

2009-10 Louisiana Deer Harvest Report

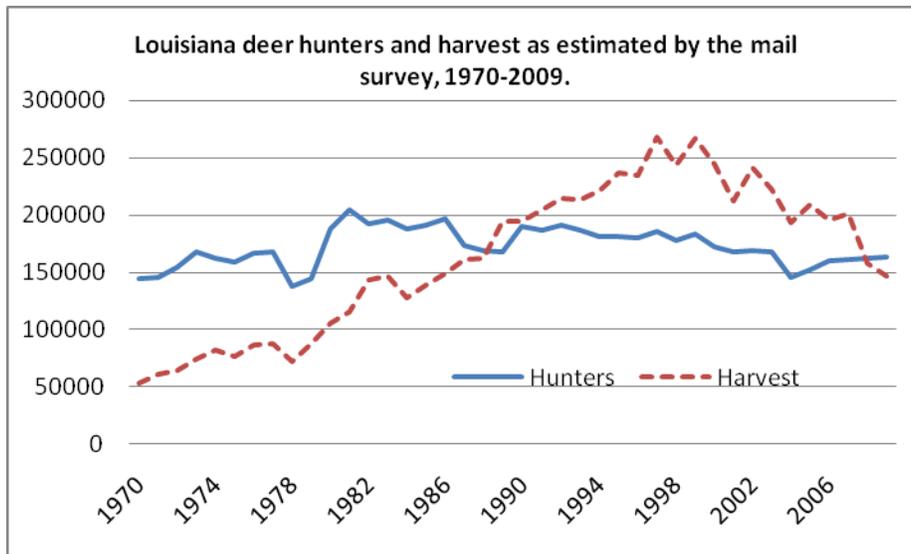
Mail survey- Each year, a 6% sample of licensed hunters between the ages of 16 and 59 receive a harvest survey by mail. Participants return the survey and statistics are compiled. Youth and senior hunters are not included in this survey, so estimates are best used for monitoring long term trends. The mail survey index for hunters and harvest for the 2009/10 season is 163,200 and 147,300 respectively (Table 1). While the hunter number index has been relatively stable the last few years, the harvest

Table 1. Distribution of deer harvest by weapon type and sex according to the mail survey estimate, 2009/10.

Weapon	Male	Female	Total	%	% Male	% Female
modern gun	60309	56591	116900	79	52	48
primitive	8110	6690	14800	10	55	45
bow	6424	6776	13200	9	49	51
crossbow	1239	1161	2400	2	52	48

index was down 7% this year and is the lowest value since 1986 (Figure 4). Although total deer numbers appear down for the second year in a row, the value (-7%) of the estimate is within last year's 95% confidence interval. Lingering effects of hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Gustav are still impacting the landscape, and are thought to have caused access and visibility issues across the state, but especially in the coastal zone and into south central Louisiana. These effects will continue for several more years. On the positive side, substantially more large antlered deer are being measured by certified measurers. Anecdotal reports and internet sites also report more big deer being harvested.

Figure 1.



Prolonged and repeated flooding in north and central Louisiana reduced hunter's abilities to access hunting areas for many weeks and the harvest in these important regions of the state were impacted. October 2009 was one of the wettest in history and hunter effort likely was down over much of the state during that month. Fewer shots were reported on opening day in Union parish, the #1 harvest parish in the state. After more record rainfall in December, there was a season closure during Christmas in southeast Louisiana after heavy rains flooded river parishes and swamp hardwood habitats. Water levels remained high in portions St. John, St. James, Ascension, and Assumption parishes for many days. The season was partially closed to protect vulnerable deer pushed up on limited high ground and to offset potential increased fawn mortality from flood conditions. A drowned fawn was reported near Donaldsonville. Water levels inside the protection levees of the Atchafalaya basin also remained high for a large portion of the season. Biologists are determining if a new closure level should be implemented in the basin with GIS technology revealing land to water ratios at different river stages.

In other portions of the state, in spite of lots of cold weather and good conditions, anecdotal hunting reports were often negative this year, with many hunters reporting reduced deer sightings and harvests. Louisiana deer are not used to snow, and after a 2 inch accumulation the first weekend of December, some hunters reported little to no deer movement.

Human expansion and development also impact wildlife habitats and deer carrying capacity and we continue to see fragmentation and an increase in exurbia in some areas of Louisiana. Forest management practices of the last decade have also impacted the landscape and reduced carrying capacities are being observed in some pine dominant parishes and regions. Hog populations may be high enough in some areas of the state to affect deer numbers through direct competition for food resources. There were wide spread reports of hemorrhagic disease (EHD or BTV) this year and it is possible that some populations suffered sufficiently high mortality rates to impact harvest at local levels.

Hunter attitudes and preferences are changing. Some hunters, even on WMAs, now are sometimes "passing" females and younger bucks in hopes of harvesting a trophy, or possibly because they simply do not have the time or desire to do the work of processing the animal. This may be especially true of the growing number of senior hunters and the younger generation of busy, more affluent, trophy-type hunters. Some hunters and managers may be becoming more comfortable with managing for lower numbers of deer that are more balanced with the habitat. Biologists have seen no indication from the harvest data that statewide over-harvest of female deer has occurred since implementing the new 3 antlerless deer limit. We continue to monitor and take public comment from concerned hunters where overharvest has been a concern at local levels.

Internet/phone reporting results- This year was the second mandatory year for tagging and reporting deer through the new system. Results provide a count of male and female deer harvested by weapon type and parish on private and public lands. Participation in the reporting program is believed to be less than 100% and it may take a period of time for all hunters to learn the system and comply with the law. It is important for hunters to report their deer, so complete data are available for future deer management decisions. There were 231,935 sets of deer tags issued in 2009-10. A summary of the reported non-program private lands harvest along with the public lands, WMA managed hunts, and

program totals are presented by parish in Appendix 1. The top total harvest parishes are presented in Table 2. The top harvest parishes by forested acres per deer are presented in Table 3. The total harvest count from all 4 sources of data is 107,455, down 8% from last year. The % reduction is nearly the same as the mail survey results. The sex ratio of the 78,444 deer reported taken on non-program private lands was 56% male and 44 % female.

Table 2. Top 20 private lands harvest parishes in Louisiana derived from the reporting system through Feb 23, 2010.

Parish	Harvest	Parish	Harvest
Union	6668	Winn	3050
Vernon	4951	Avoyelles	2748
Bienville	4923	DeSoto	2664
Claiborne	4706	Sabine	2657
Webster	3378	Morehouse	2524
Iberville	3358	W. Feliciana	2454
Tensas	3339	Beauregard	2263
Bossier	3279	Rapides	2217
Jackson	3131	St. Landry	2153
Natchitoches	3078	Lincoln	2043

Table 3. Top 20 harvest parishes by forested acreage derived from the new reporting system through Feb 23, 2010.

Parish	Acres/deer	Parish	Acres/deer
E. Carroll	26	St. Landry	78
Tensas	34	Point Coupee	78
Madison	56	St. Mary	80
W. Baton Rouge	59	Webster	85
W. Feliciana	66	Bienville	92
Avoyelles	71	Claiborne	93
Morehouse	72	Concordia	95
Union	72	Lafourche	97
Richland	76	Jackson	100
Iberville	77	E. Feliciana	108

Mail survey vs. reporting system harvest- The mail survey index of 147,300 is 37% higher than the reporting system harvest of 107,455. Since the mail survey is a single mailing, there is the potential to bias the index high. The mail survey index is best used to monitor trends over time and not as an absolute estimate. The new reporting system count is likely low due to less than 100% participation. We anticipate greater compliance with the system in the future. However, it is possible that, due to a number of reasons, the statewide harvest from the reporting system will continue to be lower than the mail survey index.

Wildlife Management Areas- The Department manages over 1,000,000 acres with deer hunting opportunity. Archery and either sex gun hunts are the primary methods for keeping deer numbers in balance with the habitat. Youth and handicapped hunts also are available on many areas. Bucks only seasons provide extended hunting opportunity and generally are held near or during rut. Harvest rates are highly variable on the WMAs according to deer physiographic region, habitat conditions, and hunter efforts. In some years WMA harvest rates equal or surpass intensively managed DMAP properties. On some WMAs, harvest rates are low due to habitat type, forest conditions, accessibility issues, or other management objectives. In general, WMA deer herds are managed in a way that helps insure long term forest regeneration, diversity, sustainability, and high deer quality. WMAs are not managed for maximum residual numbers, but rather maximum sustained harvest and recreational opportunity, which means deer herds at or below maximum biological carrying capacity.

In 2009/10, managed deer hunts were held on over 900,000 acres of wildlife management areas where high rates of success were often observed. The recorded harvest for managed hunts was 2,603 deer on the WMAs this year (Table 4). Managed either-sex hunts had an average hunter success rate of 10.6 efforts per deer, well below the long-term average of 16 efforts per deer, and similar to 11 efforts per deer observed last year (Figure 2). The total recorded WMA harvest was 5311 deer.

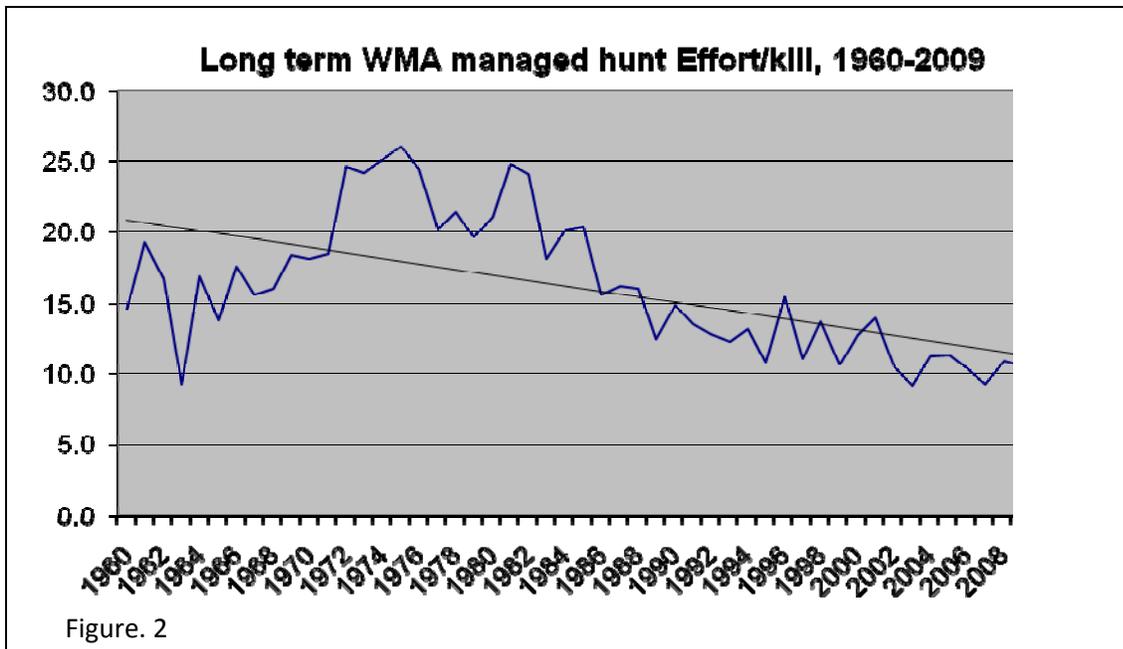
Either sex day harvests are greatly influenced by weather and hunter turn out. The Thanksgiving hunt conditions were very good this year with cold clear weather. There was high water on Boeuf, and Dewey Wills WMAs. High water can be especially stressful to fawns, and can increase mortality and reduce recruitment in future years. Hunter success and harvest vary, sometimes substantially, from year to year. The long term trend for WMA hunter success illustrates fewer efforts needed to harvest a deer. Many exceptional deer were harvested on the WMAs.

Table 4. 2009 WMA either sex managed hunts¹.

WMA	Hunter efforts	Total harvest	Bucks	Does	Efforts per deer
Loggy Bayou	96	14	6	8	6.9
Jackson Bienville (22-23 Nov)	691	83	43	40	8.3
Tunica Hills (muzzleloader)	357	52	34	18	6.9
Ben's Creek	538	12	5	7	44.8
Sandy Hollow	134	3	1	2	44.7
Maurepas Swamp (self clearing)	544	67	22	45	8.1
Pearl River	404	11	5	6	36.7
Attakapas	452	28	10	18	16.1
Attakapas (4-6 Dec)	188	17	5	12	11.1
Grassy Lake	845	112	36	76	7.5
Pomme de Terre	382	39	13	26	9.8
Sherburne	1272	68	28	40	18.7
Sherburne (18-20 Dec)	1,201	92	38	54	13.1
Spring Bayou	387	40	17	23	9.7
Thistlewaite (5-6 Dec)	612	21	10	11	29.1
Thistlewaite	885	28	11	17	31.6
Peason Ridge (Oct 31- Nov 1)	452	76	47	29	5.9
Peason Ridge	726	52	19	33	14.0
Clear Creek(Oct 31- Nov 1)	1058	138	68	70	7.7
Clear Creek	937	62	21	41	15.1
West Bay (Oct 31- Nov 1)	762	86	36	50	8.9
West Bay	1050	21	6	15	50.0
Fort Polk	2076	139	69	70	14.9
Fort Polk (Oct 31- Nov 1)	1093	159	86	73	6.9
Union (18 days managed either sex)	1814	168	69	99	10.8
Ouachita	299	75	42	33	4.0
Bayou Macon (14-15 Nov)	303	57	26	31	5.3
Russel Sage	540	61	32	29	8.9
Boeuf	816	141	76	65	5.8
Red/Three Rivers	2735	252	114	138	10.9
Buckhorn	582	54	25	29	10.8
Big Lake	731	66	34	32	11.1
Sicily Island	273	40	23	17	6.8
Sabine (24-25 Oct)	336	38			8.8
Alexander State Forest (10-11 Oct)	301	15	9	6	20.1
Alexander State Forest (7-8 Nov)	93	13	10	3	7.2
Dewey Wills (6-7 Dec)	823	102	42	60	8.1
Camp Beauregard (27-28 Nov)	564	81	31	50	7.0
Camp Beauregard (5-6 Dec)	291	20	11	9	14.6
	27643	2603	0.01		10.6
2008 Managed Either Sex Deer Hunts	28,363	2,589	-0.16		11
2007 Managed Either Sex Deer Hunts	28,813	3,094	-0.04		9.3
2006 Managed Either-Sex Deer Hunts	30,008	2,895	-0.02		10.4
2005 Managed Either-Sex Deer Hunts	30,649	2,689	0.07		11.4
2004 Managed Either-Sex Deer Hunts	28,574	2,532	-0.07		11.3
2003 Managed Either-Sex Deer Hunts	30,622	3,340			9.2

*= estimate only

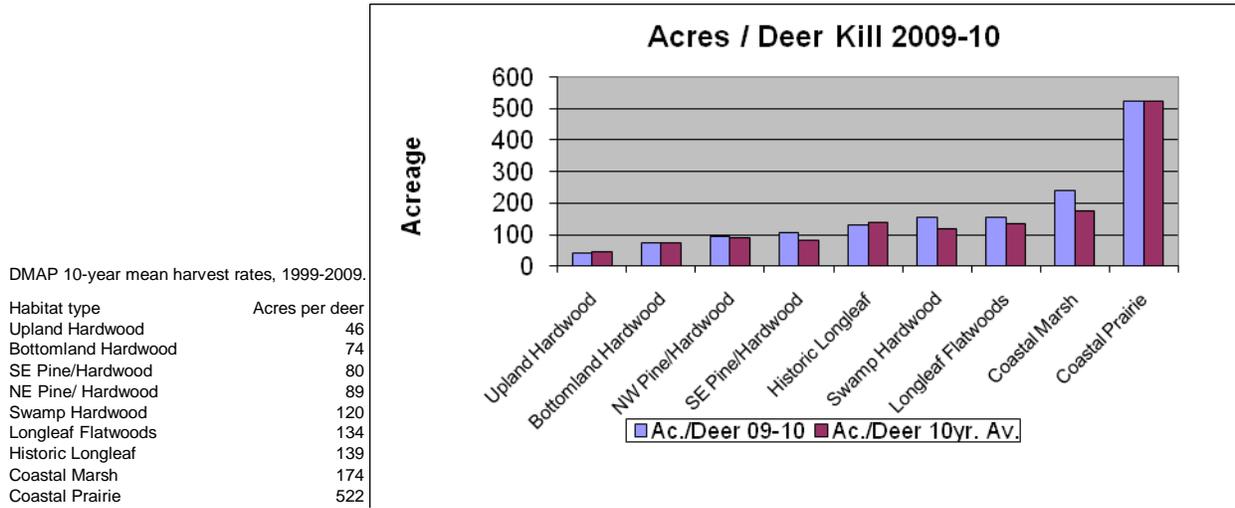
1= voluntary deer check



DMAP and LADT

Although changes in statewide antlerless harvest opportunity have reduced participation in the Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) it continues to be an important source of biological information on private lands, and we encourage hunters and managers that are serious about managing deer to continue their participation in this program. Efforts to increase site visits and other services to these participants have been initiated. Technical assistance is available to anyone that requests it and we encourage hunters to collect herd health data including jaw bones, antler measurements, weights and lactation data, whether in a program or not. Providing these data to the Department greatly increases our ability to monitor deer and habitat conditions across the state and to monitor trends in deer quality and productivity. In 2009-10, approximately 861,369 acres were enrolled in DMAP, a program in which cooperators provide full harvest data to the Department. An additional 787,940 acres were enrolled in LADT. These acreages were similar to last year's enrollment. The total programs harvest was 17,641 (-2%) deer for the 2009/10 season. The programs harvest sex ratio was 38% bucks and 62% does, identical to last year. During the past 10 years, the upland hardwood habitat type has recorded the highest avg. deer kill per acre (Figure 3).

Figure 3.



Appendix 1. Deer harvest by parish as recorded through the LDWF tagging system, Feb 23 2010.
2009/10 deer season

Parish	People per Sq Mi ¹	Acres ¹ Land area	Forested land	Forested ² acres	Non-program private land	Public land	WMA managed	Programs DMAP/LADT	Total	% change	Acre per deer harv.	Forested acre per deer harv. ⁵
Acadia	90	419379	0.24	100532	184	2	0	6	192	-12	2184	524
Allen	33	489280	0.70	343916	1174	234	16	194	1618	28	302	213
Ascension	262	186560	0.48	88660	302	21	40	53	416	9	448	213
Assumption	69	216768	0.52	112409	400	33	0	48	481	-24	451	234
Avoyelles	50	532736	0.37	196104	1542	552	132	522	2748	-3	194	71
Beauregard	28	742464	0.80	592461	1749	17	0	497	2263	-7	328	262
Bienville	19	518810	0.87	451470	3553	146	35	1189	4923	-9	105	92
Bossier	117	537152	0.68	365219	2708	172	0	399	3279	-17	164	111
Caddo	286	564480	0.56	313620	1647	9	0	105	1761	-8	321	178
Calcasieu	171	685504	0.39	270336	547	32	0	94	673	8	1019	402
Caldwell	20	338816	0.76	256017	1490	141	142	206	1979	-12	171	129
Cameron	8	840320	0.00	0	128	14	0	10	152	-37	5528	0
Catahoula	16	450368	0.41	183159	699	130	36	193	1058	-22	426	173
Claiborne	22	483008	0.90	435693	3869	216	0	621	4706	-9	103	93
Concordia	29	445376	0.38	170753	475	508	250	564	1797	-15	248	95
DeSoto	29	561408	0.78	437109	2514	11	0	139	2664	-12	211	164
E. Baton Rouge	907	291456	0.41	120883	621	3	0	296	920	9	317	131
E. Carroll	22	269696	0.13	34026	398	108	56	726	1288	21	209	26
E. Feliciana	47	290176	0.70	204297	1372	9	0	504	1885	-9	154	108
Evangeline	53	425152	0.49	209704	1209	3	0	117	1329	10	320	158
Franklin	34	399104	0.27	108819	627	81	0	256	964	-15	414	113
Grant	29	412864	0.84	346030	979	368	97	60	1504	-9	275	230
Iberia	127	368064	0.28	101286	281	262	0	73	616	-10	598	164
Iberville	54	395904	0.65	257875	1958	274	120	1006	3358	-1	118	77
Jackson	27	364608	0.86	314611	2678	235	36	182	3131	-15	116	100
Jeff. Davis	48	417472	0.14	58574	297	2	0	39	338	75	1235	173
Jefferson	1484	196160	0.11	21181	85	23	0	0	108	-59	1816	0
La Salle	23	399232	0.86	341475	1046	162	106	59	1373	-21	291	249
Lafayette	706	172672	0.13	22492	4	2	0	0	6	-50	28779	3749
Lafourche	83	694208	0.15	104618	633	50	0	399	1082	11	642	0
Lincoln	90	301696	0.78	234787	1950	18	0	75	2043	-22	148	115
Livingston	142	414720	0.76	316643	1172	13	0	9	1194	-14	347	265
Madison	22	399424	0.26	105549	847	332	0	708	1887	-11	212	56
Morehouse	39	508352	0.36	180565	2157	40	0	327	2524	-17	201	72
Natchitoches	31	803520	0.70	559577	2574	455	0	49	3078	-9	261	182
Orleans	2684	115558	0.00	0	16	4	0	0	20	-29	5778	0
Ouachita	241	390739	0.64	249628	1388	126	134	113	1761	-20	222	142
Plaquemines	32	540544	0.03	13902	135	18	0	29	182	-1	2970	0
Point Coupee	41	356672	0.40	141702	1075	85	0	659	1819	-7	196	78
Rapides	96	846400	0.66	562213	1617	257	27	316	2217	-7	382	254
Red River	25	249152	0.55	137864	756	13	0	171	940	-5	265	147
Richland	38	357440	0.23	80838	807	17	0	234	1058	-13	338	76
Sabine	27	553792	0.80	445625	2451	97	14	95	2657	-3	208	168
St. Bernard	145	297600	0.11	31374	23	0	0	33	56	-5	5314	0
St. Charles	169	181504	0.22	39884	119	36	0	18	173	-6	1049	231
St. Helena	26	262,000	0.79	206615	901	6	0	359	1266	7	207	163
St. James	86	157504	0.47	73254	302	118	0	130	550	-8	286	133
St. John	197	140096	0.46	64132	278	118	0	27	423	1	331	152
St. Landry	94	594368	0.28	167290	1689	56	95	313	2153	-10	276	78
St. Martin	66	473536	0.63	296426	908	470	0	299	1677	-13	282	177
St. Mary	87	392192	0.33	131208	1264	199	33	141	1637	-13	240	0
St. Tammany	224	546688	0.63	346369	576	189	7	127	899	6	608	385
Tangipahoa	127	505728	0.60	305468	952	76	12	63	1103	2	459	277
Tensas	11	385600	0.30	113863	1204	445	148	1542	3339	-1	115	34
Terrebonne	83	803136	0.16	129697	510	8	0	88	606	-27	1325	0
Union	26	561664	0.85	478170	5365	256	128	919	6668	-16	84	72
Vermilion	46	751232	0.10	77283	209	1	0	29	239	-17	3143	0
Vernon	40	850176	0.90	767517	3109	1041	486	315	4951	15	172	155
W. Baton Rouge	113	122368	0.48	58788	472	6	0	519	997	-6	123	59
W. Carroll	34	230016	0.19	44517	268	11	0	7	286	31	804	156
W. Feliciana	37	259840	0.63	162679	1682	133	122	517	2454	-12	106	66
Washington	66	428544	0.70	301547	1372	58	63	65	1558	-12	275	194
Webster	70	380928	0.75	286922	2762	239	0	377	3378	-8	113	85
Winn	18	608320	0.90	546508	2365	274	0	411	3050	-7	199	179
Totals		27764669	0.51	14221733	78444	9035	2335	17641	107455	-8	258	132

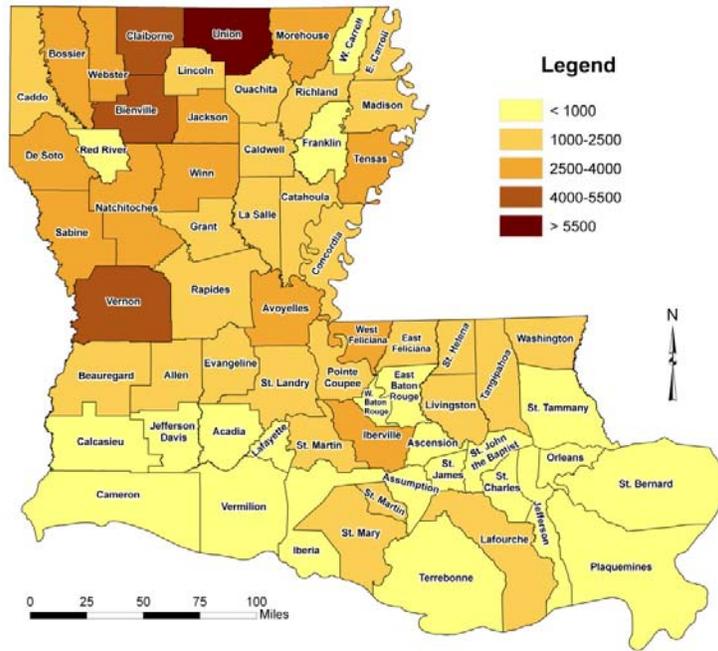
1= <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/22000.html>

2= USDA, Forest Inventory mapmaker, 2007

3= voluntary check in

5= coastal marsh and some prairie parishes excluded from this index. Some agriculture parishes may be biased high.

Total Harvest by Parish, 2009-2010



Forested Acres per Deer Harvested, 2009-2010

