

Alaska Blacktail Deer Estimates from Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA)

		Alaska Black Tail Deer	
WAFWA		Range	Mid-point
Source			
2012	2012		
2013	2013		
2014	2014		
2015	2015	333,000-346,000	
2016	2016	333,000-346,000	
2017	2017	333,000-346,000	
2018	2018	333,000-346,000	
2019	2019	333,000-346,000	
2020	2020	333,000-346,000	339,500
2021	2021	333,000-346,000	339,500
2022	2022	333,000-346,000	339,500
2023	2023	326,200–335,200	330,700
2024	2024	326,200–335,200	330,700

The state doesn't calculate a year by year population estimate. The population ranges presented to WAFWA represent population objectives and estimates of population estimates. However, this [historical analysis](#) indicates wide variations in year to year populations based primarily on weather severity.

From [2024](#) report

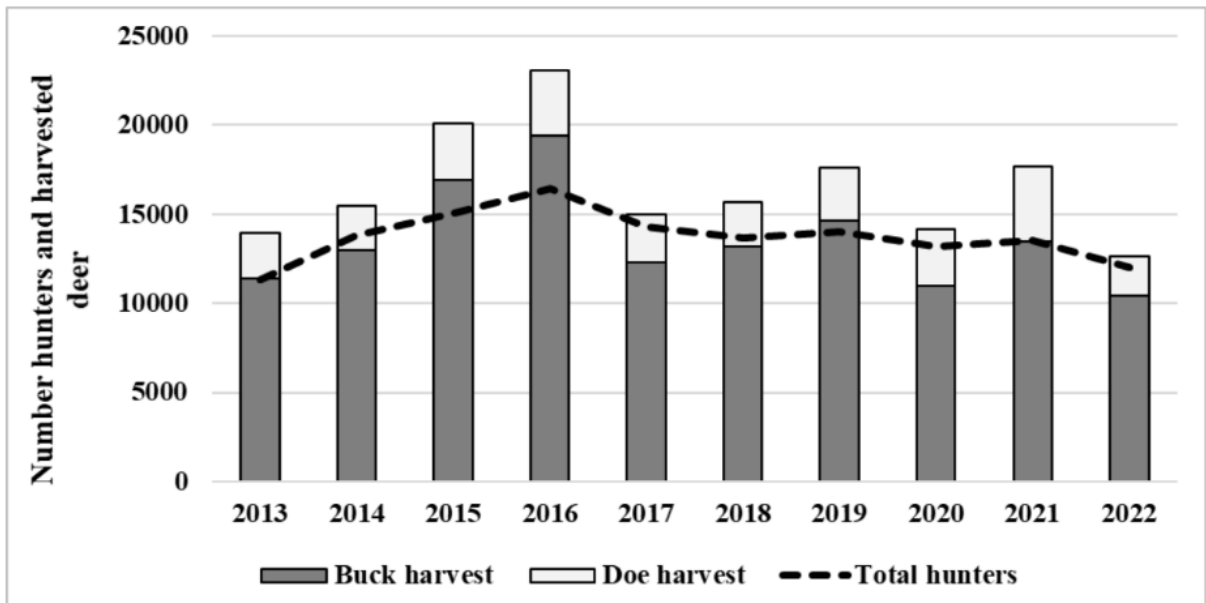


Fig. 1. Statewide Sitka black-tailed deer harvest for regulatory years 2013–2022, Alaska. 2023 harvest data was not available at the time of publishing.

-Tessa Hasbrouck, Alaska Department of Fish and Game

From [2023](#) report” “Objectives were derived based on a combination of habitat capability modeling and expert opinion panels. This estimate is not re-calculated from year to year, it is rather a general ball-park figure.” page 3, Footnote 2 to Table 2.

“Sitka black-tailed (SBT; *Odocoileus hemionus sitkensis*) deer are native to Southeast Alaska’s temperate rainforests. Due to historic transplant efforts between 1916 and 1934, SBT deer also now have established populations in parts of Southcentral Alaska, where Sitka black-tailed deer are at the northern extent of their range. Between 1916 and 1923, at least 24 deer were moved from the Sitka area in Southeast Alaska to Hawkins and Hinchinbrook islands in Prince William Sound, which comprises Game Management Unit (GMU) 6 of Southcentral Alaska. This was the first big game translocation in Alaska, and one of the most successful.

Population objectives for Game Management Units (GMU) were established in 2000 by the Alaska Board of Game. These objectives were based on expert opinion and constitute the best estimate of population levels. Based on these objectives, Alaska’s SBT deer population ranges 326,200–335,200.” page 3

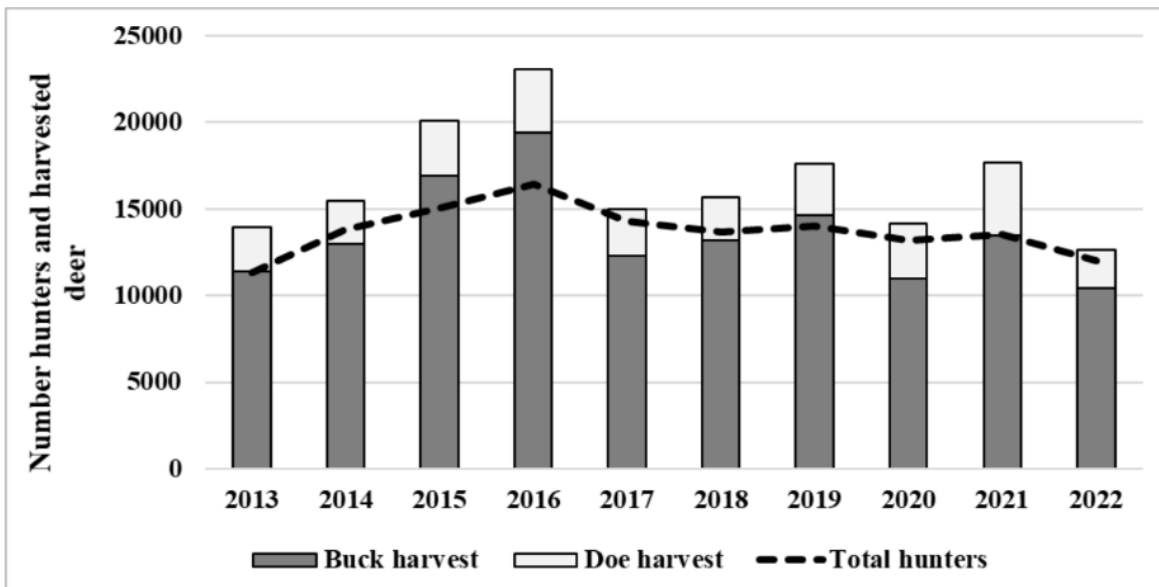


Fig. 1. Statewide Sitka black-tailed deer harvest for regulatory years 2013–2022, Alaska.

-Tessa Hasbrouck, Alaska Department of Fish and Game

From [2022](#) report: A History of Deer Populations

“These objectives constitute our best estimate of population levels in each GMU, but they are imprecise, and cannot be used to monitor changes in abundance. Based on these objectives, the deer population in Alaska as a whole likely range from 333,000-346,000.” page 3

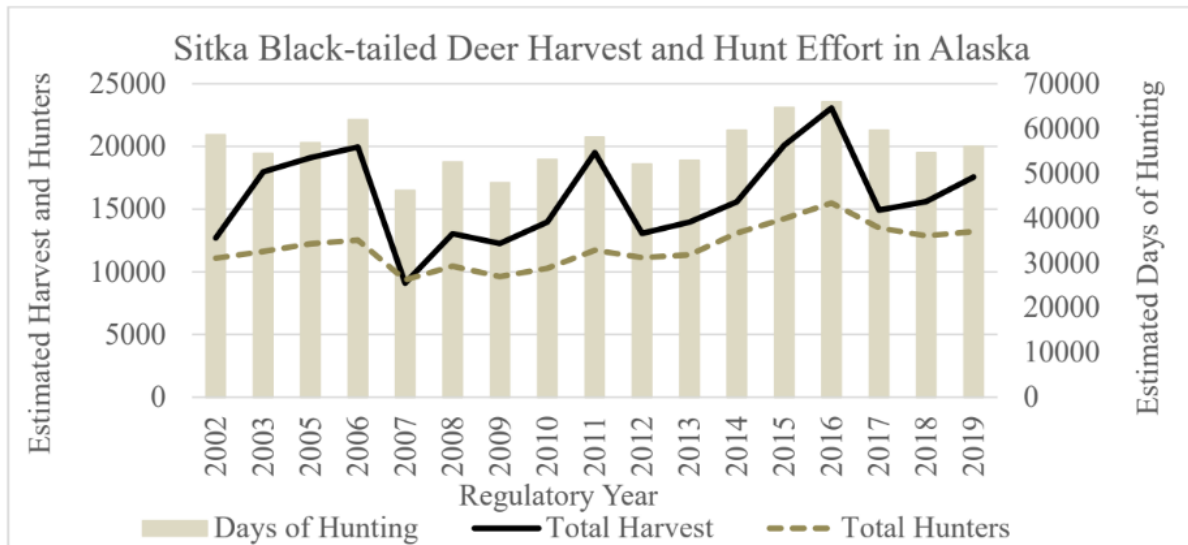
“In Alaska, weather patterns and snowfall have strong effects on both hunting success and winter survival. Both Southeast and Southcentral Alaska experienced 2 severe and above average winter between 2006 and 2009, which led to a very high harvest of deer in regulatory year 2006 when deer were concentrated on the beaches, to a very low harvest the following years... during the 2011-2012 winter Alaska was hit another severe winter.” page 4

“Deer congregating on beaches due to early and heavy snowfall increased hunter success in winter 2011-2012 to a record high in Southcentral Alaska, but subsequent effects of this harvest combined with winter mortality estimates of 50-70% precipitated management actions to allow deer to recover.” page 5

“Both Southeast and Southcentral experienced average to below average winter severity from 2012-2019. The winter 2015-2016 was one of the mildest on record, resulting in increased hunter effort and harvest. These milder winters allowed deer populations to flourish, and hunters reported deer to be in good body condition. Pellet-group survey trends through 2019 were generally stable to increasing. Because winter severity was average to below average, the drop in deer harvest in 2017 is thought to be due in part to reduced hunter effort, perhaps because of

difficult boating conditions. Inclement weather also likely made hunts more challenging. The 2019-2020 winter was average in Southeast Alaska, but severe in Southcentral Alaska, where managers estimated 60-70% mortality in some areas of the Kodiak Archipelago and Prince William Sound.” page 5

From [2021](#) reports:



-Karin McCoy, Alaska Department of Fish and Game

From [2020](#) report:

“ Objectives were derived based on a combination of habitat capability modeling and expert opinion panels. This estimate is not re-calculated from year to year, it is rather a general ball-park figure.” page 3, footnote 2 to table 2

From [2019](#) report: