

Results of the 2025 Duluth City Bowhunt

Report prepared by John Meyer and Brian Borkholder on behalf of the Arrowhead Bowhunters Alliance



February 2026

Overall Summary for the 2025 Season:

The Arrowhead Bowhunters Alliance (ABA) placed 311 hunters into the 2025 Duluth City Bowhunt following the lottery and mandatory orientations (Figure 1). The placement of 311 hunters in 2025 (Blue Bar in Figure 1), is similar to that observed since declining in 2016/2017. A total of 130 of the 311 hunters harvested 175 while-tailed deer (92 antlerless and 83 antlered) (Table 2).

For the 2025 season, the earn-a-buck requirement was suspended for a fourth consecutive season. In part, this continued decision was made because hunters reported not seeing many antlerless deer the last few seasons, but still had the desire to harvest venison for their families. Additionally, the MNDNR has indicated that if the harvest stays approximately 50:50 between antlerless and antlered deer, there would be no need to re-implement the earn-a-buck requirement in the future.

Harvest for the 2025 season was 0.56 deer harvested per hunter, up slightly compared to last year's harvest of 0.52 deer harvested per hunter (Figure 2; Table 1). Hunter success (# deer / hunter) in 2025 was the fourth lowest observed in the 21 years of the hunt (Tables 1 and 2; Figure 3). This is the harvest for all 311 registered hunters, including those hunters that failed to harvest any deer. The ABA does not know whether hunters who failed to harvest any deer in 2025 was the result of not spending much time in the woods, not getting into the woods at all, or not being able to get an ethical shot opportunity.

Hunters not reporting any harvest deer were removed from the next set of calculations. Harvest for successful hunters in 2025 was 1.35 deer harvested per successful hunter, down slightly compared to last year's harvest for successful hunters of 1.47 deer harvested per successful hunter (Table 1).

Total harvest had been somewhat stable from 2006 through 2012, between 500 and 600 deer harvested annually (Blue Bars in Figure 2). Beginning with the 2013 season, and continuing through the 2025 season, harvest has dropped well below this level (Figure 2). Beginning with the 2022 season and continuing through the 2025 season, harvest has dropped below 200 deer harvested (Figure 2).

- The number of deer harvested per hunter between 2005 and 2010 was 1.88.
- The number of deer harvested per hunter dropped below 1.0 for the first time in 2015
- The number of deer harvested per hunter between 2022 and 2025 was 0.55



While the ABA Board and City Administration anticipated that harvest might decline some after the earn-a-buck regulation was lifted, harvest rates less than 0.60 deer per hunter have been unexpectedly low.

In line with the stated goal of this management hunt, and even with lifting the earn-a-buck requirement, the 2025 harvest still favored antlerless individuals (Table 2). Of the 175 deer harvested, 92 were antlerless (52.6%). The breakdown of antlerless deer was 83 adult does, 4 fawn does, 4 fawn bucks, and 1 adult male that had shed his antlers (Table 3).

For the 21 seasons of the Duluth City Bowhunt, total harvest for registered bowhunters is 7875 deer; of which 6318 were antlerless and 1557 were antlered (Table 2). Only 19.7% of the harvest has been antlered males. This is completely in line with the stated goals of this hunt to reduce antlerless deer, and thus the reproductive potential of the Duluth deer herd. Figure 4 shows the cumulative harvest of both antlerless and antlered deer for the 21 year history of the Duluth City Bowhunt.

There have been complaints that the buck population would be decimated with the elimination of the earn-a-buck requirement. The actual data does not support this claim (Table 2). The number of antlered bucks harvested per hunter between 2005 and 2021 was 0.24. Once the earn-a-buck requirement was suspended in 2022, the number of antlered bucks harvested per hunter between 2022 and 2025 was 0.25

Further, the data suggests that the decline in antlerless harvest began somewhere in 2013, and did not decline just because hunters were no longer required to harvest an antlerless deer first (Figure 2).

Harvest by specific area or zone can vary considerably within the Duluth City Bowhunt. The Duluth City Council has established 42 Designated Hunting Areas (DHAs) throughout the City of Duluth. Harvest within each DHA is highly variable (Figure 5 and Figure 6). Three DHAs (13, 16B, and 17D) had the highest harvest in 2025, all were at or above 10 deer.

Additionally, Hot spots are areas outside of DHAs, which the ABA Board and Duluth Police Department set up on an ad hoc basis to target localized deer populations. Harvest within Hot Spots is limited to antlerless only. Only 8 deer were harvested from Hot Spots in 2025 (Table 4). In past years, harvest in hot spots made up a larger portion of the antlerless harvest. With the earn-a-buck regulation being lifted, hunters were less desperate to fulfill this requirement. Therefore, interest in Hot Spots was not as high as in previous seasons.

When standardized by area, harvest trends (harvest per square mile) continue to remain low compared to early years. Figure 6 shows a consistent decline in harvest per square mile throughout the history of the hunt. Deer harvest per square mile for 2025 was 4.2, up slightly compared to last year's deer harvest per square mile of 3.9. After several initial seasons of high harvest, our hunters began to have a noticeable effect on the herd and in turn, hunter success.



- Starting in 2013, overall harvest per square mile dropped from 15.1 to 10.8
- Starting in 2015, overall harvest per square mile dropped from 9.0 to 6.9
- Starting in 2022, overall harvest per square mile dropped from 6.9 to 4.0

2025 represents another year of the “Maintenance Phase” of the hunt, where the deer herd and hunter success have stabilized (Figure 7). Figure 8 and Figure 9 shows comparisons per DHA.

It is important to note that even if our hunters are largely not satisfied with the success rates in recent seasons (Tables 1 and 2, Figure 2), it is still higher than the MN statewide archery success rate. Bowhunters in the Duluth City Bowhunter can expect to harvest a deer every 1.8 years (ABA harvest averages from 2022 through 2025 seasons). Minnesota bowhunters statewide can expect to harvest a deer every 5.3 years (C. Balzer, MN DNR, personal communication).

There are several hypotheses that may explain this difference in success rates, even given a real or perceived lack of deer in the woods. Duluth hunters have to jump through a lot of hoops to get into this hunt, and are more likely to invest more time in the woods. Additionally, it is very convenient to hunt near your home, or after work being able to jump into a stand three or four blocks away. It is much less convenient to run out to deer camp 30+ miles out of town, or to leave the city after work and still have enough daylight for an evening sit. Without this opportunity within the city, many of our hunters would likely spend less time in the woods and their hunting success would reflect that lack of effort.

The ABA has been preaching to our bowhunters for years to adjust their expectations for the future, especially those hunters that have participated for many years. Gone are the days of seeing a dozen deer every evening in the woods. In the early years of the hunt, if a hunter did not see a dozen deer every day in the stand, they would move their stand to a “better” area. While the Duluth City Bowhunt program continues, those deer population levels will never again be seen. This year, if a hunter saw a dozen deer in any location all season long, it was a better spot than many others. Any hunters that don’t have the time or patience to wait for just a few harvest opportunities in a season are encouraged to hunt elsewhere.

Many hunters have stated that there are no longer any “trophy” bucks remaining in the City, or that their chances of harvesting a “trophy” buck are better elsewhere. The ABA continues to maintain that any white-tailed deer harvested ethically with archery equipment is a real trophy. The ABA and City of Duluth will not be managing the Duluth white-tailed deer herd for “trophy” potential, including antler point restrictions, QDM policies, or limiting buck harvest to hunters who have “proven” their merit by being involved in the hunt for a certain number of years.

Deer herd reduction is possible and the Duluth hunters have demonstrated this. By all measures, the Duluth City Bowhunt program has been a huge success. Continuing this opportunity provides a service to our community by keeping the herd at current levels, largely supported by residents, gardeners, and vehicle operators. Some hunters have suggested backing off the hunt for a few years to rebuild the herd and provide improved harvest



opportunities. However, as observed 21 years ago, this level is completely unacceptable to the residents, insurance companies, and the Duluth Police Department. If the goals early on in this Duluth City Bowhunt Program were to gain control over the white-tailed deer herd and lower the deer density within Duluth, then our Duluth hunters have been very successful. And for that, the ABA thanks our participating hunters, and our landowners for allowing us access to the wood lots of Duluth.

Table 1: 2025 hunter harvest statistics for the Duluth City Bowhunt, along with 2022, 2023, and 2024 for comparison of years with the earn-a-buck regulation lifted. The long term average includes all seasons, 2005 to 2025.

Statistic	2025 Season	2024 Season	2023 Season	2022 Season	Long Term Average
Total Harvest / Hunter	0.56	0.52	0.55	0.54	1.20
Total Harvest / Successful Hunter	1.35	1.47	1.35	1.37	1.87
Buck Harvest / Hunter	0.27	0.23	0.26	0.23	0.24
Buck Harvest / Successful Hunter	0.64	0.64	0.63	0.59	0.40
Antlerless Harvest / Hunter	0.30	0.30	0.29	0.31	0.96
Antlerless Harvest / Successful Hunter	0.71	0.83	0.72	0.79	1.47

Table 2. Summary Statistics for the Duluth City Bowhunt through the 2025 Hunt.

Year	# Hunters Placed	# Hunters Harvesting	Total Harvest	Total Antlerless	Total Antlered	Total Harvest/Hunter	Total Harvest/Successful Hunter	Buck Harvest/Hunter	Buck Harvest/Successful Hunter	Antlerless Harvest/Hunter	Antlerless Harvest/Successful Hunter	% Donated	% Hunters Harvesting a Deer	No. Hunters Harvesting 2+ Deer	% Hunters Harvesting 2+ deer
2005	192	177	333	265	68	1.73	1.88	0.35	0.38	1.38	1.50		92.2%	149	59.1%
2006	252	196	564	485	79	2.24	2.88	0.31	0.40	1.92	2.47		77.8%	149	59.1%
2007	315	252	568	477	91	1.80	2.25	0.29	0.36	1.51	1.89		80.0%	155	49.2%
2008	289	220	533	458	75	1.84	2.42	0.30	0.34	1.58	2.08		76.1%	141	48.8%
2009	315	247	588	494	94	1.87	2.38	0.30	0.38	1.57	2.00	51.7%	78.4%	153	48.6%
2010	339	272	604	515	89	1.78	2.22	0.26	0.33	1.52	1.89	61.8%	80.2%	159	46.9%
2011	377	268	587	476	111	1.56	2.19	0.29	0.41	1.26	1.78	57.9%	71.1%	168	44.6%
2012	359	274	574	483	91	1.60	2.09	0.25	0.33	1.35	1.76	53.7%	76.3%	162	45.1%
2013	391	231	399	346	53	1.02	1.73	0.14	0.23	0.88	1.50	58.3%	59.1%	98	25.1%
2014	355	208	451	375	76	1.27	2.17	0.21	0.37	1.06	1.80	51.2%	58.6%	107	30.1%
2015	375	209	371	309	62	0.99	1.78	0.17	0.30	0.82	1.48	47.7%	55.7%	102	27.2%
2016	352	174	281	235	46	0.80	1.61	0.13	0.26	0.67	1.35	50.4%	49.4%	70	19.9%
2017	296	160	290	239	51	0.98	1.81	0.17	0.32	0.81	1.49	52.8%	54.1%	74	25.0%
2018	285	157	240	182	58	0.84	1.53	0.20	0.37	0.64	1.16	53.3%	55.1%	70	24.6%
2019	283	151	233	179	54	0.82	1.54	0.19	0.36	0.63	1.19	48.9%	53.4%	70	24.7%
2020	305	189	312	228	84	1.02	1.65	0.28	0.44	0.75	1.21	0.0%	62.0%	99	32.5%
2021	299	165	264	197	67	0.88	1.60	0.22	0.41	0.66	1.19	0.0%	55.2%	78	26.1%
2022	306	121	166	95	71	0.54	1.37	0.23	0.59	0.31	0.79	60.2%	39.5%	33	10.8%
2023	319	130	176	94	82	0.55	1.35	0.26	0.63	0.29	0.72	58.5%	40.8%	37	11.6%
2024	317	113	166	94	72	0.52	1.47	0.23	0.64	0.30	0.83	53.9%	35.6%	41	12.9%
2025	311	130	175	92	83	0.56	1.35	0.27	0.64	0.30	0.71	54.9%	41.8%	29	9.3%
Mean	315.8	192.6	375.0	300.9	74.1	1.20	1.87	0.24	0.40	0.96	1.47	48.0%	61.5%	99.75	31.1%
Min	192	113	166	92	46	0.52	1.35	0.13	0.23	0.29	0.71	0.0%	35.6%	29	9.3%
Max	391	274	604	515	111	2.24	2.88	0.35	0.64	1.92	2.47	61.8%	92.2%	168	59.1%
Sum			7875	6318	1557										

Figure 1: Number of hunters placed and the number of those hunters harvesting a deer in each season of the Duluth City Bowhunt.

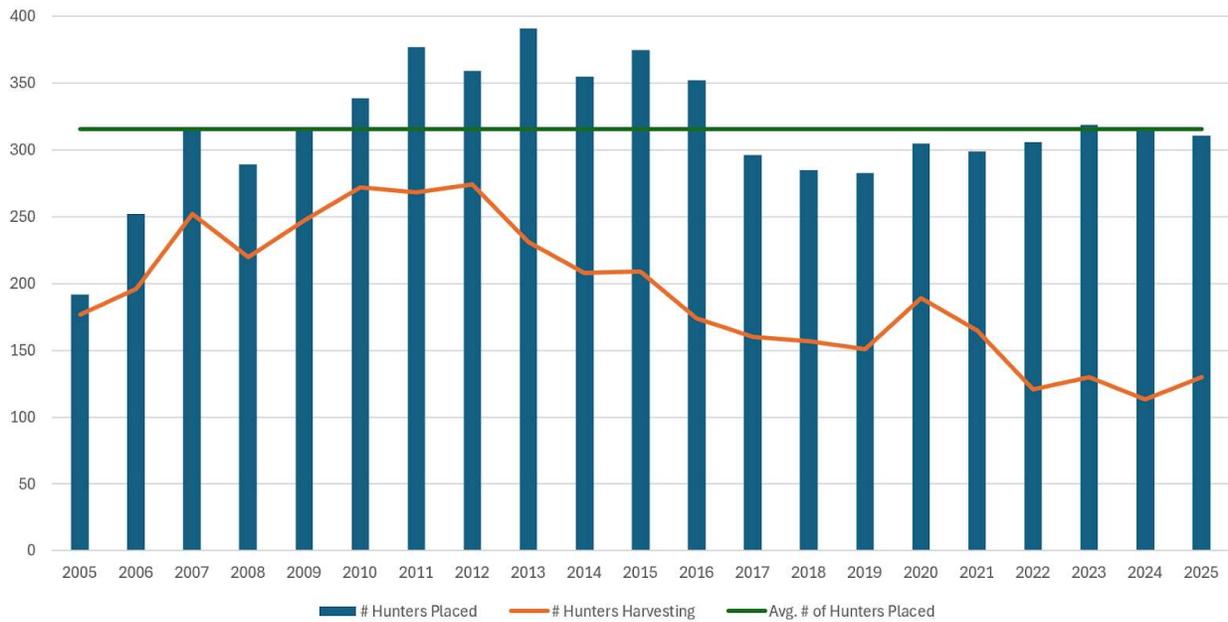


Figure 2: Total Harvest, Average Harvest Per Hunter, and Average Antlerless Harvest Per Hunter

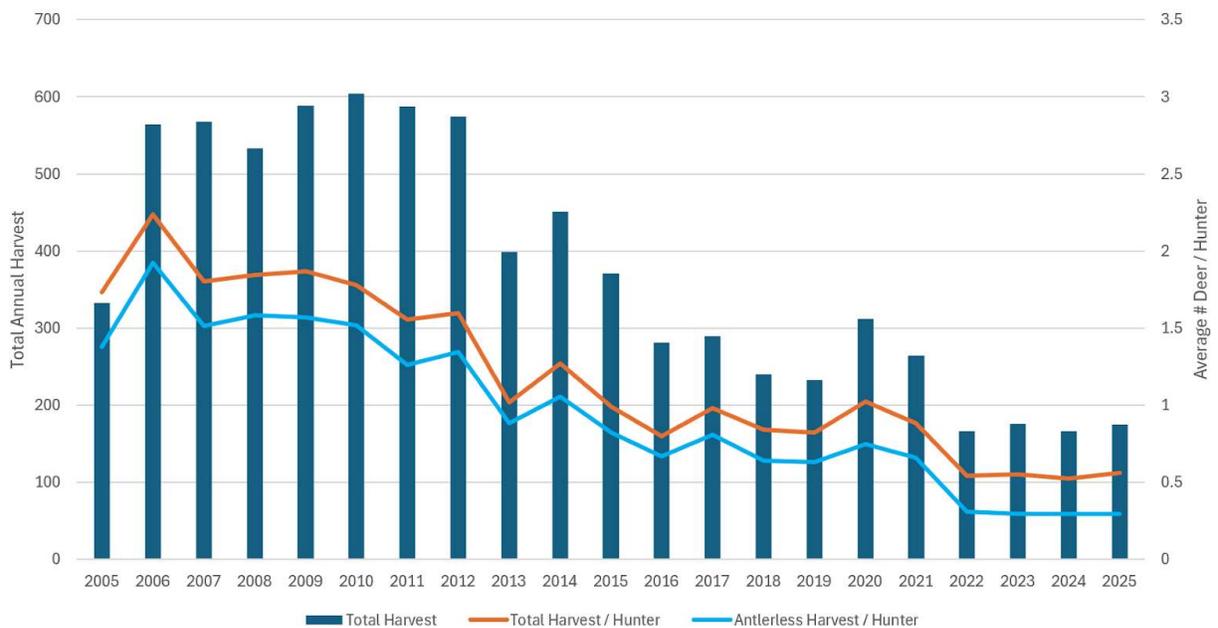


Figure 3: Number of Hunters Harvesting X Number of Deer. For example, 8 hunters harvested 3 deer.

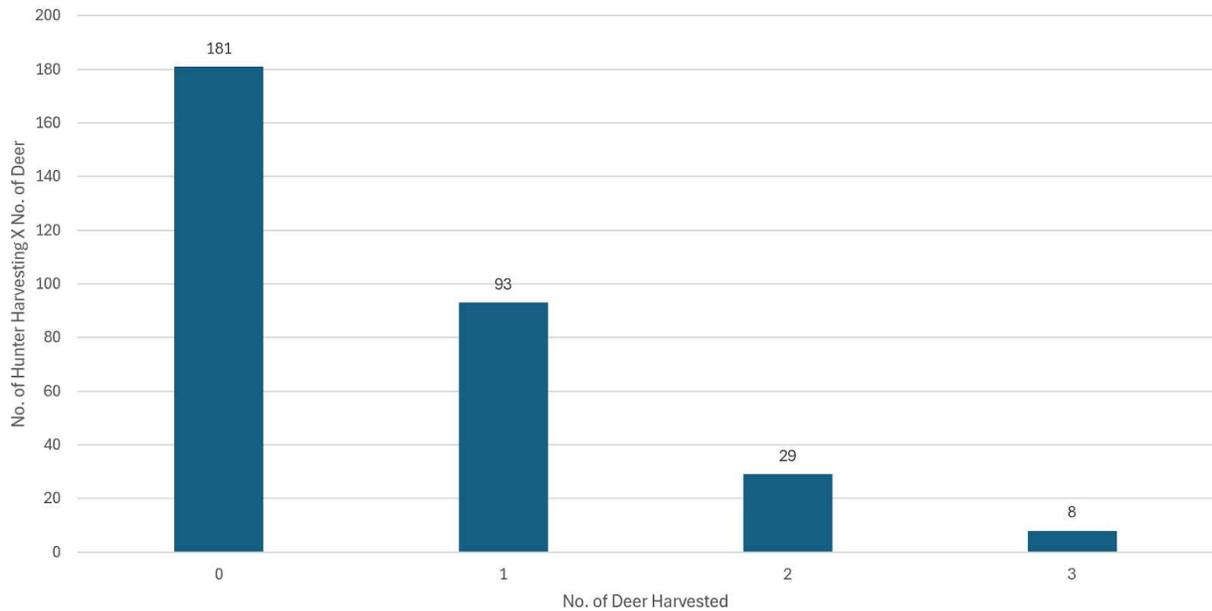


Table 3: Breakdown of harvest by deer type for the 2025 Duluth City Bowhunt

Type of Deer Harvested	Total	% of Overall Harvest
Fawn Doe	4	2.29%
Fawn Buck	4	2.29%
Adult Doe	83	47.43%
Antlered Buck	83	47.43%
Adult Male that had shed his antlers	1	0.57%



Table 4: Breakdown of Hot Spot harvest for the 2025 Duluth City Bowhunt. Harvest within Hot Spots is limited to antlerless only.

Hot Spot Location	# of Antlerless Deer Harvested
Hawk Ridge	0
Lakeside	2
Little Ely	3
Sneve	3
Total	8

Figure 4: Cumulative Harvest of antlerless and antlered white-tailed deer in the City of Duluth, MN from 2005 to 2025

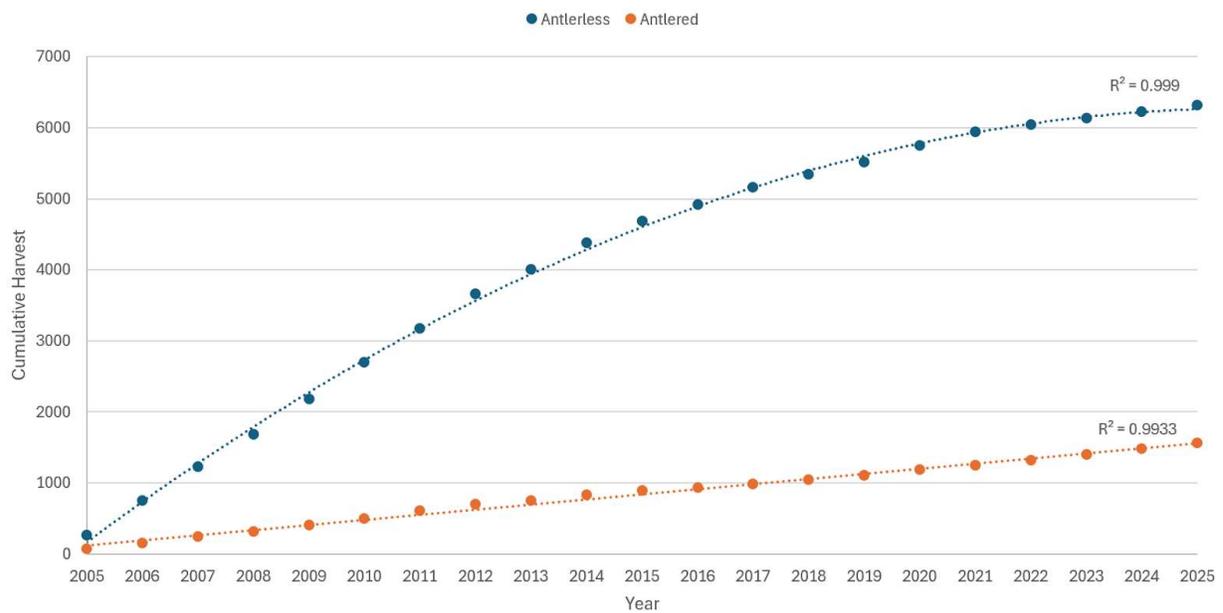


Figure 5: Number of deer harvested by deer type (antlerless or antlered) by DHA. Note that there are several DHAs with no harvested deer. DHAs without any harvested deer are not shown.

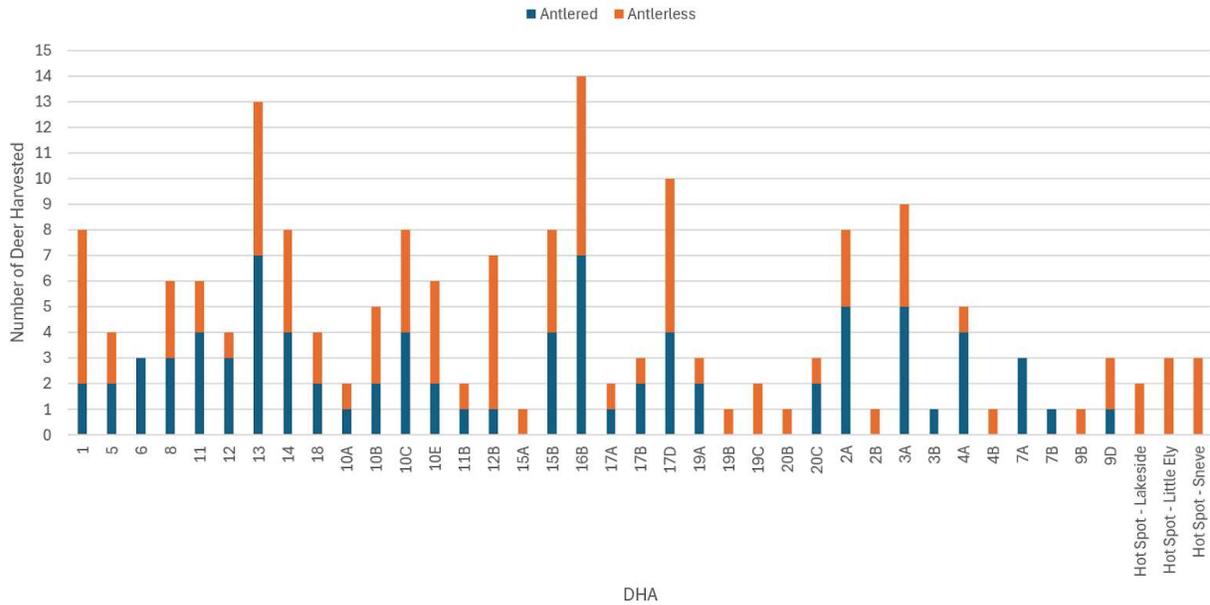
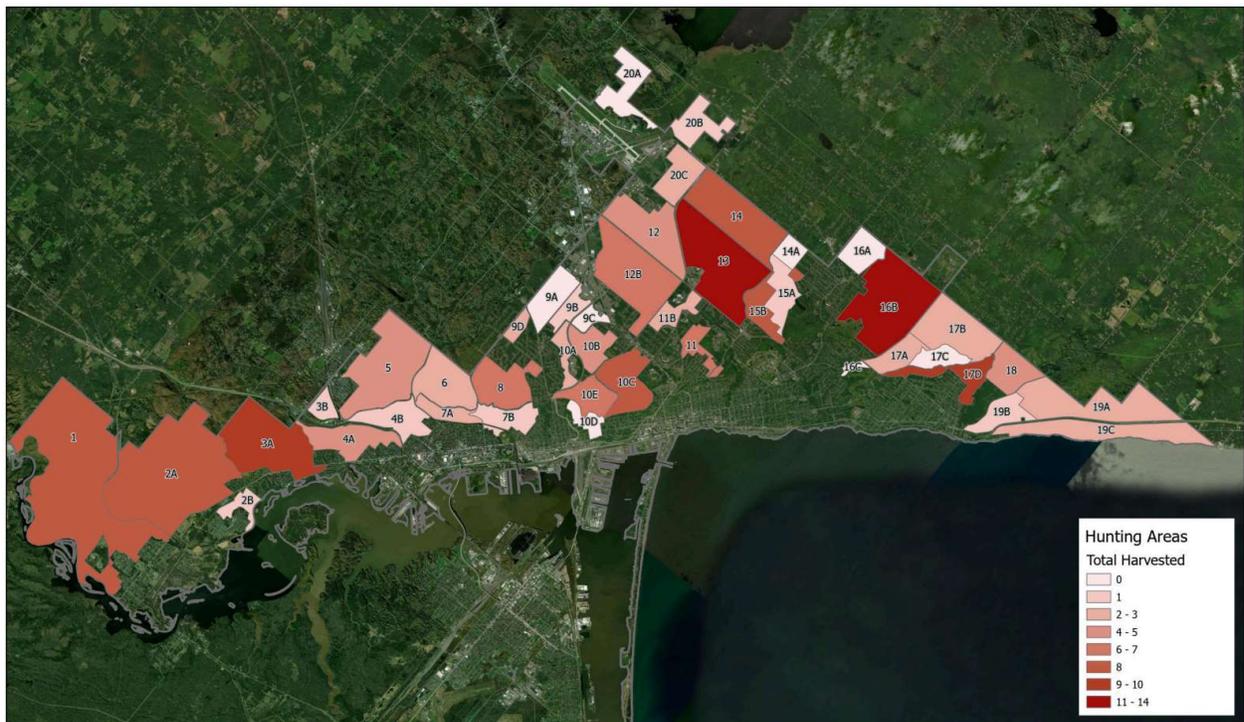


Figure 6: Deer harvest in each DHA. Map courtesy of City of Duluth GIS Department



City of Duluth Deer Harvest by Hunting Zone 2025



Figure 7: Overall harvest per square mile. Data presented is for the 2006 - 2025 seasons. DHAs were changed after the 2005 inaugural season and have stayed consistent since.

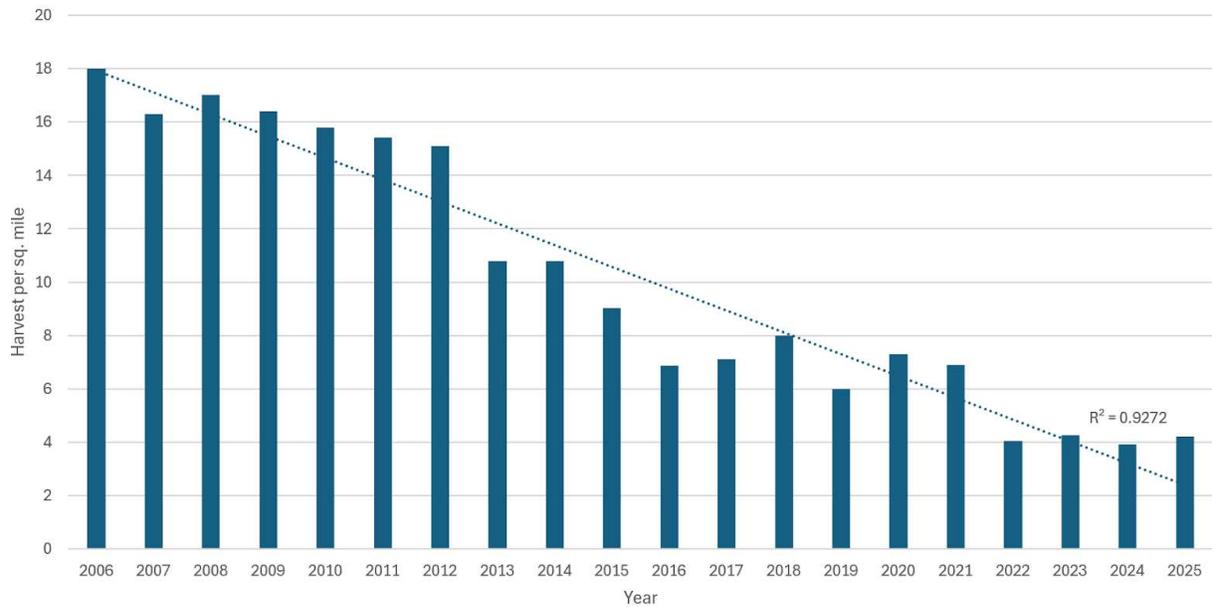
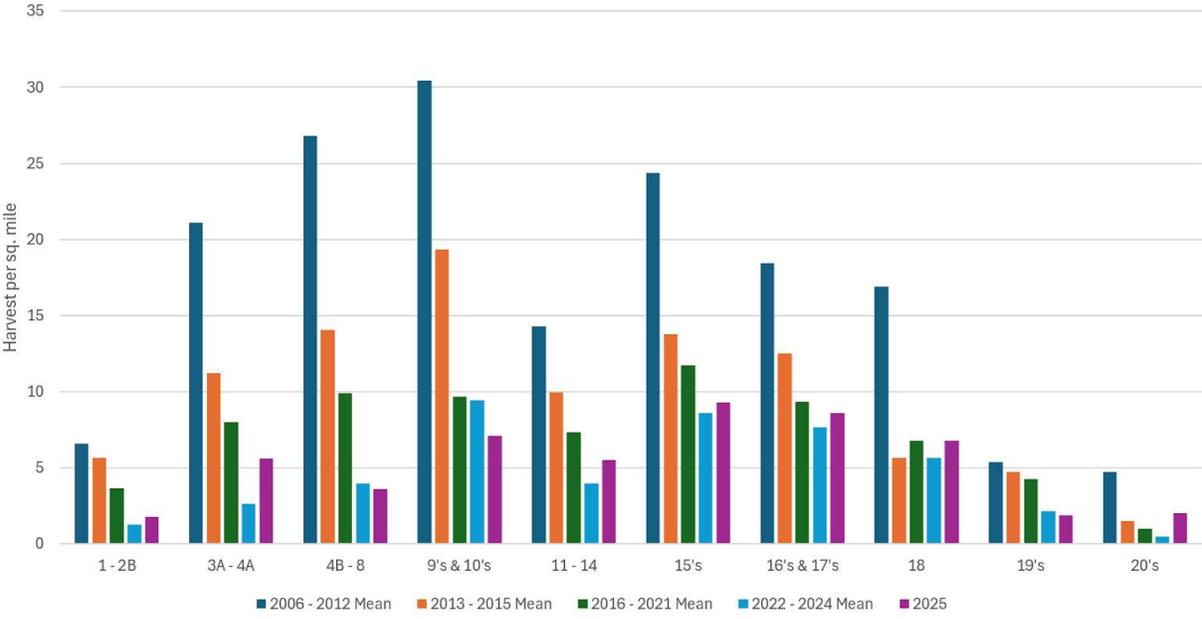


Figure 8: 2025 harvest per square mile in each DHA. Map courtesy of City of Duluth GIS Department



Figure 9: Harvest per square mile in various DHAs. Data presented is common years of harvest per square mile and the 2025 season.



General Hunt Details for the 2025 Season:

Private Lands

Hunters may access and hunt on any private property, with permission and signed LOP form, within any of the DHAs. Harvest from private lands accounted for 41.71% of the 2025 harvest (Table 6). A general misconception among some of the hunters, especially new hunters, is that one needs access to private land to harvest deer, specifically antlered bucks. Table 7 breaks down harvest on public and private lands by deer type and demonstrates that deer are still found on public lands within the city. This demonstrates the importance of continued public support for this hunt and forging positive relations with Duluth landowners who continue to allow bowhunters to participate in this sport on their property. Not all DHAs are created equally in terms of the portions of public and private lands within each DHA boundary. Figure 10 breaks down harvest within the various DHAs by public and private lands.

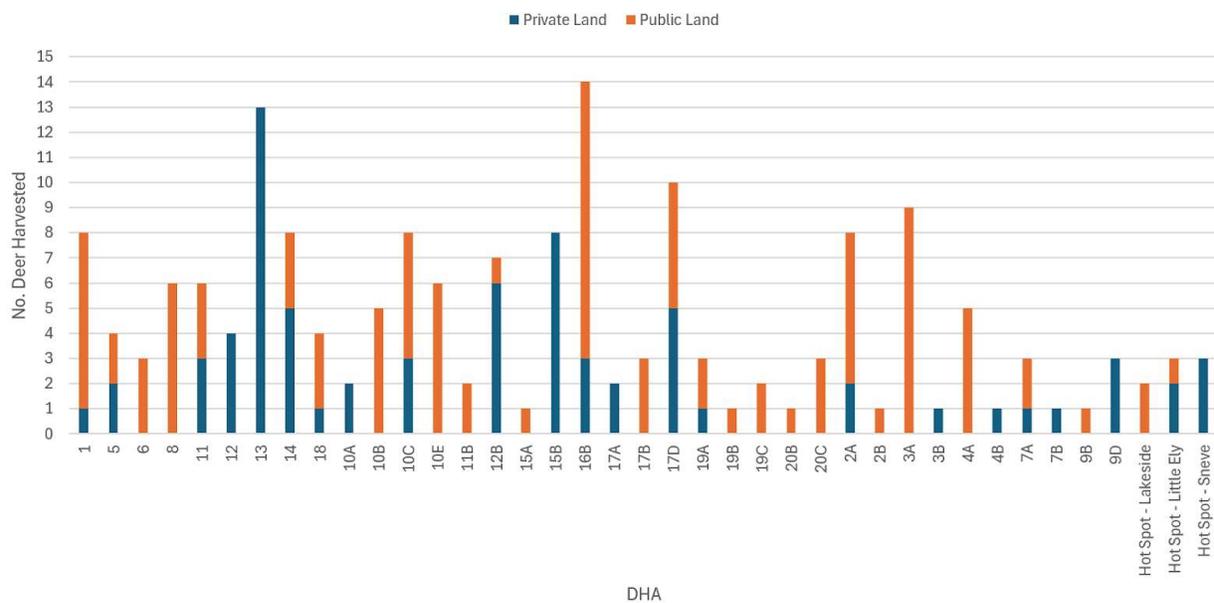
Table 6: Harvest on public and private lands within the DHAs

Land Type Harvest	Total	% of Overall Harvest
Private Land	73	41.71%
Public Land	102	58.29%

Table 7: Harvest by deer type on public and private lands within the DHAs

Deer Type and Land Type Harvest	Total	% of Overall Harvest
Antlerless - Public Land	54	30.86%
Antlerless - Private Land	38	21.71%
Antlered - Public Land	48	27.43%
Antlered - Private Land	35	20.00%

Figure 10: Harvest by land type and DHA



Hot Spots

Hot spots represent a unique portion of the harvest. Hot spots are parcels outside of DHAs established by the Duluth City Council. What makes these areas unique is that private citizens petition the ABA to hunt the property. Essentially, these are areas where the main complaint is “Why not in my backyard? We still have deer problems.” The ABA does not go out and look for these either. When landowners approach the ABA requesting their property be set up as a Hot Spot, the ABA will only proceed if, and only if, the property owner has discussed with, and received support from neighbors. The ABA will never push our way into neighborhoods without the support of the residents.



If you know of landowners that are still experiencing deer problems, please have them contact the ABA at the official email address (infoduluthhunt@gmail.com). The ABA will work with the landowners and determine if this is a possibility for their land to be included in the Hot Spot program. Landowners and our hunters need to understand that Hot Spots are not set up to be private hunting reserves for one or two individuals. The ABA will need to be able to move multiple hunters into and out of the Hot Spot(s) to maximize opportunity and harvest.

Another criterion unique to Hot Spots is that they are currently open for antlerless harvest only. The ABA allowed buck harvest in one previous season, which turned out to be a management nightmare. Hunters worried that specific known antlered bucks were harvested within a Hot Spot, before they were given an opportunity to hunt that Hot Spot. During the 2025 season, 8 antlerless deer were harvested from Hot Spots, accounting for 4.57% of the harvest of the entire hunt (Table 4).

Hearts

Again in 2025, Duluth hunters were asked to save hearts from their harvested white-tail deer. Hearts are used by the University of Minnesota - Duluth and the University of Illinois - Chicago Medical Schools for dissection and anatomy. Fresh hearts have much finer details in the arteries and capillaries than do formalin-preserved ones. In 2025, 54.86% of our hunters indicated that they participated in this program (Table 8). Three of the hunters have personally bought and donated prizes to raffle off to hunters who donated hearts. The ABA Board wishes to personally thank these generous individuals. Without their generosity, we may not have collected as many hearts. The ABA is immensely grateful to those hunters that went out of their way to collect, store, and deliver these hearts. The Board would encourage more hunters to participate in the future. Additionally, hearts do not need to be solely collected from Duluth, nor do they need to be white-tailed deer hearts. UMD will take hearts from bear, moose, elk, antelope, mule deer, white-tailed deer, and any other large mammal legally harvested outside of the city.

Table 8: Responses from hunters who were asked to save hearts for the UMD-Medical School during the 2025 Duluth City Bowhunt.

Remember to save the heart?	Total	% of Overall Harvest
No, I didn't intend to bother with this. Sorry, not important to me	1	0.57%
No, I forgot. Sorry	21	12.00%
Sorry, I eat hearts, and saved it for myself	57	32.57%
Yes, I remembered!	96	54.86%

Year End Survey:

At the conclusion of every season in the Duluth City Bowhunt, our hunters are asked to complete a Year End Survey. The survey is 100% anonymous. The survey was made available to hunters following the completion of the 2025 season. Figures 11, 12, and 13 highlight survey 2025 participation, 2025 harvest, and 2026 planning responses from the 128 respondents.

- 128 of 311 hunters completed the survey (41.16%).
- 12 of the 128 hunters who completed the survey did not hunt in Duluth in 2025 (9.4%)
- 65 of 128 hunters who completed the survey harvested 0 deer in Duluth in 2025 (50.8%)
- 63 of 128 hunters who completed the survey harvested 1 or more deer in Duluth in 2025 (49.2%)

Figure 11: Responses to “Did you hunt in Duluth in 2025?”

Did you hunt in Duluth in 2025?

128 responses

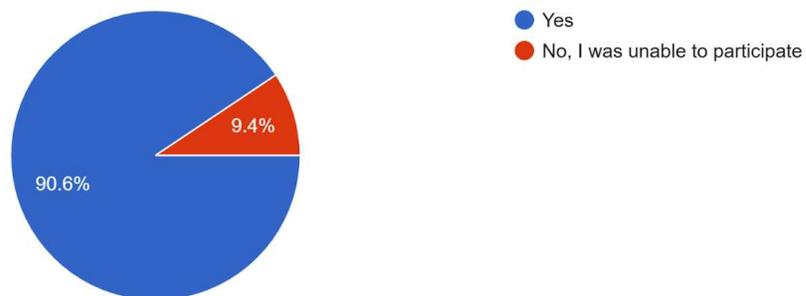


Figure 12: Responses to “How many total deer did you harvest within Duluth in 2025?”

How many total deer did you harvest within Duluth in 2025?

128 responses

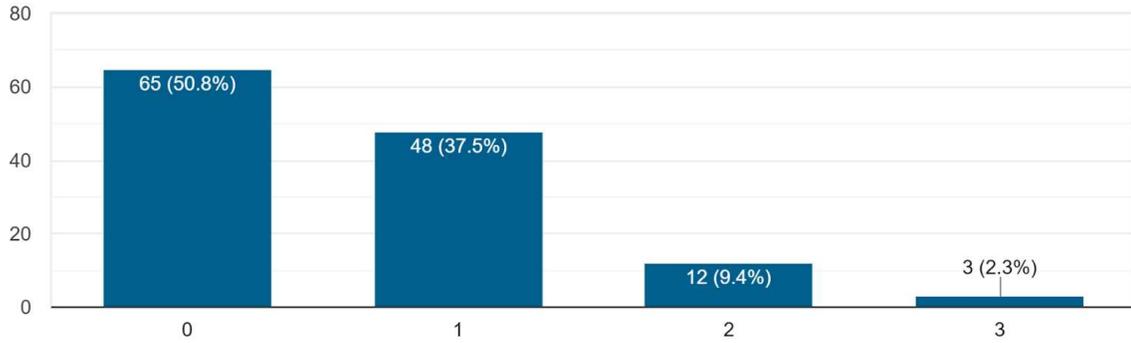
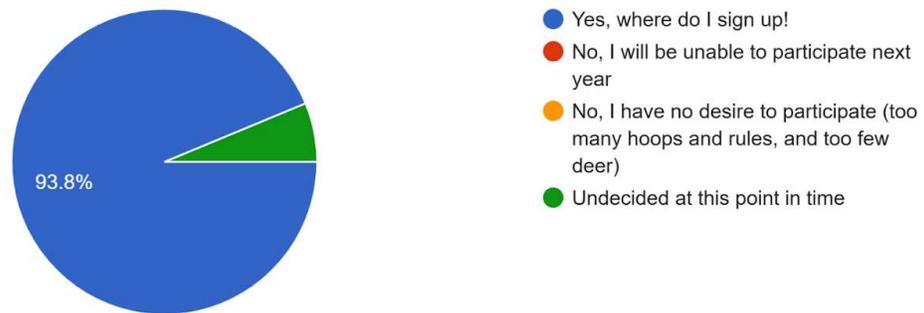


Figure 13: Responses to “Do you plan on participating again in this hunt in 2026?”

Do you plan on participating again in this hunt in 2026?

128 responses



Hunting Effort and Hunting Demographics:

Survey respondents were asked several questions regarding their hunting during the 2025 season. Hunters were asked how many times they hunted (Figures 14 and 15) and where they hunted (Figures 16 and 17).

Figure 14: Responses to “Approximately how many times did you hunt within the Duluth City Limits?”

Approximately how many times did you hunt within the Duluth City Limits?

128 responses

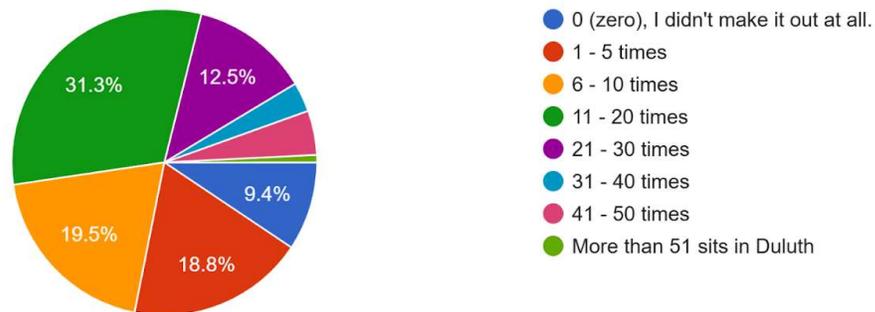


Figure 15: Responses to “For returning hunters, did you hunt more or less than you did last year in Duluth?”

For returning hunters, did you hunt more or less than you did last year IN DULUTH?

128 responses

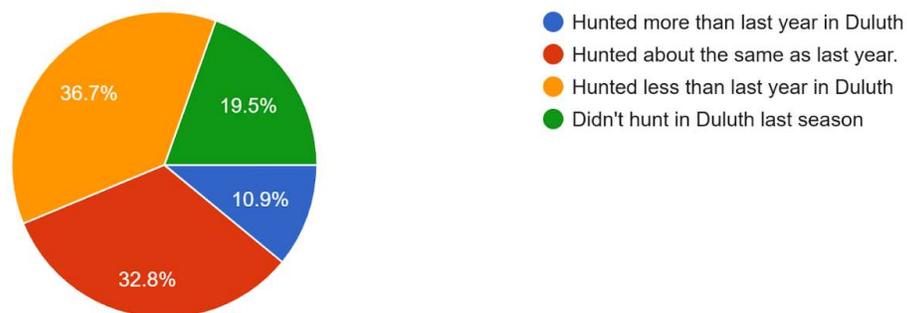


Figure 16: Responses to “For your Duluth hunting, please indicate where you spent time hunting, either within your DHA, or private lands, and in Hot Spots”

For your Duluth Hunting, please indicate where you spent time hunting, either within your DHA, on private lands, and in Hot Spots (if applicable)

128 responses

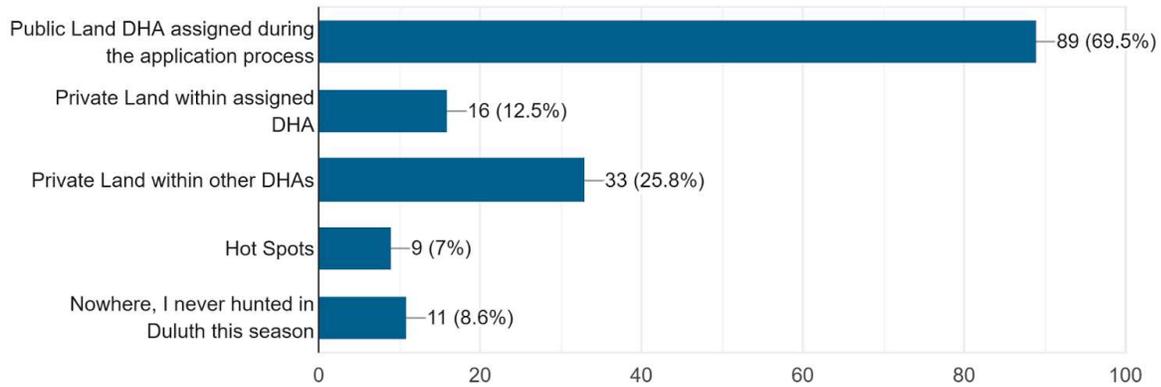
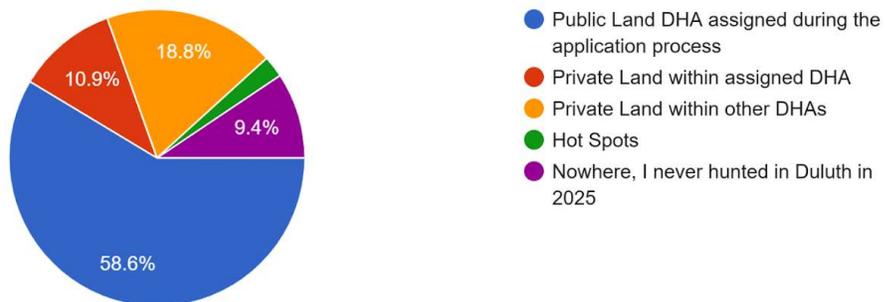


Figure 17: Responses to “From the list you checked above, where did you spend the majority of your time hunting?”

From the list you checked above, where did you spend the majority of your time hunting?

128 responses



Duluth Deer Herd:

Survey respondents were asked several questions about the number of deer they observed in 2025 and to rate the deer herd. Questions were asked about the number of deer they observed in 2025 relative to what they observed in 2023 and 2024 (Figure 18 and Figure 19). Responses could range from 1 (much less deer observed relative to 2023 and 2024) to 7 (much more deer observed relative to 2023 and 2024). A value of 4 was defined as seeing the same number of deer this year as last. All respondents were all asked to rate the current overall deer herd on a similar scale: 1 (far fewer deer than acceptable) to 7 (deer herd is still far too numerous), 4 represent the herd numbers are exactly where they should be (Figure 20).

- 44.1% of survey respondents feel that the Duluth white-tailed deer herd is where it should be (observation value = 4)
- 41.5% of survey respondents feel that the Duluth white-tailed deer herd is below where it should be (observation value = 1, 2, or 3)
- 14.4% of survey respondents feel that the Duluth white-tailed deer herd is above where it should be (observation value = 5, 6, or 7)

Landowners, especially those living outside of the established DHAs, may feel otherwise. It would be interesting to survey them at some point in the future.

Figure 18: Responses to “How many antlerless deer did you see relative to the last year or two as a participant in the Duluth Hunt”

How many antlerless deer did you see relative to the last year or two as a participant in the Duluth Hunt?
100 responses

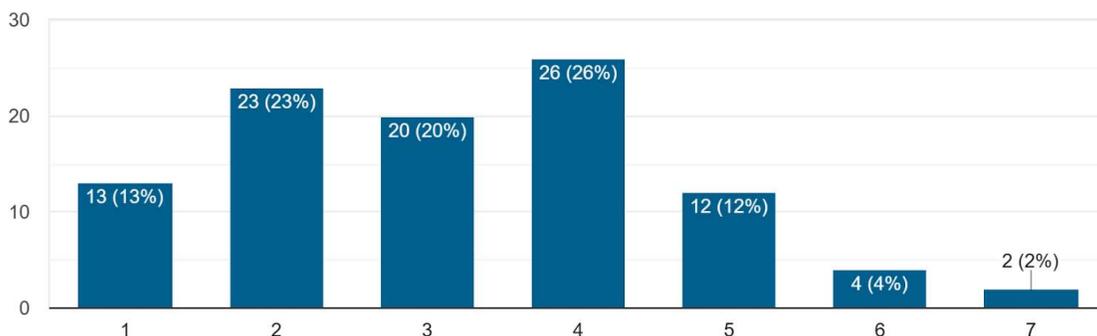


Figure 19: Responses to “How many antlered deer did you see relative to the last year or two as a participant in the Duluth Hunt?”

How many antlered deer did you see relative to the last year or two as a participant in the Duluth Hunt?

98 responses

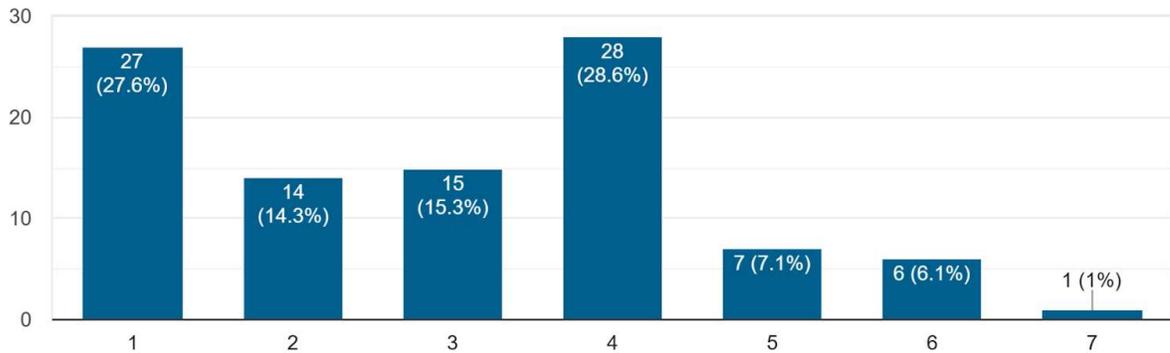
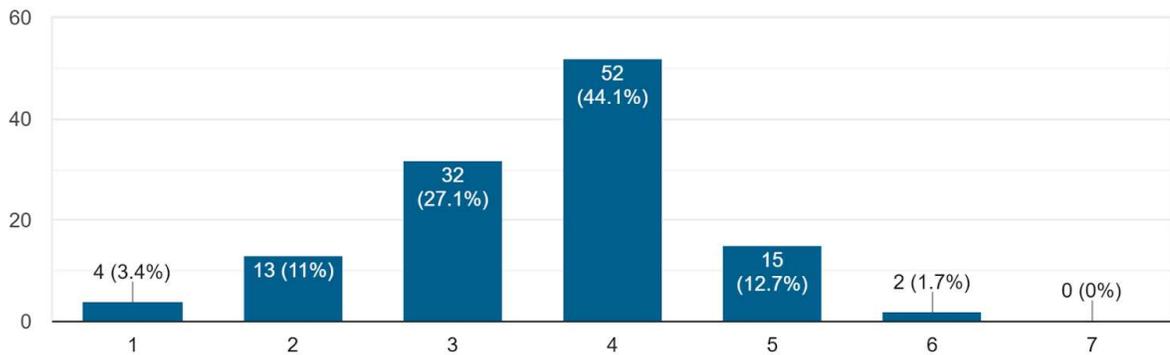


Figure 20: Responses to “From your perspective, how would you rate the current overall deer herd within Duluth?”

From your perspective, how would you rate the current overall deer herd within Duluth?

118 responses



Earn-A-Buck:

For the 2025 season, the earn-a-buck requirement was suspended for a fourth consecutive season. The MNDNR has indicated that if the harvest stays approximately 50:50 between antlerless and antlered deer, there would be no need to re-implement the earn-a-buck requirement in the future. The 2025 harvest includes 175 while-tailed deer, 92 antlerless and 83 antlered (Table 3), indicating that 2026 will very likely be another season of suspended earn-a-buck. To learn if hunters were intentionally passing on antlerless deer, and holding out for an antlered buck, survey respondents were asked the following: Did you make the intentional decision to not shoot an antlerless deer that you had a legitimate shot at? If so, why? This question allowed respondents to select responses from a list and/or write in with their own response.

Table 9: Top 5 responses from “Did you make the intentional decision to not shoot an antlerless deer that you had a legitimate shot at? If so, why?”

Response	% of survey respondents
No, never had a shot at an antlerless deer	35.93%
The doe had fawns, and I prefer to not orphan fawns, especially early in the season	14.84%
Never had a shot at a doe after the rut	14.84%
Adult does are "legal" bait, and I wanted to save her for attracting bucks in the rut	10.16%
I believe there needs to be more breeder does in the Duluth herd	7.03%



Request for Feedback:

Hunters were all given the opportunity to comment on whatever they felt was important. The question was worded: “Do you have any ideas or suggestions for improving the hunt in 2026?”

All comments and responses from the ABA are included in Appendix 1.

A brief summary of comments in no particular order:

1. Continue to suspend earn-a-buck in 2026
2. More area to hunt (reduce setbacks, expand DHAs, more Hot Spots)
3. Reduce/limit trail camera usage
4. Request for predator control (coyotes / bear)
5. Positive feedback

Finally, the ABA would like to thank these volunteers, without whom we couldn't pull this hunt off:

Bruce Fehringer
Matt Anderson
Gary Rabold
Tony Marino
Mike Dodge
Tim Key
Kyle Herr
Matt Stark
Michael Hedlund

Camron Vollbrecht
Seth Hartman
Roy Levitt
Scott Schafer
Kerry Lapcinski
Brandon Mandt
Jesse DeWitte
Joe Austin

ABA Board Members for 2025:

Phil Lockett, President
Leann Oehlerking-Boes, Chair
Brian Borkholder, Secretary / Treasurer
Michael Hedlund

Joe Austin
John Meyer
Jordan Buetow
Matt Vogt

On behalf of the Arrowhead Bowhunters Alliance, we thank all those individuals that participated in the 2025 Duluth Bow Hunt, and who made this another successful season. See you in the woods in 2026!



Appendix 1. Hunters were all given the opportunity to comment on whatever they felt was important. The question was worded: “Do you have any ideas or suggestions for improving the hunt in 2026?” Hunter comments are in the left-hand column. Responses from the ABA are in the right-hand column. Comments are as submitted.

Do you have any ideas or suggestions for improving the hunt in 2026	ABA Response
Great job to the ABA! Thank you for all you do!	Thank you!
Nice work! Thanks for another great season. Appreciate your time and effort that goes into the hunt.	Thank you!
No suggestions, this is my first year but things seemed to work smoothly. No deer seen which was surprising to me but I'm not sure I was in in a great location with my stand. I'm excited for next year already!	
Orientation this year was better than last, it was much easier to hear the presenters. I have offered myself as a volunteer but I have not heard back, I would recommend a "volunteer here" button on the website.	You need to contact the ABA directly. This is an anonymous survey. We have no idea who you are until you contact us and let us know who you are.
I think the hunt is doing fine the past few years with earn a buck restriction lifted. We're in a maintenance hunt and have been for years. Coyotes and bears are definitely reducing the herd by removing most fawns each spring and early summer. The numbers in the harvest reflect that.	Numbers are down, yes. But saying cause and effect without hard data isn't good science. It's conjecture. You may be correct, but without data, you can't be 100% sure.
Have DNR bump tags back to 5 total. Judging by the number of hunters that just shot a buck and didn't shoot a doe or even hunted after filling their buck tag,, the extra tags and the few hunters that would actually use them wouldn't really affect the herd.	MNDNR will see your comment and take whatever steps they feel is warranted.
Ban cameras. I seen six hundred cameras. And six deer.	Unfortunately, we can't ban cameras as much as some Board members might want to.



<p>I felt it was very well-run.</p> <p>An idea my daughter had was to have a place for successful hunters to post their harvests.</p> <p>We had spotted several deer that had distinctive features and were interested if they survived the season and/or if they were taken. I get it that “surprise” and “mystery” are reasons we come back, but we are also interested in genetics and want to see those broad rack 3 year olds survive to pass on their genes and/pr come back as big strapping 4-5 year olds in a future hunt.</p>	<p>We tried an online bulletin board during the first two years of the ABA. No one used it. Instagram and WasteBook are the preferred forums. Consider starting a Duluth Hunt Instagram page.</p>
<p>1st time hunter, thanks for the work</p>	<p>Thank you!</p>
<p>This hunt is handled extremely well. Compared to the Twin Cities city hunt, this is a dream. I think communication is clear and concise. Expectations are very clear and the process is handled well. Awesome hunt and I am very happy to be part of it. My only critique is that the test to get in is too easy. I would suggest a smaller 4” target instead of 6.25”. It doesn’t take long to become proficient enough to hit that big of a dot at 20 yards.</p>	<p>Your point is valid, but unfortunately that would require the ABA purchasing a whackload of targets and getting them to the two testing venues. They already have the standard league targets, which is super convenient. Every ethical hunter should put in the effort to get proficient enough to get consistent 3X - 25 scores on the test.</p>
<p>I think you guys do a good job and I appreciate the opportunity to hunt in the city. I had a bad year for bucks but I still managed to harvest a doe so I’m happy. Thanks for all the hard work!</p>	<p>Thank you!</p>
<p>I think making returning hunters do the proficiency test is a complete waste of time</p>	<p>Unfortunately this is written in the Duluth City Ordinance, something the ABA has no ability to change.</p>
<p>all good</p>	
<p>I don’t believe the city of Duluth would willingly increase the deer population so ideas to do that don’t matter</p>	
<p>Nope. It’s alright</p>	



<p>Maybe the City or State could more strongly discourage feeding of deer in Duluth. I know of deer concentrations in an area because an individual (not a hunter) is feeding deer just outside a DHA which is probably not good for the deer and concentrates deer in smaller area. Safe parking is often a concern. Provide more information about how a small area outside DHAs could be considered for a special hunt because of high deer numbers. Thank you ABA it seems you are doing a pretty good job with this hunt.</p>	<p>Within the Duluth Ordinance is a ban on deer feeding. It's already illegal. Simply call Duluth PD and report the offending parties. Small areas can be included in the Hunt as Hot Spots. We do this all the time if the neighbors approve. But you need to contact the ABA to suggest these spots.</p>
<p>Let me begin by saying I'm very appreciative for the ABA and the opportunity to do the city hunt. It's a great privilege. The only disappointment I had was not being able to hunt the zone that I live in. I respect the seniority rule for returning hunters in the lottery picks. I really do. If there's any suggestion I could throw in, it would be this: If a hunter's primary residential address is within a DHA Zone, and they pick that zone as their number one choice, they get dibs on that zone before the lottery picks. I get that this might piss off a lot of people who have been doing this hunt for many years, but that's my thought.</p>	<p>It's a valid idea, but nearly impossible to implement without starting a riot.</p>
<p>Bring back earn a buck since the total deer shot seems to be getting lower every year and I see more does in the woods now. Populations seems to be growing. Keep the crossbow restriction and not change it to the MN current regs. Change the regs on the distance you can hunt from a dwelling from 250 feet to 200 feet.</p>	<p>You've got a great location if you are seeing more and more antlerless. Consider yourself very lucky! We've tried changing dwelling set-backs on several occasions, but Duluth City Admin staff are unwilling to consider this in the future. Believe us, we've tried.</p>
<p>continue the hunt as is with no earn a buck required</p>	
<p>Allow crossbows to be used for hunting by all. Look at it collectively as archery hunting similarly to the MN DNR. Thanks for all you do</p>	<p>The ABA and City have their reasons for not allowing everyone to use crossbows.</p>
<p>Change the survey options for the question about not shooting an antlerless deer. Several of the options are strange and do not quite fit.</p> <p>Thanks for all your work on running the city hunt.</p>	



<p>Is there a firm threshold stat for when re-instating earn-a-buck would happen, or are we just going off public opinion?</p>	<p>We're going off the science, not public opinion. The goal is to get the herd back into an acceptable buck:doe ratio. Currently it's not healthy.</p>
<p>Limit the number of trail cams per hunter on public DHA's. At the very least, cameras should be labeled with the hunter's name and hunter number. A camera should not be sufficient to "save" a spot and keep other hunters away. Maybe distribute a hunters etiquette list at orientation. Also, notification of follow up regarding illegal stands would be appreciated. We are asked to notify you of any problems out there, but never hear back if anything is done about them. Other than that, it's a great hint and I appreciate everything you guys do. I especially like the weekly updates.</p>	<p>Unfortunately, anyone and everyone can hang a trail camera. Lots of non-hunters hang them on their property simply to observe wildlife. So while we can require you to label your camera, we can't require that of the general public. So we don't bother requiring that of you. Beginning this year, you will see the results of illegal stand investigations.</p>
<p>Knowing that it would be difficult, it would benefit many hunters to have priority on zones close to where they live. Including myself, I would be able to get out in the woods a lot more if my zone weren't 25 minutes away from home. I spoke with other hunters who share the same opinion too. I understand it could be challenging, but if there were a way to adjust the zone preference system to allow hunters to hunt closer to home, it would be great.</p>	
<p>Thanks for all of your time and effort on the this hunt!</p>	<p>Thank you!</p>
<p>Keep up the good work!</p>	<p>Thank you!</p>
<p>It would be nice to have a "chat box" for each zone on the website so hunters within the same zone can communicate with each other</p>	<p>We tried an online bulletin board during the first two years of the ABA. No one used it. Instagram and WasteBook are the preferred forums. Consider starting a DHA specific Instagram page.</p>
<p>Close off public lands to mountain bikers, unless they are hot chicks</p>	<p>HA HA!!</p>



<p>I think the herd is at a pretty balanced level in terms of buck to doe ratio and the number of deer per square mile is at a good level in most DHAs. I think it is wise to stay AWAY from earn a buck because the most ethical shot (broadside or quartering away) a hunter may get during the season might only happen with a buck and if the hunter had to harvest an antlerless first, it would mean that hunter did not harvest a deer which is the objective of the hunt (to reduce the herd).</p> <p>It appears that the number of antlerless deer harvested under earn a buck and without earn a buck are relatively close now that the number of deer per square mile has been reduced toward an appropriate level.</p> <p>One question you might add to this questionnaire is to ask if the respondent would be willing to volunteer with the ABA and if they are interested in volunteering, to encourage them to contact through ABA email. You might prompt a few more volunteers. I am considering volunteering if I don't move out of the area.</p> <p>Thank you to all of you involved in running the hunt!</p>	<p>Every year at Orientation, Bork asks for volunteers. Once every 4 or 5 years, someone actually pays attention and steps up. Hunters get notified of business meetings, and few ever show up. Short of personal invitations, the ABA Board isn't sure what else to do to recruit volunteers.</p>
<p>No suggestions. I'm just burned out on dealing with too many younger hunters that all think that they can reserve "their buck". Too many kids tell me that this or that buck is "theirs" and that they appreciate me respecting that. If you're unlucky enough to shoot "their" buck, then all hell breaks loose on social media. It's disgusting and tiring. Tell all those hunters to go hunt somewhere private where they don't have to deal with 300 hunters who might accidentally shoot "their" deer.</p>	
<p>You folks continue to do a good job. I appreciate the opportunity to hunt out my back door.</p>	<p>Thank you!</p>
<p>Nope everything went well. Had a great encounter with the biggest buck I've ever seen in my life, didn't have a shot opportunity. Can't wait for next year to get my first archery buck!</p>	
<p>Great hunt, like the new data guy, really like the no earn a buck allows me to spend more time with the family.</p>	<p>Thank you!</p>

Keep up the good work	Thank you!
Not an idea- (hope I'm not flooding your inbox with bullshit!) This is my first year hunting, and everyone I interacted with was very welcoming and helpful. Thank you for being so great to work with!	Thank you!
Keep up the good work!	Thank you!
Entertain the idea of having a select number of coyotes being taken from the city. I had many encounters as well as trail camera pictures of coyotes throughout the season. I even had 2 sits where they chased off antlerless deer before I could get an ethical shot. I also frequently see them in neighborhoods nearby the zone I hunt. I'm not talking a mass "shoot anything that moves". I'm asking for a couple city issued permits per-say for hunters who have an ethical and long standing relationship with the ABA.	The current City Ordinance allows for the hunting of whitetailed deer only. Short of returning to City Council and reopening the dialogue on hunting within the City, this won't ever change. The current ABA Board members feel that trying to open dialogue with the City Council could prove disastrous for the future on all hunting.
Thank you ABA!	Thank you!
None	
No complaints. Thanks for all the ABA does, and all your time invested into this hunt.	Thank you!
No suggestions at this time! I am new to hunting. I didn't see much of anything this year, but I also think that's because I needed to spend more time sitting! Looking forward to next year!	
Bring back earn a buck keep the bucks alive!	We're not about trophy hunting and keeping bucks alive. We're about the opportunity to recreate within our local woods, and harvesting whatever each individual cares to harvest. We're not all crazy for antlers.
All good	
Keep running a well organized hunt!	Thank you!
No suggestions	

None	
I think everything is good for me I have no complaints or improvements.	
Make the hunt does only for a year or two	We're not about growing mature bucks for large trophy racks. We're about the opportunity to recreate within our local woods, and harvesting whatever each individual cares to harvest. If you choose to pass on a buck to allow him to become large enough to impress your WasteBook followers, that's your prerogative. We're not all crazy for antlers.
Open up more areas to hunt!!! And if you pick a zone to hunt HUNT IT!!! Many people in 4b that never put up a stand but filled the spot.	Many folks also found that their schedules got suddenly too busy and hunting wasn't high on their priority list. Others found themselves fighting cancer, which is also more important than shooting bucks.
Even though this is a management hunt, please continue to waive the "doe first" requirement and allow any deer to be shot. As much as I would like to see more deer, we have to remember that this is a management hunt. Many thanks to the ABA Board for all of your volunteer time to make this hunt possible.	
I'm very grateful for the opportunity to hunt on my property in Duluth and very appreciate of the work of the ABA.	Thank you!
I'm not sure what can be done with the lower deer numbers without any kind of predator control.	Remember, we are one predator sharing the woods with others.
I feel great about the management of the hunt by ABA. I believe continuing the "pause" on earn a buck is warranted, even valuable to maintain early season hunter activity in the woods. I don't hunt for antlers, but only had two potential shots in 40 plus sits in the woods. The first	There's no plans to reinstate the earn-a-buck requirement for the foreseeable future.

was a buck. The only deer I harvested. If I had to pass, that would have been a shame.	
The only thing I'd say is if you could open parts of 17C to be a regular zone. I feel there is plenty of woods that could be hunted safely and not disturb the birders. Thank you all for the hard work to put this hunt on. It is truly an amazing privilege and my favorite part of living in Duluth. I have been hunting in the city for a decade and I have really been able to hone my skills and it has encouraged me to do other outdoor hunts and adventures. Thanks again!	Perhaps this is a conversation we can have with the birders and City Administration.
I still would like to see the application and lottery process completed by May 1 so you could get into your zone and see trails before the leaves come out.	Not going to happen. Sorry.
You did a great job again. No suggested changes from me. Keep it going the way it has been. John - you did a very good job with the reporting. Thank you ABA for your time!	Thank you!
You guys do great work and we may not say it but we appreciate it.	Thank you!
I've always had positive experiences being part of the city hunt the past 4-5 years.	Thank you!
Have more rules for hotspots such as time allowed in them.	Depends upon the hot spot. Some are limited to a week OR a single deer.
Don't change a thing	
I would suggest keeping the No earn a buck. If not, I wouldn't have gotten a deer in the last 3 years.	There's no plans to reinstate the earn-a-buck requirement for the foreseeable future.
Na	
Please make cell cameras illegal. Everywhere I go, there is a cell camera. I noticed I was on someone's cell camera while setting up for a hunt, they confronted me at my truck after the hunt. These things are getting to be out	You probably have a valid point, and perhaps some of the offenders will see your comment and change their behavior. But while the ABA could institute



of hand and annoying to hunter's privacy. I feel very, very strongly about this. Thank you for this opportunity.	additional rules on our hunters, e.g. X number of stands allowed, we can't legislate what the general public is allowed to do. And currently, the State of MN doesn't limit folks on the number of trail cameras allowed. Next time a hunter harasses you at your truck, please call one of the Board members and report this.
I support the work ABA is doing to manage the hunt.	
Take away the 2 stand locations for party hunters. A couple serious party hunters can quickly take over a zone by setting up 4 stands to share between them.	What's the difference between 2 hunters setting out 4 stands as a party and 2 other hunters setting out 4 stands on their own? Not sure the ABA quite understands the issue. Please call and further explain the real issue
fewer deer trespassing mouthy	You've got trespassing deer who are mouthy? Shoot them!!!
Keep the same for 2026, no earn a buck, well run hunt. Thank you.	Thank you!
No. You guys ate doing a great job	Thank you!
Great work and sure appreciate your time to make this hunt possible.	Thank you!
Hand up - I miss Bork's emails. He did a great job promoting the auxiliary aspects of the hunt, such as heart donations, wearing orange for some DHA's during gun season, and when the time comes to switch DHAs and encouraging hunters that are done hunting to contact their Hunt Coordinator. (And his dry humor.)	Bork appreciates that. Thank you!
Keep up the good work! Thanks to the board members for what you do!!	Thank you!
Please allow us to use natural mineral blocks	City Code prohibits this. Just like State code prohibits corn. ABA can't overwrite legislation.



No suggestions	
Nope it was fun and you guys do an awesome job. Thanks a ton!	Thank you!
Great job	Thank you!
I'd like to see more area open to hunting. Lot of places outside of zones that easily meet setbacks that could be hunted.	Contact the ABA and perhaps these areas can become new hot spots.
No	
I would like to harvest deer in my neighborhood of 1924 E 7th Street. I have spoken with all the neighbors and all would be happy to see these rascals removed.	Contact the ABA and perhaps these areas can become new hot spots.



Appendix 2. List of infractions dealt with by the ABA Board of Directors in 2025. The City Administration has asked the ABA to report on all infractions, both for administration as well as for other hunters to be aware that the City is taking rules violations seriously.

One hunter failed to attach a stand tag on his stand on public land. This hunter was placed on probation and required to remove his stand from the area, and not allowed to hunt within 100 yards of this spot for the duration of the hunt season. Further violations will result in a suspension for this hunter.

Ten hunters failed to check in with their Hunt Coordinator by the 5 January deadline. Nine of these hunters were placed on probation and lost their “returning” status for 2026, meaning they will not get their first choice DHA in the Lottery. One of these hunters has failed to check-in on time multiple years. That hunter was given a one-year suspension from the 2026 hunt.

Four hunters harvested deer from private property without having registered any LOPs with the ABA. These four hunters were given warnings and probation. Further violations will result in suspensions of these hunters.

Unmarked arrow. The ABA Board investigated and also found an illegal stand. The stand was not tagged with a 2025 stand tag. The property was not registered on the ABA’s LOP database. Upon further investigation, the hunter was identified. The ABA Board learned that the hunter had wounded a deer and not reported the wounded deer to the ABA or Duluth PD. This violation meant the hunter was immediately removed from the hunt for the remainder of the season. Additionally, it was discovered that the hunter had harvested multiple deer from this property over previous years, and never had registered any of the deer or property with the ABA. This means the hunter actually lied to the Hunt Coordinator every season during the year-end reporting process. Upon confronting the hunter, he admitted to all of the infractions, and claimed he wasn’t aware of the process and promised to do better next year. The ABA Board removed the hunter for 10 years.

Illegal stand. Another stand was discovered on private property with no current stand tag on it. Upon investigation, it was discovered that multiple hunters had actually tagged the stand over the previous four seasons. The actual stand owner had abandoned the stand, while another two hunters seemingly took ownership of it. After deliberation, the ABA Board decided on an AVL to see which hunter took ownership of the stand

Illegal stands. There was a third illegal stand that Duluth PD addressed. No word on the outcome of this stand. ABA Board removed two other illegal stands, and were never able to identify the owners of these stands.



The ABA confiscated another illegal stand after the landowner reported it. No stand tags, and the owner was never identified.

There were several reported trail cameras stolen, but obviously this is nearly impossible to prosecute.

Duluth PD was called on to address an illegal hunter, which resulted in the offending individual being arrested. This individual was not an ABA-permitted hunter.

Duluth PD was called on to educate several landowners on the City Ordinance banning the feeding of deer. These landowners were illegally feeding deer.

