

**GAME SPECIES STATUS  
AND KEY STATEWIDE  
ISSUES FOR 2006-08**

Fish and Wildlife Commission Meeting  
November 18, 2005

# ISSUES AND STATUS

- Overview
- Migratory Birds
- Upland Game
- Big Game – Cougar, Bear, Mountain Goat, Bighorn Sheep, & Moose
- Deer and Elk
- General Issues

# Overview

- Second Three Year Package of the 2003-09 Game Management Plan
- Initiated Public Process for 2006-08 Seasons
- Completed Scoping in October
- Developed Statewide Options for Current Public Review

# 2006-08 Timeline

- Major Public Meeting/Comment Process in January
- Recommendations developed in February
- Public comment process leading to April Commission Meeting

# Options

- Next the Game Division Staff will review the major issues and options identified to date
- Our overview will include:
  - ◆ Current game species population issues
  - ◆ Significant results of changes made during the 2003-05 seasons
  - ◆ Major issues identified by the public and statewide regulation options

# Migratory Game Birds

Don Kraege, Waterfowl Section Manager



# Waterfowl Section Species

- Ducks
- Geese
- Swans
- Mourning doves
- Band-tailed pigeons
- Managed in cooperation with:
  - ◆ USFWS
  - ◆ Pacific Flyway Council



# Federal and State Migratory Bird Regulations

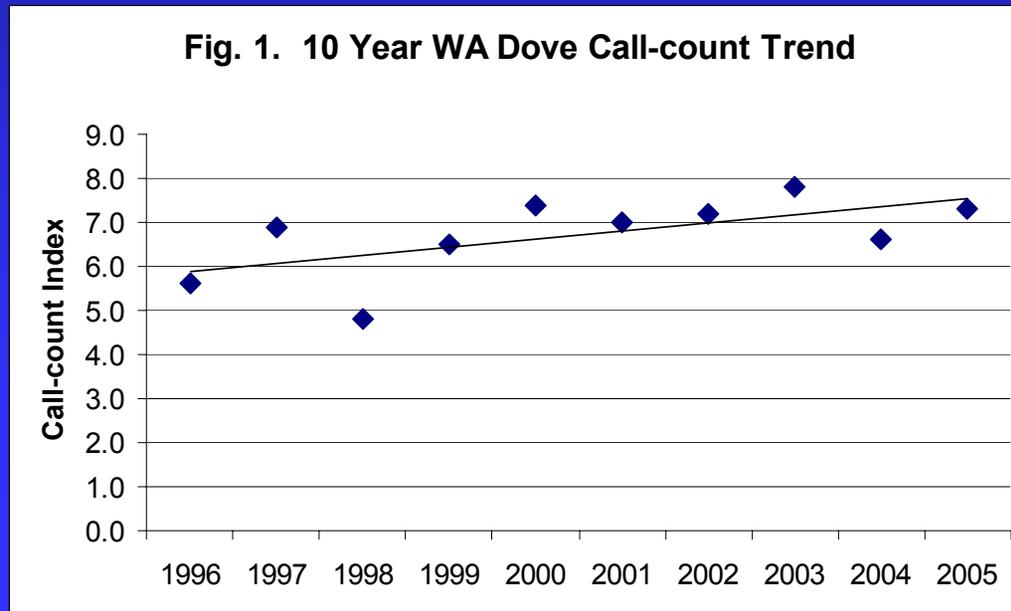
- Annual Federal process
- Early season process (seasons before 10/1)
  - ◆ Mourning doves
  - ◆ Band-tailed pigeons
  - ◆ September Canada goose
- Early seasons – WDFW 3-year package
- Late seasons – WDFW annual waterfowl meetings in summer

# Mourning Doves

- Public Input: Extend mourning dove season from current 15 days to 30 days
- Changes in mourning dove season length will be recommended consistent with strategies in the 2003-07 Game Management Plan (Objective 127):
  - ◆ Establish state harvest regulations for mourning doves in consideration of federal frameworks and population status in Washington.
  - ◆ Maintain restrictive dove season length until a significant increase in 10-year call-count index trend is observed.

# Mourning Doves

- In 2005, 10-year trend increased, but not statistically significant
- If a significant increase in 10-year trend at the 95% level, WDFW will recommend increase in season days from 15 to 30



# Mourning Doves

- Banding study conducted in 2003-2005 will offer additional insights on harvest rates
- Results may warrant revision of current harvest strategy

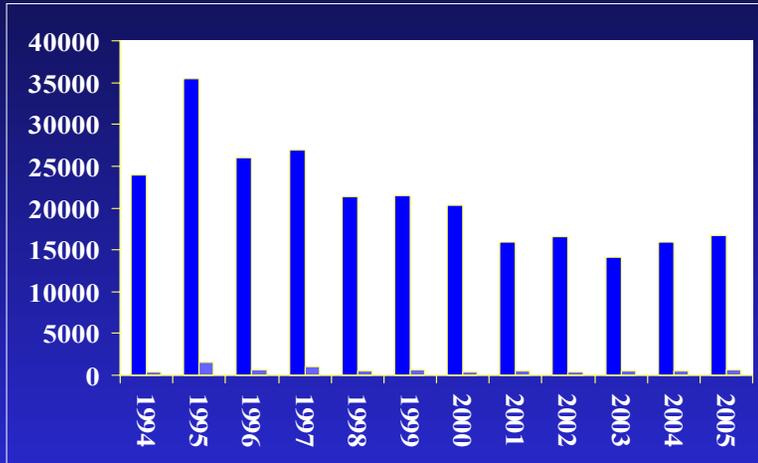


# Sea Ducks

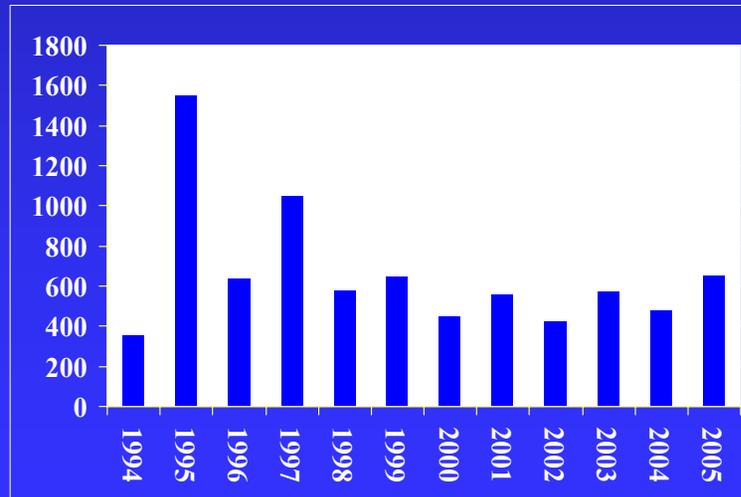
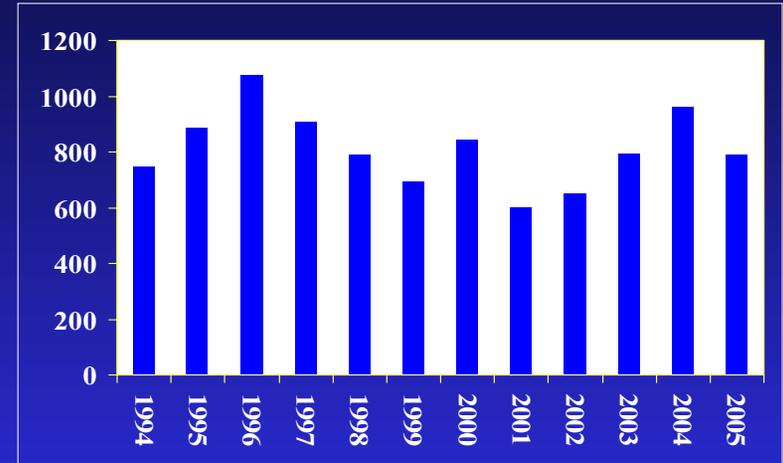
- Public Input: Further restrict sea duck seasons due to population declines
- Sea ducks = scoter (3 spp.), harlequin, long-tailed duck
- Washington has been more restrictive than federal frameworks for sea ducks since 2000
- In 2004, Commission approved several additional restrictions for sea ducks
  - ◆ Harlequin duck limit reduced from 1/day to 1/season
  - ◆ Mandatory hunting authorization and harvest report for scoter, harlequin, and long-tailed duck

# Sea Duck Population Trends

## Scoter population index



## Harlequin duck population index

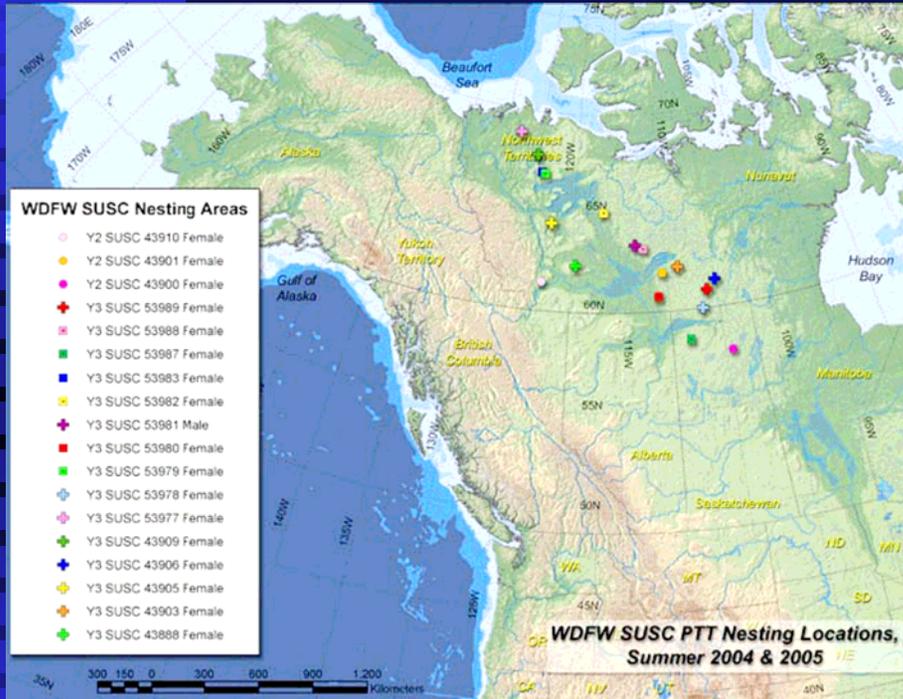


## Long-tailed duck population index

# Sea Duck Studies

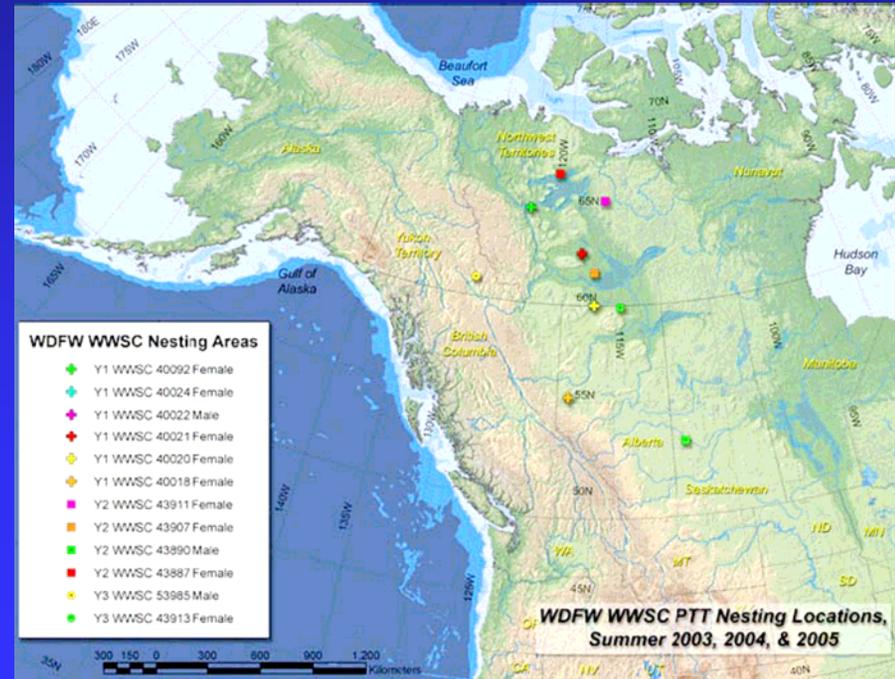
- WDFW Puget Sound Monitoring and Assessment Program (PSAMP) team has documented a 57% decline in scoters since the late 1970s
- In 2003, PSAMP team began a 4 year focus study using implanted satellite (PTTs) and VHF radio transmitters
- Goal of understanding range and movements of surf and white-winged scoters, to evaluate population trends
- 60 PTT transmitters (36 in surf scoters and 24 in white-winged scoters)
- 60 VHF transmitters in surf scoters

# Sea Duck Studies



- New information on nesting range

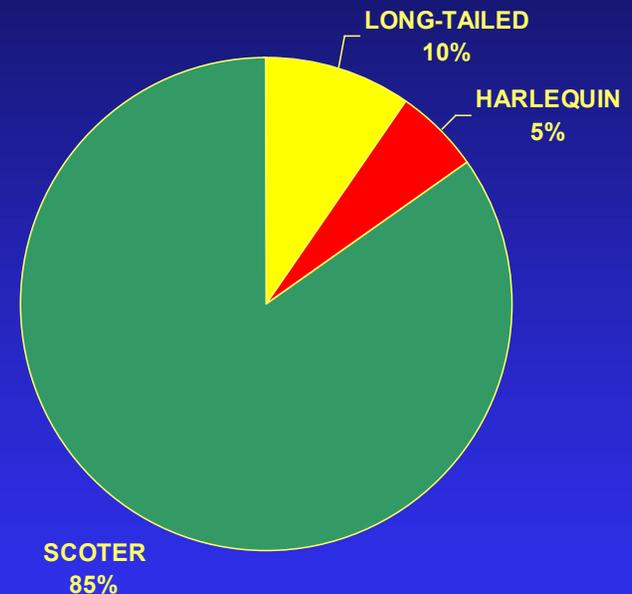
- Links between nesting areas and wintering areas to evaluate trends



# Sea Duck Season Recommendations

- Sea duck seasons will be re-evaluated following analysis of 3 years data from 2004-05 through 2006-07 harvest reports
- Recommendations at 2007 waterfowl meeting

## 2004-05 SEA DUCK HARVEST



**TOTAL HARVEST = 2275**  
**TOTAL AUTHORIZATIONS = 906**

# Questions?



# Upland Game Birds

Mick Cope, Upland Game Section Manager



Photo Courtesy of Bob Inouye

Wild Turkey



Pheasants in Southeast

# Upland Game Section Species

- Wild Turkeys
- Forest Grouse
- Pheasants
- Chukar
- Gray Partridge
- Quail
  - ◆ California
  - ◆ Mountain
- Rabbits and Hares



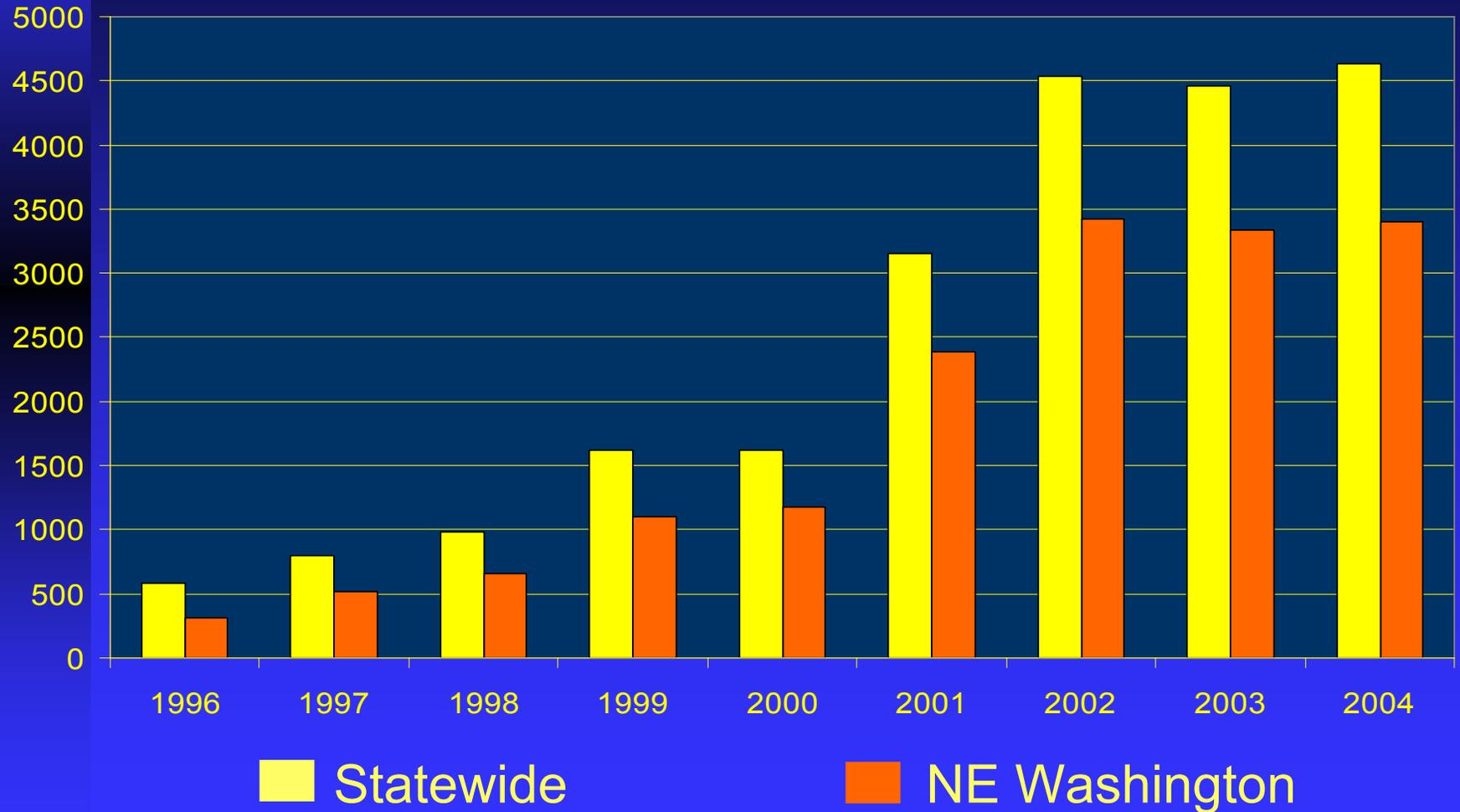
Blue Grouse

# Focus Topics

- Population Status and 3-Year Package Issues
  - ◆ Wild Turkey, Pheasant, Quail, Chukar, and Gray Partridge



# Statewide Spring Turkey Harvest 1991-2004



# Expanded Spring Season

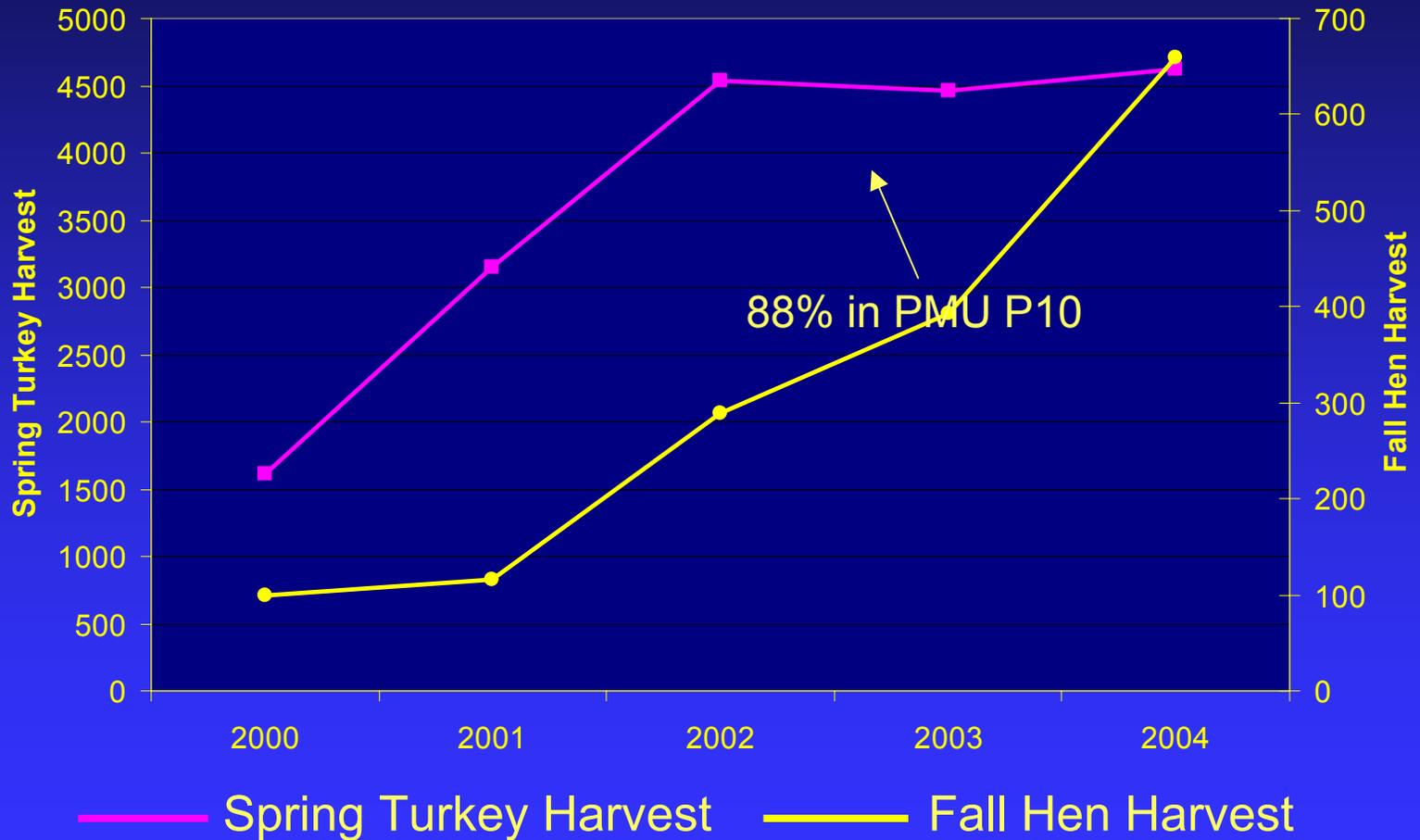
- Current: Youth Weekend Prior to April 15 and regular season April 15 – May 15
  - ◆ Options:
    - ◆ Earlier youth and general season
    - ◆ Earlier youth season
    - ◆ Later general season



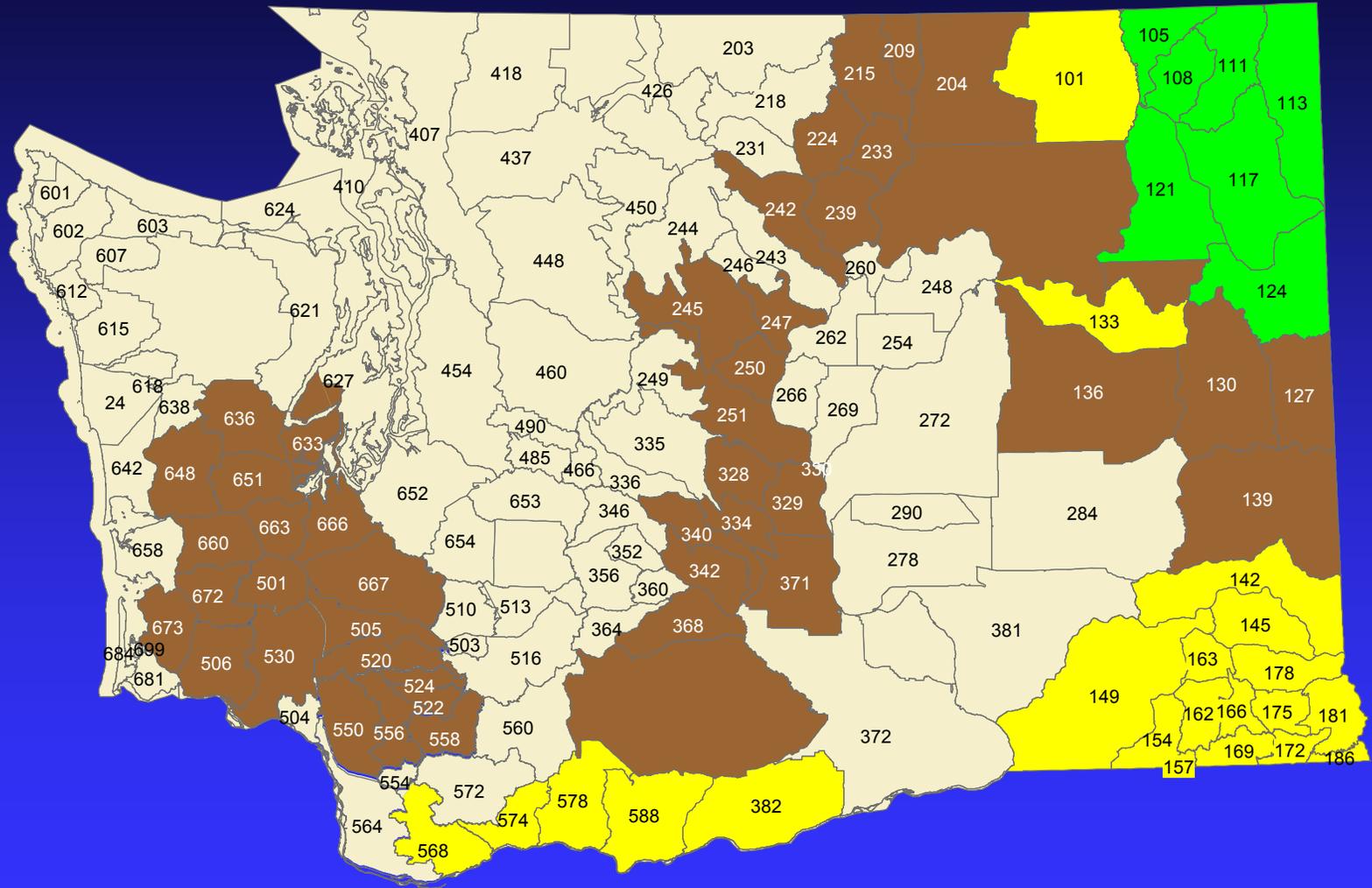
Photo Courtesy of Bob Inouye

Tom and Hen Turkey

# Fall Hen Turkey Harvest



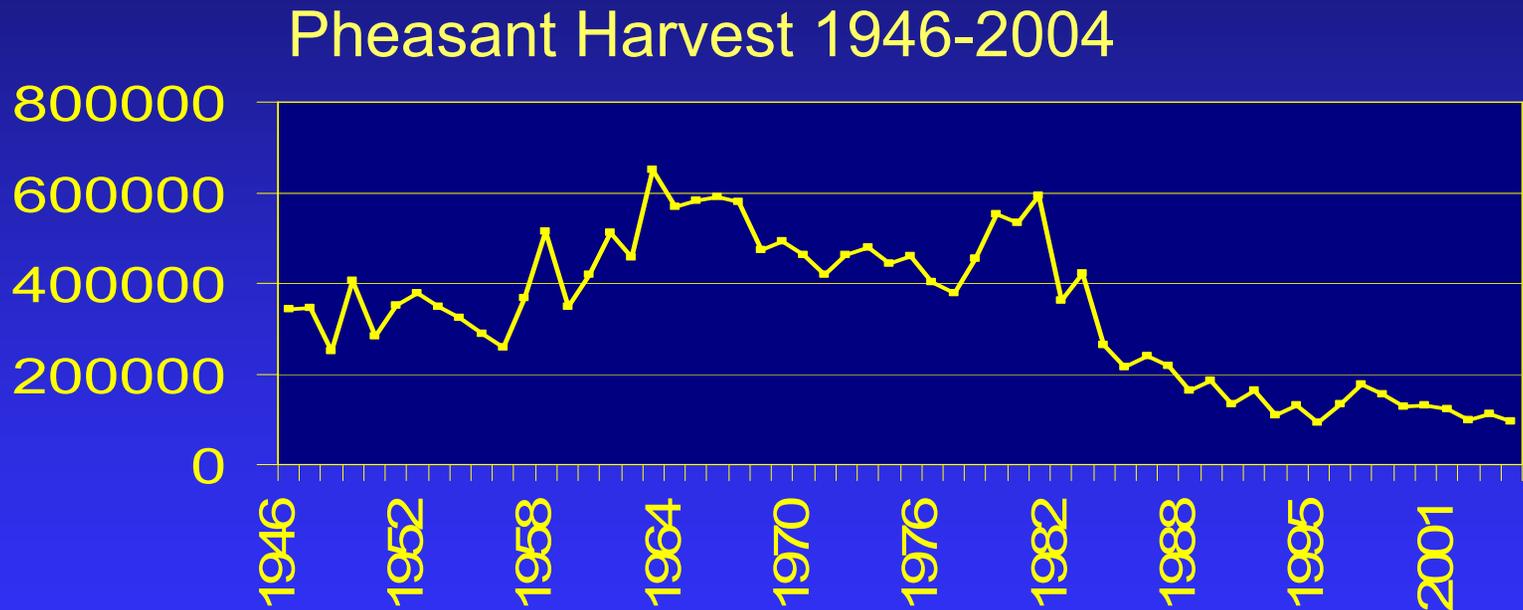
# Expand Fall Turkey Season?



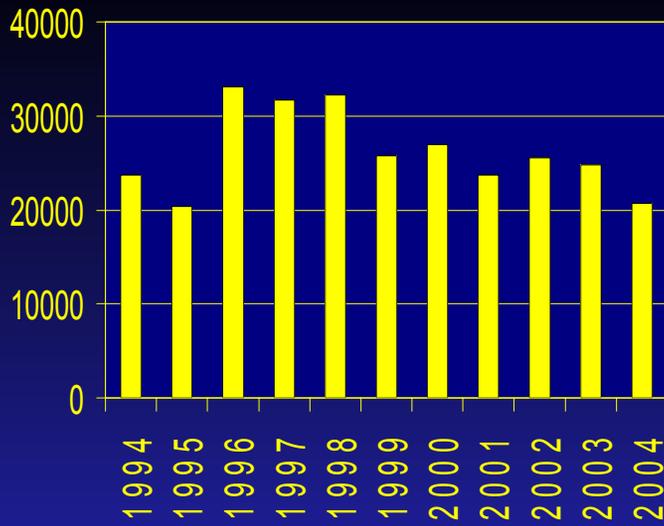
■ General Fall Season   ■ Fall Permit Season   ■ Wild Turkey Distribution

# Upland Game Population Status

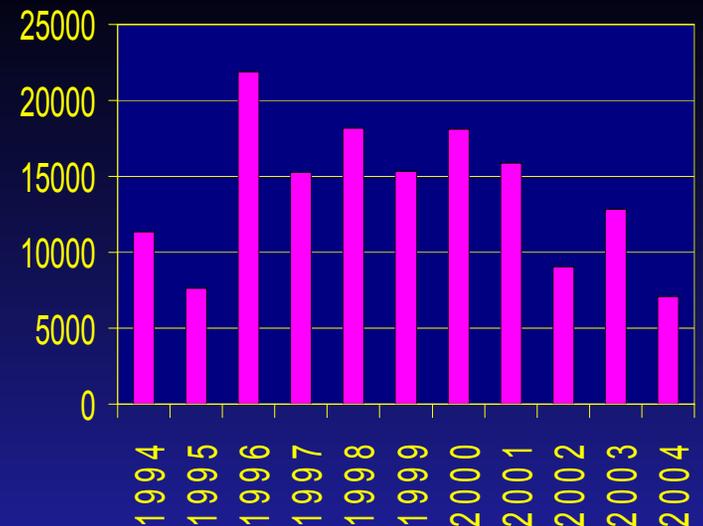
- Harvest is an Indicator of Population Status



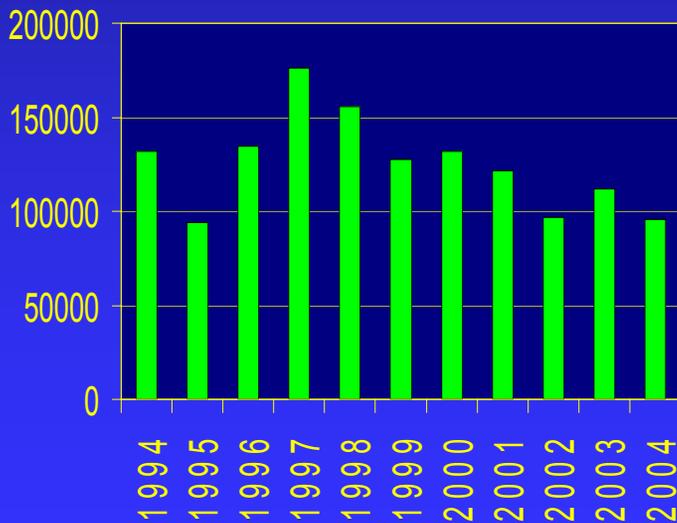
Major Reason for Decline is Habitat Loss



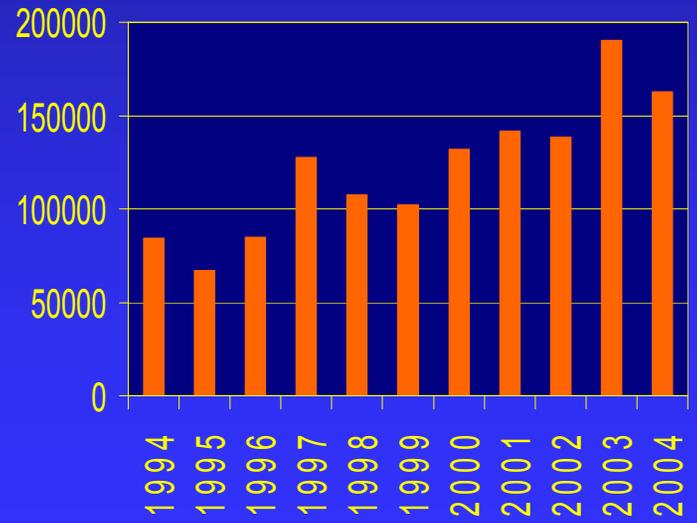
Chukar Harvest



Gray Partridge Harvest



Pheasant Harvest



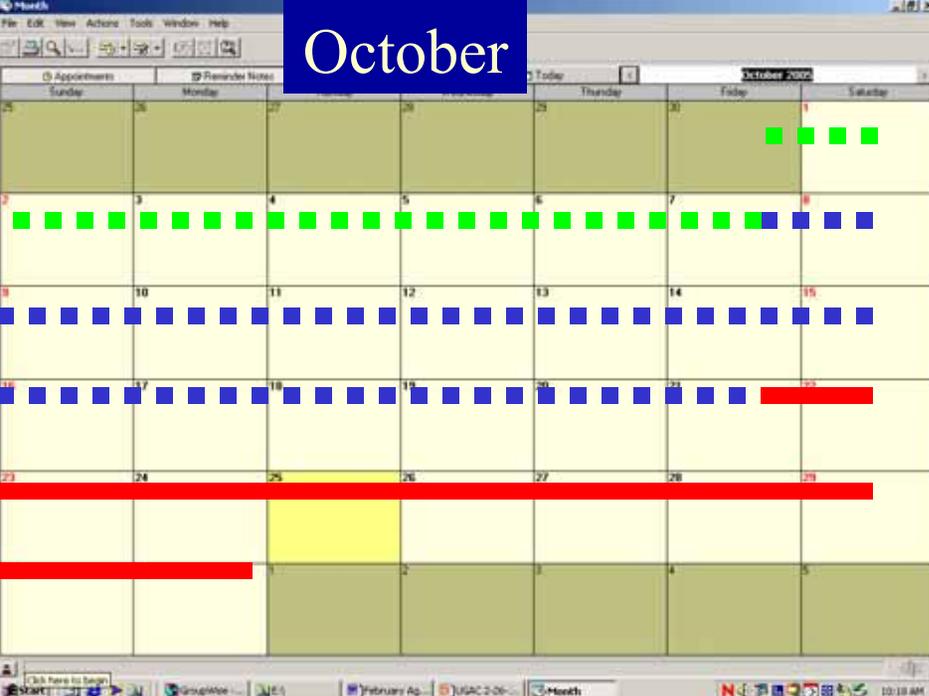
Quail Harvest

# Pheasant Issues

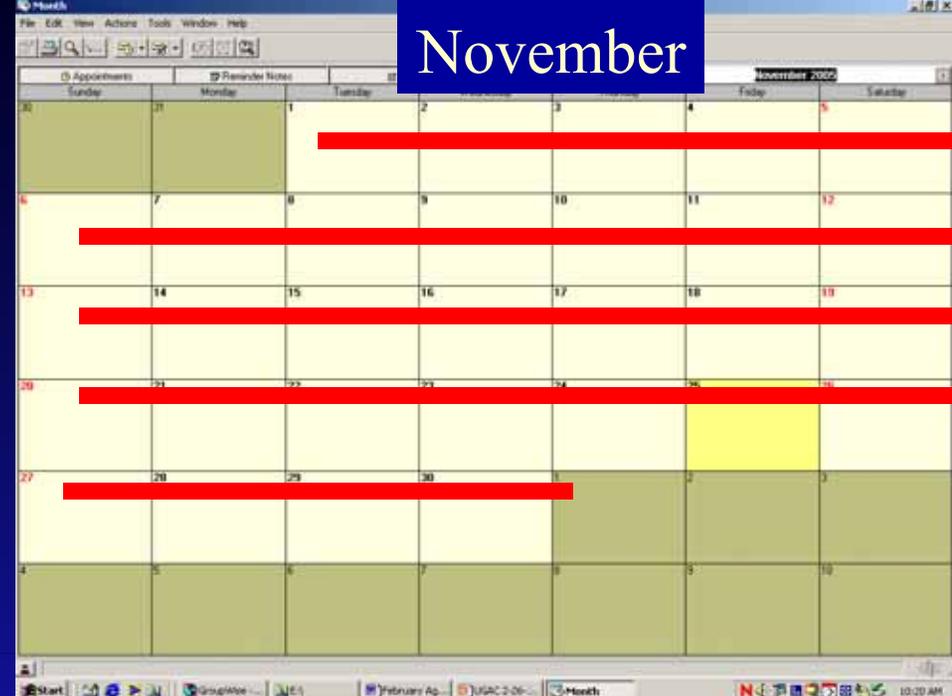
- Eastern Washington Season Dates



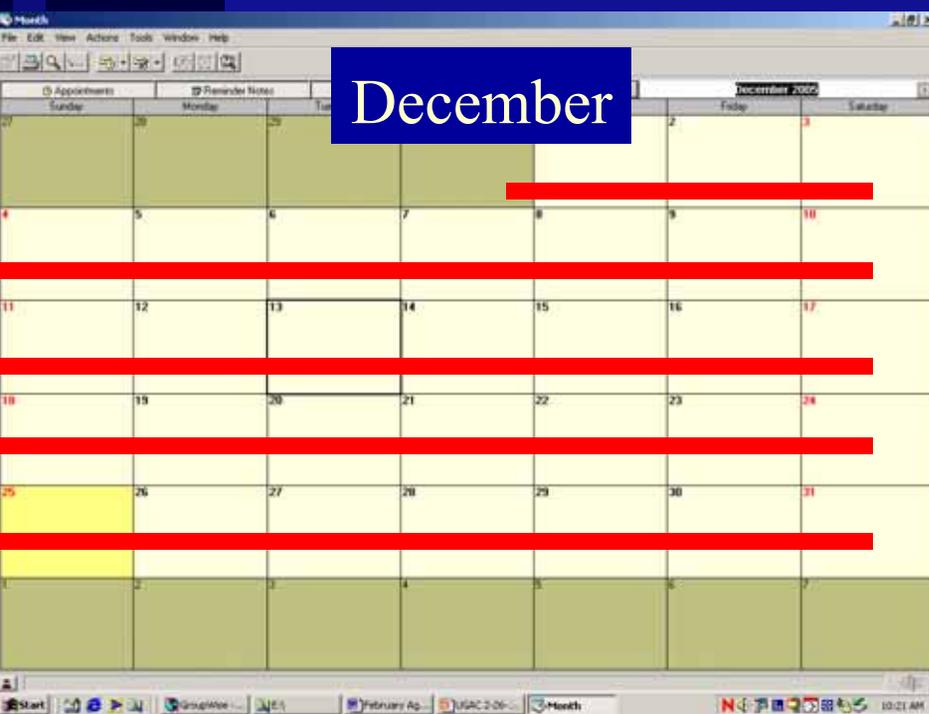
# October



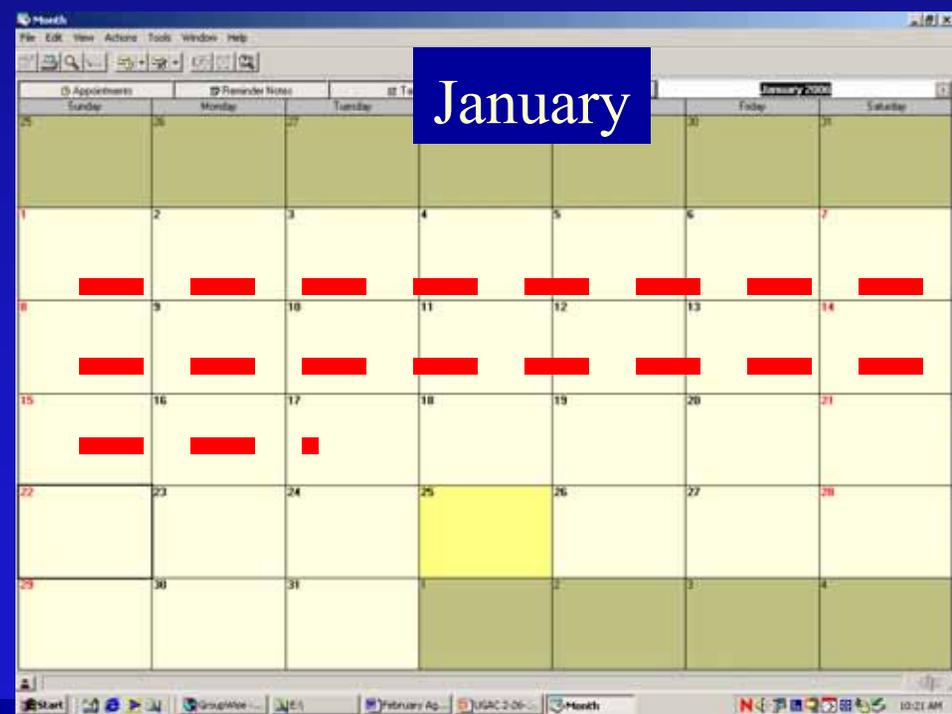
# November



# December



# January



# Pheasant Issues

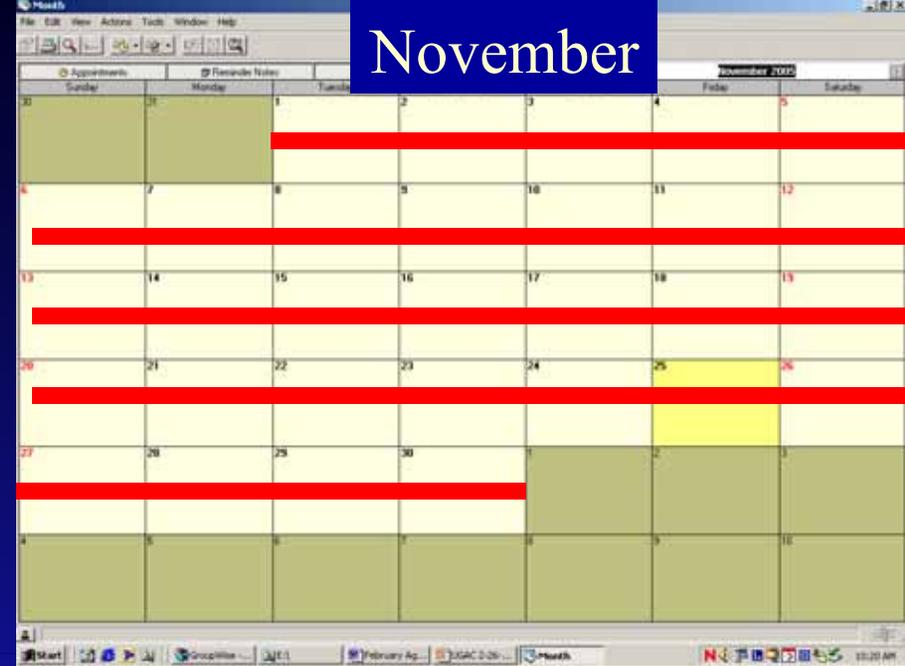
- Western Washington Season Dates



October



November



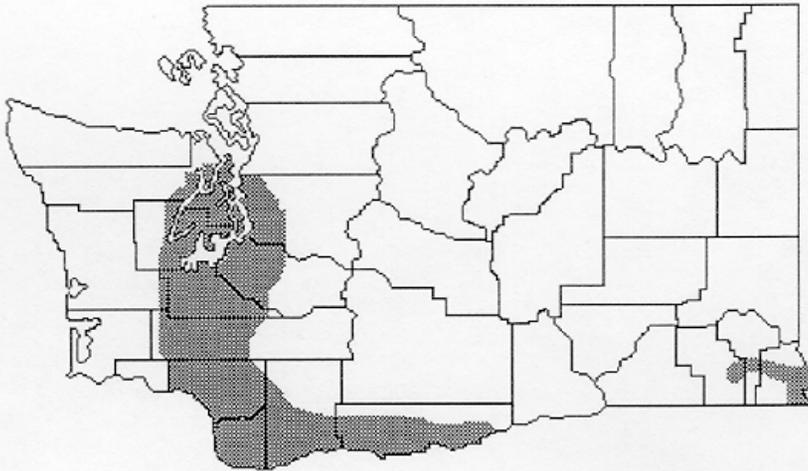
December



Extend Season Through  
December 15 on all sites?  
*(No pheasant releases)*

# Mountain Quail

Historic Mountain Quail Distribution



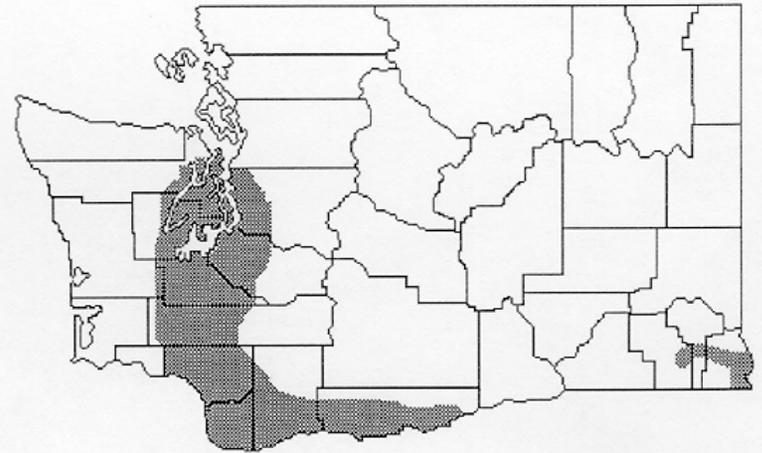
Mountain Quail and Brood

# Mountain Quail

## Western Washington

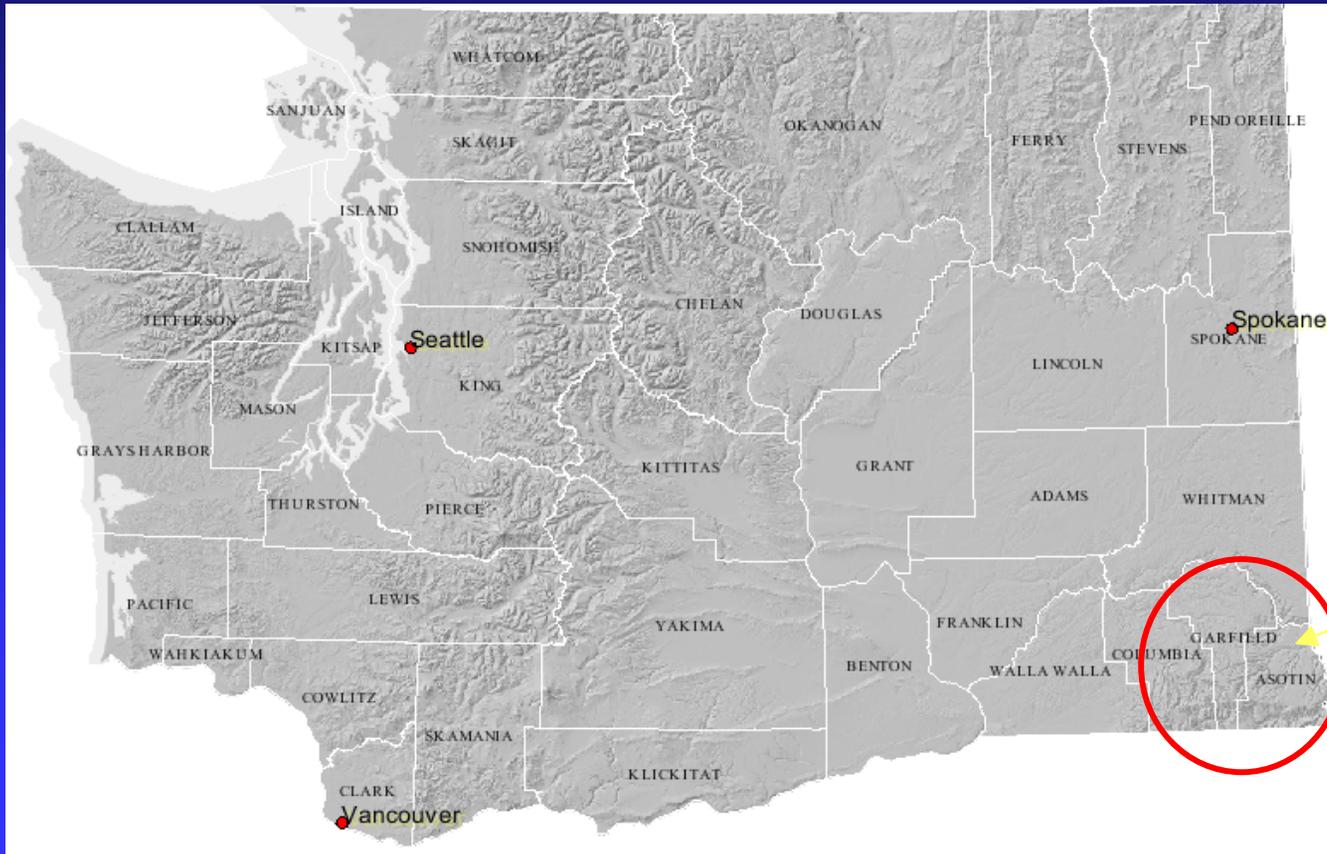
- Possibly introduced
- 2-month season
- Better harvest information needed
- Authorization Card?

Historic Mountain Quail Distribution



# Mountain Quail Eastern Washington

## ■ 3-year Reintroduction Project



Project  
Area

# Mountain Quail Reintroduction

- 75 – 100 Wild-Trapped Birds Per Year
- Cooperative Partnership:
  - ◆ Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and University of Idaho

## Project Goals:

- ◆ Re-establish Mountain Quail
- ◆ Create Multiple Self-Sustaining Populations
- ◆ Retain as a game species

# Questions?



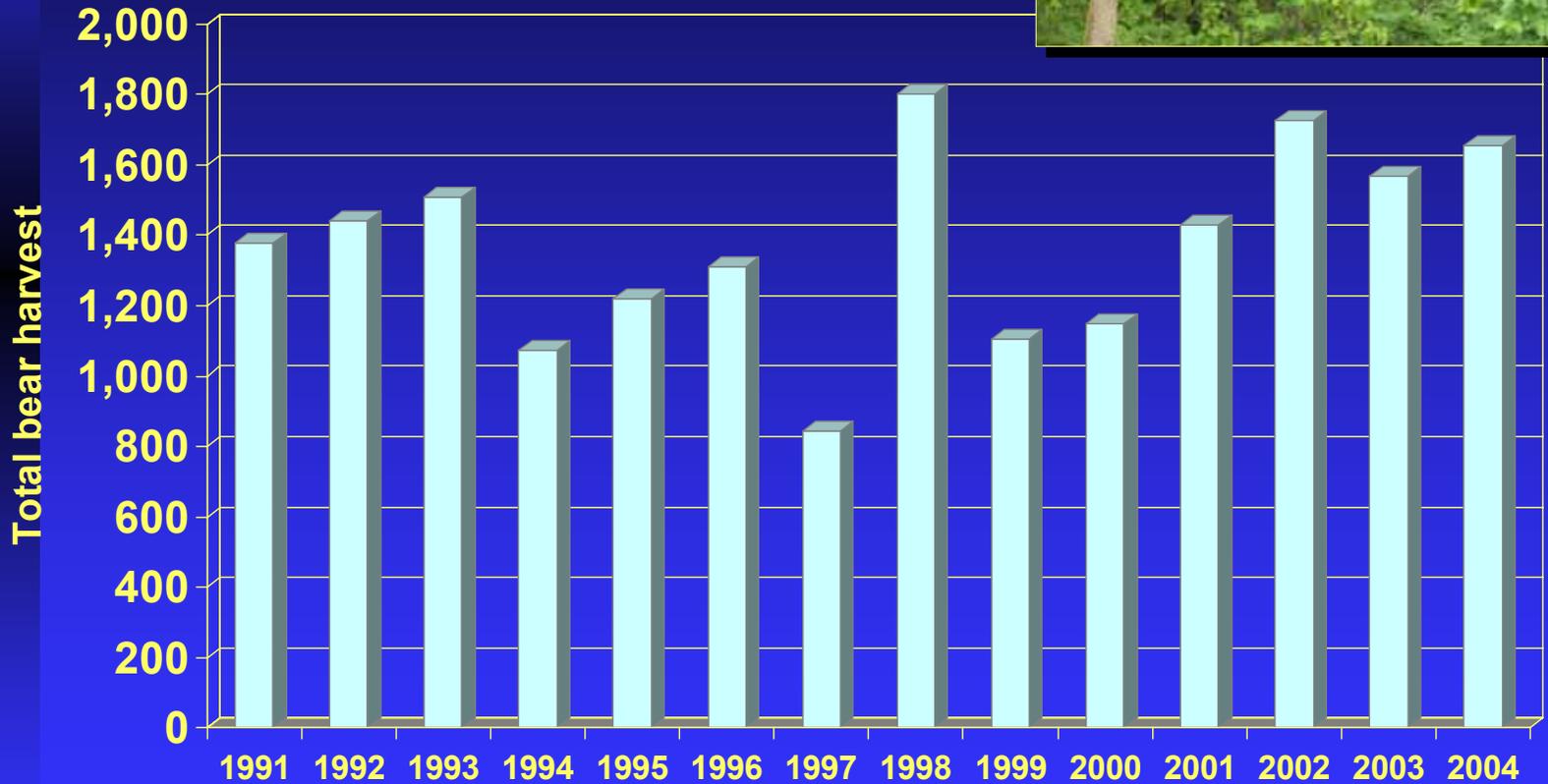
# **Big Game** (Cougar, Bear, Mountain Goat, Bighorn Sheep, & Moose)

**Donny Martorello, Ph.D.,  
Big Game Section Manager**

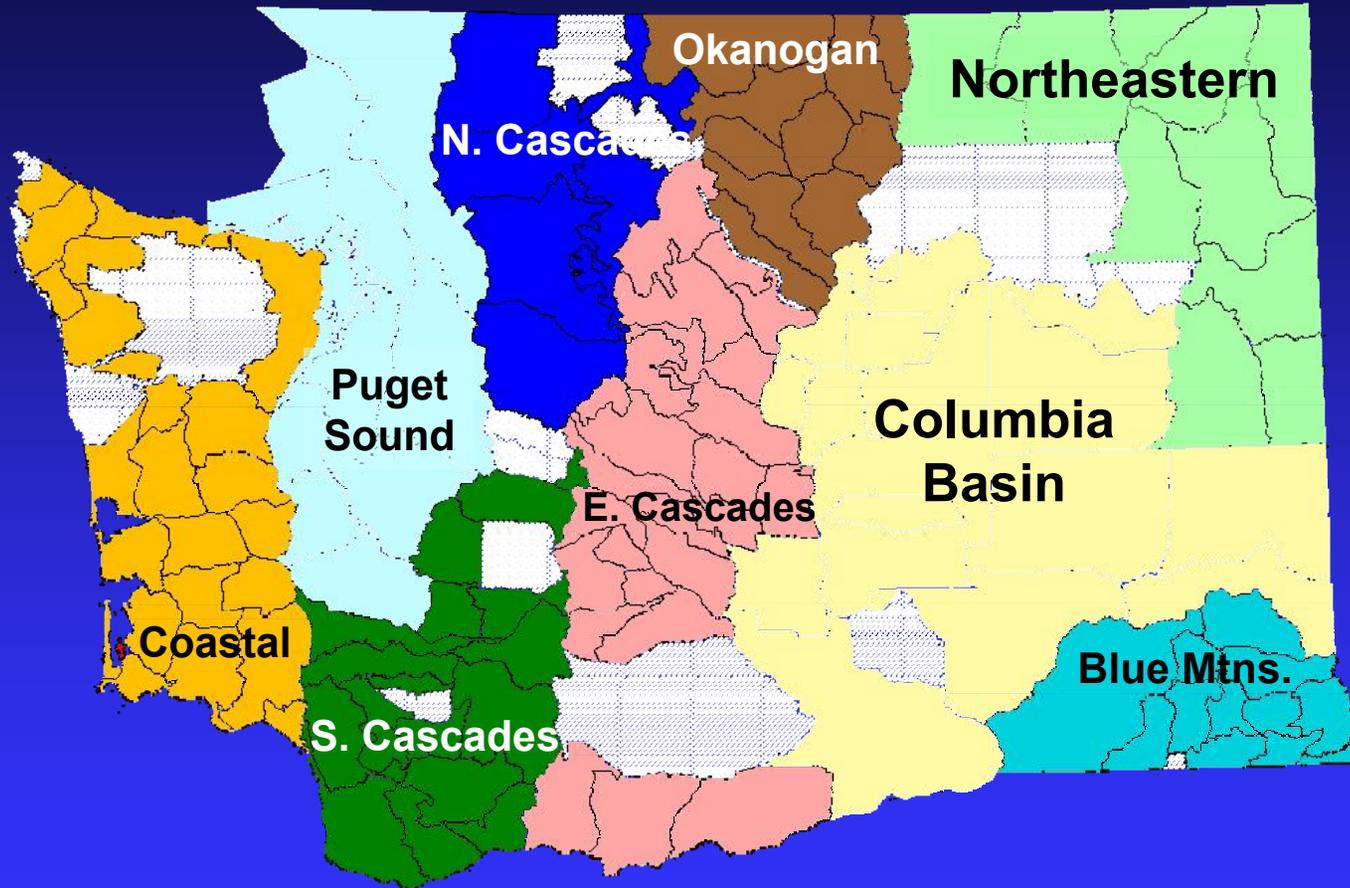
# Black Bear Population Status



# Bear Harvest Trend



# Black Bear Management Units



# Biological Thresholds for BBMU

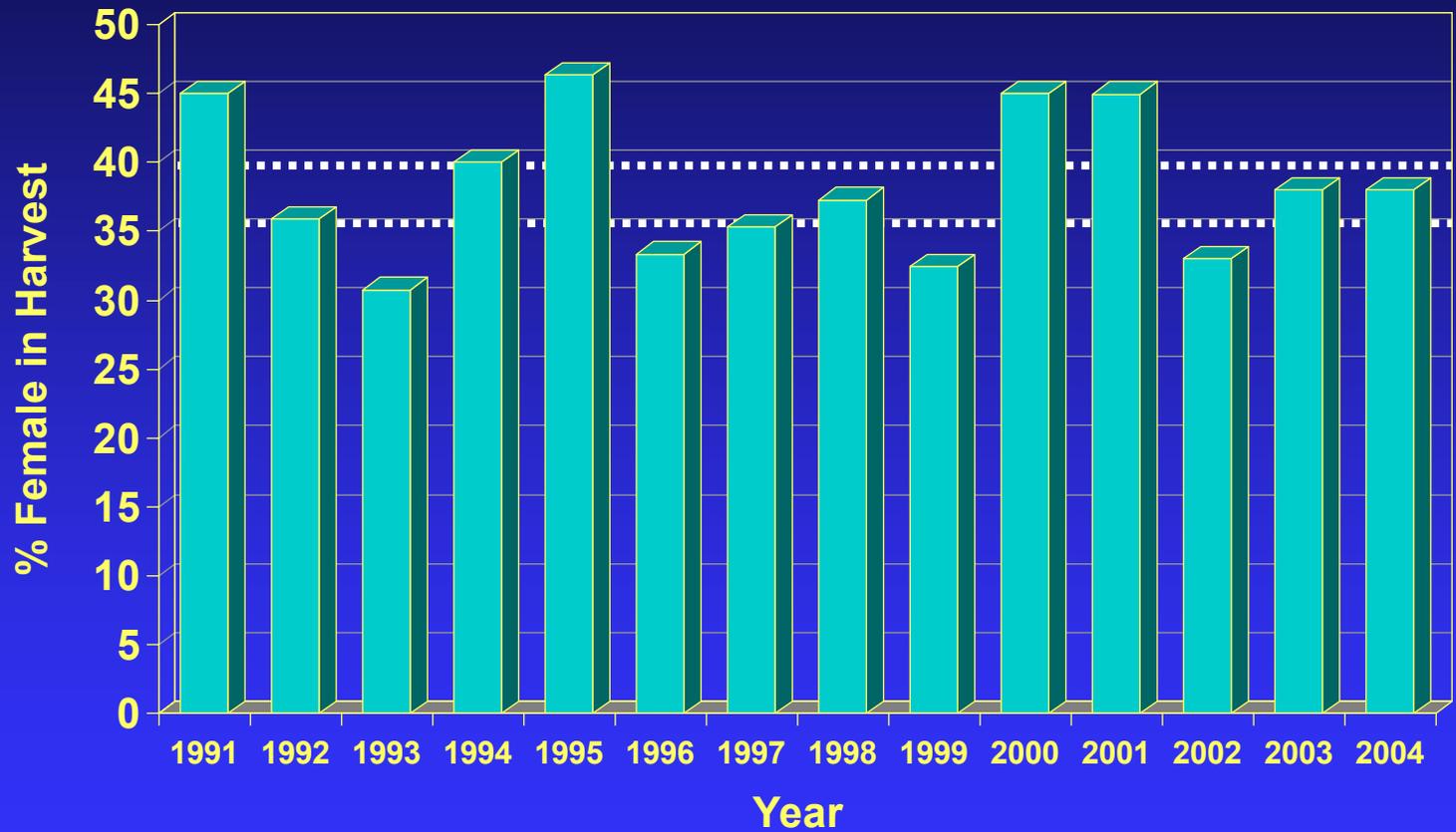
Criteria	Harvest Levels			
	Over-harvest	Acceptable	Desirable	Under-harvest
Percent Female in the harvest	$\geq 40\%$	36% - 39%	35%	$\leq 35\%$
Median age of harvested males	$\leq 1$ years	2 – 3 years	4 years	$\geq 5$ years
Median age of harvest females	$\leq 4$ years	5 years	6 years	$\geq 7$ years

# Northeastern BBMU

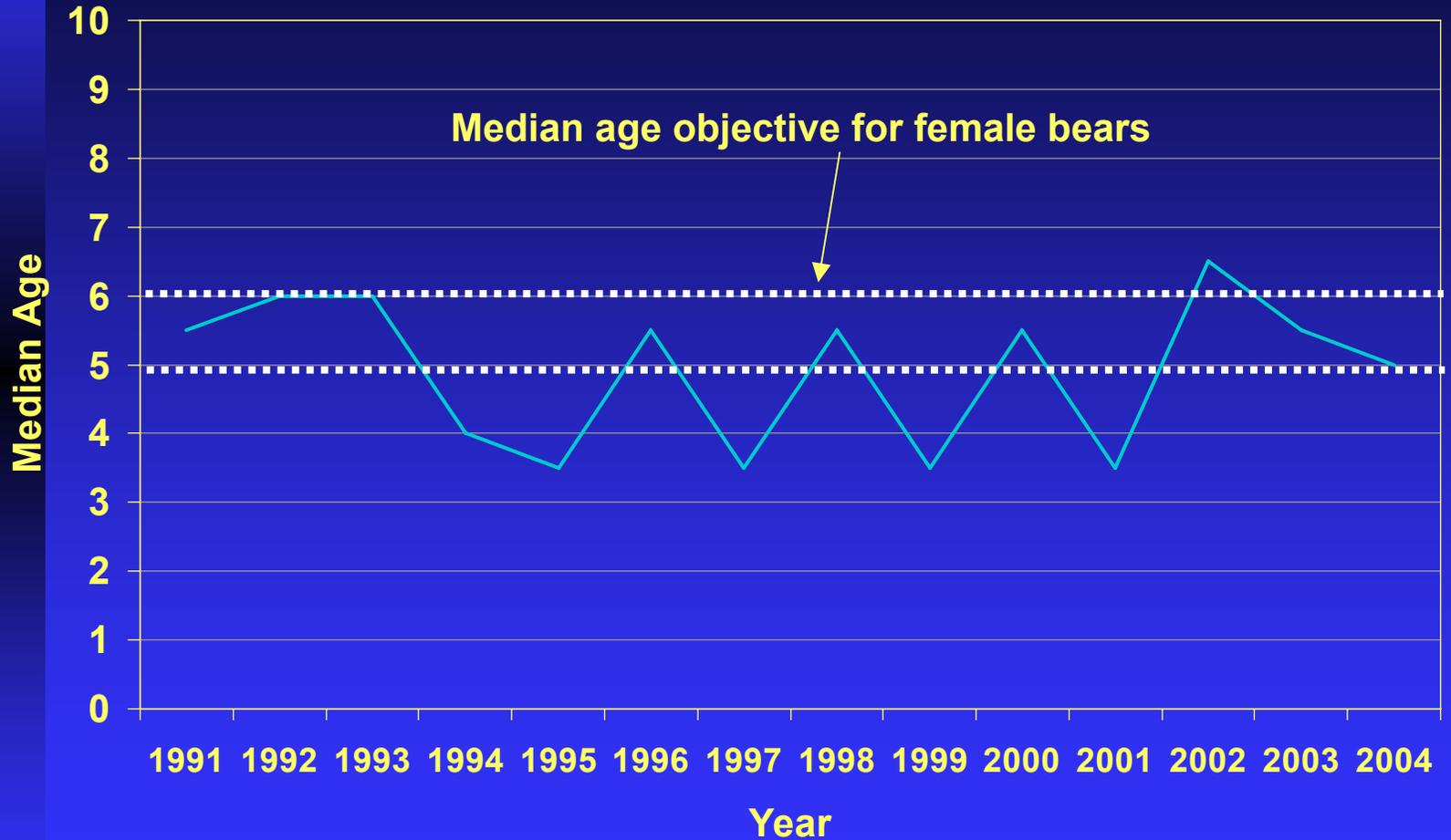


- Historically opened Aug. 1
- Age and sex ratio of harvested bears were exceeding objectives
- Reduced season length in 2000

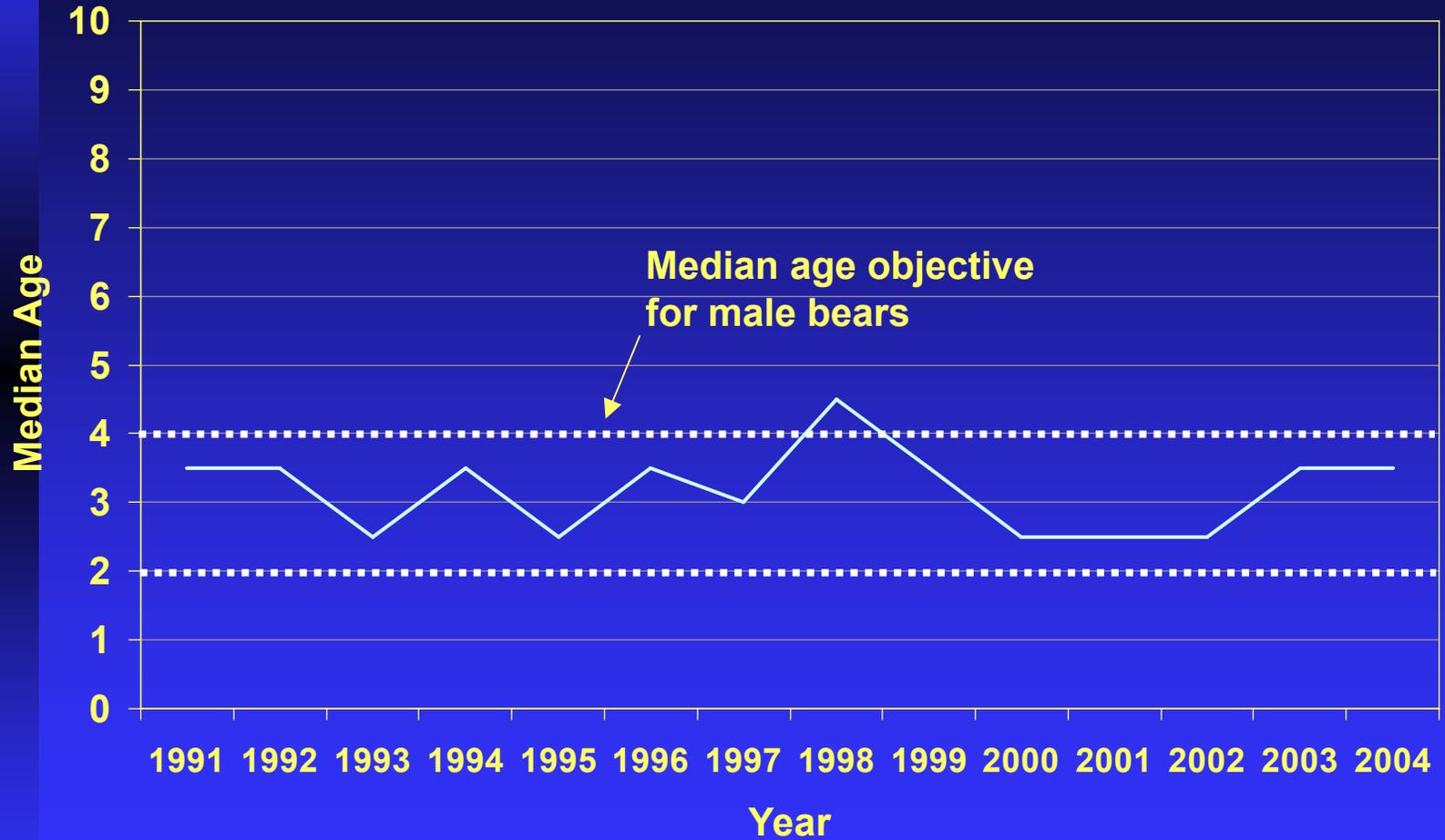
# Northeastern BBMU



# Northeastern BBMU



# Northeastern BBMU



# General Comments

- Trends for median age and percent female in harvest are within biological thresholds.
- Minor one-year deviations from acceptable limits do not necessarily warrant a change in harvest strategy.



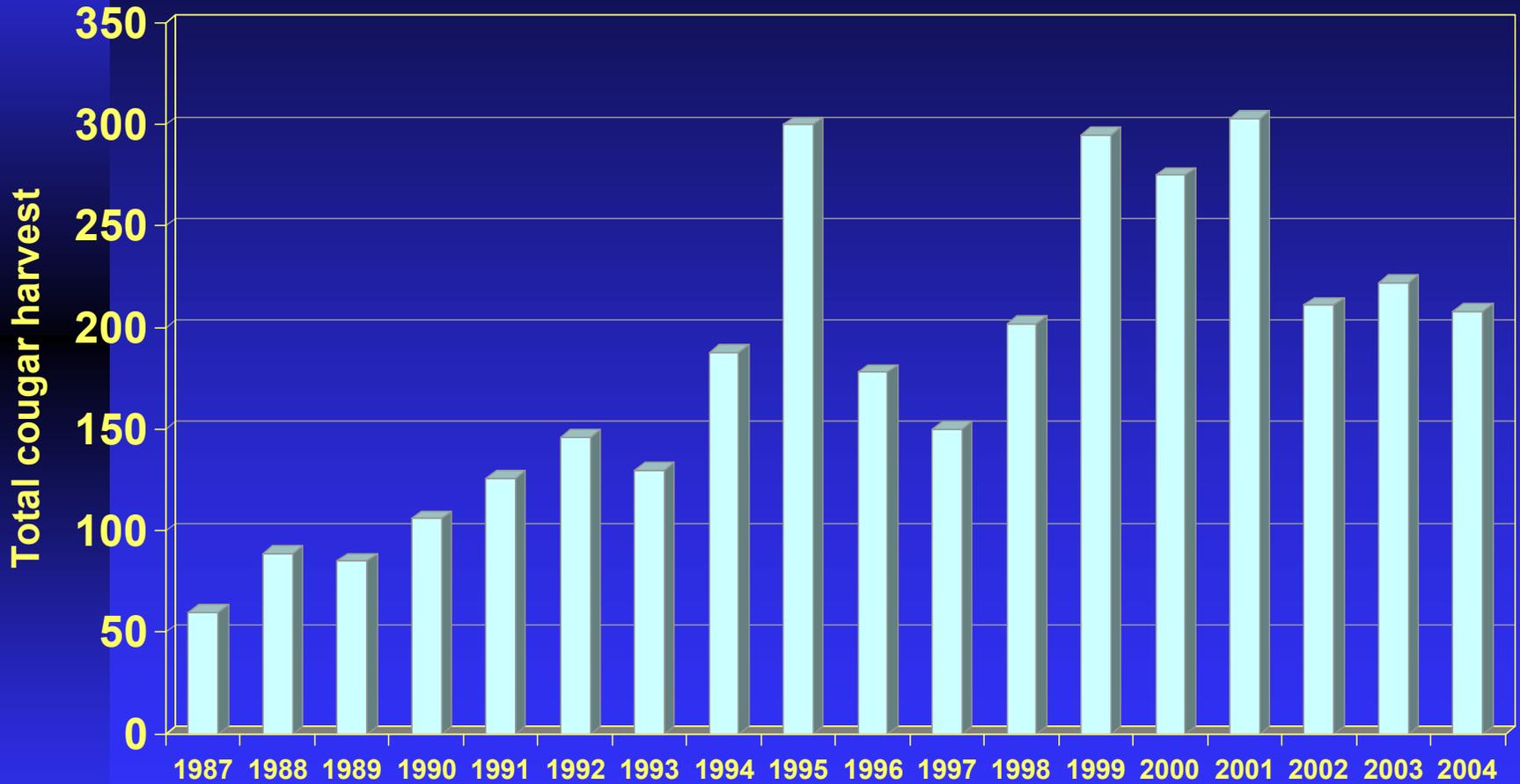
# Option Summary

- In areas where additional bear hunting opportunity exists:
  - ◆ Open season on Aug 15
  - ◆ Develop spring season
  - ◆ Start all bear seasons after Labor Day
  - ◆ Status quo
    - ◆ Aug 1 in general eastern & western BBMUs; After Labor Day in NE and Blue Mountains

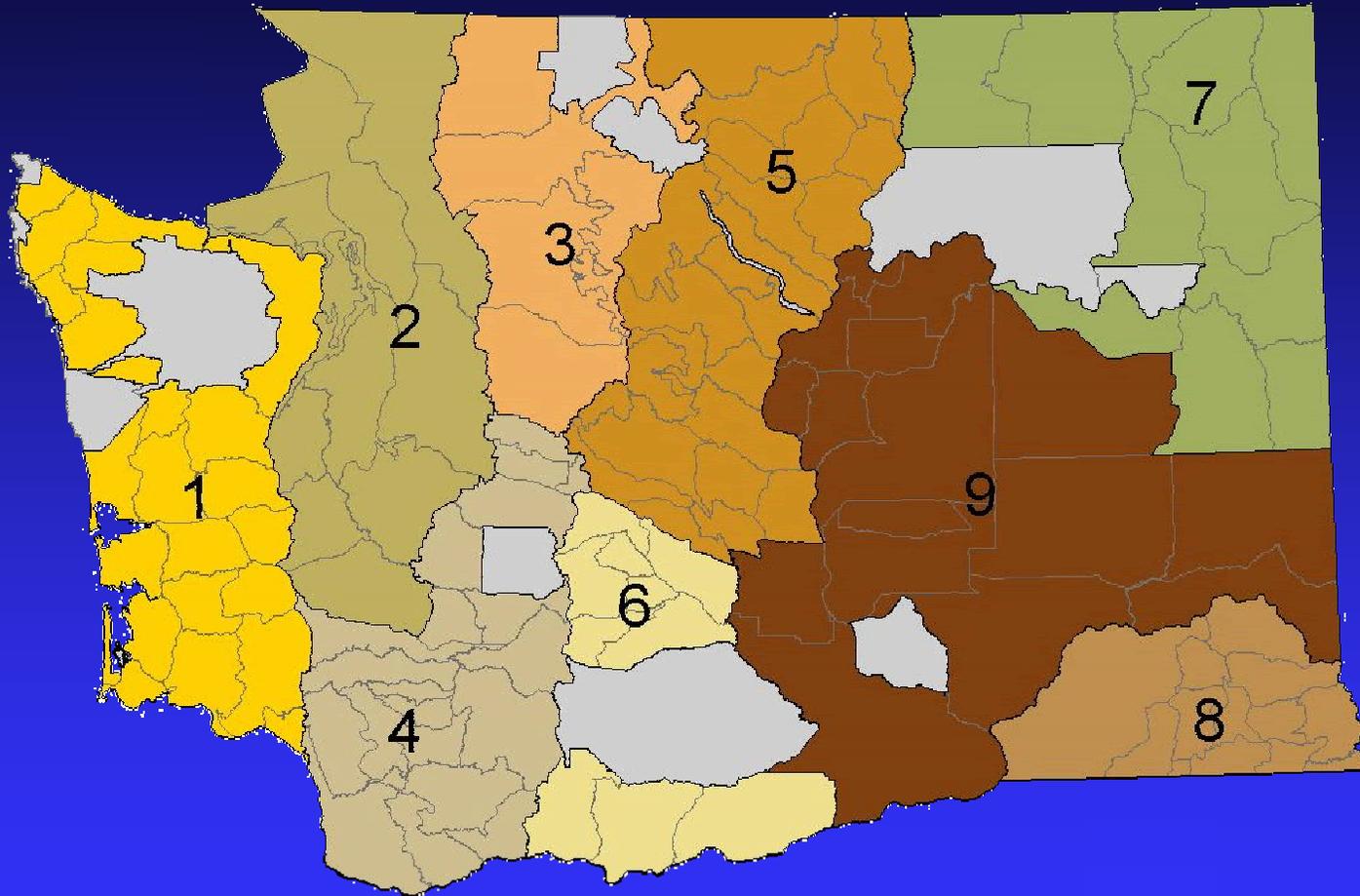
# Cougar Population Status



# Cougar Harvest Trend



# Cougar Management Units



# Female Harvest Guidelines

CMU	Objective	Female Harvest Guideline	Average female harvest	
			1999-2001	2002-2004
1. Coastal	Stable	10		
2. Puget Sound	Reduce	No Limit		
3. North Cascades	Stable	10		
4. South Cascades	Stable	7		
5. East Cascades North	Reduce	32		
6. East Cascades South	Stable	4		
7. Northeasters	Reduce	40		
8. Blue Mountains	Stable	8		
9. Columbia Basin	Unsustainable	No limit		

# Female Harvest Guidelines

CMU	Objective	Female Harvest Guideline	Average female harvest	
			1999-2001	2002-2004
1. Coastal	Stable	10		
2. Puget Sound	Reduce	No Limit		
3. North Cascades	Stable	10		
4. South Cascades	Stable	7		
6. East Cascades South	Stable	4		
5. East Cascades North	Reduce	40 (Pilot)		
7. Northeasters	Reduce			
8. Blue Mountains	Stable	8		
9. Columbia Basin	Unsustainable	No limit		

# Female Harvest Guidelines

CMU	Objective	Female Harvest Guideline	Average female harvest	
			1999-2001	2002-2004
1. Coastal	Stable	10	12	
2. Puget Sound	Reduce	No Limit	11	
3. North Cascades	Stable	10	9	
4. South Cascades	Stable	7	8	
6. East Cascades South	Stable	4	6	
5. East Cascades North	Reduce	40 (Pilot)	98	
7. Northeasters	Reduce			
8. Blue Mountains	Stable	8	16	
9. Columbia Basin	Unsustainable	No limit	1	

# Female Harvest Guidelines

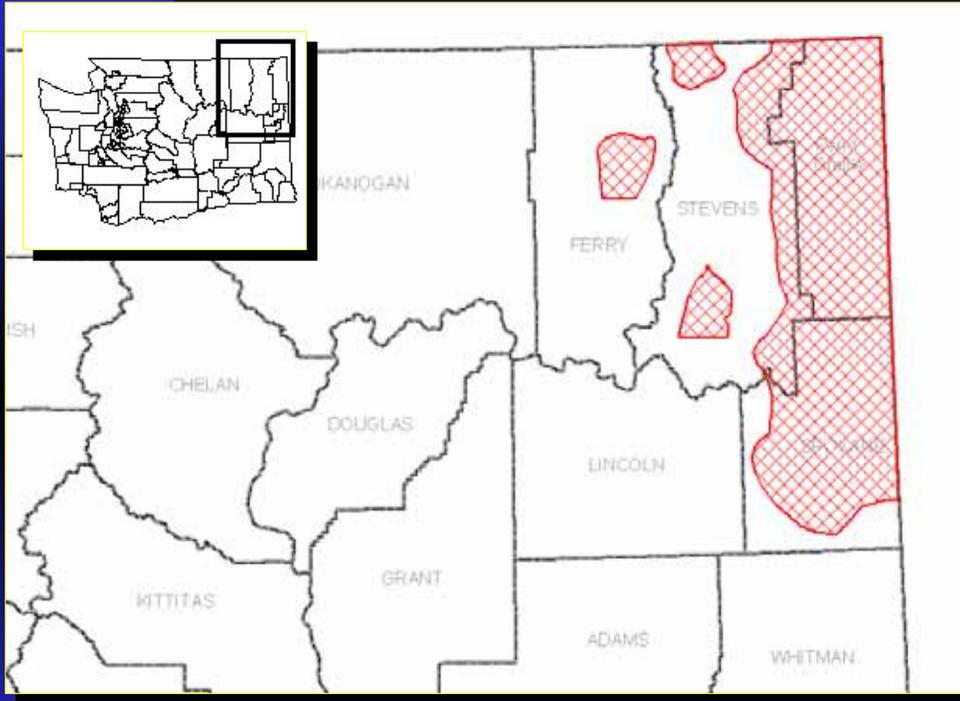
CMU	Objective	Female Harvest Guideline	Average female harvest	
			1999-2001	2002-2004
1. Coastal	Stable	10	12	7
2. Puget Sound	Reduce	No Limit	11	4
3. North Cascades	Stable	10	9	4
4. South Cascades	Stable	7	8	8
6. East Cascades South	Stable	4	6	6
5. East Cascades North	Reduce	40 (Pilot)	98	72 (60 in 2004)
7. Northeasters	Reduce			
8. Blue Mountains	Stable	8	16	6
9. Columbia Basin	Unsustainable	No limit	1	3

# Option Summary

- Status quo
- Minor season changes per biological guidelines



# Moose Management

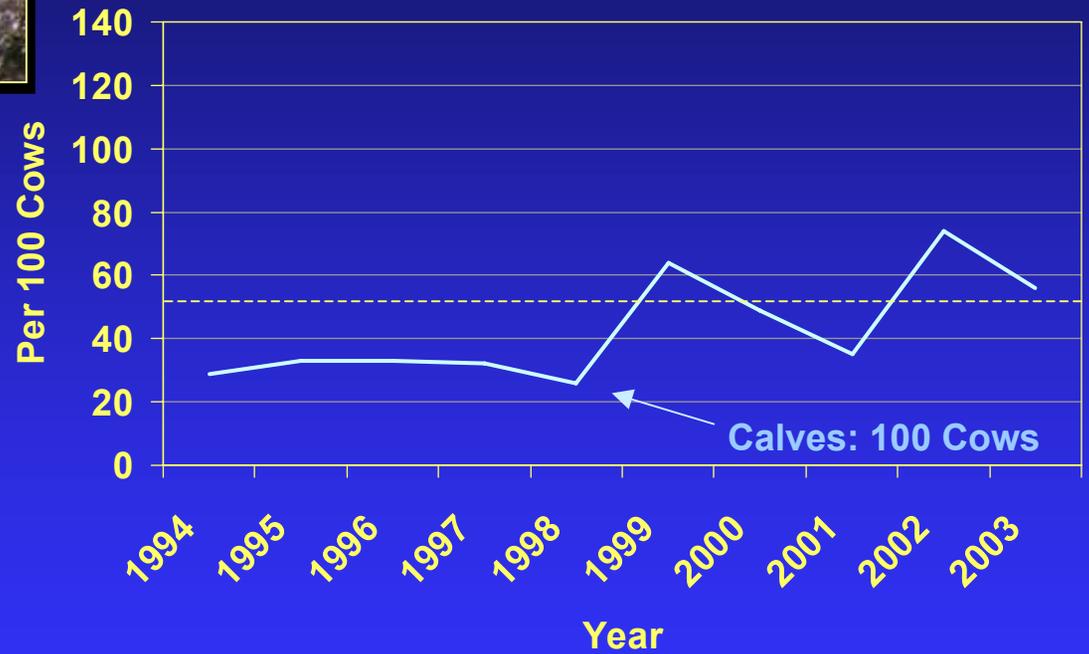


Moose Range

- Annual surveys
- Sustainable harvest (mostly mature bulls)
- Aggressive harvest near urban centers (bulls and cows)
- Stable to increasing moose populations

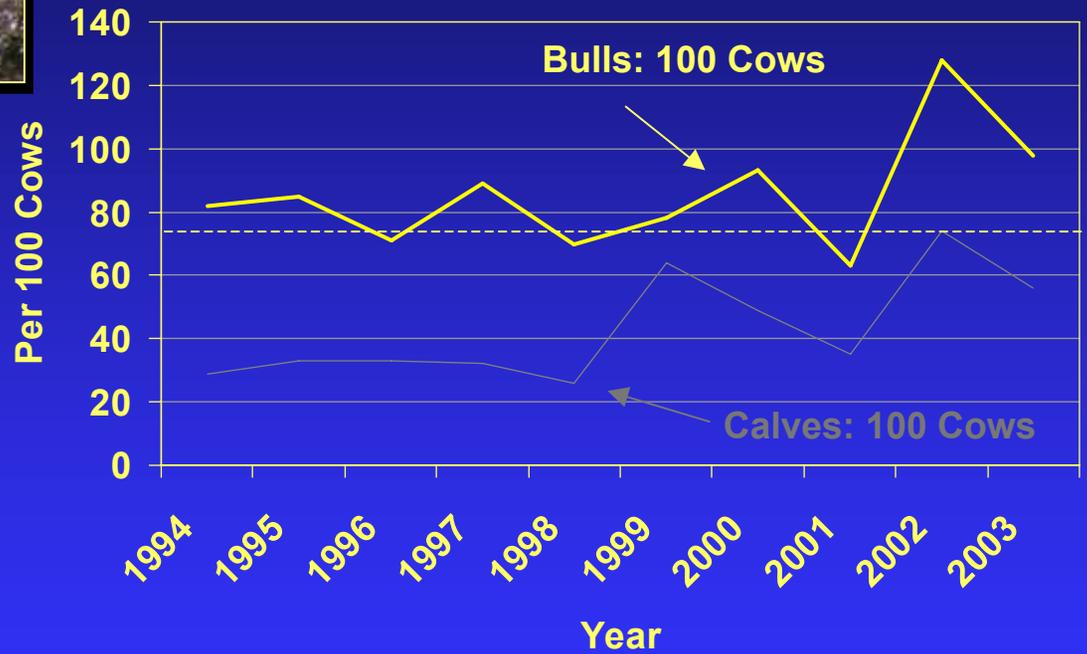


Cow and calf moose seen during survey





Cow and calf moose seen during survey



# Mtn Goats and Bighorn Sheep

- Stable populations and permit levels
- Mtn Goat Research Project
- Slow recovery in the Hells Canyon area

# Bighorn sheep, Mtn Goat, Moose Issue

## Low drawing odds for special species

- 151 applications for each bighorn permit issued
- 182 applications for each goat permit issued
- 104 applicants for each moose permit issued



# Option Summary

## Options to improve drawing odds

- Increase cost of application and create endowed dedicated fund
- Increase the license cost
- Allow 1 hunt choice rather than 4
- Allow hunters to apply for deer/elk or special species, but not both
- Allow hunters to apply for one or two of the three special species

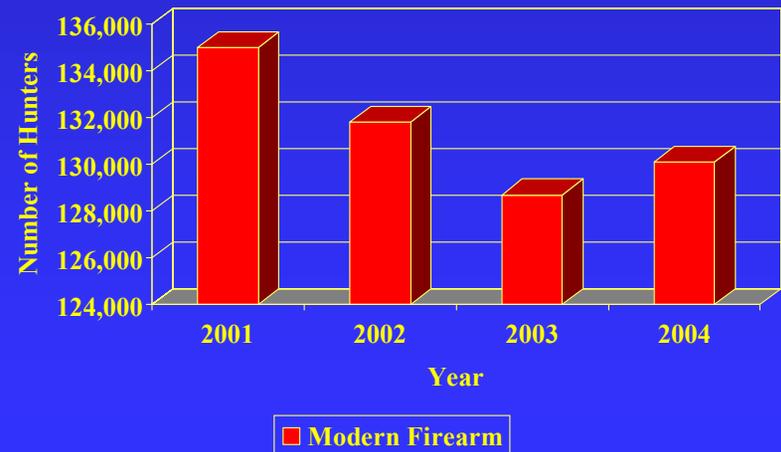
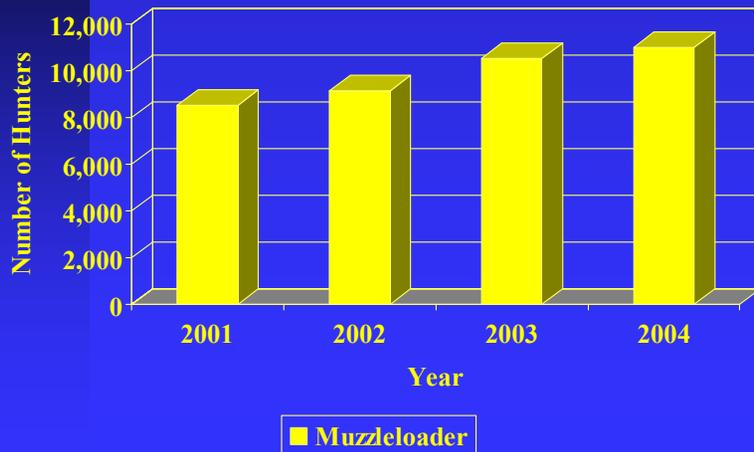
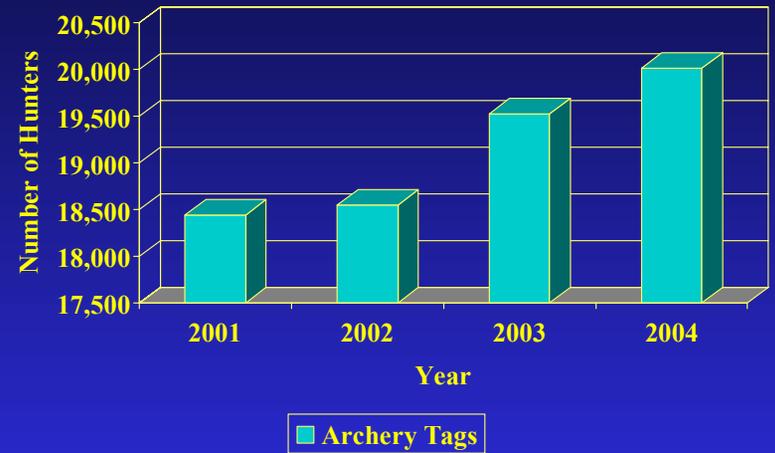
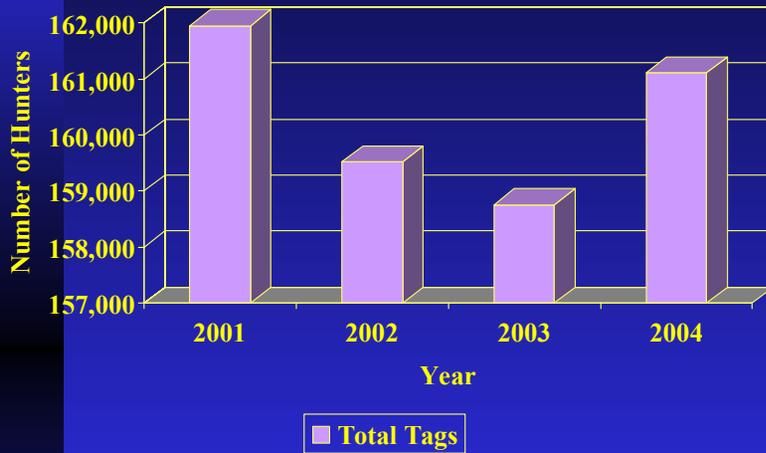


# Deer and Elk

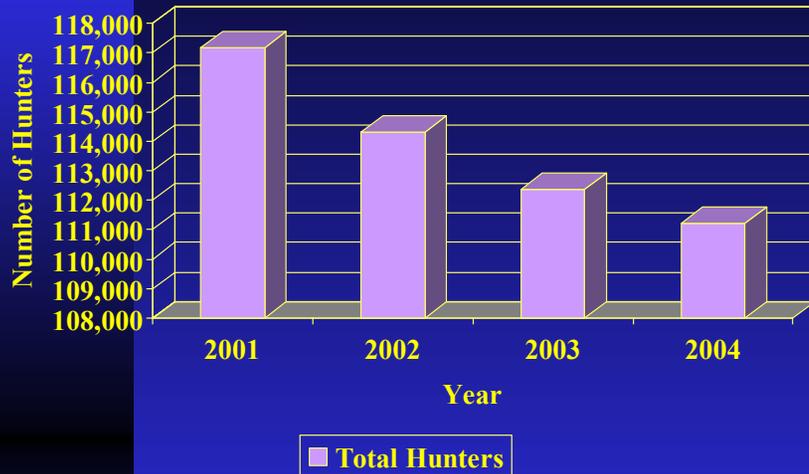
Jerry Nelson, Ph.D.,

Deer and Elk Section Manager

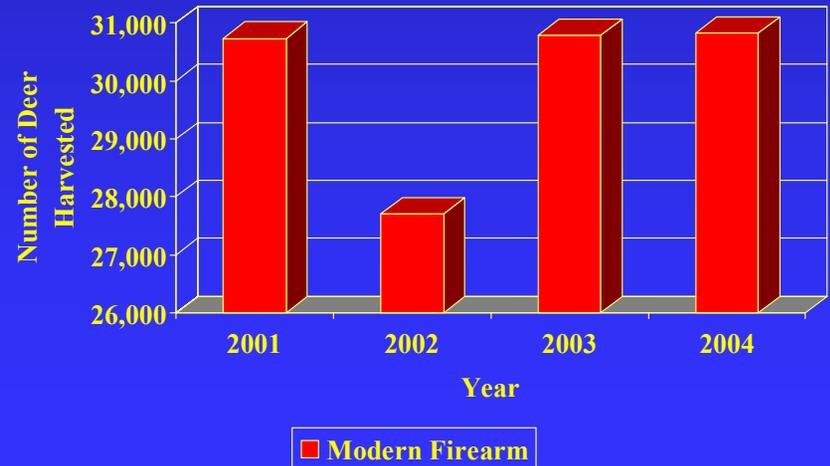
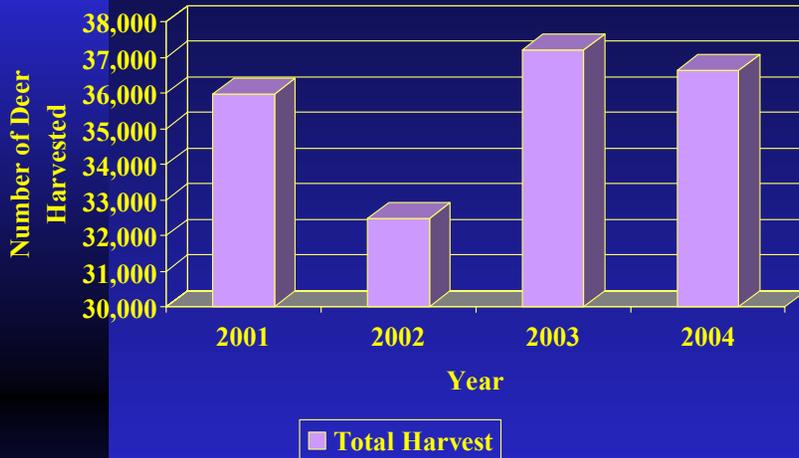
# Deer Tag Sales



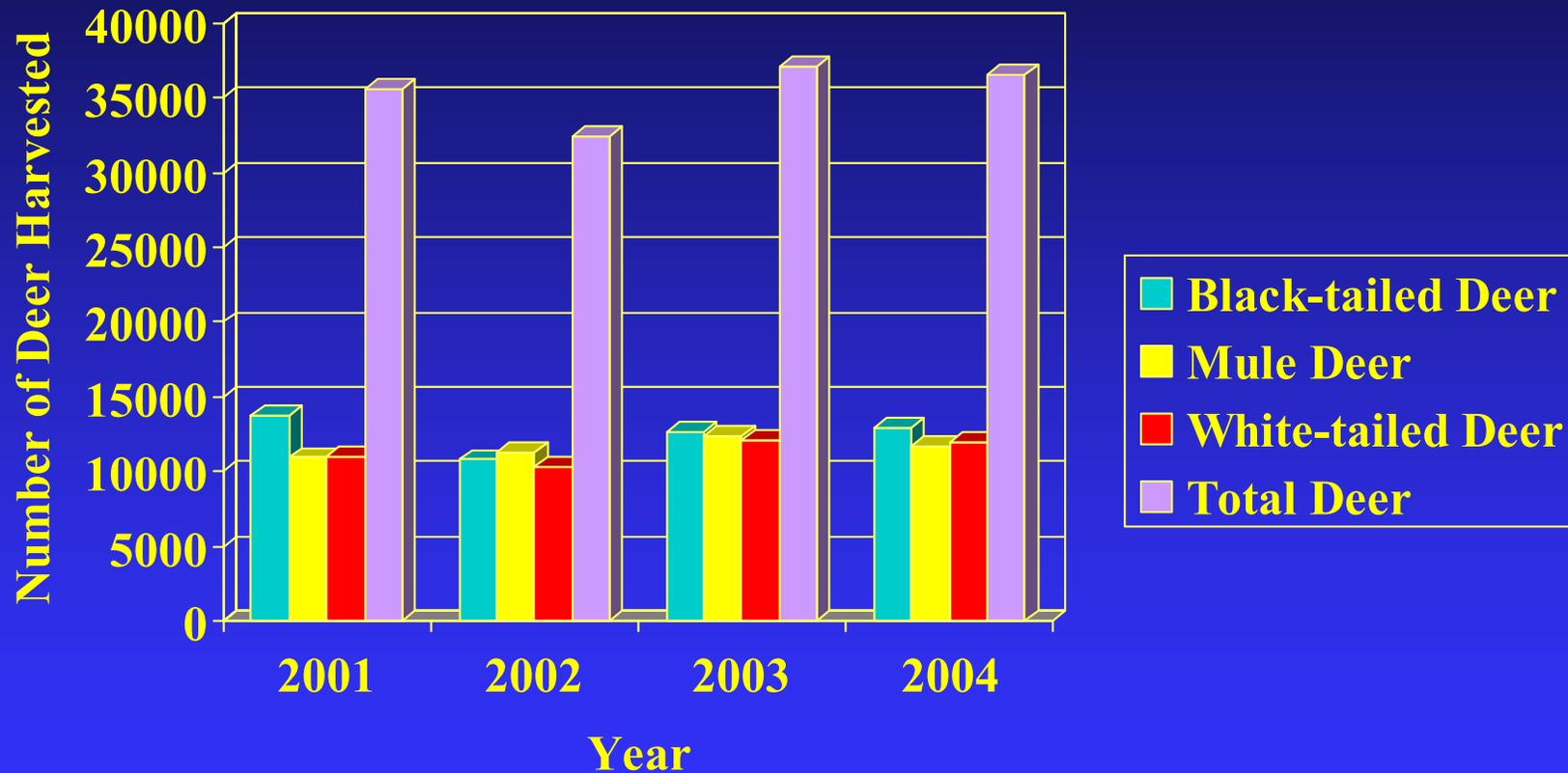
# Deer Hunter Participation



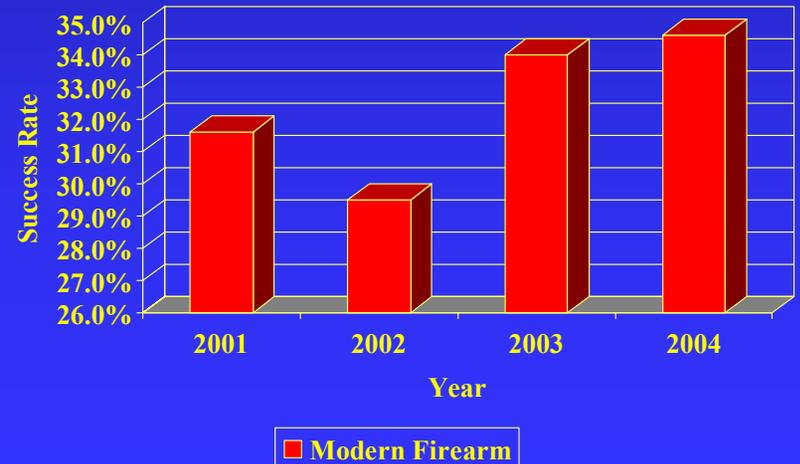
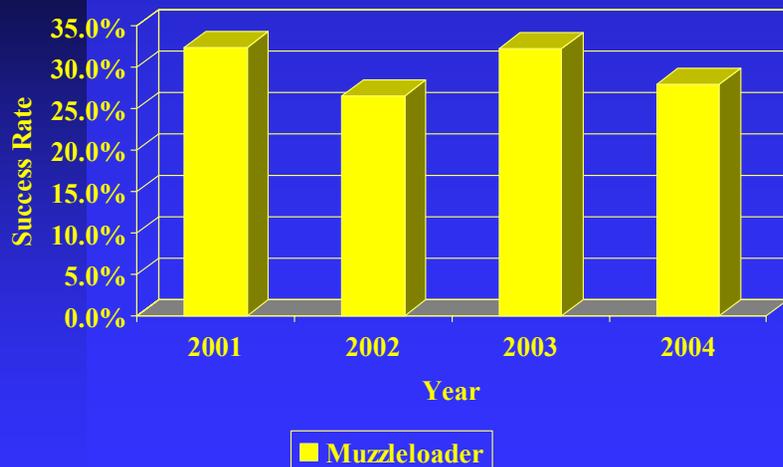
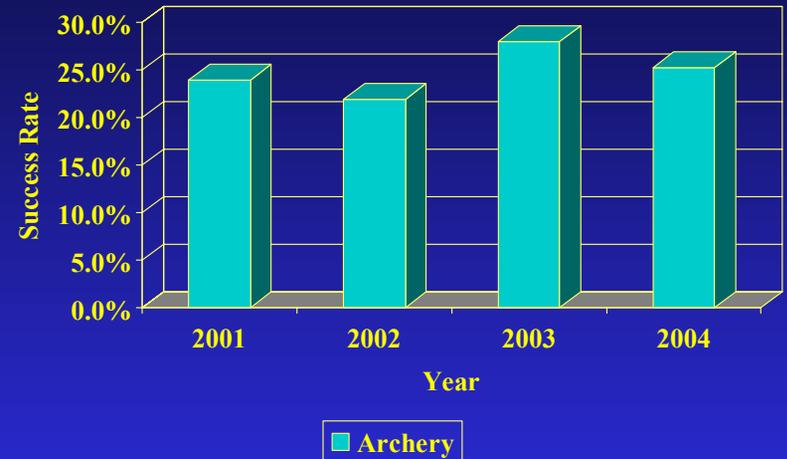
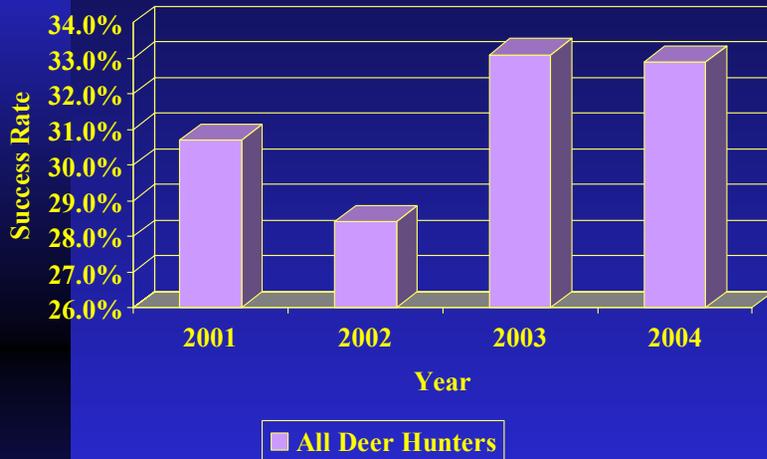
# Deer Harvest



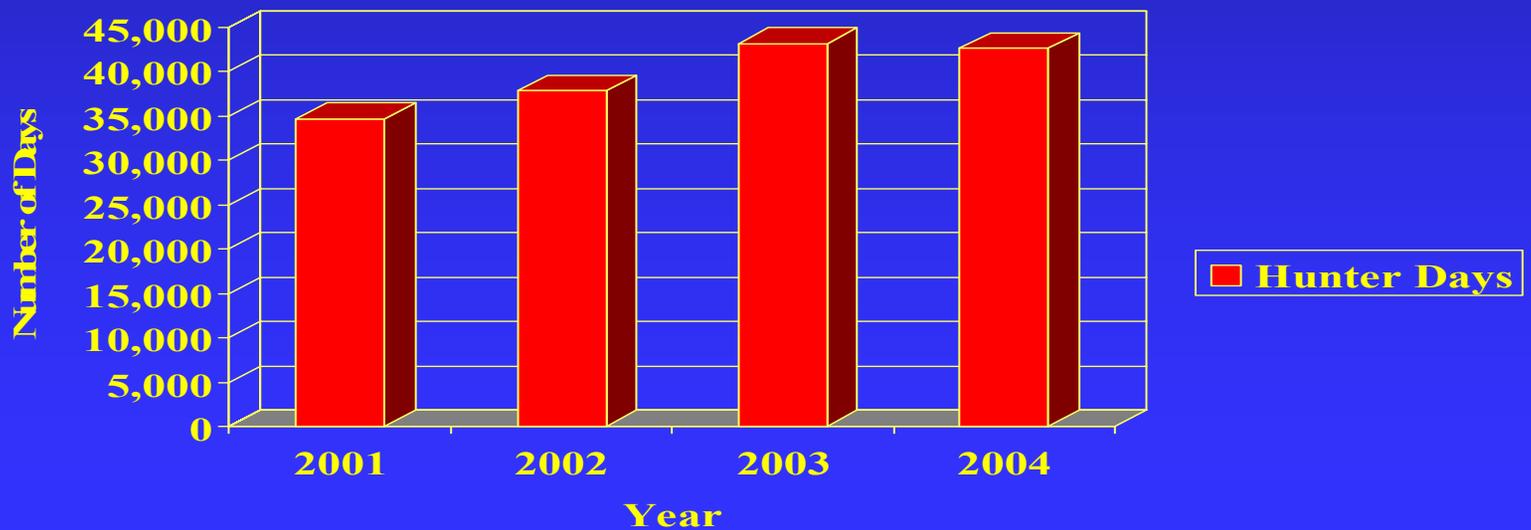
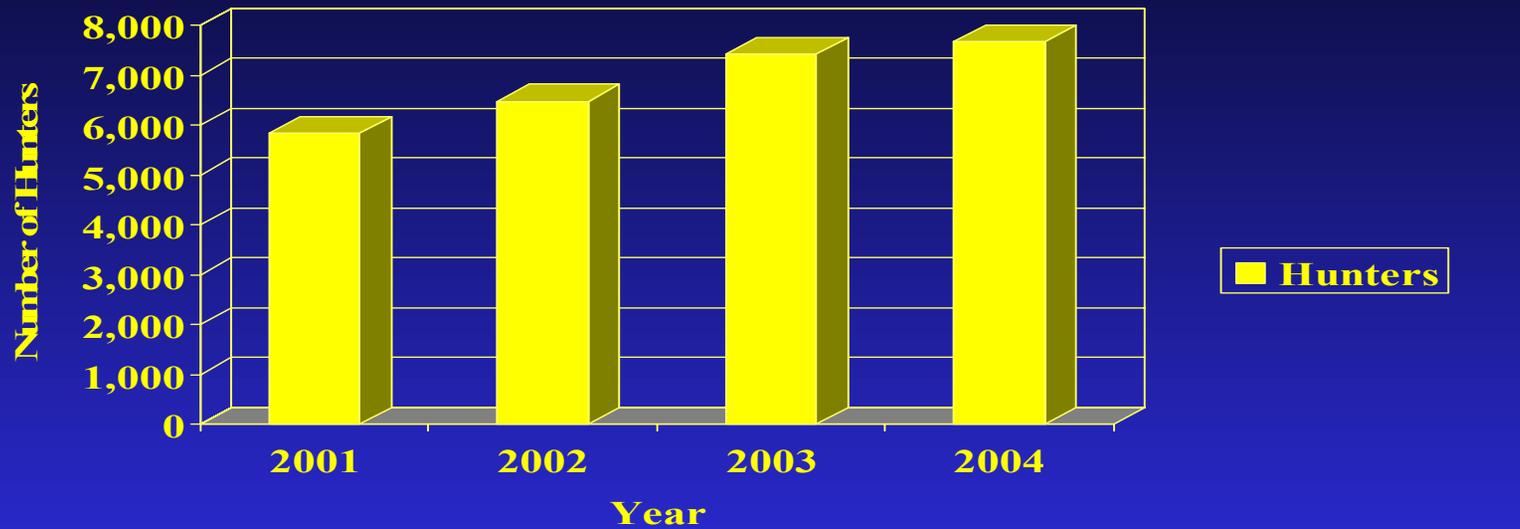
# Deer Harvest



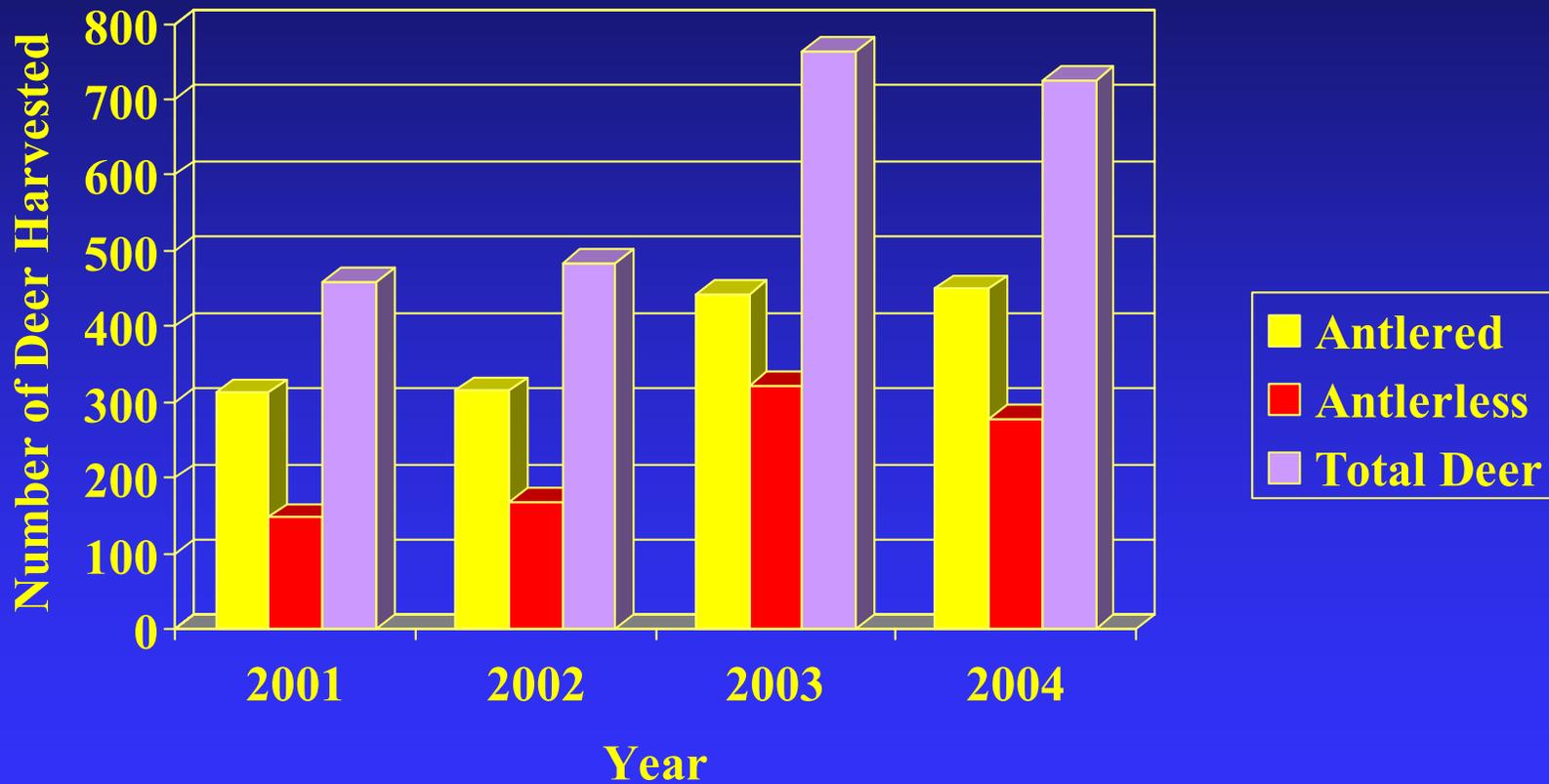
# Deer Harvest Success Rates



# Muzzleloader Participation for Deer

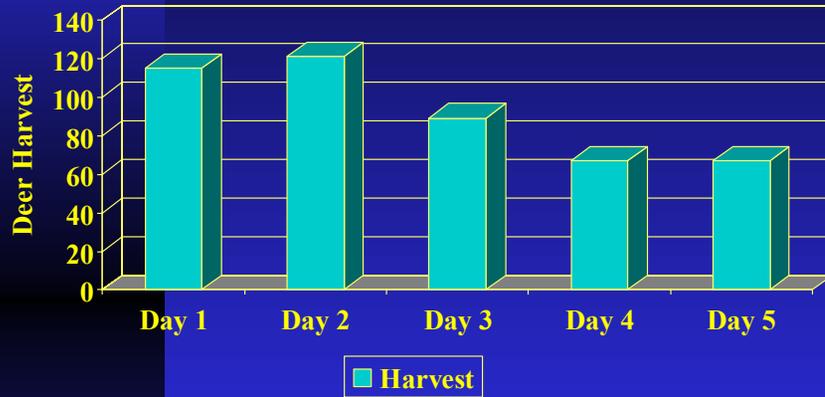


# Early Season Muzzleloader Harvest Deer

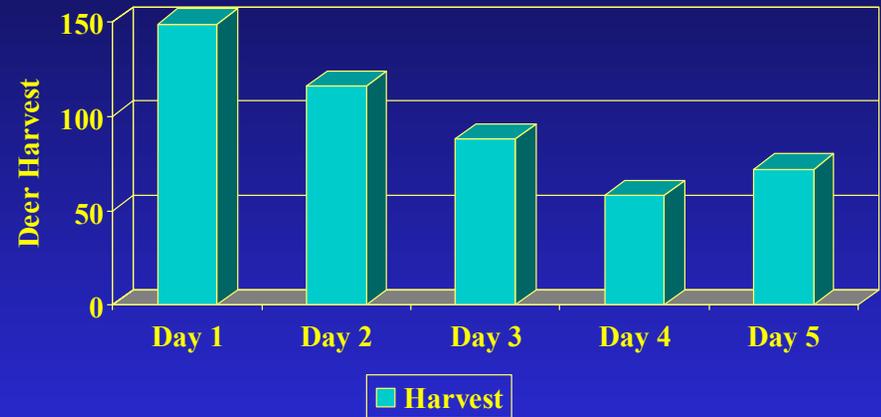


# Early Muzzleloader Harvest by Day

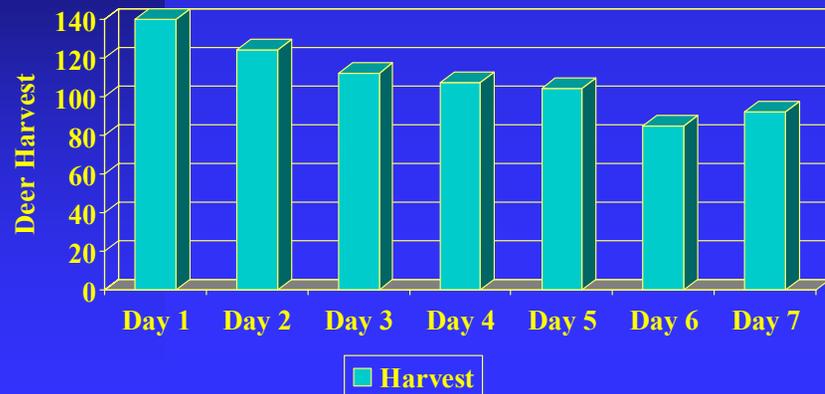
2001



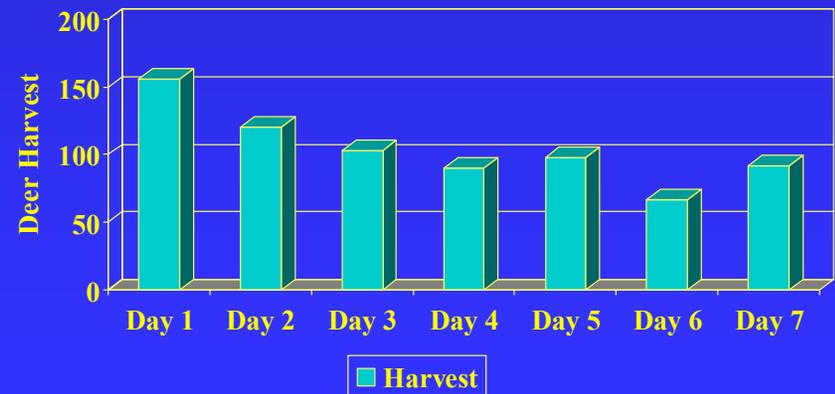
2002



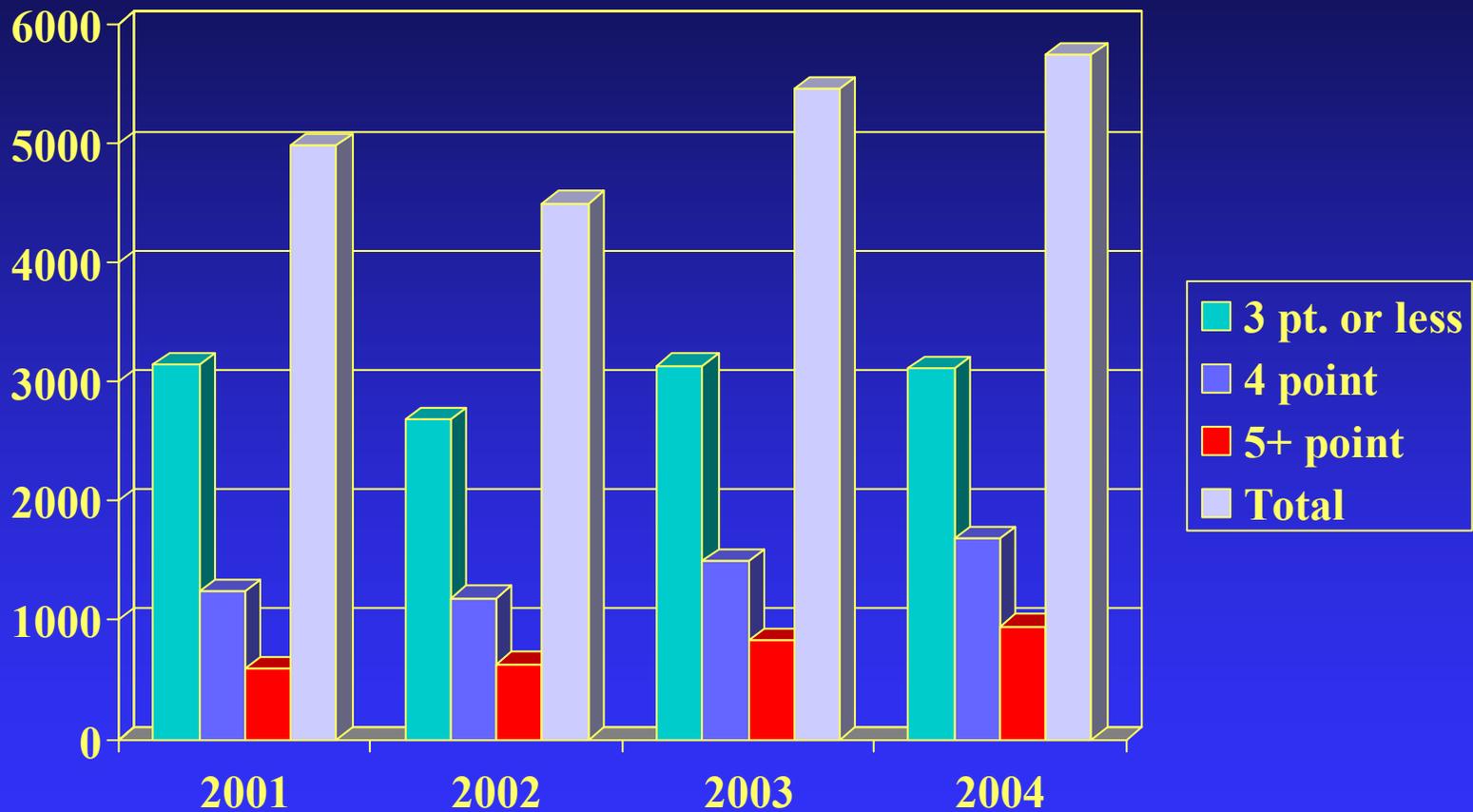
2003



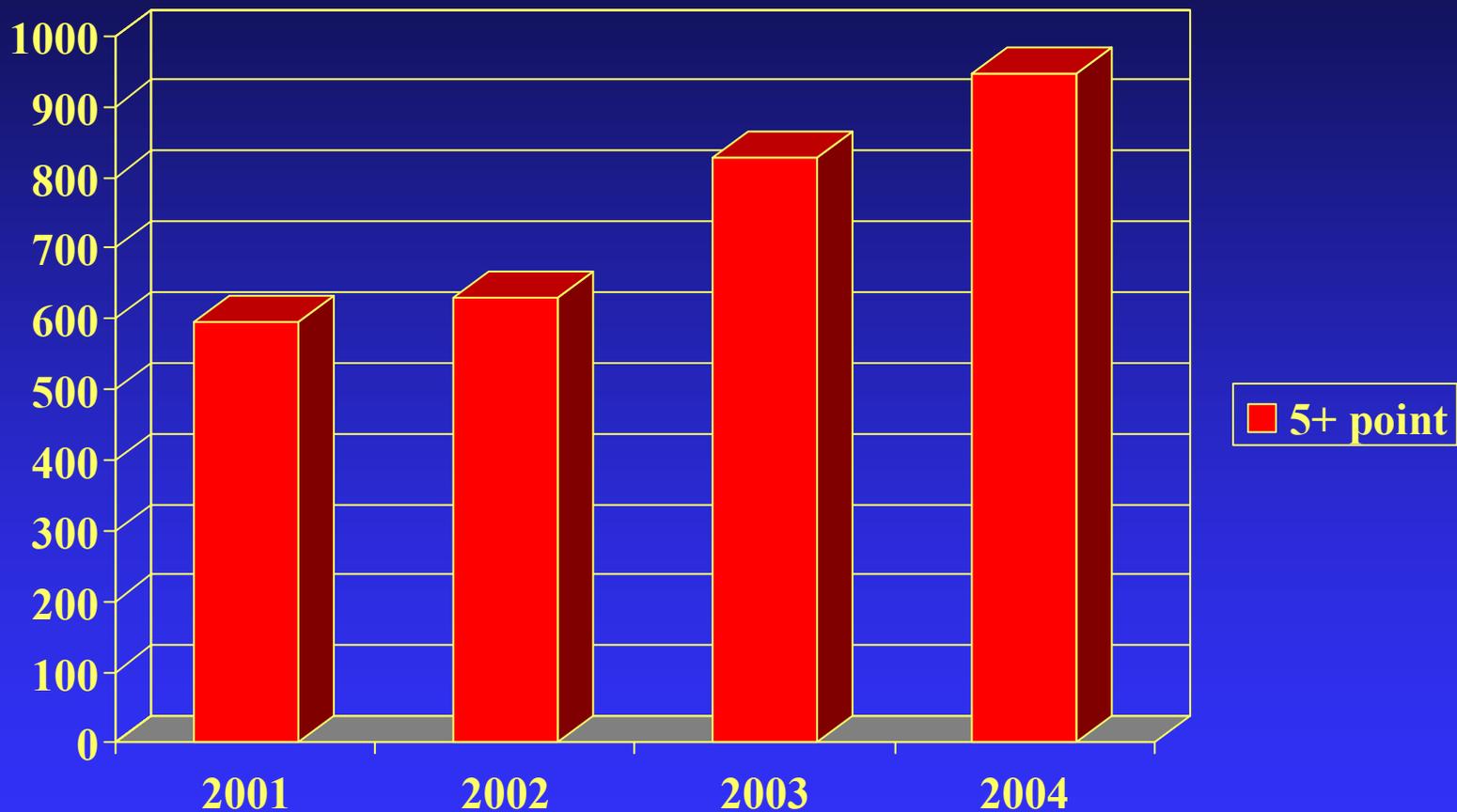
2004



# White-tailed deer buck harvest in NE Washington



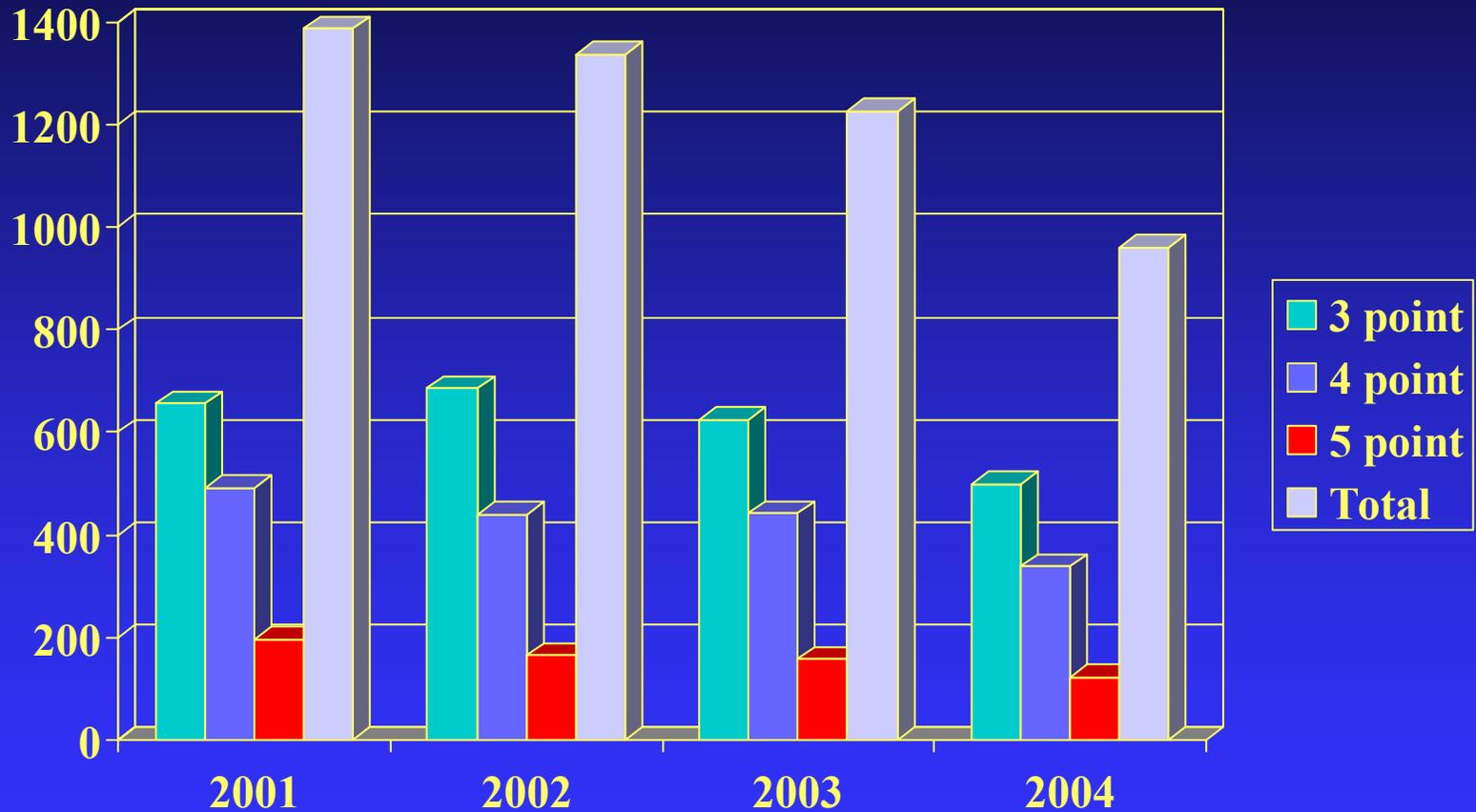
# White-tailed deer buck harvest in NE Washington. Five point or better.



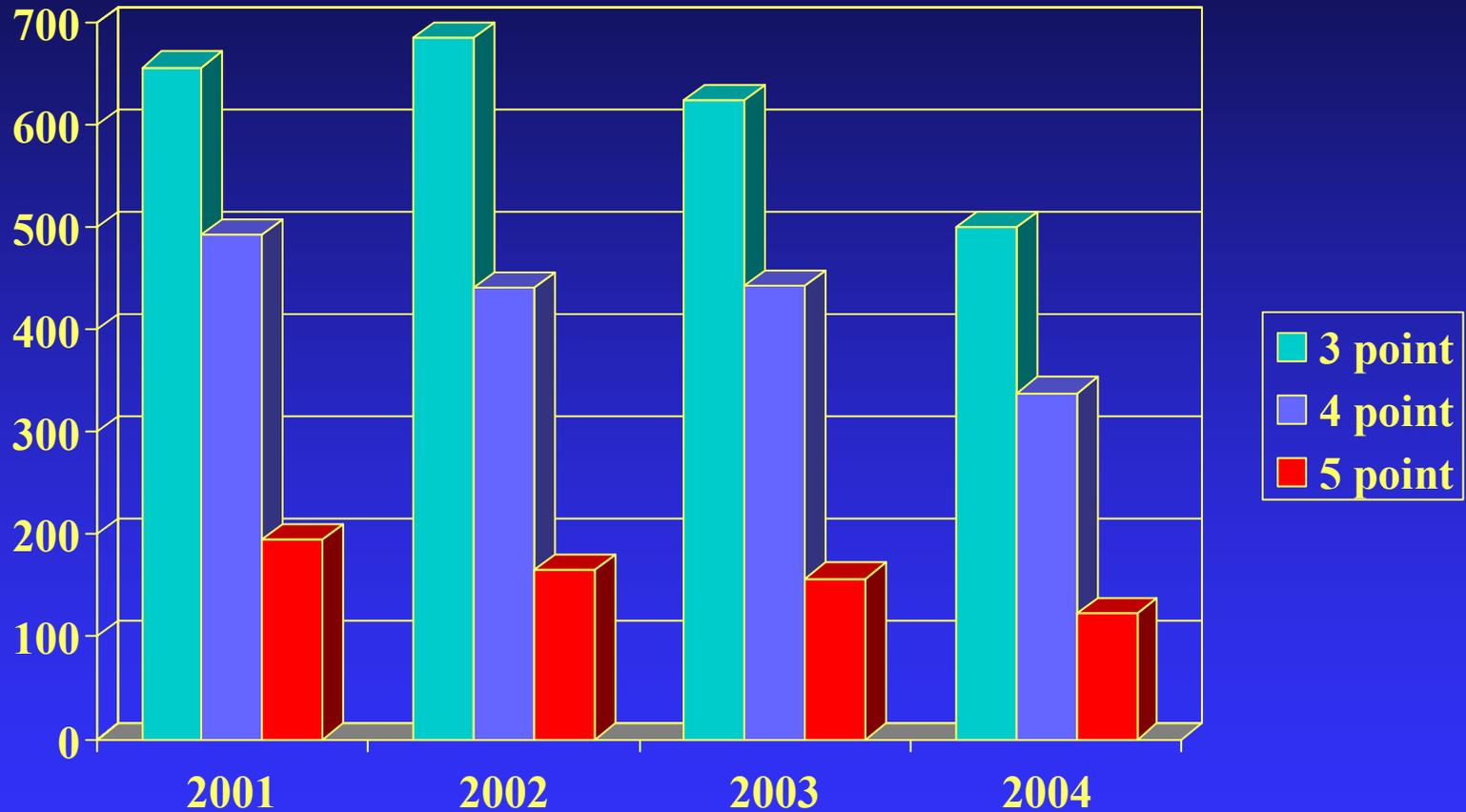
## Options- Implement a Pilot 3-Point Antler Restriction for White-tailed Deer in NE Washington.

- Change to a late buck 3-point antler restriction in all NE GMUs.
- Implement restriction only in GMU 117.
- Implement on the Pend Oreille Wildlife Refuge.
- No change.

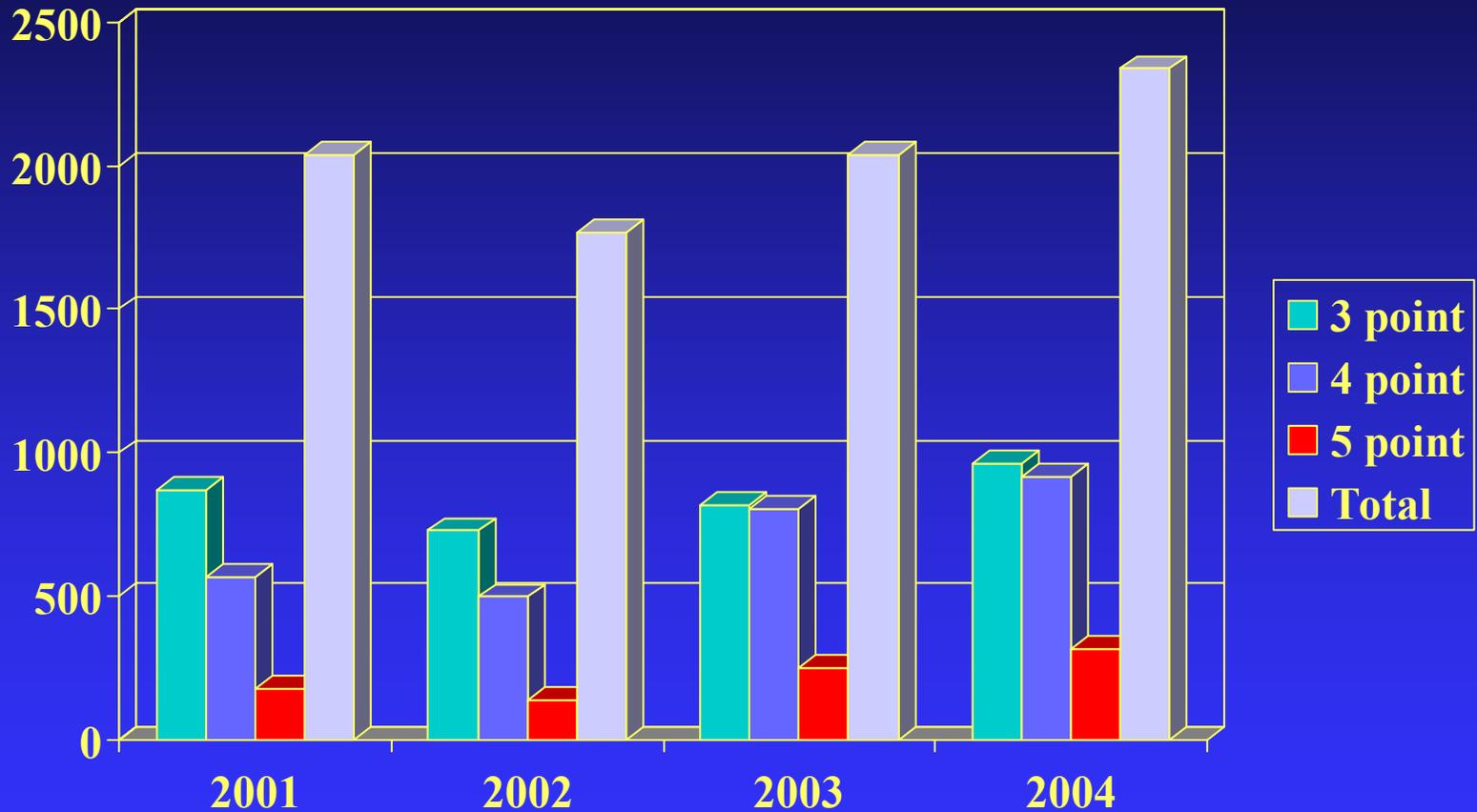
# Mule deer buck harvest in SE Washington.



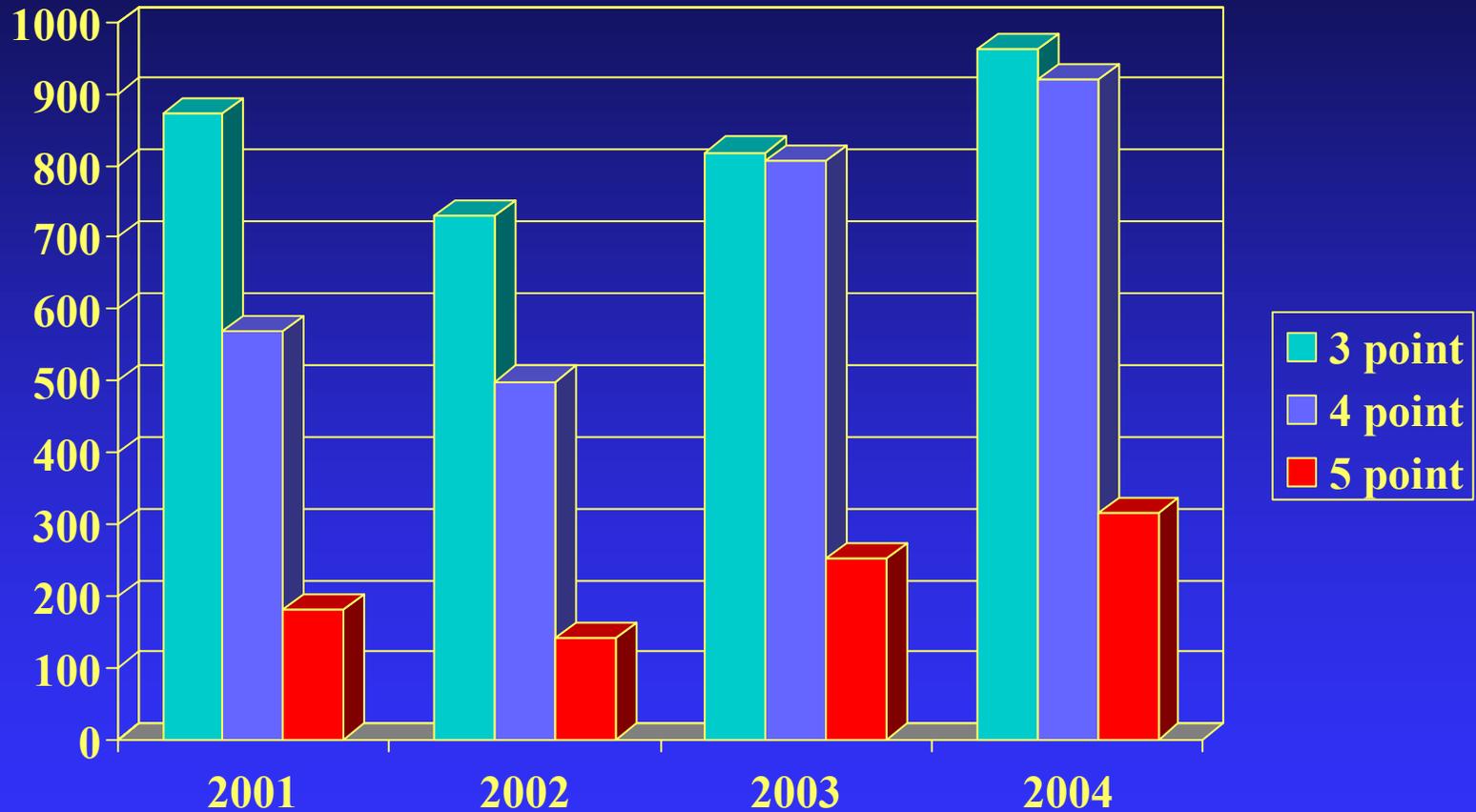
# Mule deer buck harvest in SE Washington.



# Mule deer buck harvest in Okanogan under extended season.



# Mule deer buck harvest in Okanogan under extended season.



## Options- Improve mature buck escapement for mule deer in Chelan and Okanogan counties

- No change.
- Shorten the general modern firearm season to nine days and increase late buck special permits in Chelan and Methow GMUs.
- Increase antlerless harvest through special permits.
- Combine the two previous options.
- Change to special permit only only deer hunting in GMUs 231, 250, 251.

# Arid/Open Land Buck Ratios

- Low mule deer fawn recruitment driven by dry conditions.
- Static hunting season structure with 3-pt. antler restriction.
- Buck harvest has been constant to declining.
- Buck ratios have dropped below objective.

Options- Improve buck ratios in Douglas, Grant, Franklin, Whitman, and Adams counties.

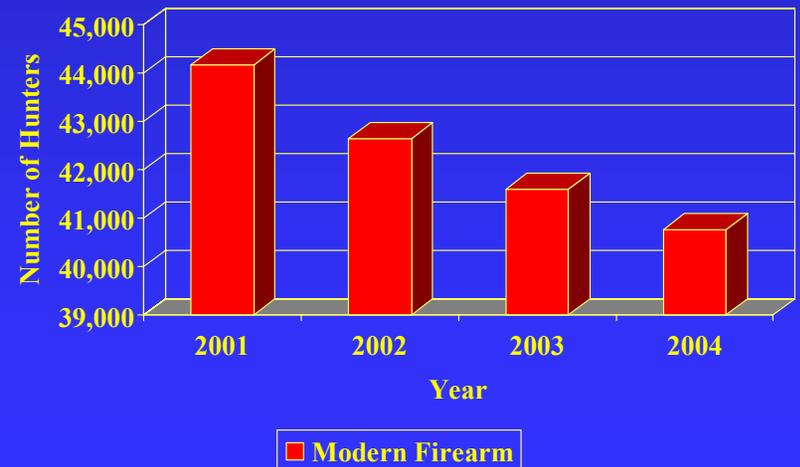
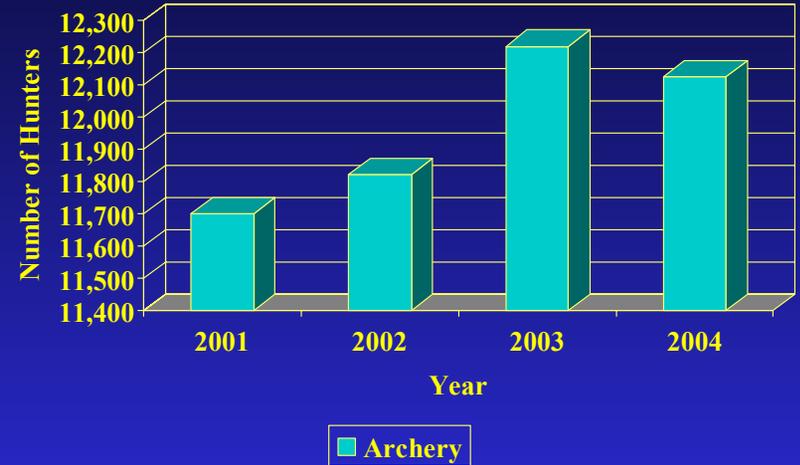
- Change to special permit only for mule deer in these counties.
- Change to special permit only for mule deer in GMUs 142, 248, 272, 284, 381.
- Reduce the season to seven days in these areas.
- Change late muzzleloader special permits in GMU 381 to antlerless only.
- Increase the antlerless deer harvest in these areas.
- No change.

Options- High vulnerability for deer in open country also applies to the Central District south of Spokane. Improve white-tailed buck ratios in this District.

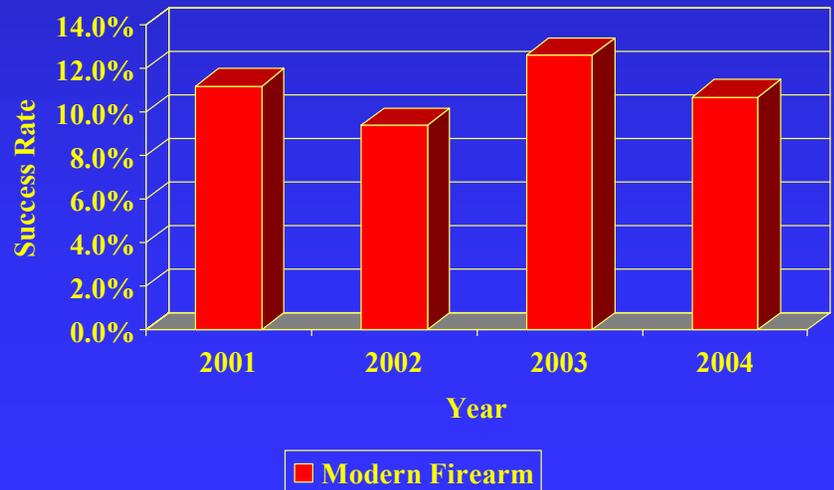
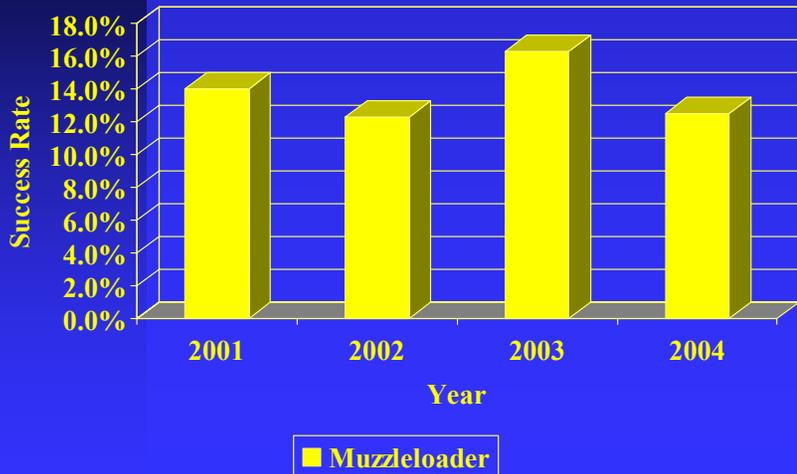
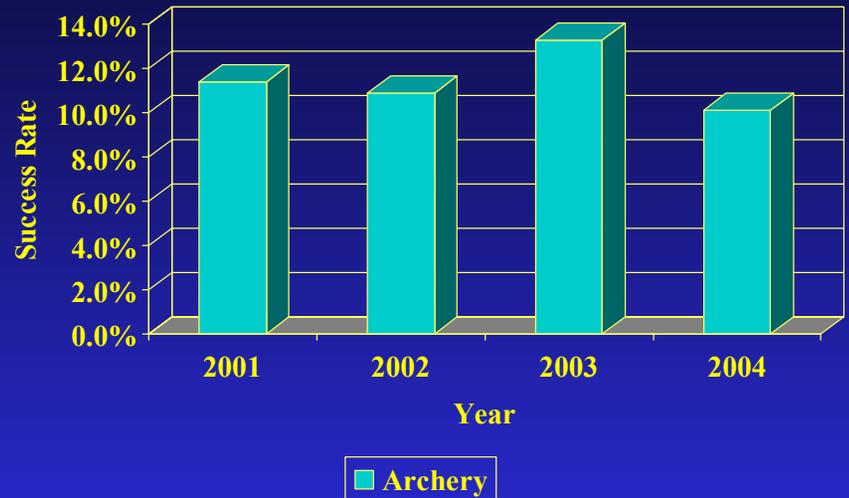
- Close late season completely for bucks.
- Eliminate late buck general season and switch to special permits in GMUs 130, 133, 136, 139, 142.
- Change to special permit only in GMU 139 for late buck for both modern firearm and muzzleloader.
- No change.



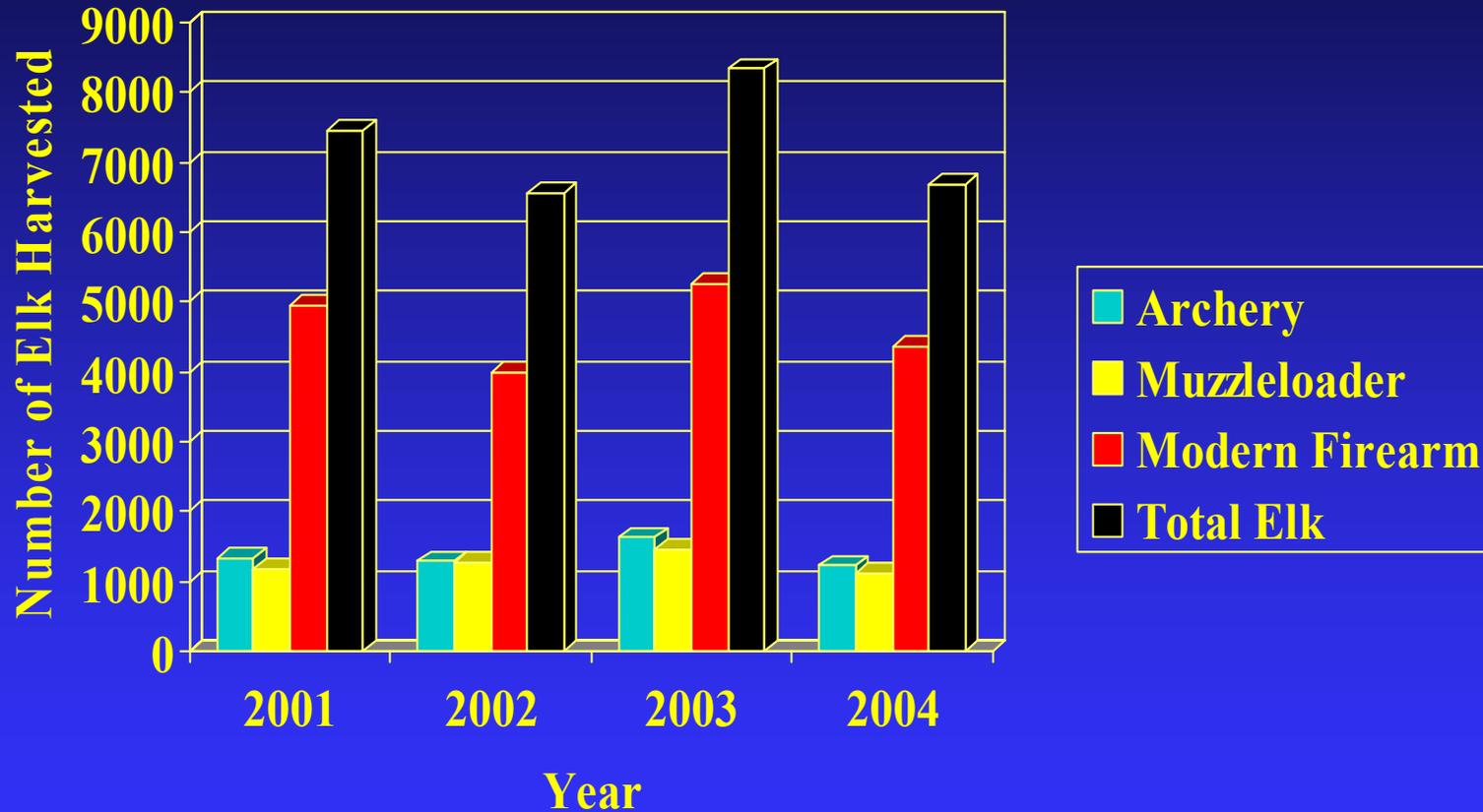
# Elk Hunter Participation



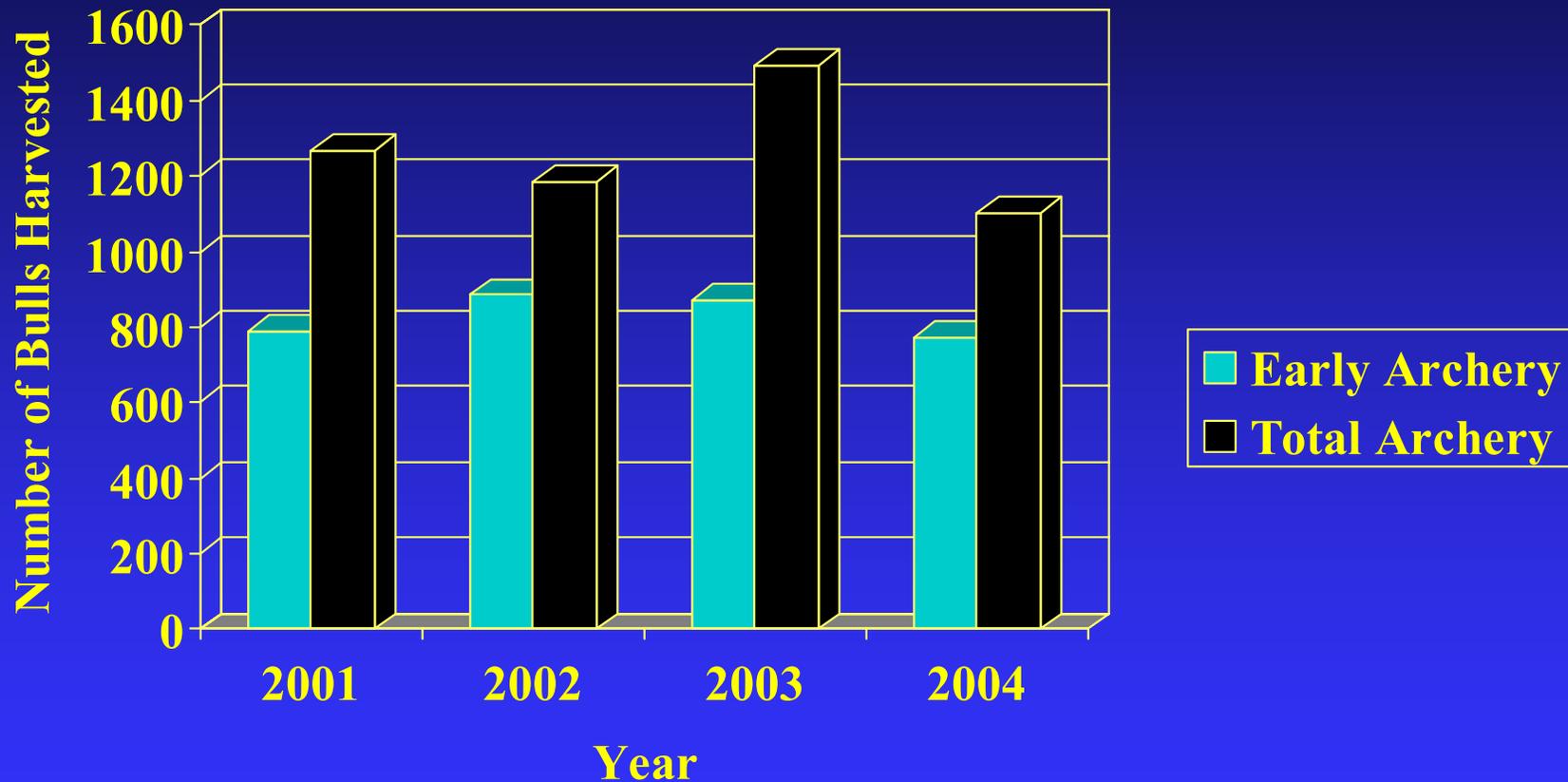
# Elk Harvest Success Rates



# Elk Harvest



# Early Archery Bull Elk Harvest



# Colockum Elk Herd

- Variable history for this herd – not always meeting population objectives.
- Recruitment has been down the last few years.
- Winter survey trends showed a steady decline in 2002, '03, '04.
- In response, the Dept. recommended elimination of antlerless opportunity for modern firearm special permits, muzzleloader special permits, and general season archery. Current antlerless harvest is only related to damage at this time.
- Recruitment and population numbers have improved since the season change in 2004 but population is still below objective.

Options- Manage the damage hunt harvest for Colockum elk to include archery.

- Provide limited archery special permits once the population reaches objective.
- Provide some archery permits in the damage hunt areas now, before the population reaches objective.
- No change.

Options- Better direct damage related hunts to private lands where damage is occurring rather than public lands.

- Provide “any deer” or “any elk” opportunities on private lands but “buck only” and “bull only” opportunities on public land.
- Provide second, antlerless only, white-tailed deer tags that require written permission from private landowner.
- Provide antlerless deer special permits in the Methow and Loomis area valid for private land only.
- No change. Use existing landowner access permits to address the problem.

Options- Create additional special permit opportunities for elk for modern firearm hunters in September.

- Implement in all of the Yakima herd GMUs, GMU 169, and GMU 588. This would result in shortening the deer archery season in these units.
- Change to special permit only for elk in GMUs 252 and 329.
- Create special permit elk hunts during this time frame on Turnbull, Hanford ALE, and Conboy National Wildlife Refuges.
- No change.

Questions?

# General Issues

- Equitability
- Equipment

# EQUITABILITY

- WHAT IS IT ???



# Equitable Opportunity

- Allocation between:
  - ◆ Modern Firearm Hunters
  - ◆ Muzzleloader Hunters
  - ◆ Archers
- Other Groups
  - ◆ Youth; Seniors; Disabled

# Equitable Opportunity

- What is “Fair”?
- Is it equal:
  - ◆ Days?
  - ◆ Harvest?
  - ◆ Success Rate?
- Something else?

# Equitable Opportunity

- The permit allocation formula has been used successfully for eight years
- Based on:
  - ◆ participation
  - ◆ success

$$\text{Permits} = \frac{\text{participation} \times \text{harvest quota}}{\text{success}}$$

# Equitable Opportunity

- Can we extend the permit allocation formula to general seasons?
- Does the formula include:
  - All deer or elk combined (does and bucks; cows and bulls)? – GMAC said yes!
  - What is the geographic scale? – District
  - Standards: Statewide Participation & Proportion of Harvest

# Statewide Participation Rates

Proportion of Tag Sales		
Deer	2000-02	2004
Modern	83.1%	81%
Archery	11.5%	12.3%
Muzzleloader	5.4%	6.7%
Elk	2000-02	2004
Modern	70.4%	68.7%
Archery	16.1%	17.5%
Muzzleloader	13.5%	13.8%

# Equitable Opportunity

- Techniques to make changes:
  - ◆ GMUs open to group
  - ◆ Antlerless opportunity
  - ◆ Season timing
  - ◆ Season length



# Equitable Opportunity

- What is the current status?
- Initial changes with 2003-05 package
- Created Allocation Committee as part of GMAC to review results of last pkg changes
- Developed list of recommendations
  - ◆ Dependant on Biologist's review of resource impacts & local public discussion

These individual GMU/District recommendations are not necessarily part of the statewide issues, but will be considered as we move forward



Questions?

# Equipment Regulations

- Electronic devices – Robo duck
- Muzzleloader equipment
  - ◆ Ignition systems
  - ◆ Powder charges
- Archery
  - ◆ Let-off requirements
  - ◆ Arrow weight restrictions