

**2023-2024 Harvest Recommendation**  
Simms Creek Wildlife Management Association  
Lampasas and Mills Counties

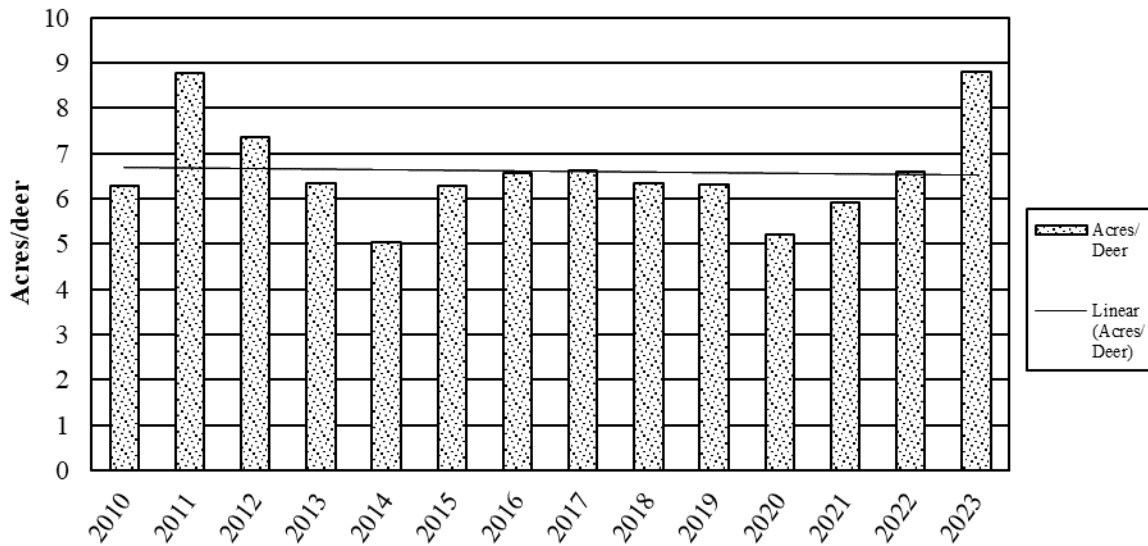
Simms Creek WMA strives to manage the deer herd to maintain numbers below the carrying capacity of the habitat and provide ample mature buck harvest opportunities for its members. This report provides the supporting information used to formulate the 2023-2024 deer harvest recommendations.

**Deer Population Estimate**

Population estimates are based on survey data, both incidental and spotlight data, collected by Simms Creek WMA members. Data collected from six spotlight routes were used to estimate deer density and herd composition. Incidental data were collected to strengthen herd composition estimates and were collected on 9 member properties with a total sample of 1,062 identified deer.

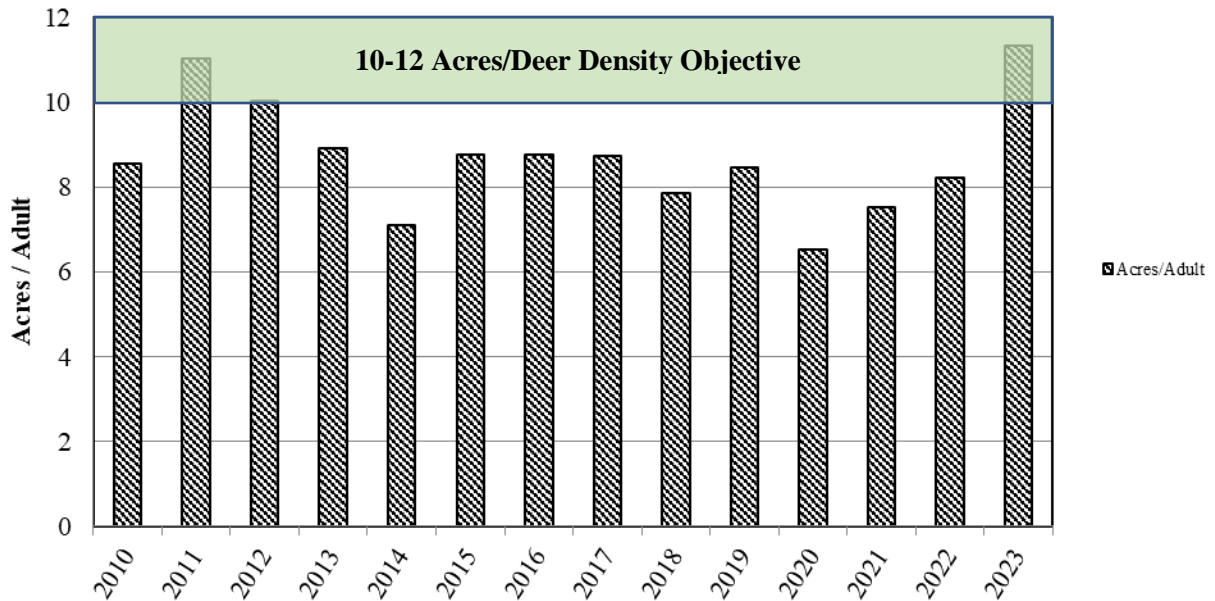
Population density – The current estimated deer density is 8.79 acres per deer (Figure 1). The estimated adult deer density (11.33 acres/adult) falls within the 10-12 acres/deer density objective (Figure 2). The annual harvest recommendation strives to accomplish the post-harvest deer density objective. Survey data indicates a decrease in deer density. The harvest recommendation proportionately reflects this decrease in deer density.

**Figure 1. Acres/deer trend.**



**Figure 1: Deer density objective is 10-12 acres per deer. Density has increased over the last 13 years with no significant progress toward meeting the density objective listed in the management plan for the WMA. Average density for the last 13 years is around 6.60 acres per deer, including fawns.**

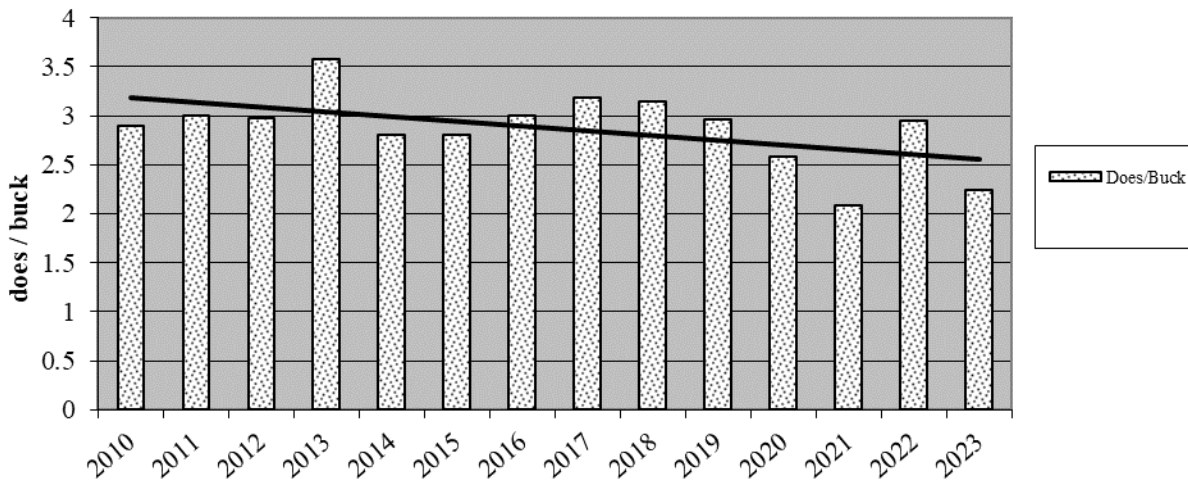
**Figure 2. Acres/Adult trend as compared to deer density objective.**



**Figure 2: The WMAs density objective is to remain below carrying capacity, between 10-12 acres per deer. Adult deer density has decreased within the WMA with an average of 8.70 acres per adult deer over the last 13 years.**

Sex ratio - The management objective for a free-ranging (low-fenced) deer population typically is to maintain the adult sex ratio at 2 does per 1 buck. The current sex ratio estimate (2.23 does per buck) has a slight increase from last year’s 2.94 does/buck (Table 2). This year I recommend harvesting at least 2-3 does per 1 buck.

**Figure 3. Sex ratio trend, Simms Creek WMA, 2010-2023.**



**Figure 3: WMA management objective is 2 does per 1 buck. The Simms Creek population has consistently favored does for the past 13 years. This year is close to the desired 2 does per 1 buck objective.**

Recruitment - The current estimated fawn production of **0.42 fawns per doe** and is consistent with the WMA average of 0.43 fawns per doe. Making for these newcomers in the population while also making up for low harvest last year.

Buck antler quality – 214 bucks observed during the daylight observation surveys were classified by number of antler points to provide the following summary: 11.80% are spikes, 24.30% have 3-5 points, 20.60% have 6-7 points, and 43.40% have 8+ points. Thorough reporting by WMA members lends confidence in this antler summary.

### **Deer Harvest Recommendations**

Simms Creek WMA strives to achieve a post-harvest deer density objective of 10-12 acres per deer, which is thought to be below the carrying capacity of “typical” Central Texas deer habitat. Additionally, the WMA strives to maintain a sex ratio of 2 or fewer does per buck. A quality management philosophy has been adhered to by limiting buck harvest to  $\leq 33\%$  of the estimated number of bucks and avoiding the harvest of young bucks with good antler characteristics. TPWD provides annual deer harvest recommendations to assist the WMA with meeting these population management objectives.

Population estimates provided from deer spotlight/incidental data and deer population projection data were used to develop an “average” deer harvest recommendation.

#### Bucks

The recommended buck harvest rate (33%) results in a maximum recommended harvest of **9 total antlered bucks per 1,000 acres (1 buck per 111 acres)**. It is important to be judicious and discerning with harvest to ensure that we are still meeting the buck harvest recommendations listed below.

The buck harvest recommendation includes all bucks, including trophies or management bucks. Regardless of the buck harvest rate, the emphasis of the buck harvest should be on:

- 4.5 + year-old bucks – Peak antler development is ~ 6.5 so I would suggest the bucks with the best antler traits be allowed to reach full potential in the 5.5+ age class.
- 3.5 year-old bucks with less than 8 antler points – Be certain not to harvest bucks that could be younger than 3.5. A lot of bucks are taken as management in this class that are actually top end 1.5 or 2.5 year-olds.
- Bucks with at least one unbranched antler – Focus on true spikes and take the smallest first (i.e. Harvest a 3” spike over a 10” tall 3 point).

The actual number of bucks harvested will be limited by the numbers of bucks that meet the harvest criteria above. In other words, **the actual buck harvest rate should be less than recommended** if/when individual properties observe fewer deer bucks that meet these criteria.

### Does

The recommended doe harvest is **1 doe per 40 acres** throughout the area, which is approximately 41% of the number of does estimated to be in the population. The harvest rate strives to continue lowering the sex ratio, make room for an incoming fawn crop and lowers the post-harvest deer density. As a general rule-of-thumb, the data indicate that approximately **2-3 does should be harvested for every antlered buck harvested.**

### **Harvest Data**

Please find the attached new deer harvest log for use this deer season. Please use this form and discard any previous harvest log versions that you may have on file. The new log was created for the WMA to satisfy the requirements for MLDP harvest log, cold storage record book and/or breeder deer release site sample log. **In order to standardize data collection, I'm asking all association members to use this form for recording deer harvest data.**

Please record the following information for each harvested animal:

- Date of kill
- Species
- Sex
- Age (Refer to aging material attached – do your best and try to learn jawbone aging and we will re-visit this and I can provide more guidance/ training at the spring meeting).
- Weight (Please don't guess! If an accurate weight cannot be recorded just leave blank)
- Number of points R/L

If you are using this form to meet the harvest data requirements of MLDP, cold storage log or breeder deer release, please be aware that there are additional data/information requirements. You can find these listed in the note at the bottom of the form.

The collection of jawbones and the recording of weight and antler data are currently required of landowners who are the recipients of Managed Lands Deer Permits and/or those receiving the reduced cost WMA Hunting Lease License. Data collection is voluntary, but highly encouraged, for landowners who do not receive a lease license or permits.

### **Harvest reporting**

Please find the attached harvest summary form to be completed and brought to the spring meeting along with your completed harvest data sheet. MLDP properties will need to do an additional step in reporting harvest and management practices in the LMA system before April 1, 2024.

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