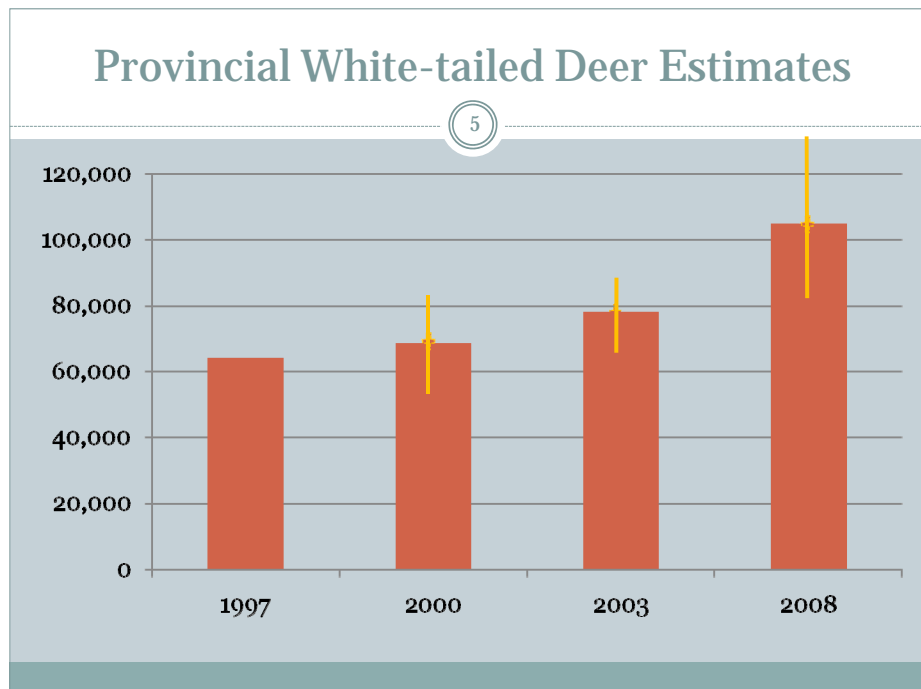


## White-tailed Deer: Provincially Coordinated Hunting Regulations

A number of questions and concerns have been expressed from resident hunters about the provincial changes in the White-tailed Deer hunting regulations in the 2010-11 and 2011-12 Hunting and Trapping Regulations Synopsis. We've compiled answers to the most frequently asked questions, which you'll find below.

1. How many White-tailed Deer are there in the province, and are they increasing, stable or declining?

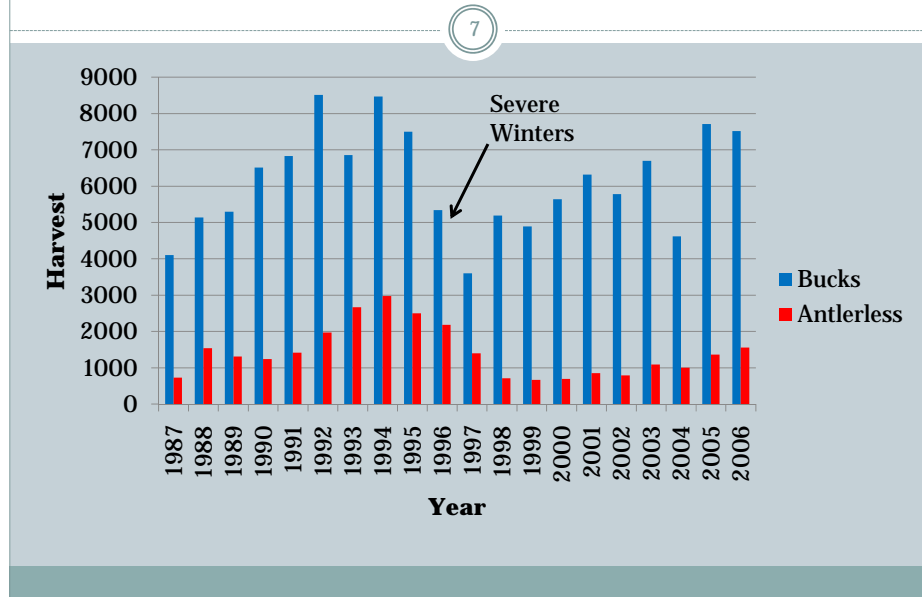
The current provincial estimate for White-tailed Deer is between 81,000 and 130,000, with a best estimate exceeding 100,000. As shown in the graph below, White-tailed Deer numbers have increased since 1997. Although the provincial population estimates are not precise (minimum and maximum estimates are shown with error bars for 2000, 2004 and 2008), the increase in numbers since 1997 is supported by the increased distribution; favourable harvest trends; and observations by wildlife staff, hunters, and the agricultural community.



2. What are the trends in the provincial harvest of white-tailed deer bucks and does over the last 10 years?

White-tailed Deer harvest trends have been increasing over the last 10 years (see graph below). This is believed to be due to increasing abundance and distribution of White-tailed Deer, as well as progressively more liberal hunting regulations. Severe winters in 1995-96 and 1996-97 resulted in declines in deer numbers and harvest, but since 1997, populations and harvests have increased.

## Provincial Resident White-tailed Deer Harvest



3. Why has the Fish and Wildlife Branch initiated a standardized White-tailed Deer season throughout the province?

The provincially coordinated White-tailed Deer regulation framework was initiated in response to requests from the BCWF for increased hunting opportunity and in support of key Ministry drivers or "tests" for regulatory change including: (1) hunting regulation simplification; (2) harmonization of hunting regulations within and between regions; (3) increased hunting opportunity and (4) program delivery within existing resources. The regulation framework meets these tests, while ensuring that our primary goal of conservation is maintained.

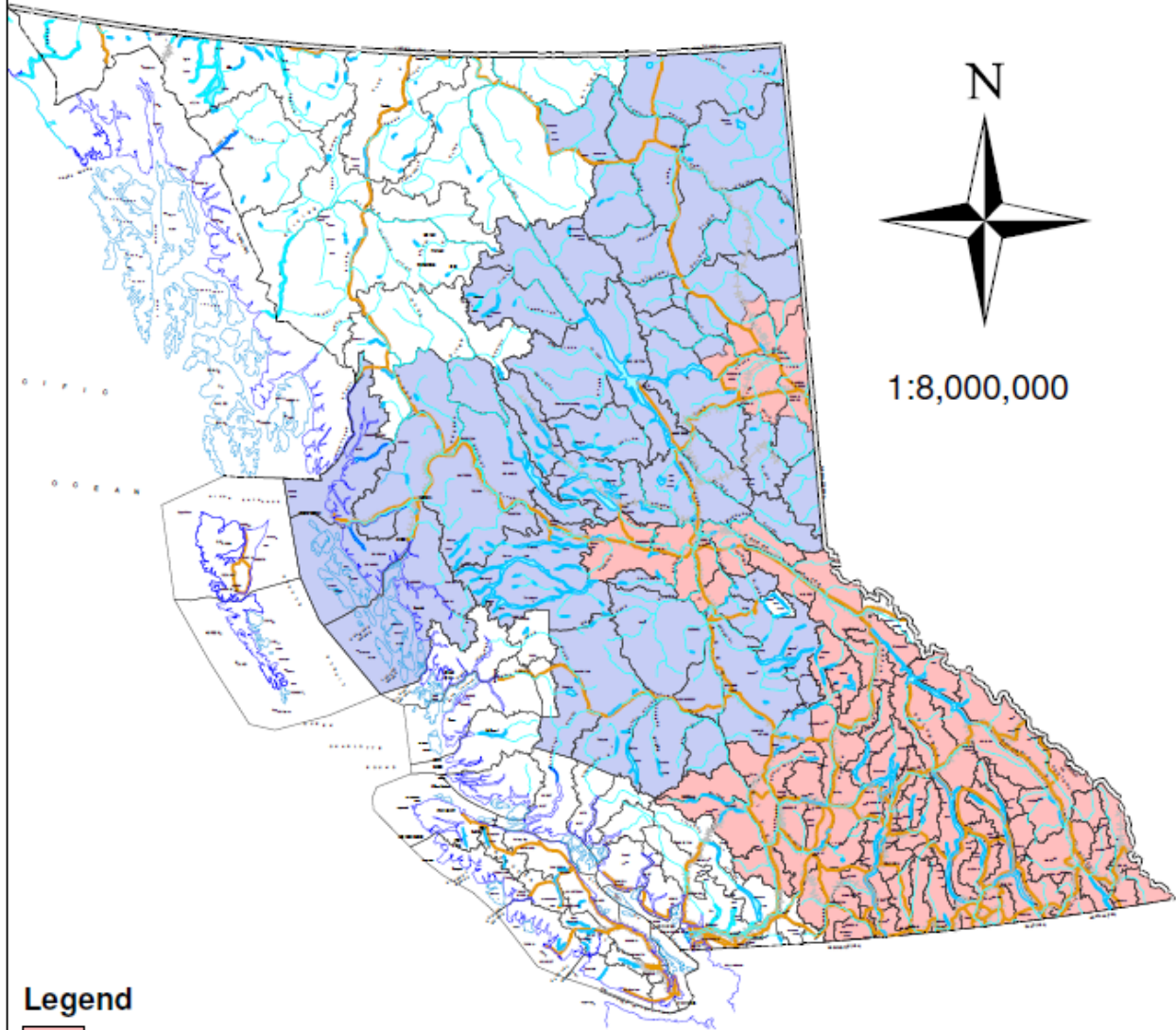
4. What are the new provincial hunting regulations for White-tailed Deer?

The provincial White-tailed Deer regulation framework consists of the following GOS (General Open Season) regulations:

- GOS any buck youth and archery: Sep 1 to 9
- GOS any buck: Sep 10 to Nov 30
- GOS antlerless: Oct 10 - Oct 31 (within contiguous White-tailed Deer range)
- GOS youth either-sex: Nov 1 - 30 (within contiguous White-tailed Deer range)
- GOS archery either-sex (optional): Dec 1 to 20.
- GOS any buck (optional): Dec 1 to 10.

The following map identifies the location of contiguous White-tailed Deer range (includes antlerless hunting opportunities) and non-contiguous range (buck only hunting opportunities, where existing seasons are in effect).

# Provincially Coordinated White-tailed Deer Seasons



1:8,000,000

## Legend

### Contiguous White-tailed Deer Population Seasons

- GOS any buck youth and archery: Sept 1 to Sept 9
- GOS any buck: Sept 10 to Nov 30
- GOS antlerless: Oct 10 to Oct 31
- GOS youth either-sex: Nov 1 to Nov 30
- GOS archery either sex (optional): Dec 1 to Dec 20
- GOS any buck (optional): Dec 1 to Dec 10

### Non-Contiguous White-tailed Deer Population Seasons

- GOS any buck youth and archery: Sept 1 to Sept 9
- GOS any buck: Sept 10 to Nov 30
- GOS archery either sex (optional): Dec 1 to Dec 20
- GOS any buck (optional): Dec 1 to Dec 10

5. What consultation process was used to inform hunters about the new regulations?

Ministry staff from each region consulted on the provincial regulation proposal through their regional hunting regulations review process. The regulation proposal was also posted on the Ministry of Environment, Fish and Wildlife Branch website (<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/fw/wildlife/managment-issues/>) on Nov. 15, 2009. Comments on the proposal were received through the website, and a modified proposal that responded to the comments was posted on Feb. 18, 2010. The Provincial Hunting Regulations Allocation and Advisory Committee (PHRAAC) was also consulted on the regulation. Based on the comments received, the proposed antlerless rifle season was shortened and moved from Nov. 1-30 to Oct. 10-31.

6. Why were antlerless White-tailed Deer removed from Limited Entry Hunting and replaced with a General Open Season?

A current Ministry directive is to reduce the number of LEH (Limited Entry Hunting) seasons, where possible and without compromising conservation, and replace with GOS (General Open Seasons). The antlerless GOS season in October is considered to be sustainable, increases hunting opportunity, and will not compromise conservation objectives.

7. Why was the "4 point buck" season in the Peace replaced with an "any buck" season?

The "4 point buck" season was considered to be unnecessarily restrictive on hunting opportunity. Experience elsewhere in BC and North America have shown that even heavily hunted White-tailed Deer populations can sustain an "any buck" season, without compromising buck:doe ratios.

8. How confident is the Fish and Wildlife Branch that the harvest of White-tailed Deer under the new regulations will be sustainable?

The new regulations were discussed in detail among Ministry biologists through a series of meetings. While there were some concerns, an agreement was reached among the biologists that the increased harvest resulting from the regulations would be sustainable. This understanding is largely supported by published scientific studies that indicate the antlerless component of White-tailed Deer populations are often under-utilized; and that many jurisdictions, particularly those in Eastern North America, are no longer able to control White-tailed Deer numbers through liberal hunting seasons. However, if conservation concerns are identified, the Ministry will revise the regulations to ensure that the hunt remains sustainable.

9. How do you intend to monitor the impact of the new regulations on White-tailed Deer populations?

The provincially coordinated white-tailed deer season was implemented based on sound wildlife management principles and experiences throughout North America. White-tailed deer populations have been growing and their ranges have been expanding across North America in

recent decades. As it is generally accepted in the scientific literature that hunting is not effective in controlling white-tailed deer numbers, white-tailed deer will not be closely monitored through population surveys. Rather, monitoring will focus on the hunter harvest and will include measures such as: (1) harvest numbers and trends; (2) harvest composition (i.e. the proportion of bucks and antlerless deer in the harvest); (3) hunter success (i.e. the proportion of hunters who harvested a deer); and (4) hunter effort (i.e. number of days required to harvest a deer). Some regions will also continue to assess population trends by ground-based surveys in specific areas. As winter severity is considered to be the primary factor controlling the abundance and distribution of white-tailed deer, biologists will also monitor weather information in order to determine if any regulation changes are required.

10. How long will the new white-tailed regulations continue, and when will they be reviewed?

The regulations will continue until the end of the 2011-12 hunting season and will be reviewed at that time. While the Ministry has adopted a multi-year regulation cycle, the White-tailed Deer regulations will be reviewed by Ministry staff and adjusted for 2011-12 if there is evidence of a conservation concern following the 2010-11 season. Unusual events, such as a periodic severe winter which reduce White-tailed Deer numbers, will be considered when making regulation changes.