

# 2025-26 WILDLIFE REGULATION REVIEW AND AMENDMENT PROCESS

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## BOARD REGULATION PROPOSALS *Staff Final Recommendations*



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# **2025-26 WILDLIFE REGULATION PROCESS**

**Oct 7 – Dec 6, 2024 -- Public Scoping Period:** public comments solicited via web-based input forms, staffs contact constituent groups and/or individuals to assess regulatory concerns

**January 22 & 23, 2025 – Wildlife & Boat Committee/DWR Board Meetings:** preliminary review of issues, solicit Board regulatory concepts

**Dec 9, 2024 – February 2025:** Staff committees review input, analyze data, and consult with constituent groups and individual stakeholders to develop proposal-stage regulation amendment recommendations

**March 20, 2025 – DWR Board Meeting:** Staffs present proposal-stage recommendations to the Board, public comments accepted on staff recommendations and additional recommendations, Board deliberates and proposes regulation amendments (*Wildlife & Boat Committee Meeting – March 19th*)

**April 9 – May 9, 2025:** Regulation Proposal Comment Period: public input is solicited on the Board's proposed regulation amendments

**May 22, 2025 – DWR Board Meeting:** Staffs present final recommendations to the Board, public comments accepted on proposed amendments, Board deliberates and votes on proposed regulation amendments (*Wildlife & Boat Committee Meeting – May 21st*)

**August 1, 2025:** Effective date for regulation amendments adopted by the Board



# **Public Comments**

## **Online Public Comments – 1,461**

Deer – 611	Elk – 33
Bear – 522	General – 110
Furbearer & Waterfowl – 50	Firearms – 135

## **Email/Hand-Written Public Comments – 682**

Firearms – 663	Bear – 12	Deer – 7	Other – 2
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**Total Public Comments – 2,143**



# **REGULATIONS: BLOCK FORMAT**

## **Elk Regulations**

- 4VAC15-90-530 (elk hunt lottery)
- 4VAC15-90-540 (landowner program)
- 4VAC15-90-550 (Conservation License)

## **General Regulations**

- 4VAC15-20-50 (pet fox renewal)
- 4VAC15-20-65 (license fees)
- 4VAC15-20-130 (T&E species list)
- 4VAC15-20-155 (camping)
- 4VAC15-30-40 (snakeheads/prairie dogs)
- 4VAC15-40-282 (bear feeding)

## **Furbearer & Waterfowl**

### **Blind Regulations**

- 4VAC15-160-31 (opossum trapping)
- 4VAC15-210-51 (raccoon trapping)
- 4VAC15-170-30 (otter tagging)
- 4VAC15-260-50 (Back Bay blinds)

### **Firearm Regulations**

- 4VAC15-40-60 (cased gun law)
- 4VAC15-40-61 (hunting on public land)
- 4VAC15-40-62 (DWR shooting ranges)
- 4VAC15-40-70 (dog training season)
- 4VAC15-210-10 (raccoon chase season)
- 4VAC15-70-60 (bobcat archery season)
- 4VAC15-240-60 (turkey archery season)





# QUESTIONS



# **REGULATIONS: BLOCK FORMAT**

## **Motion**

I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources adopt the regulation amendments contained within the block format as presented by staff.



# DEER REGULATIONS

## 4VAC15-90-10. Open season; generally. (pg. 6)

- Establish 4-week firearms season on private lands in 20 counties WBR
- Establish 7-week season on private lands western Amherst, Bedford, Carroll, Floyd, Franklin, Montgomery, western Nelson, Page, Pulaski, Roanoke, Rockingham (east of 613 & 731) Shenandoah, Warren, and Wythe counties
- Implement early and late antlerless only firearms season in Greene, Hanover, Henrico, and James City counties
- Make descriptions for public and private lands in Carroll and Roanoke consistent with other counties



# DEER REGULATIONS

## 4VAC15-90-70. Archery Hunting. (pg. 25)

- Clarify that the late archery deer season is only open where the firearms deer season ends prior to the first Saturday in January
- Clarify language regarding the “carry” of firearms during designated special archery seasons

### Recommended Modifications

1. Start the late archery season the “day” after the general firearms season closes
2. Maintain the current late archery season in Alleghany, Bath, Bland, Buchanan, Dickenson, Highland, Lee, Rockingham (west of 613/731), Rockbridge, Russell, Scott, Tazewell, and Wise



# DEER REGULATIONS

## 4VAC15-90-80. Muzzleloading gun hunting. (pg. 28)

- Clarifying that the late muzzleloading season is only open where the firearms deer season ends prior to the first Saturday in January
- Provide 2 either-sex hunting days in Buchanan County (1 early season, 1 late season)
- Provide 1 either-sex hunting day during the late season on federal lands in Dickenson County
- Update definitions of muzzleloading rifles and revolvers
- Clarify language regarding the “carry” of firearms during designated special muzzleloading seasons

### Recommended Modifications

1. Increase the early and late muzzleloader season in Rockbridge to full season, either-sex
2. Correct oversight in regulation language by adding Rockbridge to the list of counties WBR that allow either-sex deer hunting on National Forest and Department-owned lands on the last day of the late muzzleloader season





# DEER REGULATIONS

## 4VAC15-90-89. Earn a buck. (pg. 33)

- Establish EAB on private lands in Chesterfield, Craig, Giles, and Spotsylvania
- Clarify that antlerless deer taken on kill permits do not fulfill the EAB requirement

## 4VAC15-90-91. General firearms season either-sex deer hunting days. (pg. 35)

- Increase either-sex hunting days in 29 counties/cities
- Modify text to maintain the current 3 either-sex days in Lee County
- Increase either-sex hunting days on 4 WMAs and Cumberland State Forest
- Add references to federal lands in Dickenson and Wise counties to maintain antlered deer only hunting on these lands

### Recommended Modifications

1. Increase the either-sex hunting days in Caroline County from 8 to 15 days
2. Amend the increase in either-sex hunting days in Rockbridge County to increase from 3 to 8 days



# QUESTIONS



# **DEER REGULATIONS**

## **Motion**

I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources adopt the proposed deer regulation amendments as presented by staff.



# **BEAR REGULATIONS**

## **4VAC15-50-11. Open season; generally.** (pg. 58)

- Decrease the length of the firearms season by 25 days in 24 counties, primarily in northwestern Virginia where sarcoptic mange is endemic
- Add an additional week of firearms hunting in Charlotte, Halifax, Mecklenburg, and Prince Edward counties
- Create consistent, county-wide bear firearms seasons in the counties Montgomery, Pulaski, Smyth, Washington, and Wythe to reflect the current bear firearms seasons north/west of I-81

### **Recommended Modifications**

1. Remove the 3-day early season from Bland, Craig, Giles, Montgomery, Pulaski, Roanoke, Smyth, Tazewell, and Wythe counties
2. Include language in the regulation that the proposed regulation amendments would only be effective through the 2026-2027 bear hunting season



# **BEAR REGULATIONS**

## **4VAC15-50-70. Archery hunting.** (pg. 67)

- Decrease the length of the archery season by 14 days in 24 counties, primarily in northwestern Virginia where sarcoptic mange is endemic
- Clarify language regarding the “carry” of firearms during designated special archery seasons

### **Recommended Modifications**

Include language in the regulation that the proposed regulation amendments would only be effective through the 2026-2027 bear hunting season

## **4VAC15-50-71. Muzzleloading gun hunting.** (pg. 69)

- Decrease the length of the muzzleloading season by 3 days in 24 counties, primarily in northwestern Virginia where sarcoptic mange is endemic
- Update definitions of muzzleloading rifles and revolvers
- Clarify language regarding the “carry” of firearms during designated special muzzleloading seasons

### **Recommended Modifications**

Include language in the regulation that the proposed regulation amendments would only be effective through the 2026-2027 bear hunting season





# **BEAR REGULATIONS**

## **4VAC15-50-120. Bear hound training season.** (pg. 72)

- Provide 18 days of opportunity to chase bears without harvesting in 23 counties where bear harvest with hounds during the firearms season was removed due to the impact of mange
- Modify the dates for bear hound training in Appomattox and Buckingham so they don't conflict with changes to recommended bear firearms season dates
- Clarify language regarding "possession" of firearms during the bear hound training season

### **Recommended Modifications**

Remove 7 days from the November/December bear hound training season in Charlotte, Halifax, Mecklenburg, and Prince Edward counties that would overlap the additional week of bear firearms hunting in this area



# QUESTIONS



# **BEAR REGULATIONS**

## **Motion**

I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources adopt the proposed amendments to the bear regulations as presented by staff.



# GENERAL REGULATIONS

## DISPATCH OF GAME AND FURBEARERS

**4VAC15-40-310 (New).** Dispatch of game and furbearers by authorized persons. (pg. 101)

- Establish that the Director or his designee may authorize citizens to dispatch severely injured or diseased game, furbearers, and non-migratory game birds

### **Recommended Modifications**

Add explicit assurance that this new regulation will not authorize a person dispatching an animal to circumvent trespass or firearms use laws.

### **Mange Response Update**

- Adoption of this regulation is a major step in enhancing mange response
- Human-Wildlife Conflict Specialist
  - Approved for hiring
  - Included in FY26 budget
- August 2025 (?) for implementation of enhanced response capabilities



# QUESTIONS





# **GENERAL REGULATIONS**

## **DISPATCH OF GAME AND FURBEARERS**

### **Motion**

I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources adopt the proposed amendments to the dispatch of game and furbearer regulation as presented by staff.





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## Boating and Administrative Regulations

### Final Recommendations



# Boating Regulations - Issue

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## 4VAC15-410. Watercraft: Boating Safety Education

Summary: The proposed amendments are to simplify the regulations regarding the requirement for boaters to have boating safety in Virginia. In this section the following code sections are recommended to be amended or repealed:

- 4VAC15-410-30 – **REPEAL** – Phase in is complete and schedule is now obsolete
- 4VAC15-410-40 - B – **AMEND** to clarify the minimum standards for boating safety education course competency
- 4VAC15-410-50 A-D – **REPEAL** current section A, amend Section B, and renumber sections to clarify responsibilities of course providers
- 4VAC15-410-70 – **AMEND** to combine 4VAC15-410-80 into this section and reduce redundant language found in sections regarding course certificates and student records
- 4VAC15-410-80 – **REPEAL** – necessary pieces to be incorporated into section 70
- 4VAC15-410-90 – **AMEND** section on Instructor Certification to simplify section eliminate redundant language in regulation
- 4VAC15-410-100-B – **REPEAL** section B regarding the specific requirements of an open-book test. This can be managed through internal policy.
- 4VAC15-410-110 A and C – **AMEND** – Eliminate redundant language in regulation that is already included in definition of equivalency exam. **REPEAL** section C as this re-iterates what is already in the definitions.
- 4VAC15-410-130 – **AMEND** Section A to include one sentence from section B. Section B will be **REPEALED**
- 4VAC15-410-140 – **AMEND** Section B to eliminate unnecessary specifications on the contents of an application or the documentation required. **REPEAL** section D as that is no longer the process for obtaining a replacement card.



# Boating Regulations - Issue

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## 4VAC15-430. Watercraft: Safety Equipment Requirements

Summary: The proposed amendments are to simplify the regulations regarding the requirement for boaters to have boating safety in Virginia. In this section the following code sections are recommended to be amended or repealed:

- 4VAC15-430-60 – **AMEND** – Remove section 4 as it is already stated in 4VAC-15-430-30 Section 3.
- 4VAC15-430-150 – **AMEND** to clarify the requirement. Existing regulation is related to the building of a vessel.
- 4VAC15-430-160 – **AMEND** to provide correct web address.
- 4VAC15-430-170 – **AMEND** to remove section D which is not required by CFR
- 4VAC15-430-210 – **AMEND** to clarify the requirement. Existing regulation is related to the building of a vessel.

## 4VAC15-400. Watercraft: Accident and Casualty Reporting

- 4VAC15-400 (Forms) – **AMEND** to remove all except the Virginia Boating Incident Report form



# Administrative Regulations - Issue

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## 4VAC15-20. Definitions and Miscellaneous: In General

Summary: The proposed repeal is to simplify the regulations removing a regulation that is no longer in use by the agency regarding license sales:

- 4VAC15-20-120 – **REPEAL** – Regulation refers to a practice that is obsolete.







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## Questions?

Stacey Brown, Boating Division Director  
Boating Law Administrator  
804-308-6114  
[stacey.brown@dwr.virginia.gov](mailto:stacey.brown@dwr.virginia.gov)



Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources



## DWR Board Motion:

Mr. Chair,

I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources adopt the proposed regulation amendments related to Boating and Administration as presented by staff.



# 2025-34 Virginia Wild Turkey Management Plan: An Overview

*DWR Board Meeting*



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22 May 2025

# Wild Turkey Management Plan Snapshot

- Yesterday the W&B Committee voted to move the plan to the full board with a few wording suggestions per Dr. Parker's request
- The planning model integrates the public's values with the technical expertise of DWR staff to generate a plan for managing turkeys over the next 10 years.
- Through 2024-2025, staff worked with the Stakeholder Advisory Committee and Technical Committee to develop goals, objectives and potential strategies



# Wild Turkey Management Plan Snapshot

- Wild Turkey Management Plan contains 4 main goal areas:
  - Populations,
  - Habitat,
  - Recreation,
  - Conflict
    - The Objectives and Strategies clarify how to achieve the goals
- Public input was received through the Turkey Hunter Survey (2023) and public review of the turkey plan in March and early April of 2025
- Areas of focus in the near term include improving monitoring, population monitoring, and expanding outreach efforts





# Questions?



## Board Motion – May 22, 2025

### **Recommended Motion:**

Mr. Chairman,

I move that the DWR Board endorse the 2025-2034 Virginia Wild Turkey Management Plan as presented by staff.



# DWR Chronic Wasting Disease Updates

## *May 2025*



Alexandra Lombard, Wildlife Health Coordinator  
Dr. John Tracey, Wildlife Veterinarian



# 2024-2025 CWD Surveillance Summary

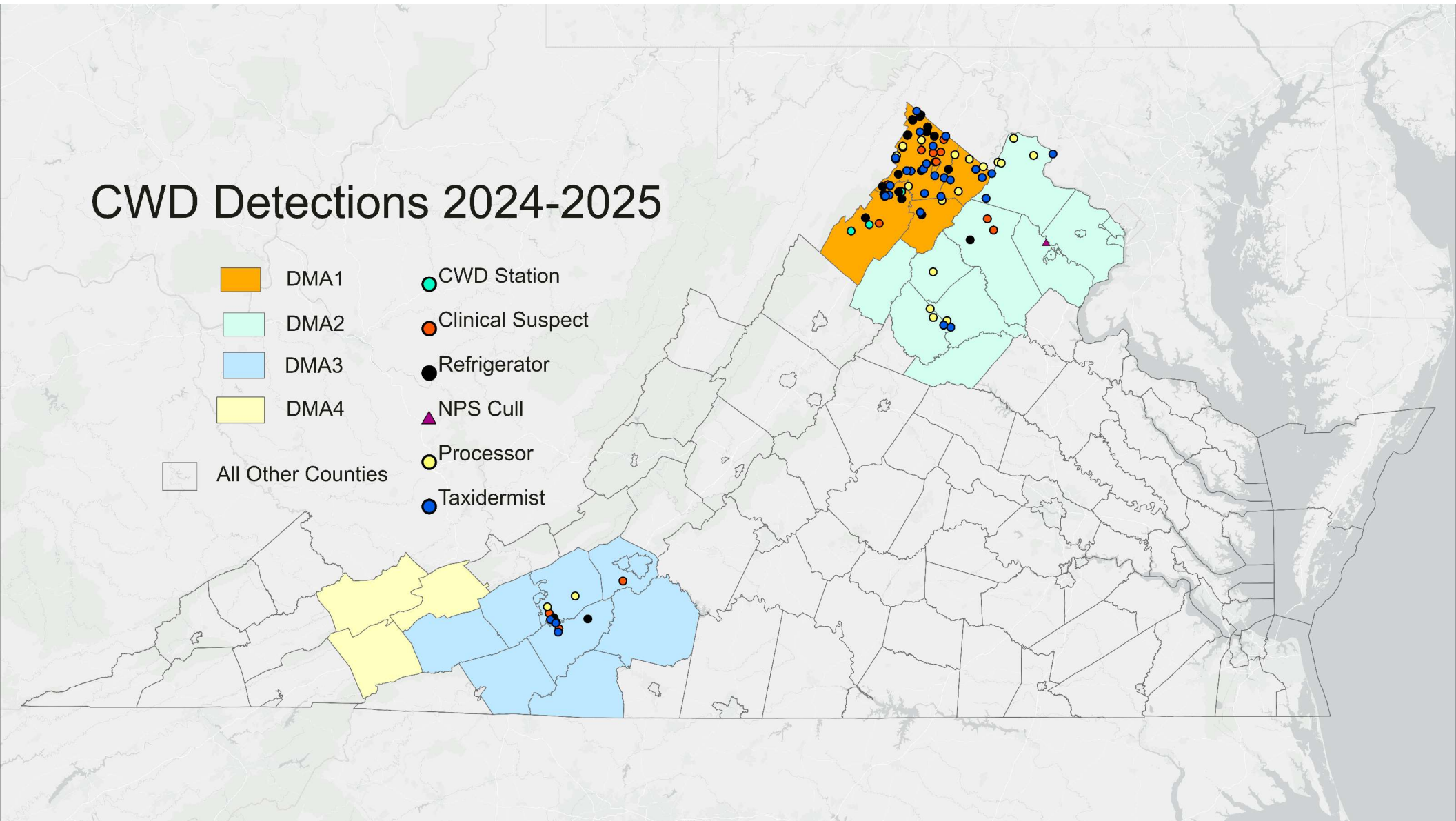
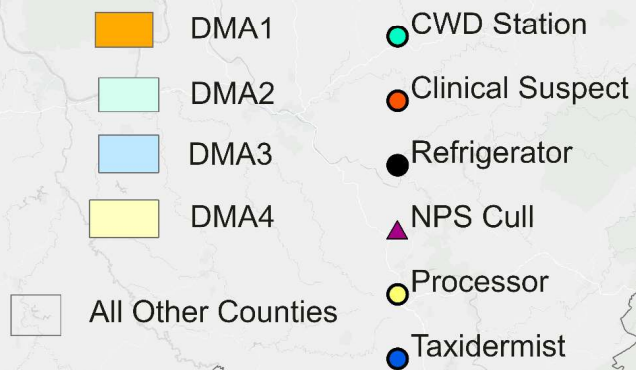
8101 deer tested



109 positive  
detections

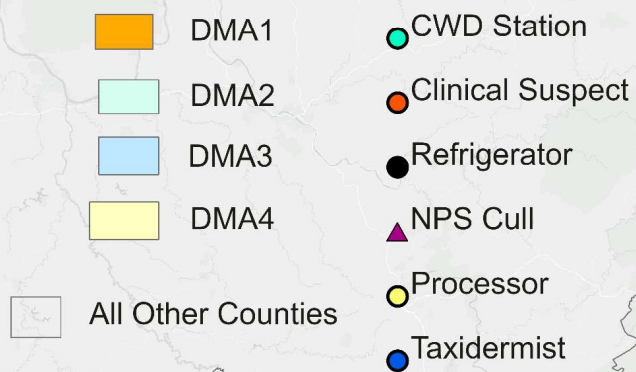


# CWD Detections 2024-2025

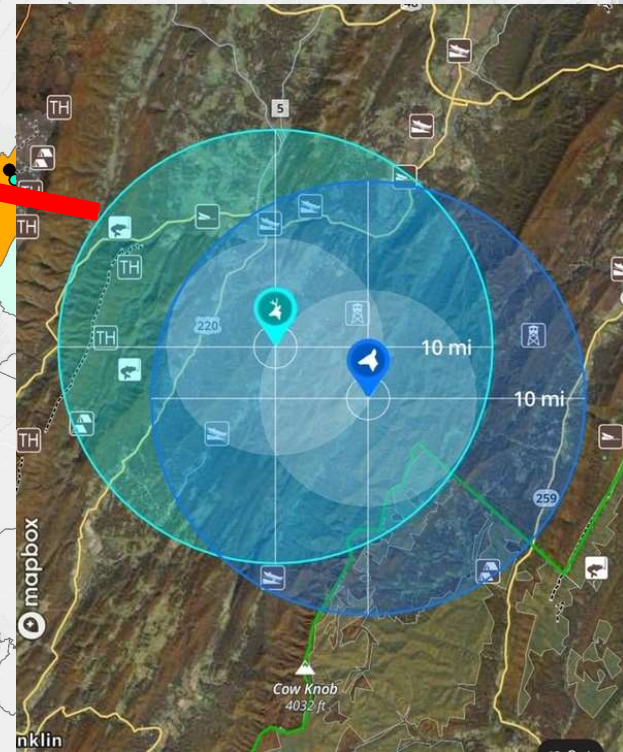
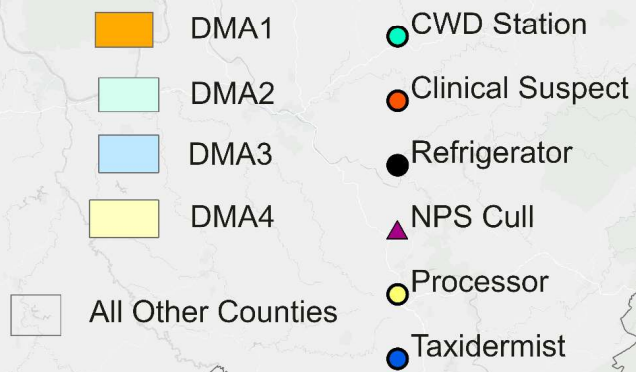




# CWD Detections 2024-2025

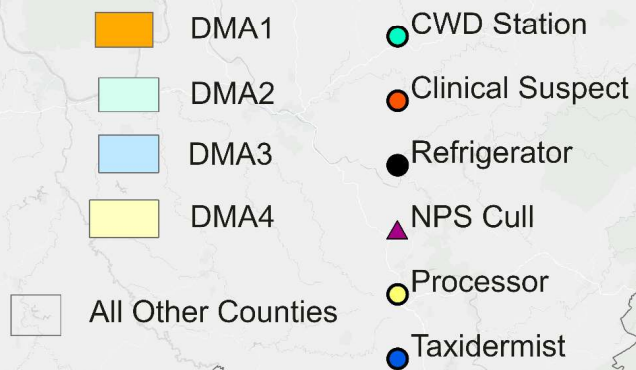


# CWD Detections 2024-2025





# CWD Detections 2024-2025



Roanoke  
2/24/25  
Adult



# DMA Changes for 2024-2025

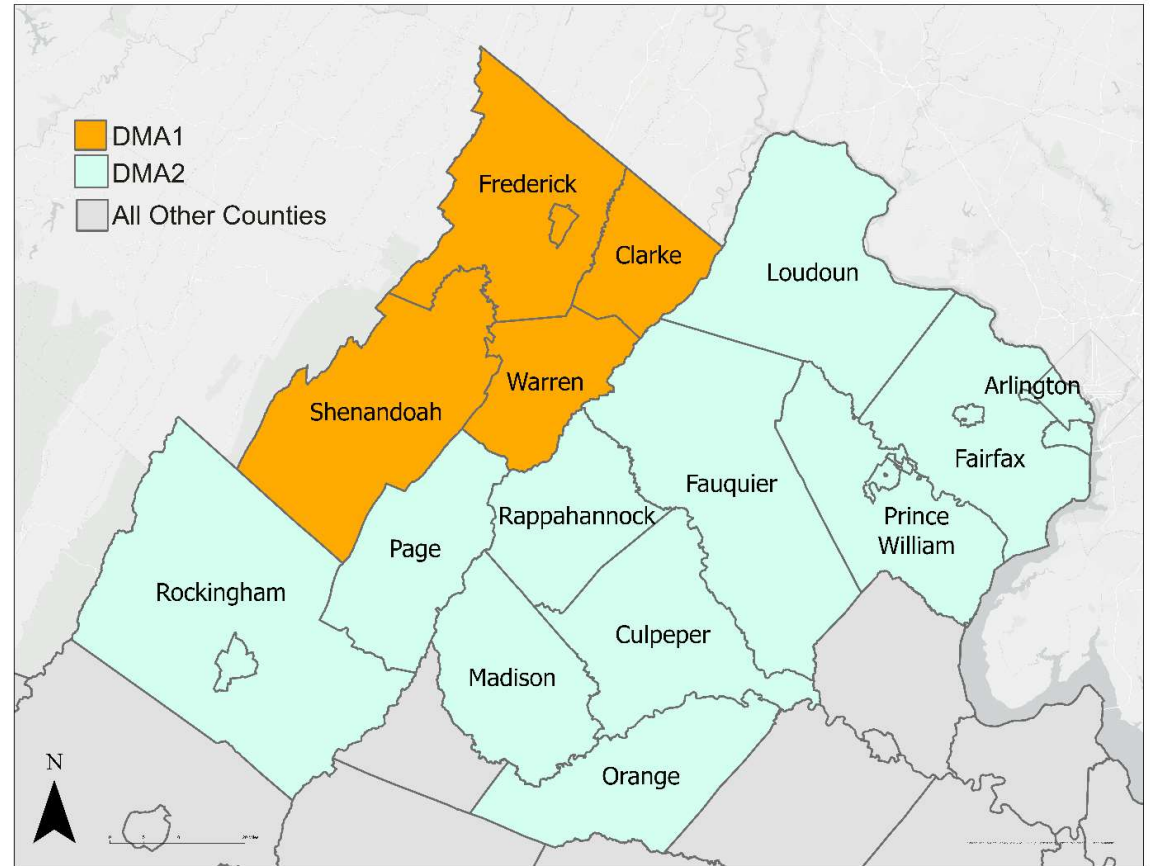
**DMA1:** No change

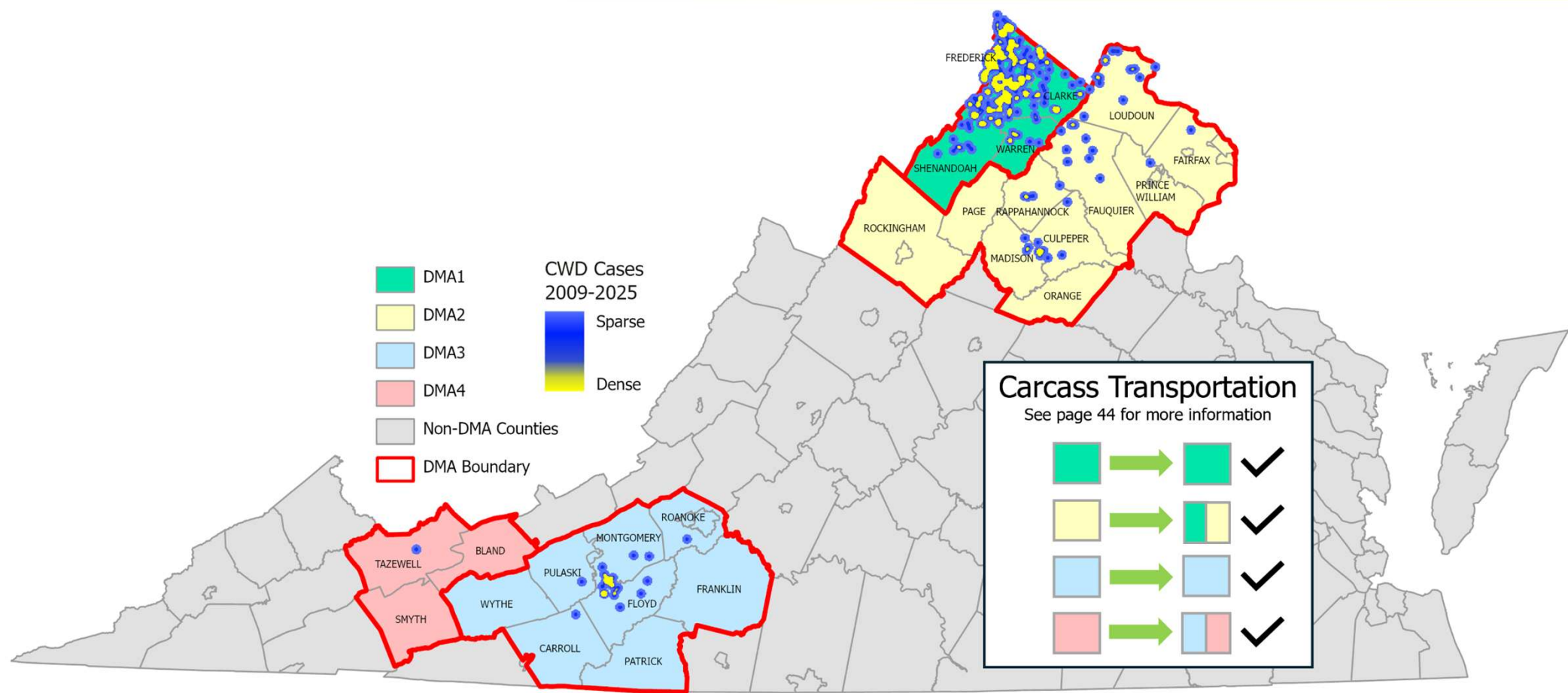
**DMA2:** Add

Rockingham County

**DMA3:** No change

**DMA4:** No change







# CWD Certification Pilot Program

- Only available to taxidermists
- Allow transport of otherwise-illegal deer to certified taxidermists
  - Allowing import from out of state would require a regulation change
- Taxidermist requirement:
  - Training w/ renewal
  - Disposal requirement and documentation
- Pilot program 2025-2026
  - Will likely only be available to taxidermists in SWVA (~36 )
- Re-evaluate / tweak for more widespread adoption
  - How does this fit into the big-picture direction of CWD management in VA?





# QUESTIONS?



**Additional material below  
if needed for questions.**

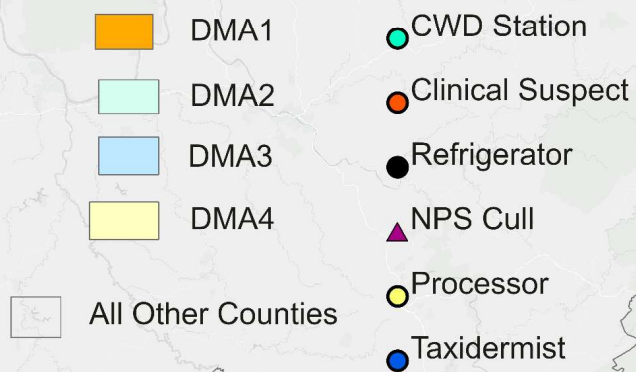


# Mandatory Testing 2025

- November 15<sup>th</sup>
  - DMA1: Shenandoah County
  - DMA3: Patrick, Roanoke, and Wythe counties
  - DMA4: Smyth and Tazewell counties



# CWD Detections 2024-2025

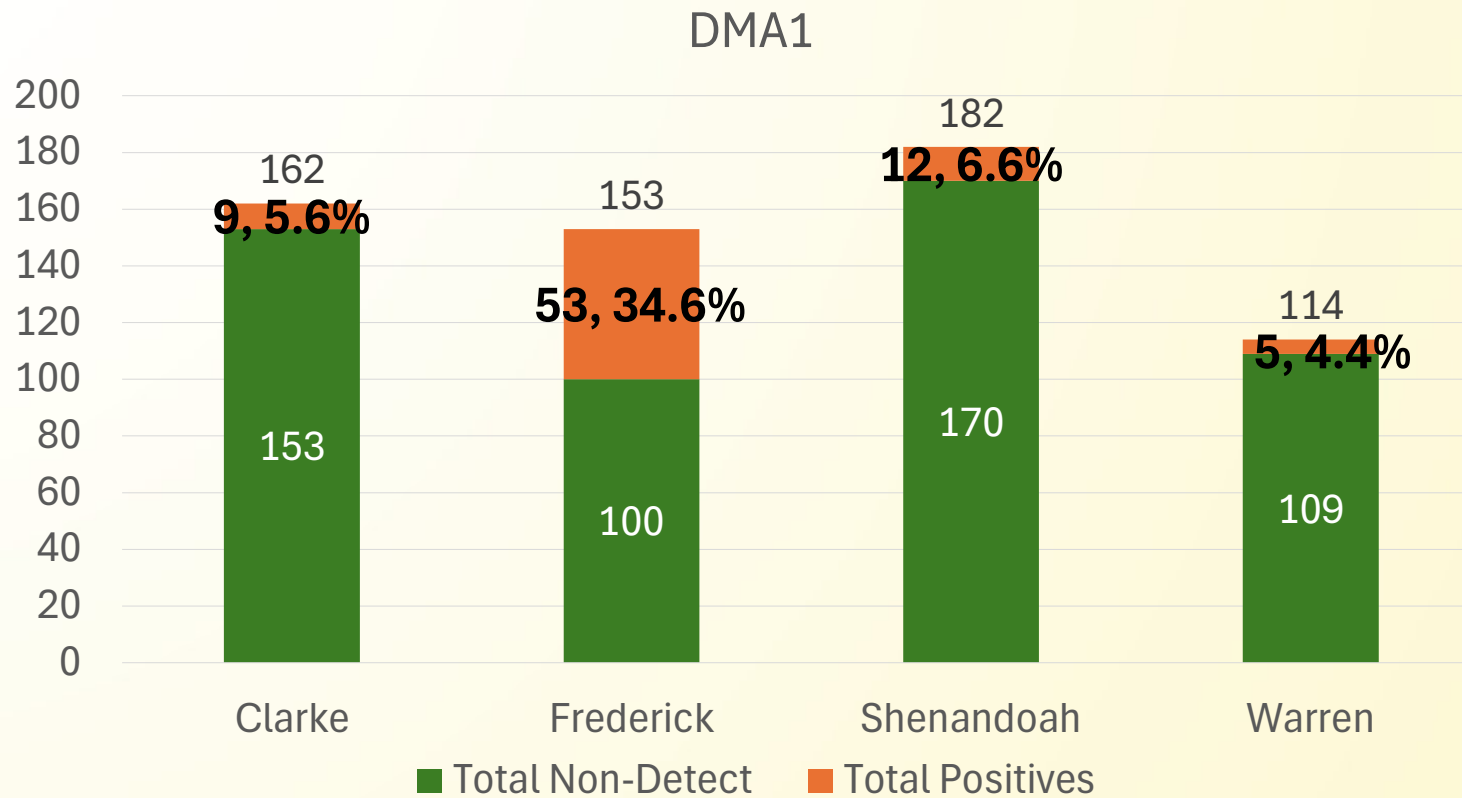


## Clinical cases:

Total = 14

- Fauquier = 2
- Floyd = 1
- Frederick = 8
- Montgomery = 1
- Roanoke = 1
- Shenandoah = 1

# 2024-2025 Season Summary – DMA1



## 2024-2025 Season Summary – DMA2

County	Total Samples	Total Positives	Apparent Prevalence
Arlington	1	0	0.0%
Culpeper	390	2	0.5%
Fairfax	502	0	0.0%
Fauquier	533	3	0.6%
Loudoun	672	7	1.0%
Madison	318	3	0.9%
Orange	166	0	0.0%
Page	26	0	0.0%
Prince William	162	1	0.6%
Rappahannock	189	1	0.5%





## 2024-2025 Season Summary – DMA3

County	Total Samples	Total Positives	Apparent Prevalence
Carroll	197	0	0.0%
Floyd	388	5	1.3%
Franklin	300	0	0.0%
Montgomery	619	7	1.1%
Patrick	84	0	0.0%
Pulaski	250	0	0.0%
Roanoke	80	1	1.3%
Wythe	205	0	0.0%



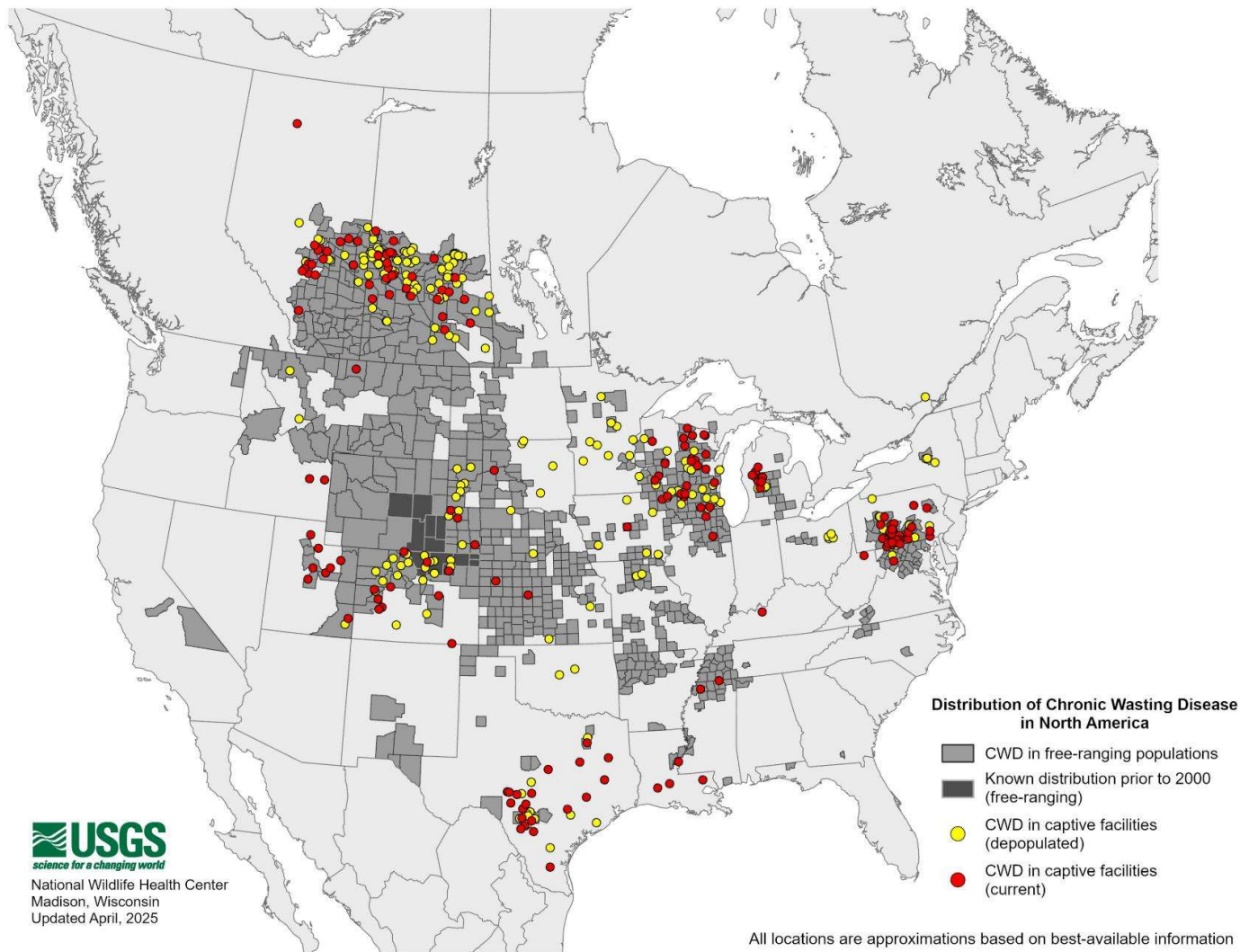
## 2024-2025 Season Summary – DMA4

County	Total Samples	Total Positives	Apparent Prevalence
Bland	25	0	0.0%
Smyth	19	0	0.0%
Tazewell	102	0	0.0%



# CWD in North America

- 2025: Georgia had first two positives in same area
- 36 US states with positive detections



# Black Bear Mange Updates



John Tracey, Wildlife Veterinarian  
Carl Tugend, Bear Project Leader  
Katie Martin, Deer-Bear-Turkey Biologist





**Legend**

- Mange Reports\_2024 (275)
  - Dead
  - Sighting
- Mange Detections\_2023 (163)
  - Dispatch
  - Sighting
- Mange by Year\_2022 (123)
  - Dispatch
  - Sighting
- MangeByYear\_2021 (2021 (09))
  - Dispatch
  - Sighting
- MangeByYear\_2020 (2020 (110))
  - Dispatch
  - Sighting
- MangeByYear\_2019 (2019 (28))
  - Dispatch
  - Sighting
- AllMangeBears\_2014\_2018 (2014-2018 (51))
  - Dispatch
  - Sighting
- Mange\_Positive\_Counties
- Mange 2025 (Jan-May)
  - Dead
  - Sighting

0 10 20 40 Miles





# DWR Commitments to Mange

- Improve the public mange reporting system
  - Online disease reporting system nearly there
  - Budgeting for an after-hours conflict/response coordinator
  - Humane dispatch regulation being considered for adoption
- Expand involvement of bear hunters in sample/data collection
  - Held field check-station day December 7, 2024
- Reduce hunting mortality to assist natural recovery of bear populations
  - Season reduction proposals being considered for adoption
- Increase public awareness about mange in Virginia and DWR actions toward it
  - DWR website & VT project website updates
  - Staff presentations at EBBW, NEAFWA
- Develop a more comprehensive bear sarcoptic mange management plan



# Mange Management Plan

- Process
  - Veterinarians from DWR and Arkansas Game and Fish Commission have been meeting every 2-4 weeks
    - Pool efforts & share updates
  - Expansive literature searches
    - >50 articles reviewed
  - Plan outline developed
  - Still a significant amount of discussion and writing to be done
  - Designed to be adaptive
- Timeline
  - Initial goal was draft completion in spring of 2025
    - Moved forward with season reduction proposals and humane dispatch regulation
  - DWR will share a draft plan with the board in August 2025
    - After internal & external reviews, the plan will be finalized in October



# Mange Management Plan Components

- Major sections
  - **Monitoring and surveillance**
    - Discussion and recommendations
  - **Management and response**
    - Discussion and recommendations
  - **Research**
    - Especially future research needs
  - **Communication**
    - Internal and external
    - Engaging stakeholders and fostering citizen science
- Accessory info
  - History
  - Disease pathogenesis
  - Transmission dynamics
  - Population metrics & monitoring
  - Literature and sources



# Updates from Collaborative Research Projects



Virginia Tech: Marcella Kelly, Brett Jesmer, Fang Chen, Madison Thurber, Brogan Holcombe, Isabella Sciarrino

Study Website [Project Updates | VA Bear Mange Study](#)

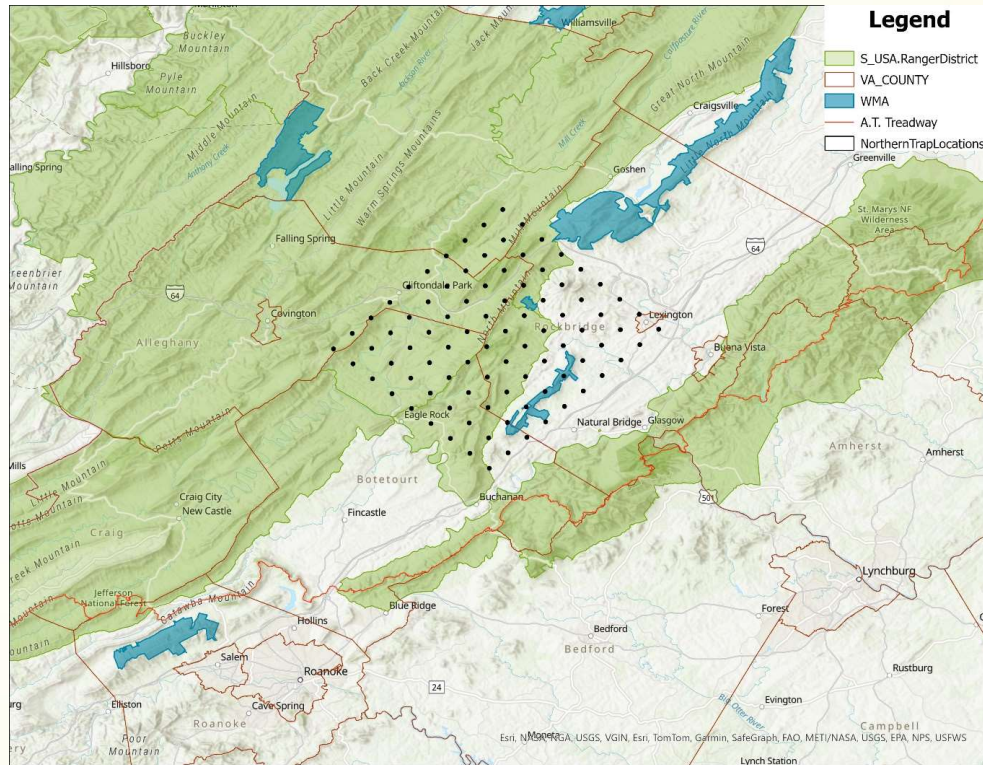


SCWDS: Michael Yabsley, Raquel Francisco, Jillian Broadhurst

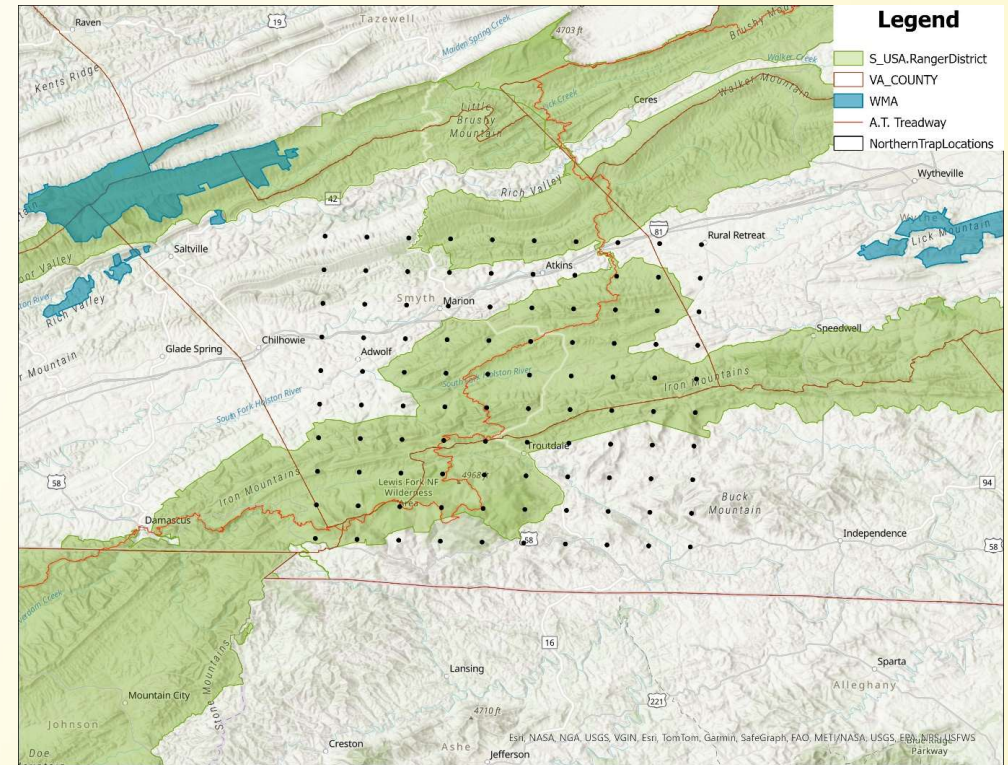




# Phase 1: Spatially Explicit Capture-Recapture



**Northern Study Site (Mange Endemic)**  
 \*Botetourt, Rockbridge, Augusta, Alleghany, Bath



**Southern Study Site (Non-Mange)**  
 \*Grayson, Smyth, Wythe





# Phase 1: Spatially Explicit Capture-Recapture

- Madison Thurber & Dr. Marcella Kelley
- 2024 Results
  - Northern Mange Area
    - 630 total hair samples (at 68 of 73 snares)
    - 355 processed for DNA extraction
  - Southern Non-Mange Area
    - 779 total hair samples (at 61 of 77 snares)
    - 431 processed for DNA extraction
- Upcoming 2025 Field and Lab Work
  - Repeat 8-week sample collection from June-August
  - Finish processing and DNA extraction
  - Perform SECR analysis



Photo courtesy of Madison Thurber



# Phase 1 Offshoot: Estimating Mange Prevalence

- Isabella Sciarrino & Dr. Marcella Kelley
- Utilize trail camera data from SECR Northern Mange Area
  - 598 unique bear events
    - 99 with mange, 419 without
  - Use mange matrix tool (developed by SCWDS) to score each mange case
    - Calculate weighted average for each camera location
- Plan to repeat and further develop methods in summer 2025



Photo courtesy of Isabella Sciarrino





# Phase 2: Movement Modeling & Vital Rates

- Dr. Brett Jesmer and graduate students Fang Chen & Brogan Holcombe
- Goal
  - Deploy 30 GPS collars in each study area to monitor stage-specific survival and movement of mange versus non-mange affected bears
    - Adult female bears are GPS collared
    - Male bears and young female bears are VHF ear-tagged or collared depending on age/size
- Summer 2024 field season
  - Caught 30 bears
  - GPS collars placed on 8 females & 2 males
- Review and refine applicable population models
  - IPM, SEIR, PVA
- 2025 Field Season Beginning Soon



# SCWDS Research

- Regional Multi-species Mange Surveillance
- Genetic Characterization of *Sarcoptes scabiei*
- Black Bear Mange Toxicology
- Bear Mange Skin Microbiome
- Black Bear Mange Mite Enumeration
- Wildlife Agency Response to Black Bear Sarcoptic Mange Survey & Analysis (Being submitted for publication)

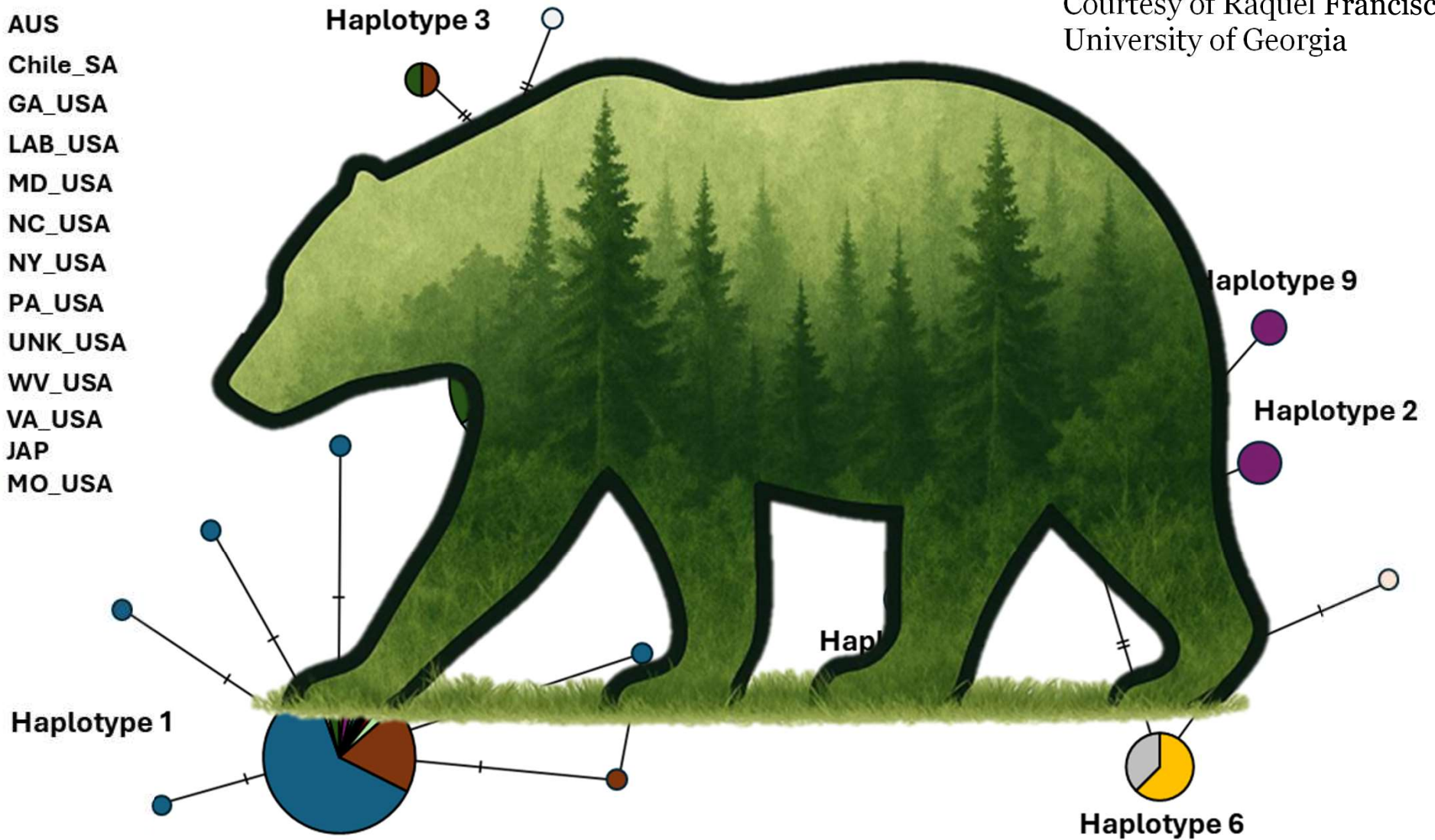
**Mange Matrix score**

Category	0	1	2	3	Category Severity (0-3)
<b>Hair Loss</b>	None	Hair missing from less than 1/3 of body	Hair missing from 1/3 to 2/3 of body	Hair missing from more than 2/3 of body	
<b>Skin Condition</b>	Normal	Skin not thickened or pigmented, areas of scaly skin small and diffuse	Patches of thickened, crusted, or black pigmented skin	Large areas of thickened, crusted skin, debris flaking from skin or on hair shafts; strong odor	
<b>Body Condition</b>	Normal	Below Average; vertebrae knobby, pelvic crest and ribs can be felt but not protruding	Poor; spinal vertebrae well defined, pelvic crest and ribs visible, skull structures felt but not visible	Emaciated; skeletal muscle gone, zygomatic arches visible, eyes sunken	
				<b>Mange Severity Total Score (0-9)</b>	



- AR\_USA
- AUS
- Chile\_SA
- GA\_USA
- LAB\_USA
- MD\_USA
- NC\_USA
- NY\_USA
- PA\_USA
- UNK\_USA
- WV\_USA
- VA\_USA
- JAP
- MO\_USA

Courtesy of Raquel Francisco,  
University of Georgia





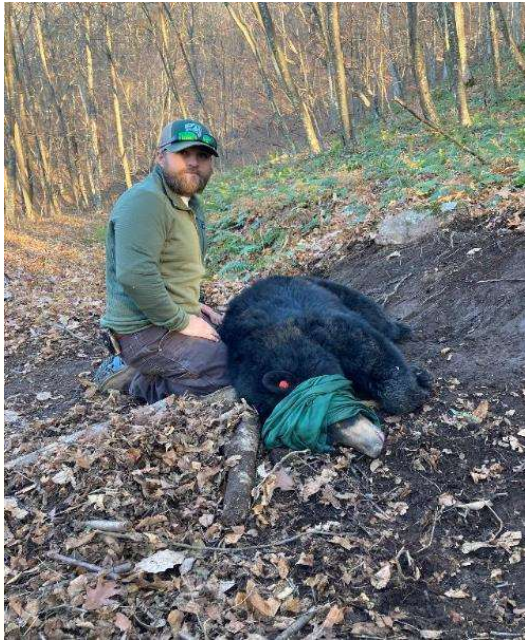
# Still A Lot To Learn

- Transmission dynamics
  - Density effects, other hosts, indirect transmission, etc.
- Population dynamics and management
  - Best management targets before and after mange
  - Additional modeling tools
- Survival
- Predisposing factors
  - Genetics, co-infections, etc.
- Host : parasite evolution
- Adapting effective response protocols
- Managing constituent relationship and expectations





# ANY QUESTIONS??



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[john.tracey@dwr.virginia.gov](mailto:john.tracey@dwr.virginia.gov)



[katie.martin@dwr.virginia.gov](mailto:katie.martin@dwr.virginia.gov)

## MORE INFO

[https://dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife/information/  
black-bear/#section-mange-and-black-bears](https://dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife/information/black-bear/#section-mange-and-black-bears)

