A Year of Changes

The upcoming 2012 Quabbin deer hunt marks an important year in the history of the hunt. The DCR has adopted a number of minor and significant changes for this year’s hunt. Some changes were based on requests from hunters, and other changes were the result of our annual review and ongoing discussions with biologists at MassWildlife. These changes include:

• **Extending the orientation requirement to 7 years.** Previously, hunters were required to attend an orientation once every 6 years. Since many hunters have attended multiple orientations at this point, we have extended the exemption period.

• **Extending the hours for car-scouting.** In 2012, hunters will be allowed to car scout from 8:00-3:00 pm during the 2-day weekend car scouting. This is an increase of 2 hours each day.

• **Scouting weekend will be the weekend before Thanksgiving.** Again, a number of hunters requested that we have more separation between the car scouting weekend and the actual hunt.

• **Re-draw the zone boundaries between New Salem and Petersham.** Approximately 2300 acres of the northern portion of the Petersham zone will now be part of the New Salem zone. This is being done for logistic reasons (the northern portion of Petersham was difficult to reach and required an extra entry gate) and hunter distribution (hunters rarely hunted in the northern portion and seldom harvested deer).

• **Hunter densities will change.** The DCR set an original goal of 1 hunter/30-35 acres. Over the last several years, this density has gradually creeped up, and in most years, we had 1 hunter/24 acres. This year, we will ensure that hunter densities return to our original goals of approximately 1 hunter/35 acres.

• **The second antlerless permit will be eliminated.** Recent discussion with Mass-Wildlife biologists have prompted a renewed commitment between the DCR and Mass-Wildlife to better coordinate deer management at Quabbin and within zone 6. In order to better predict and manage our annual harvests, we are eliminating the second antlerless permit - they were seldom filled by hunters and added a lot of confusion to our harvest figures.

• **Antlerless permits will be issued on an allocation system.** Traditionally, all Quabbin hunters were required to purchase an antlerless permit. In 2012, we are not requiring anyone to buy a permit, but allowing everyone who wants one to purchase one. In future hunts, DCR will allocate a certain number of antlerless permits based on hunter success rates and harvest goals.

• **Transition to an online application.** The DCR hopes to have the whole Quabbin hunt procedure online by 2013. In 2012, the application will still be paper (enclosed), but antlerless permits will be bought online. This year’s application fee will be $5, but will increase next year as an online service fee is added. Total costs will be $10 or less.
The 2011 Hunt

The 2011 deer hunt was the second year of a 5-year rotation, and Hardwick was not hunted. Approximately 1700 hunters applied for the hunt and about 84% (1400) were selected. Just over 1200 hunters attended the hunt, and the total harvest was 73 deer. The overall success rate in 4 days of hunting was about 6%.

The following section details the results from each hunting block. The “Quick Facts” in the box in each section summarizes statistics that hunters most often inquire about.

New Salem

New Salem was hunted for 2 days in 2011, and hunters were met with chilly conditions and a small amount of sleet and snow during the first day. Attendance was good during the hunt. Approximately 150 hunters (88%) showed up, and they harvested 9 deer. This is approximately 1.2 deer killed/mi² and about .058 deer/hunter. In other words, about 5.8% of the hunters in New Salem killed a deer.

Pelham

Pelham wasn’t hunted in 2010, and anticipation is typically higher in an area following a rest year. However, Pelham had an average harvest during 2011. Attendance was high, with approximately 92% (338 hunters) showing up on at least one of the days. These hunters harvested 21 deer. This is about 1.6 deer killed/mi². Success rate in the Pelham block was 6.2%.

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QUICK FACTS

**Biggest Buck**
- 142 pounds
- 3.5 years old
- Walter Sheridan

**Biggest Doe**
- 134 pounds
- 3.5 years old
- Kevin Quesnel

Marc Colcombe (right) and his 198 pound 6-pointer.
Petersham

It was an odd year in the Petersham zone in 2011. No deer were killed during the second day of the hunt, although several hunters reported seeing deer. We even saw one walk in front of us at the check station. Like the other areas, harvest was down in Petersham. Approximately 330 hunters attended the 2-day hunt, which is about 92% of those eligible. Petersham hunters killed 24 deer. This is about 1.7 deer killed/mi². Overall hunter success rate was 7%.

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Prescott

As usual, Prescott hunters were well represented during the 2-day hunt. Approximately 380 (94%) hunters were present for at least one day. These hunters harvested 19 deer. This is about 1 deer/mi². Hunter success rate was 5%.

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QUICK FACTS

Biggest Buck
- 157 pounds
- 2.5 years old
- Elwood Burtt

Biggest Doe
- 137 pounds
- 3.5 years old
- Marc Allessio

Sean Keenan and his 147 pound 9-pt. Petersham buck.

Robert McNeil and his 139 pound 8-point Petersham buck.

Allen Donofrio and his 176 pound 8-point Prescott buck.

Michael Graham and his son Neil with their 171 pound 8-point Pelham buck.
The 2012 Hunt

As discussed on the cover page of this year’s newsletter, there are a number of substantial changes in store for the 2012 hunt. One thing that isn’t changing is the continuation of the rotation. The Petersham block will be removed from hunting during 2012. Hunting will take place in Prescott, Pelham, Hardwick, and New Salem. Each block will be hunted for one 2-day segment.

Again, to quickly summarize the important changes:

Application Fees: Fees will be reduced to $5/hunter for the 2012 hunt. However, the DCR anticipates that the application procedure will be online in 2013. There will be a service fee associated with this, but total cost to hunters will be $10 or less.

Scouting: Two things are changing about the car scouting program: the hours and the timing. Car scouting weekend will now be the weekend before Thanksgiving (Nov. 17-18, 2012). In addition, car scouting hours will be 8:00am-3:00pm. Hunters are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity and are reminded that car scouting is reserved for Quabbin hunters only and no firearms are allowed.

Zone Boundaries: The boundary line between the New Salem and Petersham zones will be redrawn so approximately 2300 acres of northern Petersham will become part of the New Salem zone (see map below).

Changes in Antlerless Permits: The second antlerless permit will be eliminated. Quabbin hunters will be allowed a maximum of 1 antlerless permit. In addition, the DCR is transitioning to a antlerless allocation system, similar to the one used by MassWildlife. In 2012, antlerless permits will no longer be required. All hunters wanting an antlerless permit will have the opportunity to purchase one, if they are drawn for the Quabbin hunt. In future hunts, there may be a specific number of antlerless permits made available, depending on previous year’s harvest, antlerless harvest success rates, and annual management decisions. Antlerless deer at Quabbin will still be considered “bonus” and not count towards state-wide bag limits.

Changing Hunter Densities: Hunter densities will return to 1 hunter/35 acres in 2012. In previous years, hunter densities have exceeded this goal and been closer to 1 hunter/24 acres.

Moving Online: DCR hopes to have the whole Quabbin process online by 2013. This means hunters will apply, pay their application fees, and be notified if they were selected for the hunt online. In addition, antlerless permits would be purchased online. For 2012, we anticipate having hunters purchase their antlerless permit online through MassWildlife’s new system.

The 2012 Quabbin deer hunt application is available online at the DCR website. The address is: http://www.mass.gov/dcr/waterSupply.htm
We have also included an application for your convenience.

The Quabbin hunt is scheduled for the following days:

Pelham/Hardwick: Nov. 29-30, 2012
Prescott/New Salem: Dec. 6-7, 2012

Any questions? Call Dan Clark at 508-792-7423 ext. 215 or dan.clark@state.ma.us OR contact Ken MacKenzie at 508-792-7423 ext. 313 or ken.mackenzie@state.ma.us.