

If Landowners Cooperate, Hunters Could Have Good Deer Season in 2006

White-tailed deer numbers across the state of Michigan are very similar to a year ago, so Department of Natural Resources (DNR) wildlife biologists believe this year's combined archery and firearm deer harvest will be similar to last year's total, about 415,000 animals, with an estimated 60 percent of those deer taken in southern Michigan.

About 725,000 individuals are expected to go deer hunting this year. These hunters will spend more than 10 million days enjoying deer hunting recreation during the archery, firearm, and muzzleloading seasons combined. This is more days spent deer hunting than in any other state or Canadian province. As a result, deer hunters will contribute more than \$500 million to Michigan's economy through the purchase of food, lodging, transportation, and equipment.

Although bowhunters are expected to take about the same number of deer as last year, the firearm and muzzleloading harvest should increase if hunters and landowners take advantage of the hunting opportunities provided.

"Our goal has been to reduce the size of the herd in southern Michigan, but that's only realistic if hunters cooperate and if landowners allow hunters on their land," said DNR Big-Game Specialist Rodney Clute.

According to the DNR's annual statewide deer hunting forecast, the deer herd is dynamic and not evenly distributed across the state. The whitetails' reproductive capability



Although many deer hunters bypass younger bucks so these deer can grow older and larger, yearling males generally represent the majority of the buck harvest. The largest bucks (heaviest and best antlers) typically come from agricultural areas, but some nice bucks also are taken from forested country where hunter access is limited. (DNR photographs by David Kenyon)

and their ability to adapt to the variety of habitats across the state have resulted in a Michigan deer herd estimated to be more than 1.6 million animals. This is exciting to citizens who enjoy hunting or observing deer, but is problematic to the habitat and the overall ecosystem.

Deer-vehicle accidents are still high in many areas, damage from deer to agricultural crops remains high, and both growth and vegetative composition in some forest areas has been disrupted by deer.

This is especially true in the southern half of the Lower Peninsula, where in the last decade this region has contained an increasing proportion of the statewide deer population.

That is significant considering there were only about 15,000 deer in southern Michigan when this zone was completely reopened to deer hunting in 1948. By the mid-1970s, the deer population in this region was still less than 100,000 and accounted for less than one-quarter of the harvest.

But for the last four years, the estimated southern Michigan deer harvest has exceeded 50 percent of the statewide total and DNR biologists expect this trend to continue in 2006.

"Early indications are that deer in southern Michigan are in excellent health," Mr. Clute said. "Hunters should be able to find large-bodied deer with good-sized



antlers."

Deer are prolific breeders with few natural predators other than hunters, so in most parts of Michigan, deer have a higher birth rate than death rate each year. The number of deer in an area impacts the quality and quantity of habitat, deer productivity, and deer/human conflicts. In southern Michigan, deer enjoy ample food and cover. Over time, they have become more tolerant of humans and now inhabit much of suburbia, as well as the transition zones between rural and urban.

Deer distribution also varies within every deer management unit (DMU). Most deer are found on private land. Harvesting deer through hunting helps keep the deer herd in balance with the habitat. The DNR is committed to managing white-tailed deer in a sustainable manner to yield healthy fawns, does, and bucks, without negatively impacting habitat, other wildlife species, or creating undue hardship to private interests.

A regulated hunter-harvest of both sexes is necessary to maintain a healthy and thriving deer population. Antlerless deer license quotas are established for each DMU to achieve a desired harvest of antlerless deer for that unit. Where an increased deer population is

desired, no antlerless deer licenses are offered.

"Overall, we are expecting this year's harvest to be approximately an equal number of antlered and antlerless deer," Mr. Clute said. "But in southern Michigan, we would like to see the antlerless harvest exceed the antlered harvest."

Following is a brief summary, region by region. For the more detailed forecast, visit the DNR Web site at www.michigan.gov/dnr.

Southern Michigan

The southern Michigan deer herd appears to be stabilizing in some areas, and 2006 deer hunters should see deer numbers and deer harvest similar to 2005. However, the 2006 herd remains above the desired levels in most areas, and the number of deer in much of southern Michigan is exceeding public tolerance for damage. The DNR is responding to concerns of too many deer in this part of the state with significant numbers of antlerless deer licenses for hunting on private lands. The southern

Lower Peninsula should produce some of the best white-tailed deer hunting in the nation for both antlered and antlerless deer. With landowner permission, hunting in or near standing corn can be productive. Sixteen counties in this region are open to the late antlerless only firearm season this year. Check the 2006 Michigan Hunting and Trapping Guide for the open counties.

Northern Lower Peninsula

Deer hunting in the northern Lower Peninsula will be about the same as a year ago. The buck harvest is expected to be similar to last year and the antlerless deer harvest is expected to be down. The deer herd remains over goal in the DMUs bordering southern Michigan, but is at or below goal in the remaining DMUs. There are fewer DMUs open to the harvest of antlerless deer on public land than in 2005. Antlerless licenses are not available for Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Lake, or Wexford counties. To help eradicate bovine tuberculosis in deer, antlerless deer licenses in the bovine-TB-positive counties will be available. Leftover public land antlerless licenses in these seven-county special regulations units

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Shooting Tragedies Signal A Demand for Gun Control

To the Editor:

After watching the news over the last few days, I have to speak out. What is happening to our country? Ten innocent children shot execution-style in Pennsylvania while they were in school, a young girl in Colorado shot and molested by a sick man, a young principal shot in Wisconsin by an angry student.

The National Rifle Association preaches that we have to have guns in order to protect ourselves. What would they have us do, have our children carry guns to school every day so that they can be safe? When are we going to wake up and start demanding some form of gun control? How many innocent children will have to be killed or injured before we take a stand against the National Rifle Association, and demand that our representatives start protecting our children and quit bowing down to the mighty dollar.

Stand up, Americans, demand some kind of gun control.

Beverly Schmidt
St. Ignace

Michigan Politics

By George Weeks



Election and Poll Standings Getting Closer

Leads that Governor Jennifer Granholm and Senator Debbie Stabenow had in September over their GOP challengers narrowed slightly in polling released at start of the final month of campaigning that will include debates and an even heavier dose of TV ads.

Both incumbents were under 50 percent, with 12 percent of likely voters undecided in the race between Granholm and businessman Dick DeVos, and 15 percent undecided on Oakland County Sheriff Mike Bouchard's challenge of Stabenow.

In last week's EPIC-MRA survey of 600 voters for *The Detroit News* and four TV stations, Granholm had a 46-40 lead, down from 50-42 September 15. It was 48-35 for Stabenow, down from 53-34.

In the combined sampling of the Upper Peninsula and the northern lower, Granholm led 44-40; Stabenow 60-35. In the Traverse City media market, which includes much of the northern lower and the eastern U.P., DeVos led, 56-28; Bouchard, 54-38.

The 600-sample had an error margin of plus or minus 4 percentage points. The error margin is greater for smaller regional sub samples.

However sliced geographically, Bouchard's task is far bigger than that of DeVos, in large part because Bouchard's war chest is much smaller and there's much less voter and media interest in the almost-stealth Senate race.

Historically on debates, incumbents with leads in the polls say the fewer the better. They figure why give more public exposure to a relatively unknown challenger — especially if there is a lack of a media drumbeat for debates?

DeVos, after the heaviest TV ad campaign ever in Michigan, is hardly unknown. Granholm, who was trained as an actress before becoming a lawyer, agreed to three televised debates (if DeVos doesn't improve in the last two, she made a wise decision).

But Stabenow as of this writing had agreed to only one televised debate, a morning October 15 taping on WGUV in Grand Rapids for showing on public stations at 8

p.m. that Sunday. On Saturday, Bouchard asked WGUV to have a live debate and make it available to commercial stations.

Pollster Steve Mitchell told the *Detroit Free Press*, "It's the worst possible time to have a debate. ... a joke on Michigan voters." A Bouchard aide told the *Free Press*: "It's obvious she doesn't want anyone to see her debate."

Actually, Stabenow proved to be a good debater in her unsuccessful bid for the 1994 Democratic gubernatorial nomination, and in her 2000 victory over Senator Spencer Abraham.

Stabenow and Granholm, as have incumbents for decades before them, agreed to luncheon joint appearances with their opponents at the Detroit Economic Club. These stilted affairs lack live TV and direct exchange between candidates.

Meanwhile, uphill battler Bouchard is tapping star power for campaign glitter. Last week it was former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, a possible presidential contender. In Bloomfield Hills, Giuliani touted Bouchard's law enforcement background as important to current homeland security issues.

This week's schedule includes

a Bouchard boost in Grand Rapids from Arizona Senator John McCain, another presidential prospect. Seven other Republican U.S. senators also were to campaign for Bouchard.

Senator Elizabeth Dole of North Carolina, the chair of the National Republican Senatorial Campaign who was instrumental in getting Bouchard to challenge Stabenow, recently campaigned in Traverse City and elsewhere for Bouchard.

Five female Democratic senators came to Michigan earlier for Stabenow.

Airlifting of prominent Democrats or Republicans to Michigan might help raise money or get a candidate a story or even a picture or video clip in places they land. But such events don't much advance the needle of voter support.

In this last month, what will count most are TV spots, maybe debates, and — most certainly — what the parties do to spur voter turnout.

George Weeks retired this year after 22 years as political columnist for The Detroit News. His weekly Michigan Politics column is syndicated by Superior Features.

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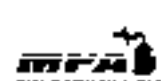
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The quotation under the flag of *The St. Ignace News* on Page 1 is from the 10 triads written by Dr. Fred Newton Scott, creator and teacher of the first continuous course in journalism in the United States at the University of Michigan in 1890. The 10 triads are chiseled on the parapet of the Detroit News Building at 615 Lafayette Boulevard, Detroit. They were headed "Ideals of the Press" or "The Newspaper in a Free Society," and serve as a reminder of what a free press means to us.