

# VERMONT

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*Agency Of Natural Resources*

March 17, 2011

Dear Members of the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board,

I hope and anticipate you'll be attending one of the upcoming public deer meetings being held at the end of the month. As we know from recent hearings on a proposed October muzzleloader season, Vermont deer hunters remain passionate about deer, and these meetings are an excellent opportunity to learn about the status of Vermont's deer herd and the public's opinions on deer management issues.

These meetings are instrumental in engaging our constituents, allowing us the opportunity to review the 2010 hunting seasons, discuss the effects of winter on the deer herd, and outline the prospects of the 2011 season. In advance of the meetings, I want to share several key points the Department will be reinforcing:

### **The Success of 2010**

- Combining archery, youth, rifle, and muzzleloader seasons, Vermonters harvested 15,523 deer in 2010. That number aligns well with the Department's 2010-20 Big Game Management Plan that set the annual harvest objective between 14,000-18,000.
- Vermont's deer kill was up about two percent from 2009. The rifle season harvest was up 11 percent. This is phenomenal, especially compared to neighboring New Hampshire who saw precipitous declines in its 2010 deer kills.
- Biological information taken from deer brought into reporting stations during youth weekend show an increase in the body weight of our yearling bucks. This points out that, in general, we have a very healthy deer herd.
- In the four seasons combined, Vermont hunters took 8,430 antlered bucks. That number is above the total buck kill we had for a number of select years before antler restrictions began in 2005.

### **A Wild Winter**

- There is no question, it looks like we are experiencing a severe winter, and winter weather, in combination with hunter success rates, is a critical variable in the Vermont deer management equation. We do expect to see a reduction in the state's deer herd.
- The good news is this: Heading into the winter of 2010-11, Vermont's deer herd was in excellent health. Having a vibrant, healthy herd will help mitigate the effects of harsh winter weather.
- And more good news: The Department has been diligent in conserving and protecting important deer wintering areas. Many of our identified wintering areas are in excellent shape, which should also help mitigate the effects of harsh winter weather.

### **Coming This Fall**

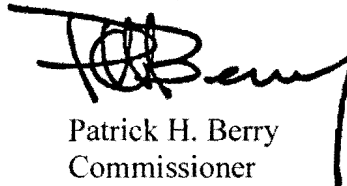
- Due in large part to winter severity, and recent higher antlerless permit numbers designed to achieve regional deer population objectives, we fully expect a reduction in the number of antlerless permits we issue for the muzzleloader season. Based on comments at previous hearings, we expect many hunters will support this reduction.
- On the heels of severe winter weather and with a reduction in antlerless permits, we can reasonably expect that total deer harvest numbers will be below the 2010 totals.
- Archers will have the option of taking three deer during bow seasons this year, only one of which can be a buck. All other deer hunting regulations remain the same.
- We will be holding biological check stations during youth season.
- We are in the process of identifying candidates for a deer biologist and expect to be making a determination on a deer team project leader sometime in the spring.

### **Forthcoming Initiatives**

Vermont's landscape has changed dramatically over the last 40 or 50 years. Regenerating farms, active woodlots, and undeveloped expanses of land no longer define Vermont's rural character. These changes have been a driving force in managing populations of various game species, especially with regard to our beloved white-tailed deer. In addition, access to land for hunting continues to become more limited, constricting more hunters onto fewer acres. I look forward to discussing strategies with my staff to reverse this trend.

I look forward to seeing you at the upcoming meetings and working with you on these and other issues in the coming months. Please feel free to drop me a line or give me a call if you have questions, concerns or feedback.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Berry". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "P" and a long, thin vertical stroke extending downwards from the end of the name.

Patrick H. Berry  
Commissioner