

DCR-DWSP Deer Harvest Summary: 2024

The Department of Conservation, Division of Water Supply Protection (DWSP) manages 140,000-acres across the Quabbin, Ware River, Wachusett and Sudbury Watersheds. Forest health and tree regeneration are important land management goals for the Division because the forest acts as a biological filter for water quality. In response to high deer densities and deer impact on forest regeneration, DWSP opened watershed lands to deer hunting to restore and maintain balance in the forested ecosystem. These deer hunts are all regulated according to the Department of Fish and Game, Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's (MassWildlife) and DWSP's rules and regulations. Changes to the deer hunts may be applied annually based on an adaptive deer management approach. All 2024 hunts were the same as those implemented in 2023.

The following DWSP hunting zones were open in 2024:

- Quabbin Watershed:
 - Hardwick, New Salem, and Pelham Zones (two-week shotgun season deer hunts),
 - Prescott, Petersham and Quabbin Park Zones (two-day controlled deer hunts),
- Ware River watershed lands (all seasons)
- Wachusett Watershed lands (all seasons)
- Sudbury Watershed (all seasons)

View the [DWSP Hunting Map](#).

Harvest data were reviewed and analyzed from the MassWildlife harvest database (MassFishHunt). All hunters are legally required to submit their harvest information in-person at a certified check station or online to MassWildlife. DWSP biologists review the data and based on information available a list of confirmed and possible (unconfirmed) harvests on watershed lands is compiled. Due to the nature of the analyses performed, the 2024 DWSP harvest totals must be displayed as a range of deer harvested in each hunting zone (exception: Prescott, Petersham and Quabbin Park Zones where an in-person check station was present). The harvest analysis provided the following summary (confirmed # – total possible #) for 2024:

- Hardwick: 16-18 deer
- New Salem: 12-22 deer
- Pelham: 9-16 deer
- Petersham: 59 deer
- Prescott: 46 deer
- Quabbin Park: 37 deer
- Ware River: 3-65 deer
- Wachusett Watershed Lands, including Reservoir Zone (five-year permit): 6-114 deer
- Sudbury: 13-26 deer

In total, there were 201 confirmed harvests across all DWSP lands in 2024 – an increase from 2023, reflecting continued interest and success in managing deer populations on our watershed lands. **The 2024 results by DWSP hunting area are further broken down in the table on the next page.**

Topic	Hardwick (Quabbin)	New Salem (Quabbin)	Pelham (Quabbin)	Petersham (Quabbin)	Prescott (Quabbin)	Quabbin Park (Quabbin)	Ware River Watershed	Wachusett Watershed	Sudbury Watershed
Wildlife Management Zone	6	6	6	6	6	6	5, 8	5, 8, 9	9, 10
Deer season	Shotgun (Dec 2 - Dec 14)	Shotgun (Dec 2 - Dec 14)	Shotgun (Dec 2 - Dec 14)	Two Day (Dec 12 - 13)	Two Day (Dec 4 - 5)	Two Day (Dec 9 - 10)	All (Oct 7 - Dec 31)	All (Oct 7 - Dec 31)	All (Oct 7 - Dec 31)
DWSP permit type	1 year access	1 year access	1 year access	Two-day access	Two-day access	Two-day access	5-year access	5-year access	5-year access
Hunters applied (number)	627*	627*	627*	734*	734*	412	4,067 ^a	4,067 ^a	4,067 ^a
Hunters selected (number)	627	627	627	265	392	120	4,067 ^a	4,067 ^a	4,067 ^a
Eligible hunters (returning or attended orientation; percent of selected)	627/627 (100%)	627/627 (100%)	627/627 (100%)	247 (93.2%)	358 (91.3%)	116 (96.7%)	4,067 / 4,067 (100%) ^a	4,067 / 4,067 (100%) ^a	4,067 / 4,067 (100%) ^a
Hunter attendance (percent of eligible)	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	199 (80.6%)	298 (83.2%)	97 (83.6%)	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Total deer taken (confirmed number - total possible)	16-18 deer (10 F; 6-8 M)	12-22 deer (6 F; 6-16 M)	9-16 deer (3 F; 6-13 M)	59 deer (35 F; 24 M)	46 deer (29 F; 17 M)	37 deer (25 F; 12 M)	3-65 deer ^b	6-114 deer ^b	13-26 deer
Success rate (deer taken / number hunters)	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	29.6%	15.4%	38.1%	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Size of hunt area	5,781 acres (9.0 mi ²)	6,871 acres (10.7 mi ²)	9,028 acres (14.1 mi ²)	7,061 acres (11.0 mi ²)	12,182 acres (19.0 mi ²)	2,615 acres (4.1 mi ²)	22,791 acres (35.6 mi ²)	18,153 acres (28.4 mi ²)	1,874 acres (2.9 mi ²)
Deer taken / square mile	1.8 – 2.0 deer/ mi ²	1.1 – 2.1 deer/ mi ²	0.6 – 1.1 deer/ mi ²	5.4 deer/ mi ²	2.4 deer/ mi ²	9.0 deer/ mi ²	0.1 – 1.8 deer/ mi ²	0.2 – 4.0 deer/ mi ²	4.5 – 9.0 deer/ mi ²

Topic	Hardwick (Quabbin)	New Salem (Quabbin)	Pelham (Quabbin)	Petersham (Quabbin)	Prescott (Quabbin)	Quabbin Park (Quabbin)	Ware River Watershed	Wachusett Watershed	Sudbury Watershed
Pellet survey results (most recent year surveyed)	5.5 – 14.5 deer/ mi ² (2025)	7.9 – 20.8 deer/ mi ² (2025)	7.7 – 20.1 deer/ mi ² (2025)	7.0 – 18.4 deer/ mi ² (2021)	6.4 – 16.9 deer/ mi ² (2024)	19.9 – 52.5 deer/ mi ² (2025)	8.9 – 23.5 deer/ mi ² (2015)	11.5 – 45.1 deer/ mi ² (2024) ^c	8.7 – 23.0 deer/ mi ² (2025)
Notes	*number of applicants for all Quabbin shotgun zones.	* number of applicants for all Quabbin shotgun zones.	* number of applicants for all Quabbin shotgun zones.	*Hunters applied for Pet/Pre hunt on same application and selected preference. Hunters who did not get into their first choice were put in their second	*Hunters applied for Pet/Pre hunt on same application and selected preference. Hunters who did not get into their first choice were put in their second		^a Ware River, Wachusett and Sudbury hunters use the 5-year access permit. Number of hunters may include a few repeat applicants or permits that expired during deer season. ^b Difficult to estimate deer harvest. Includes former Res Zone and remaining Wach watershed areas.	^a Ware River, Wachusett and Sudbury hunters use the 5-year access permit. Number of hunters may include a few repeat applicants or permits that expired during deer season. ^b Difficult to estimate deer harvest. Includes former Res Zone and remaining Wach watershed areas. ^c Estimate includes historically hunted areas and Res Zone (2024)	^a Ware River, Wachusett and Sudbury hunters use the 5-year access permit. Number of hunters may include a few repeat applicants or permits that expired during deer season.