



2016

Blue Hills State Reservation

Deer Management Program

Department of
Conservation & Recreation

Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

dcr
Massachusetts



MASSWILDLIFE



Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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DCR Mission Statement

*To protect, promote and enhance our
common wealth of natural, cultural and
recreational resources for the well-being of all.*



Thank You to Our Partners!

Department of Fish & Game



Division of Fisheries & Wildlife



Massachusetts Environmental Police



Massachusetts State Police



Friends of the Blue Hills





DFW Mission Statement

The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife) is responsible for the conservation - including restoration, protection, and management - of the state's natural heritage of wildlife and habitat diversity for the benefit and enjoyment of the public now and into the future.

Tonight's Meeting - Purpose

- Provide a brief overview for why deer management is needed in the Blue Hills Reservation
- Review preliminary vegetation monitoring efforts
- Provide an overview of last year's controlled hunt and results
- Review the proposed 2016 Deer Management Plan
- Solicit public input on the draft 2016 plan

Context for Deer Management

- The Reservation is one of the first properties to be acquired by the Commonwealth for public recreation.
- It is a special place and we want to make sure future generations can enjoy and appreciate its resources.
- As stewards of the Blue Hills Reservation, DCR is concerned with the long-term health of the forest due to impacts related to high deer densities.

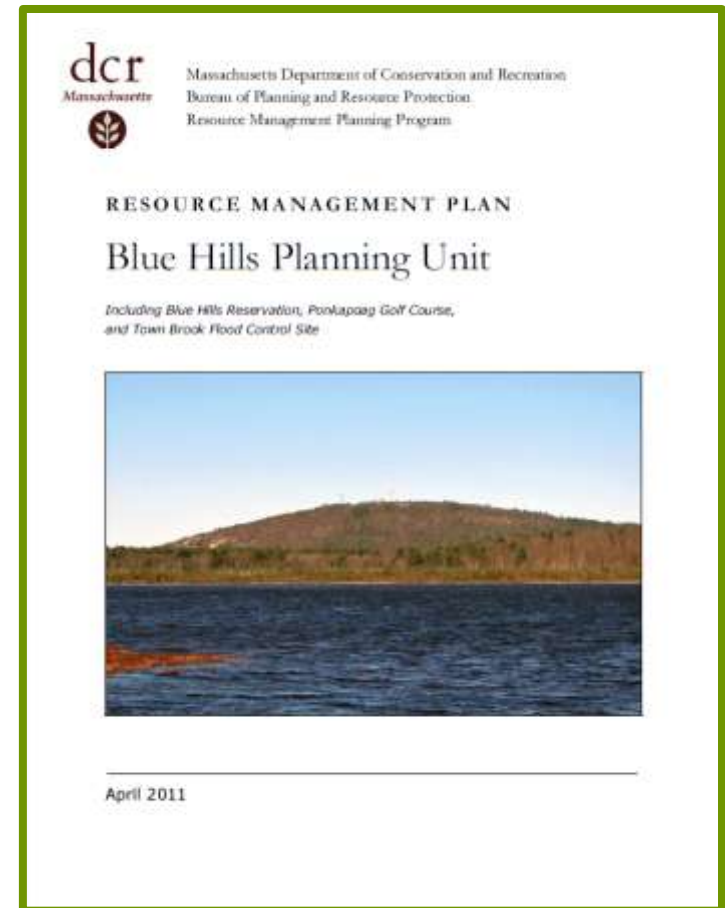


Causes of Deer Overabundance

- Excellent deer habitat
- Elimination of major historic predators; such as mountain lions and wolves
- Hunting had not been allowed in Blue Hills – unlike the majority of other DCR properties where hunting is allowed.
 - *Lack of hunting in the Blue Hills created sanctuary habitat favorable to deer population increases*

2011 Blue Hills RMP

- **April 2011**: DCR develops and Stewardship Council approves Resource Management Plan (RMP)
 - RMP Notes: “over-browsing [by deer] has the potential to significantly decrease species diversity and suppress canopy cover for decades”
 - RMP Notes: “over-browsing by deer also affects some of the reservation’s rare plants”



Environmental Bond Bill

Section 43, Ch. 286, Acts of 2014

- DCR must work with DFW to identify areas where deer overpopulation is negatively impacting forestation, water resources, plant growth
- DFW and DCR must develop and implement a management plan for identified areas

Rationale for Deer Management

- Maintain an ecologically sustainable deer density that fosters the restoration of native vegetation, promotes healthy habitat for other wildlife, and allows for the continuous growth and development of forest regeneration
- Reduce the negative impacts that high deer densities have on the regenerating forest
- Ensure a healthy forest composed of adequate diversity of species and age classes

Vegetation Monitoring Program

- DCR's Forestry Bureau is continuing with existing vegetation monitoring efforts to further study the impacts of deer on the Reservation's vegetation
- 2015: Baseline survey of plants at fixed points conducted within the Reservation
- Deer Exclosures: One in place since 2011, one installed this year and a third to be installed



Vegetation Monitoring Program

	Control Site		Exclosure Site	
	Regeneration less than 1 ft. tall	Regeneration from 1 ft. to 4.5 ft. tall	Regeneration less than 1 ft. tall	Regeneration from 1 ft. to 4.5 ft. tall
White Pine	4	0	16	0
Red Oak	5	0	14	0
White Oak	7	0	6	8
Black Oak	2	0	5	0
Red Maple	1	0	1	2
American Beech	0	0	1	0
Chestnut	0	0	0	1

2015 Controlled Hunt Overview

- Designed to be conservative
- 4 weekdays of hunting during the shotgun season
- Only 2,980 acres (out of 7,000+ acres) opened to hunting (no hunting south of I-93)
- Maximum number of hunters allowed = 196 (98 hunters per day)
- 163 actual permits issued to licensed hunters

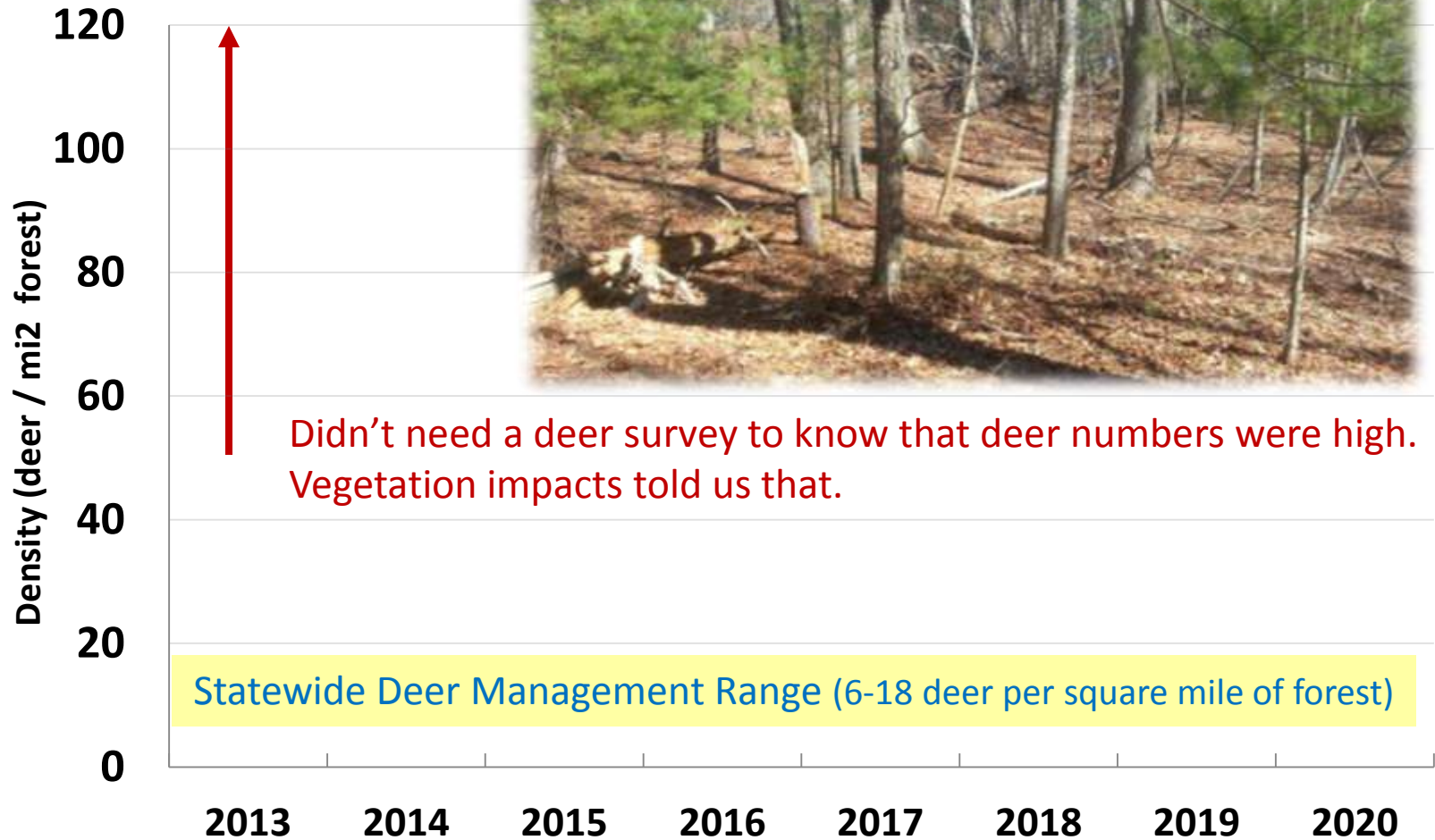
	# of Permits Issued	Total # of Participating Hunters
Days 1 & 2	89	86
Days 3 & 4	74	72

2015 Controlled Hunt Overview

- All hunters completed a mandatory orientation session
- Unified Command Center utilized by all agencies to centrally coordinate resources and communication
- 64 deer removed in just 4 days of hunting

Management Zone	# of Deer Removed
1 – Fowl Meadow	12
2 – Great Blue	12
3 – Houghton's Pond	15
4 – Chickatawbut	19
5 – Wompatuck	6

Blue Hills Deer Population



Blue Hills Deer Population

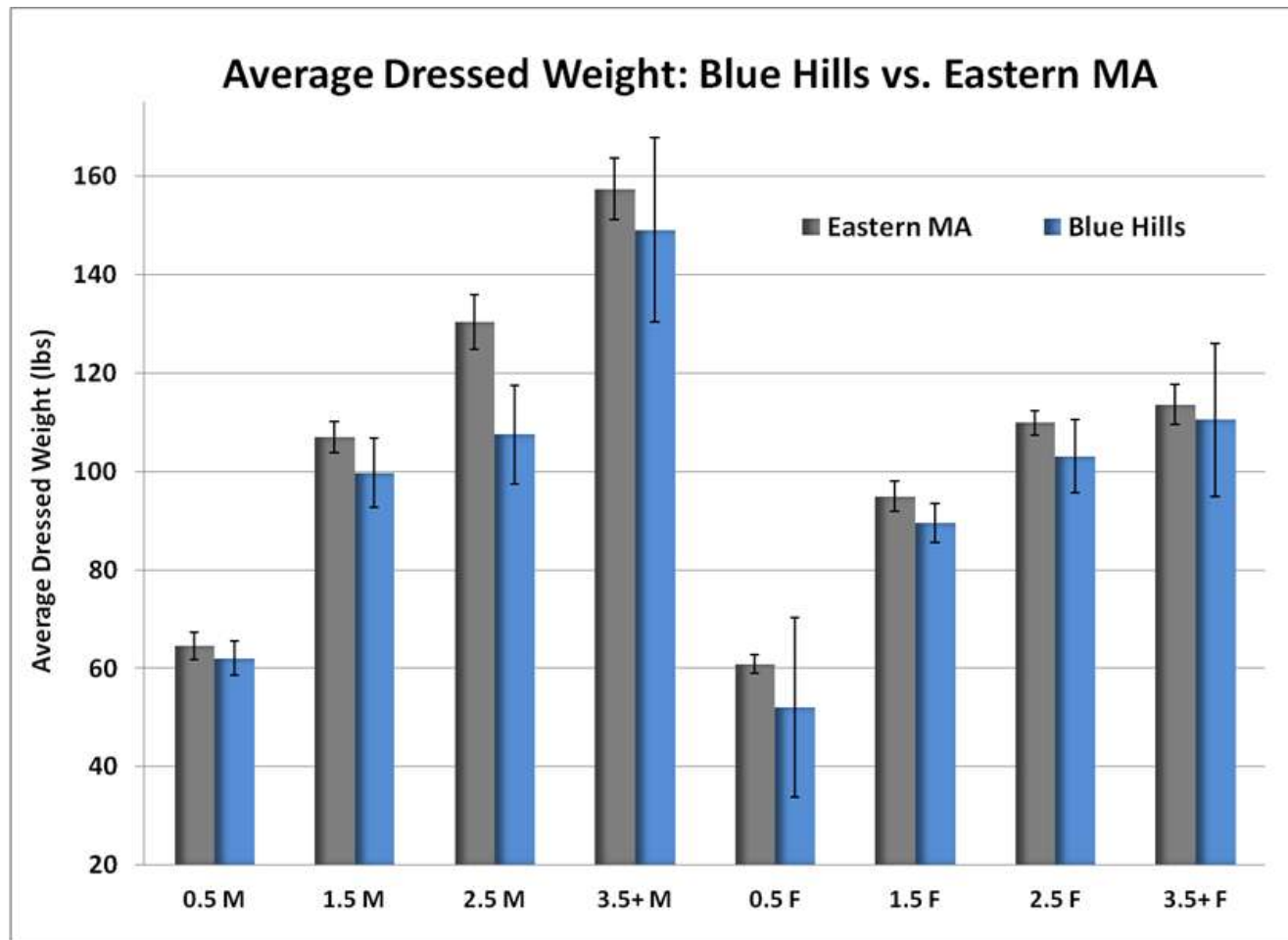


2015 Controlled Hunt Summary

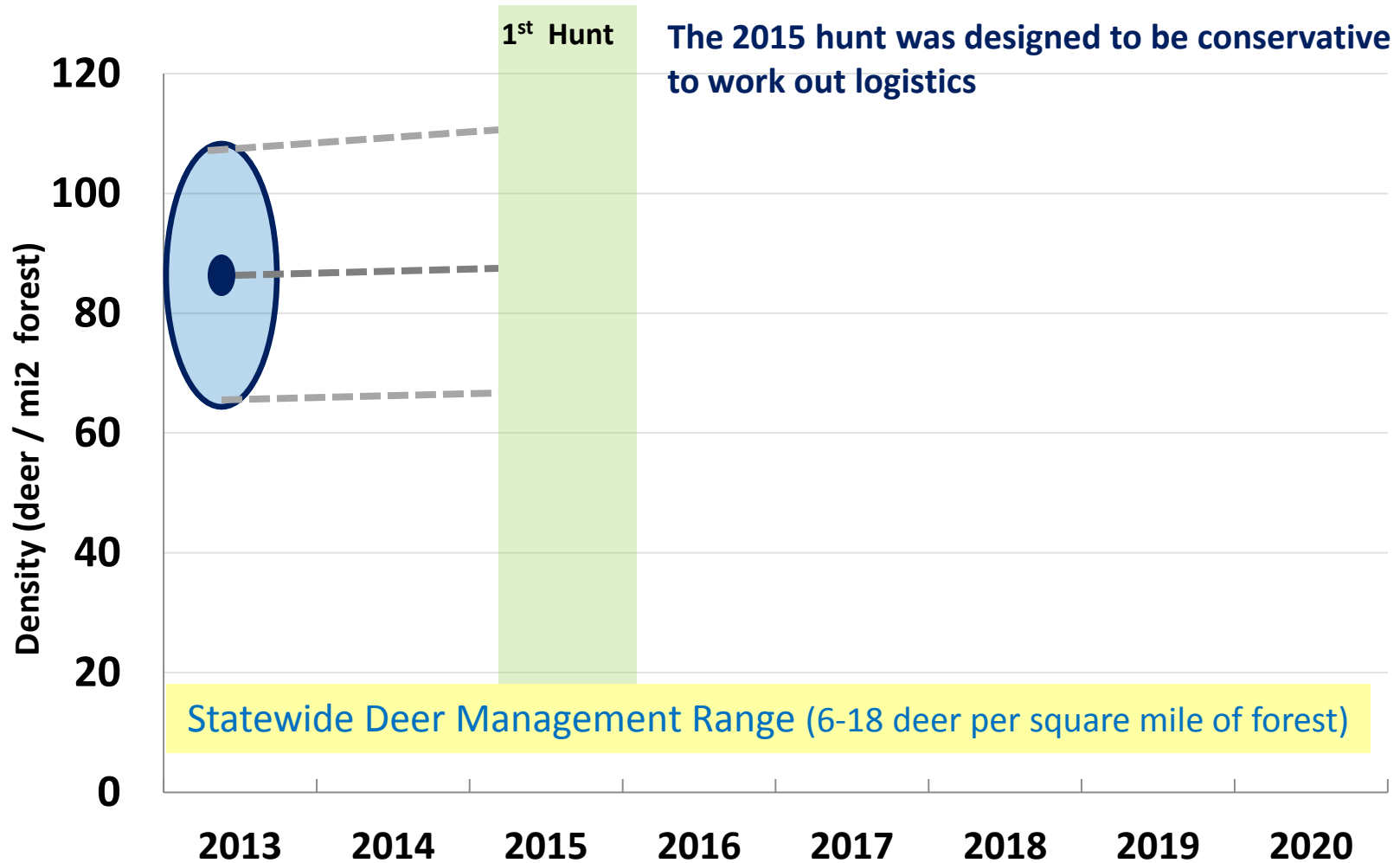
- **Total of 64 deer removed**
 - **Removed 14 deer per mi² of hunted forest**
 - Double the number taken in surrounding region over 65 days of hunting
- **Demonstrated that regulated hunting and firearms can be used to safely manage deer in urban/suburban areas**

2015 Biological Data

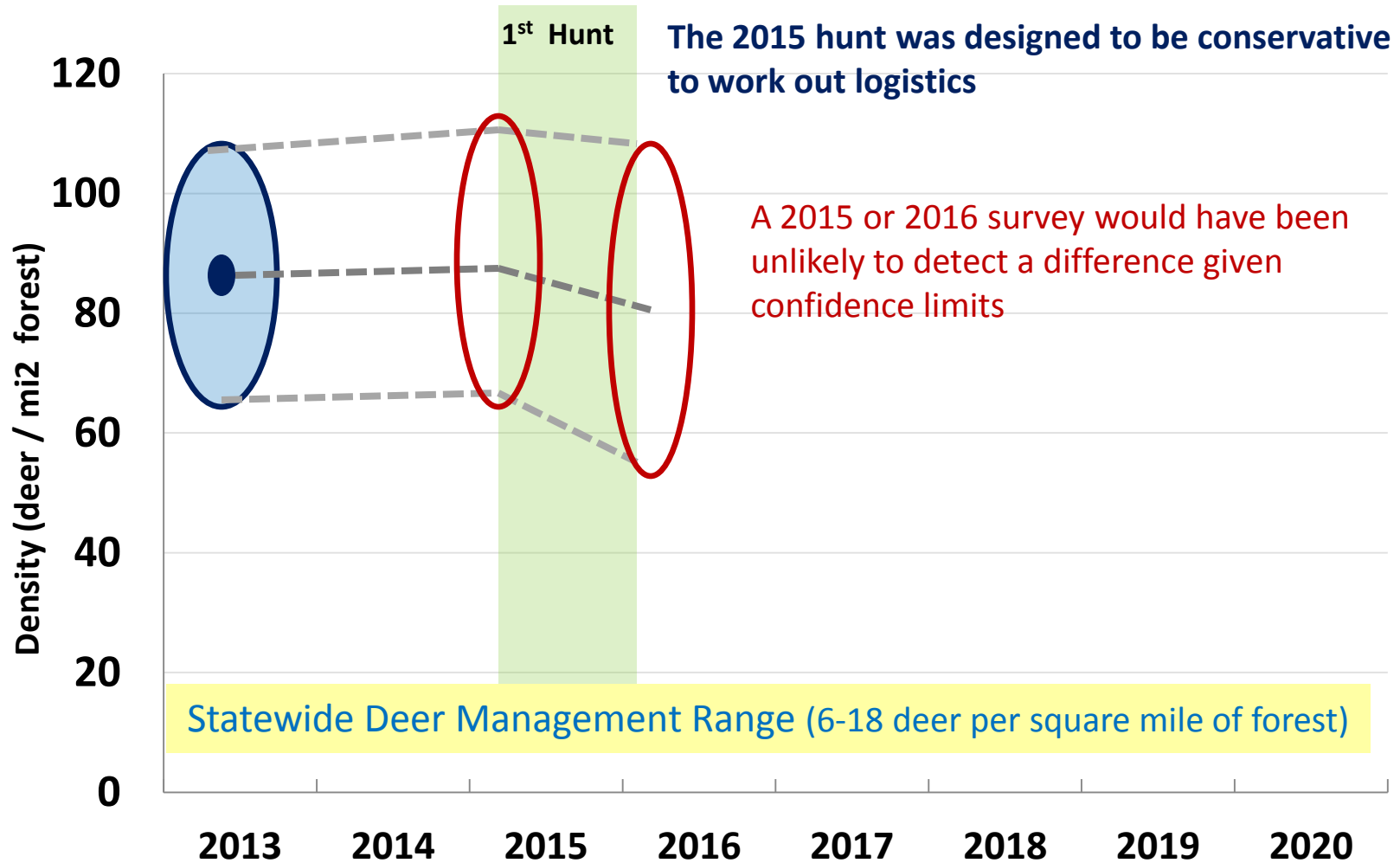
- Biological data did show some indication of stress



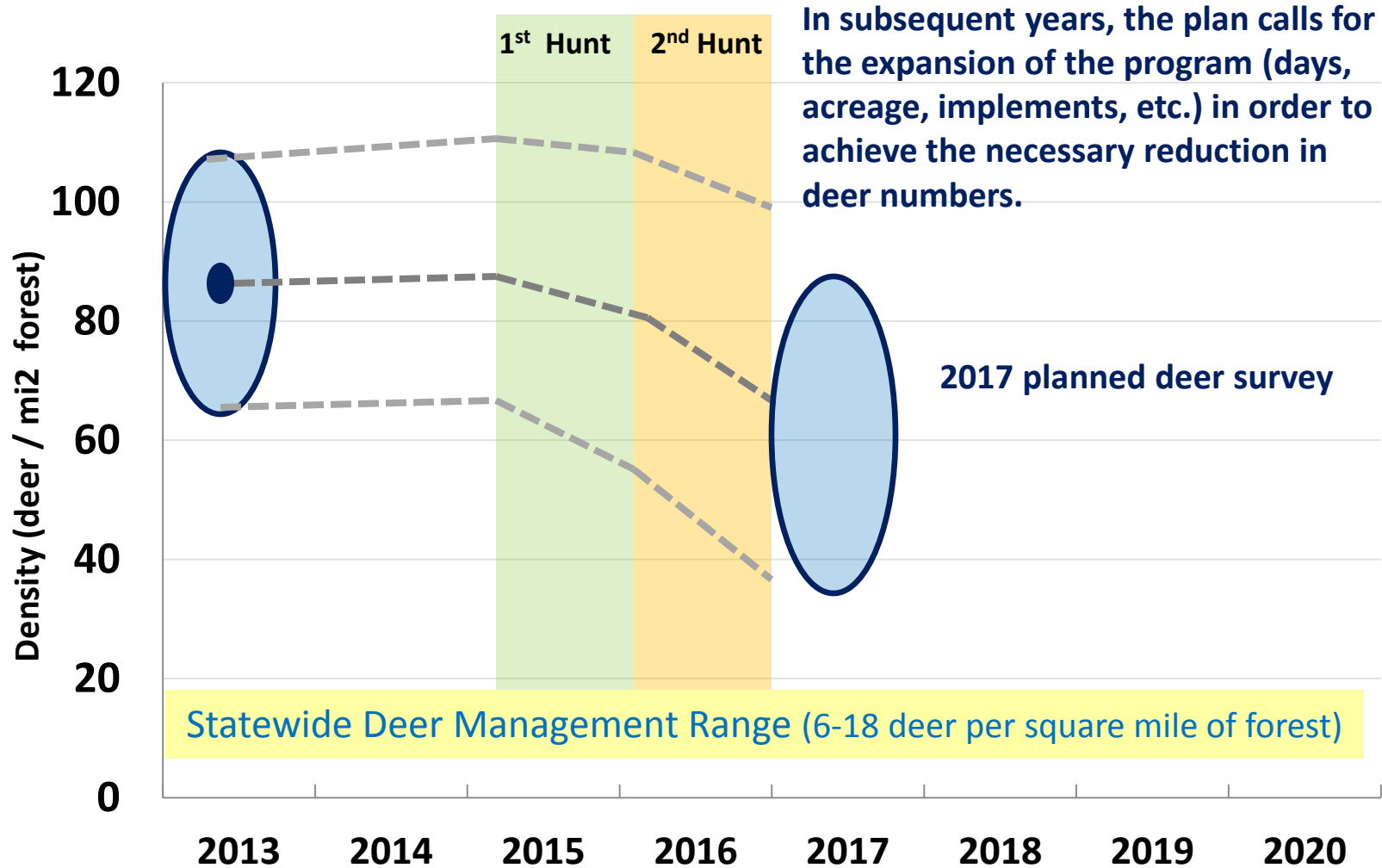
Blue Hills Deer Population



Blue Hills Deer Population



Blue Hills Deer Population



2016 Proposed Management Plan

2016

Blue Hills State Reservation *Deer Management Plan*



A Joint Publication of the
Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation and
the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife
♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦
Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs
Commonwealth of Massachusetts

2016 Draft Management Plan

- Posted to DCR website on June 24th
- Accepting written comments through August 5th

Proposed Program Enhancements

- Enhancements are in keeping with provisions in the 2015 Deer Management Plan to expand the program over time in order to achieve adequate population reductions.
- Enhancements have been shaped by an assessment of outcomes and operations from last year's controlled hunt.
- Guided by an understanding that solving the problem of high deer densities requires a long-term commitment to management of the deer herd.

Proposed Program Enhancements

Timing & Length

- Increase number of hunting days from 4 to 6 during 2-week controlled hunt:
 - **Segment 1:**
Tuesday, November 29th & Wednesday, November 30th
 - **Segment 2:**
Monday, December 5th & Tuesday, December 6th
 - **Segment 3:**
Thursday, December 8th & Friday, December 9th

Proposed Program Enhancements

Hunting Implements

- Continued use of shotgun (slug only) as main mechanism
- Addition of limited archery in designated areas
 - *Allow for management in areas where deer could avoid hunting pressure*
 - *Allow for management in smaller areas/ fragmented forest habitat that allow for greater number of archery hunters compared to shotgun hunters*
 - *Archery complements management efforts already taking place on nearby private lands*
 - *Will only be allowed during the six days of the controlled hunt*

Proposed Program Enhancements

Participation & Access Permitting

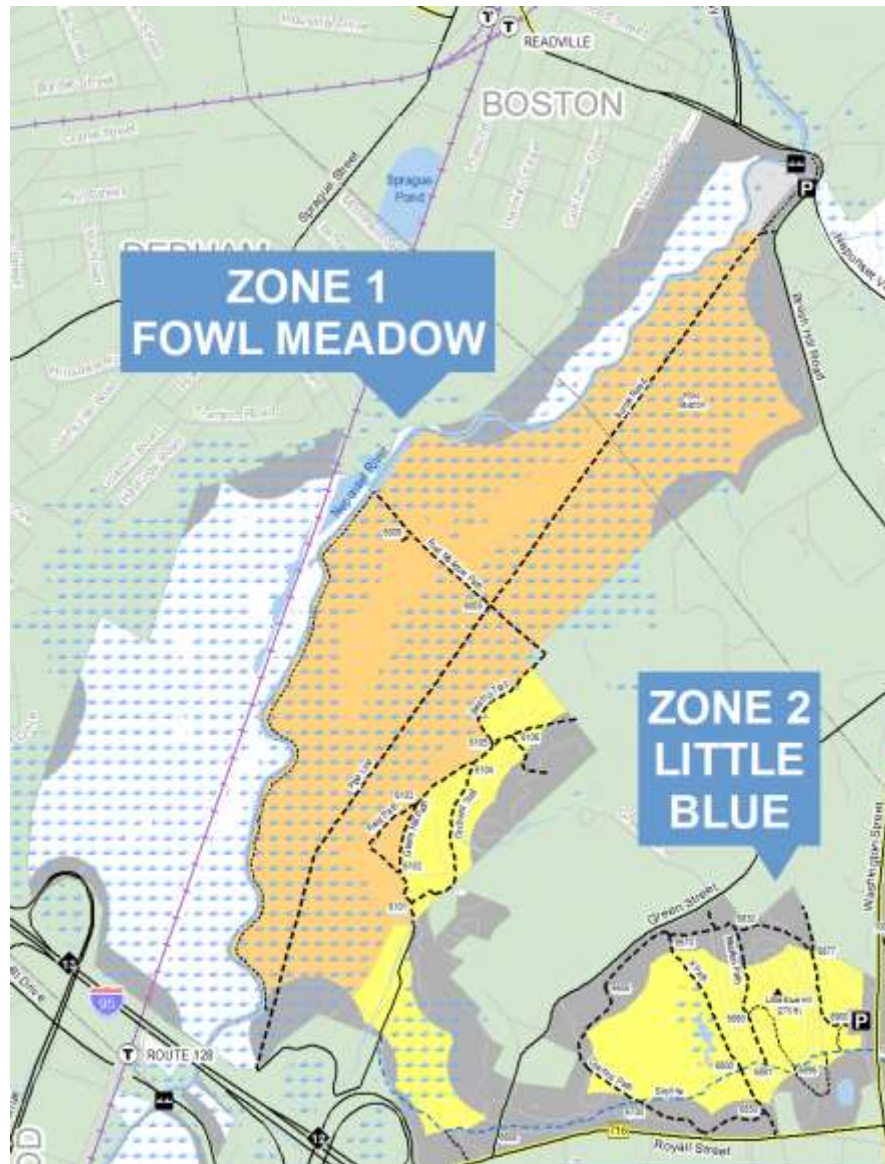
- Follow same application and lottery system as last year to selected permittees.
- Separate applications for shotgun and archery hunters
- Applications for shotgun hunting will allow for up to two (2) applicants (one “primary applicant and one “co-applicant”)
- Expand management zones to include areas not hunted in 2015

Proposed Program Enhancements

Management Zones & Hunter Distribution

	2015		2016			
Management Zone	Acres Open to Hunting	Number of Hunters Allowed Per Day	Acres Open to Shotgun Hunting	Acres Open to Archery Hunting	Number of Shotgun Hunters	Number of Archery Hunters
1 - Fowl Meadow	248	8	330	51	11	2
2 - Little Blue	0	0	0	71	0	3
3 - Great Blue	637	21	353	0	12	0
4 - Brookwood Farm	0	0	0	27	0	1
5 - Houghton's Pond	575	19	574	0	19	0
6 - Chickatawbut	1,024	34	1,004	0	33	0
7 - Wompatuck	496	16	561	0	19	0
8 - Ponkapoag	0	0	497	114	17	4
9 - Nike Site	0	0	160	0	5	0
10 - Braintree Site	0	0	0	77	0	3
TOTAL	2,980	98	3,479	340	116	13

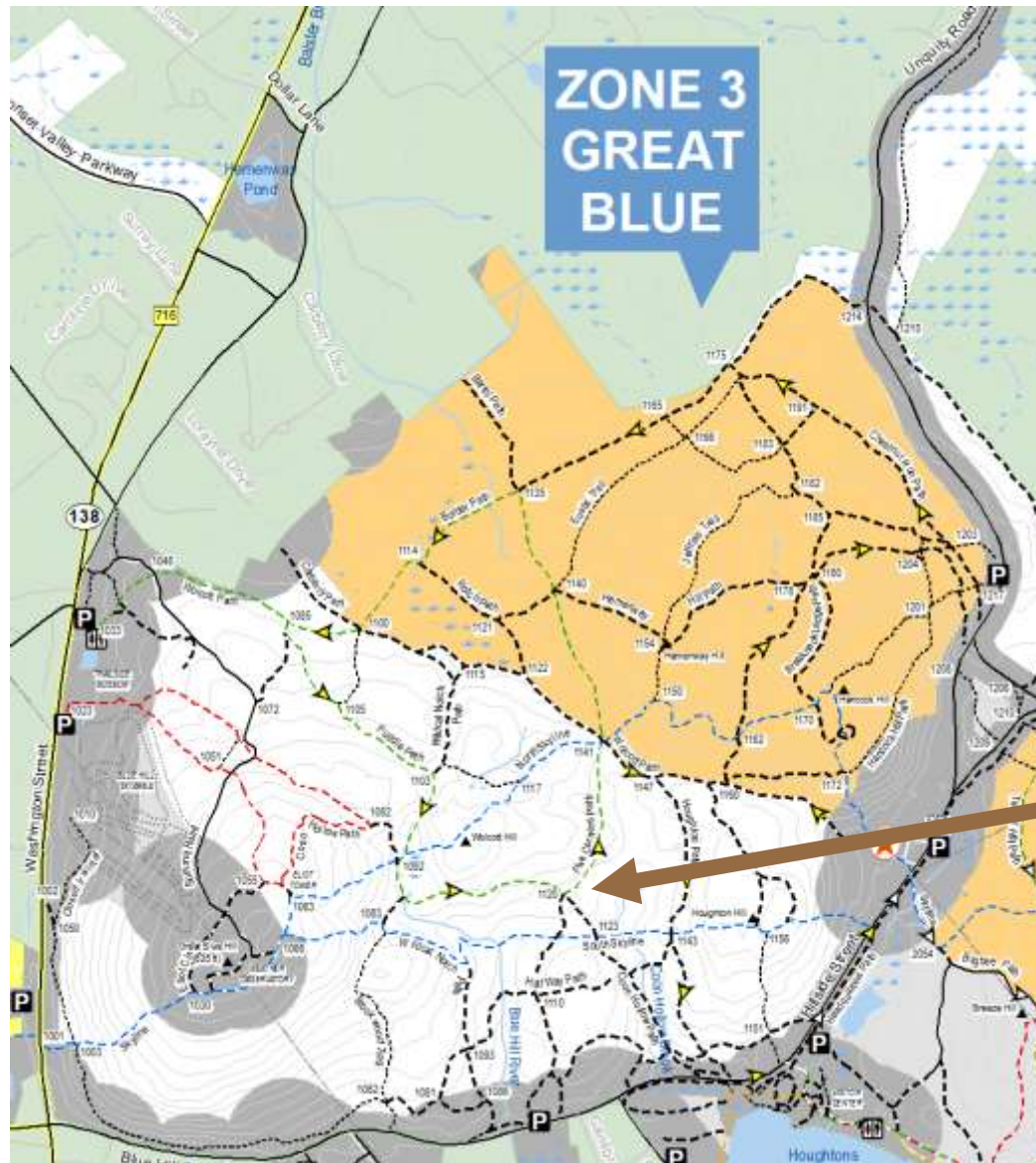
Blue Hills Deer Management



Shotgun Only

Archery Only

Blue Hills Deer Management

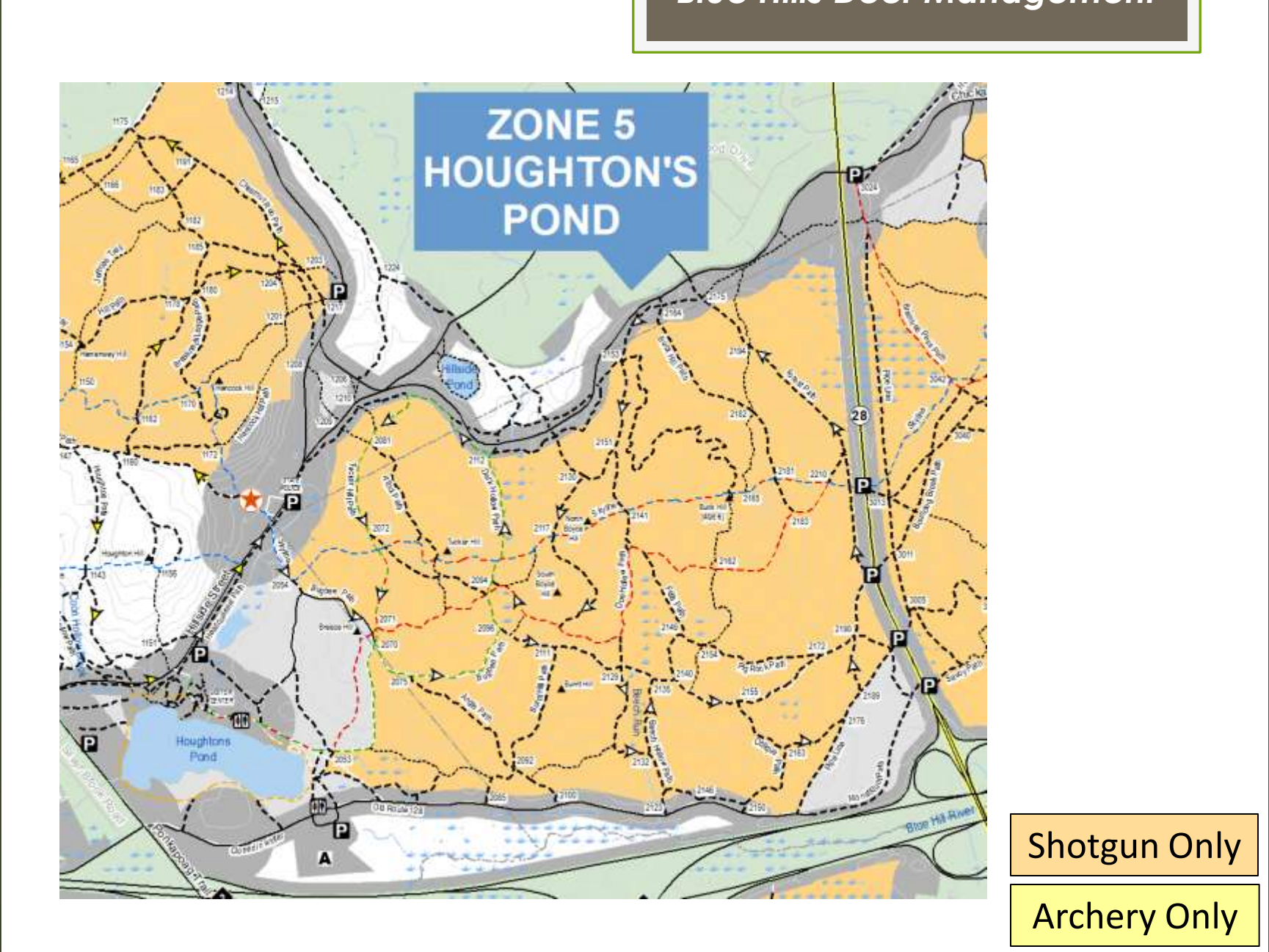


No Hunting

Shotgun Only

Archery Only

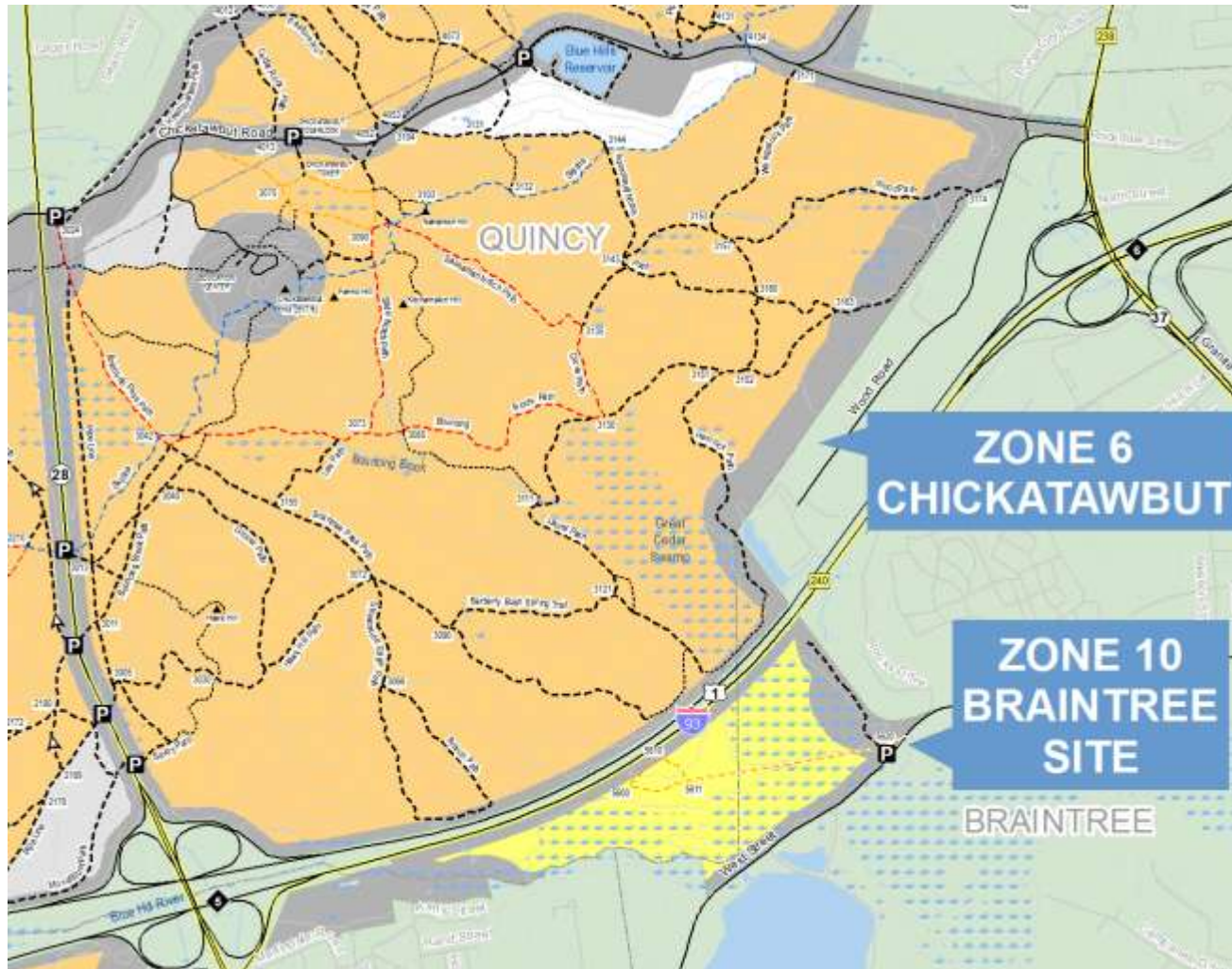
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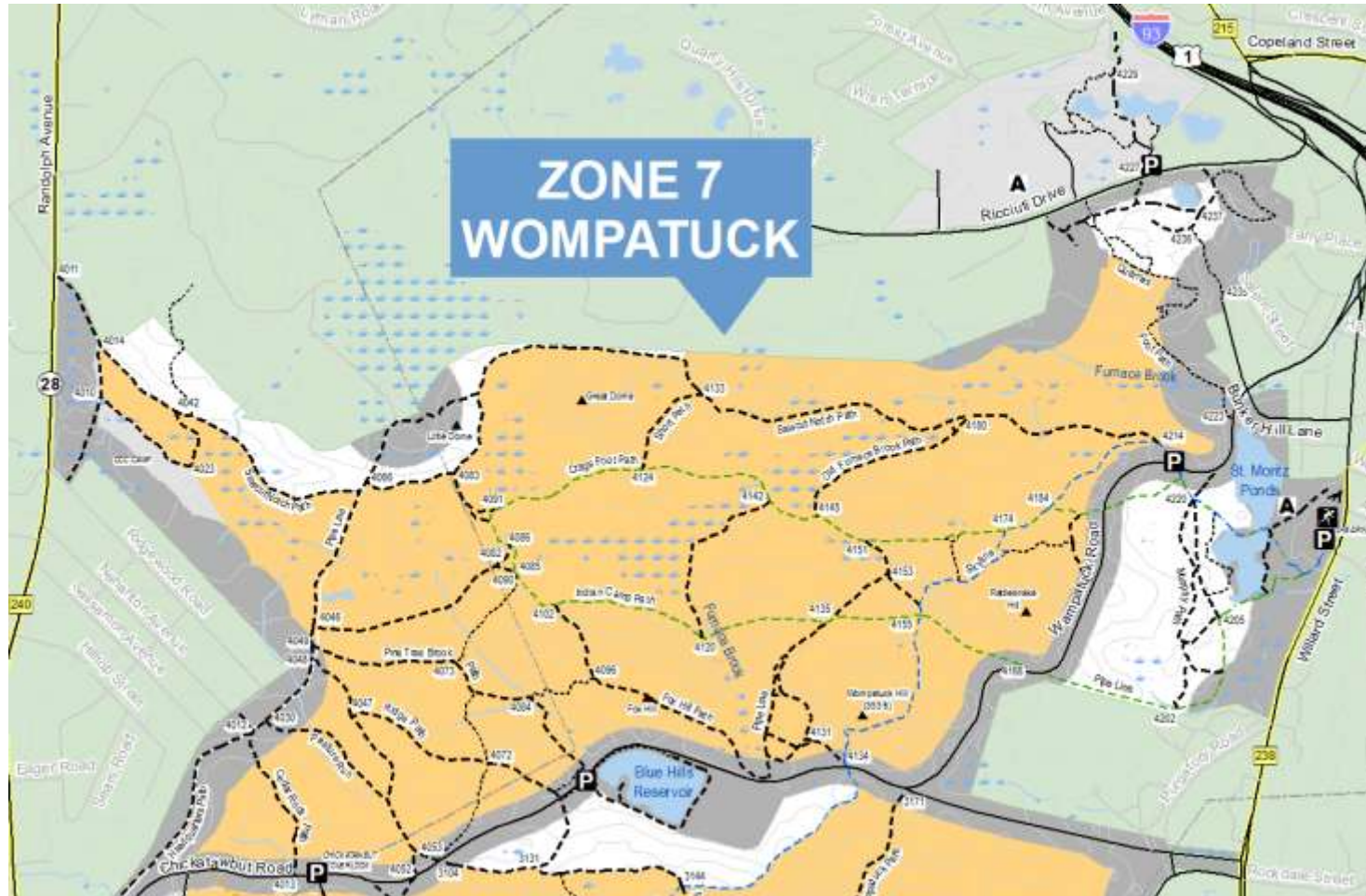
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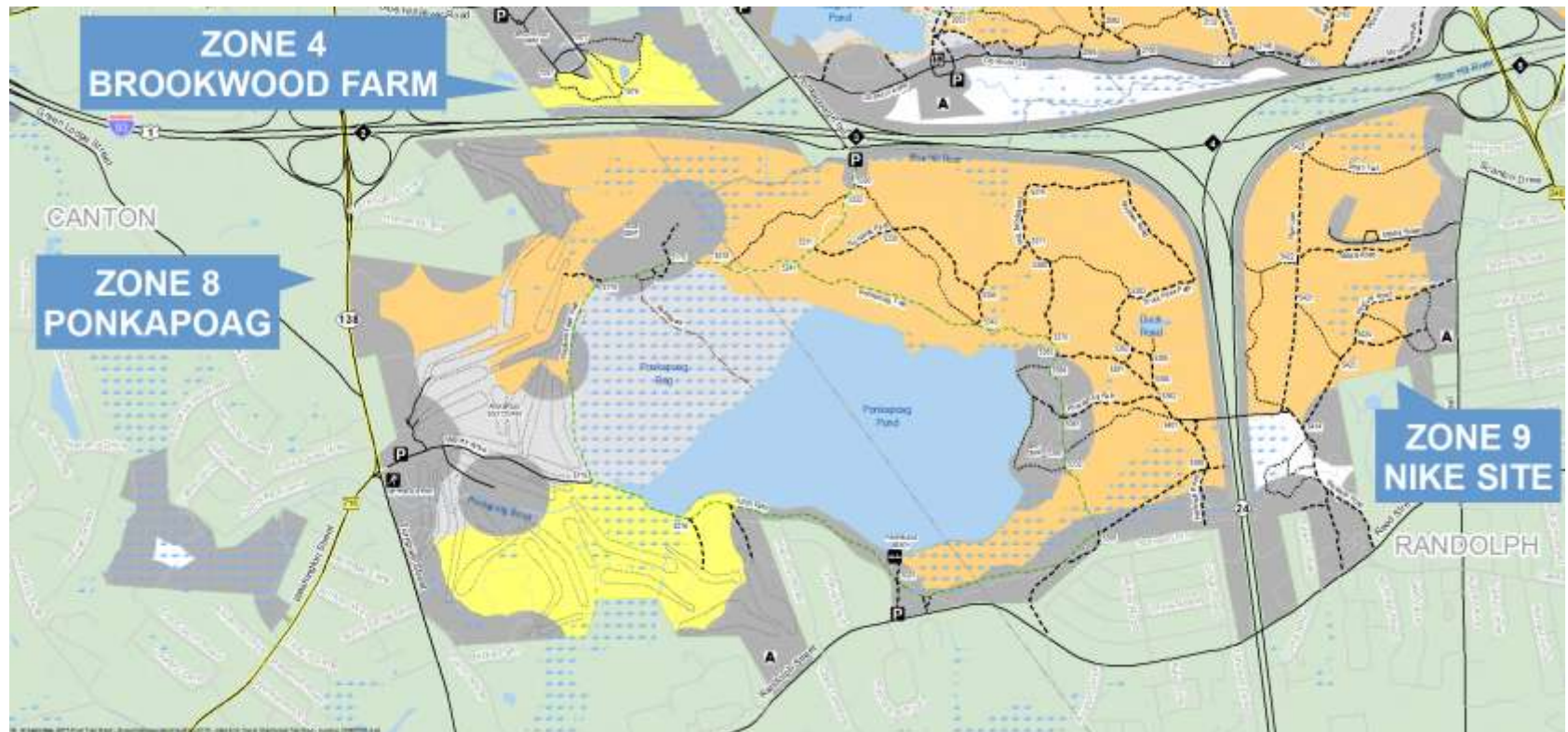
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Archery Only

Blue Hills Deer Management



Shotgun Only

Archery Only

Continued Unified Command Structure



In coordination with Local Law Enforcement Agencies

Recap of Tonight's Presentation

- Discussed the context and rationale for implementing a multi-year deer management program in the Blue Hills
- Reviewed vegetation monitoring and the impact of high deer density on the Reservation's vegetation
- Assessed operational aspects and outcomes of last year's successful first year of the controlled hunt
- Reviewed proposed modifications and enhancements to this year's planned controlled hunt

Next Steps

- 2nd public meeting on August 2nd at the Blue Hills Regional Technical School
- Written public comments on the draft 2016 plan accepted through August 5th
- Mid-August: issue a Final 2016 Blue Hills Deer Management Plan

Additional Information

For more information:

<http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/blue-hills-controlled-deer-hunt.html>

If you have comments:

Submit Online: <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/public-outreach/submit-public-comments/>

Write: Department of Conservation and Recreation
Office of Public Outreach
251 Causeway Street, Suite 600
Boston, MA 02114

Deadline: Friday, August 5, 2016

Note: Public comments submitted to DCR may be posted on the DCR website in their entirety.

If you have other questions or concerns, or wish to subscribe to a DCR general information or project-specific listserv: contact DCR's Office of Community Relations at 617-626-4973 or Mass.Parks@state.ma.us.



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Questions & Comments

Please tell us:

- Name
 - Town of Residence
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