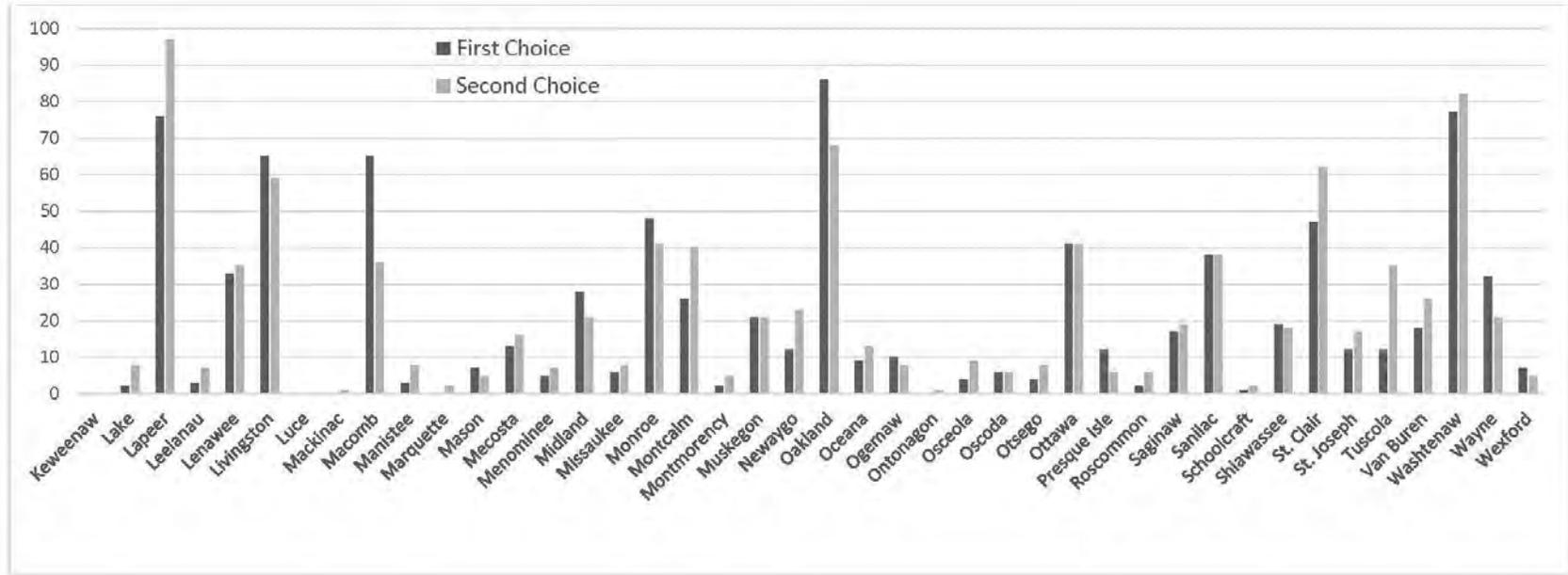


FIGURE 2: THE TOP 20 MICHIGAN COUNTIES CHOSEN BY VOLUNTEER HUNTERS IN 2016

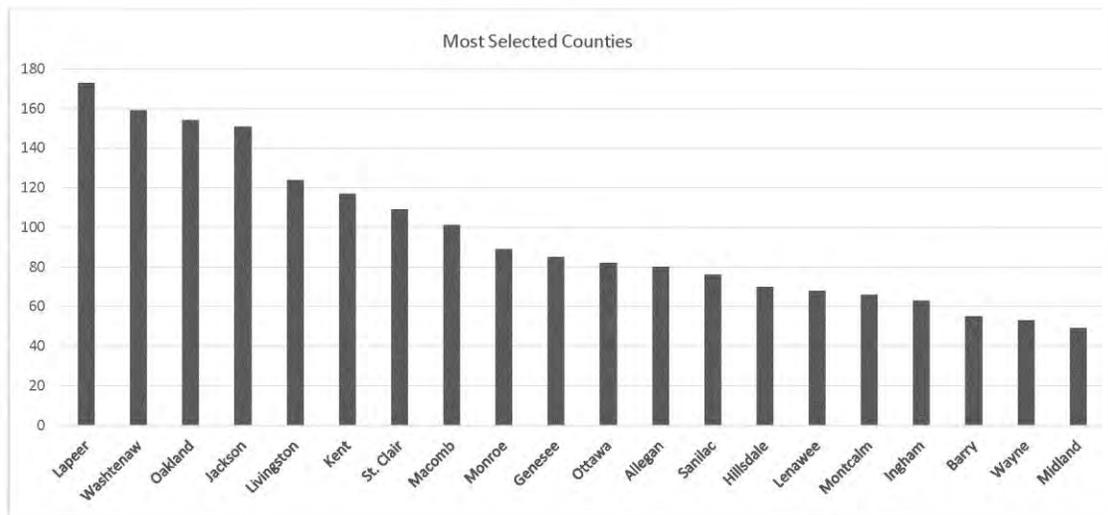


FIGURE 3: THE TOTAL NUMBER OF VOLUNTEER HUNTERS AND LANDOWNERS BY EACH YEAR OF THE PROGRAM

