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Yearling Buck Management in New York

Results and Outcomes of a Structured Decision Making Process



February 2016

Note: This slide show was presented by DEC to representatives of several New York hunting, conservation, and other stakeholder organizations on February 2 and 4, 2016. Text annotations may be viewed by placing your cursor over the small message icon  in the upper left corner of the slides.

Acknowledgments

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Yearling Buck Management – A Social Issue

Not biologically necessary

- healthy adult sex ratio
- healthy breeding activity

No tangible benefit to:

- hunting participation
- safety
- increased antlerless harvest





Why is this an issue?



Why is this an issue?

"We don't shoot any younger than 2.5 year old bucks. Problem is that surrounding hunters don't practice the same thing."

"Any buck we get is a trophy, whether it is a spike or ten point."

"I want to get a buck for the meat and don't really care about large antlers."



Why is this an issue?

Hunters have complex views and values.

55% greatly value a better chance to take a large antlered buck, BUT
57% greatly value maintaining their freedom to choose.

Siemer and Decker, 2015

33% interested in older bucks & supportive of restrictions
35% interested in any buck & not supportive of restrictions
17% value freedom but are supportive of restrictions

Bishop and LaMere, 2015



Photo: John Major



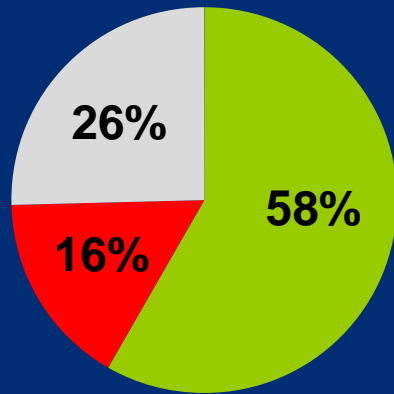
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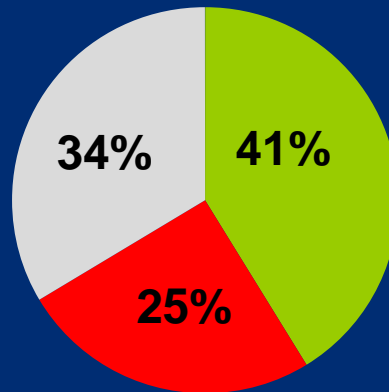
Why is this an issue?

Hunters have complex views and values.

Buck Hunting Rules



Opportunity to Take a Big Buck



Siemer and Decker, 2015



Photo: Dick Thomas



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Why is this an issue?

The debate has been divisive and time consuming.

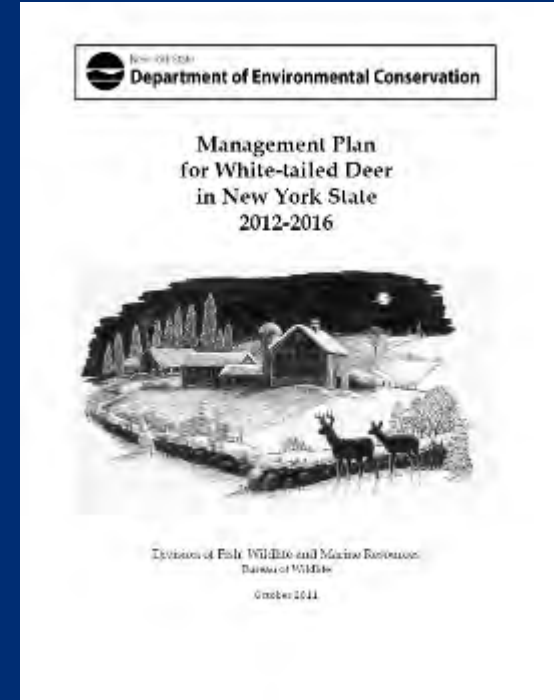
- 5 advocacy groups to lobby ARs
- NYS Conservation Council & NY Farm Bureau oppose mandatory ARs
- > 5 formal requests for regulation & 2 legislative bills
- 60 FOIL requests ≈ hundreds of hours of staff time
- Hundreds of letters to hunters and legislators
- 10 public surveys, dozens of public meetings



NYS Deer Management Plan

Encourage various strategies to reduce harvest of young bucks (≤ 1.5 years old) in accordance with hunter desires.

Use objective criteria to determine and evaluate optimal strategies for reducing harvest of yearling bucks...

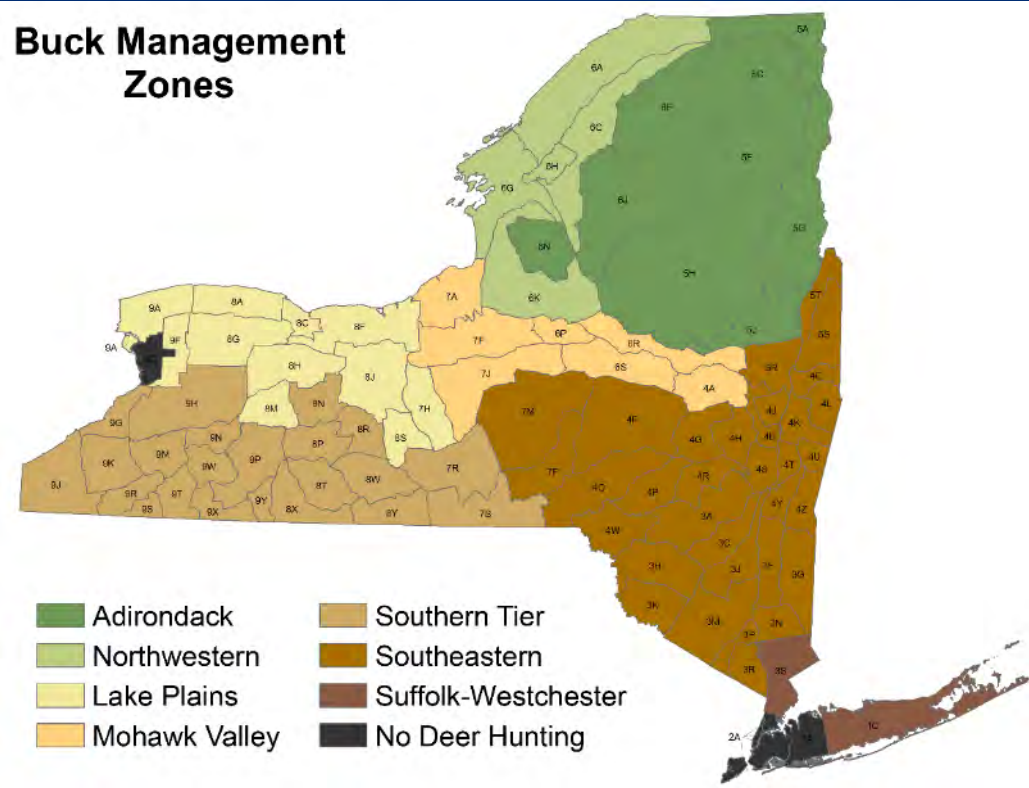




Elements of Structured Decision Making for Yearling Buck Management



Buck Management Zones





Objectives

1. Hunter Satisfaction

- Maximize opportunity to encounter and shoot a big buck
- ... any buck
- ... any deer
- other factors (hunting opportunity, complexity)





Objectives

2. Population Management

- Minimize impact on population management and monitoring



3. Minimize Costs

- enforcement & compliance costs
- education & outreach costs



Management Alternatives

...more than one way to satisfy the objectives!

- Mandatory ARs – all seasons (except Youth Hunt)
- Mandatory ARs (partial) – all of bow season through 1st week of the regular firearms season
- 1-buck bag limit
- Shorten regular season by 1 week in Southern Zone; 2 weeks in Northern Zone
- Actively promote voluntary ARs
- No change



Photo: Dick Thomas



Tools for Evaluating Alternatives

Population Model

- relative effect

DEC biologist & law enforcement input

- relative costs

Hunter Survey

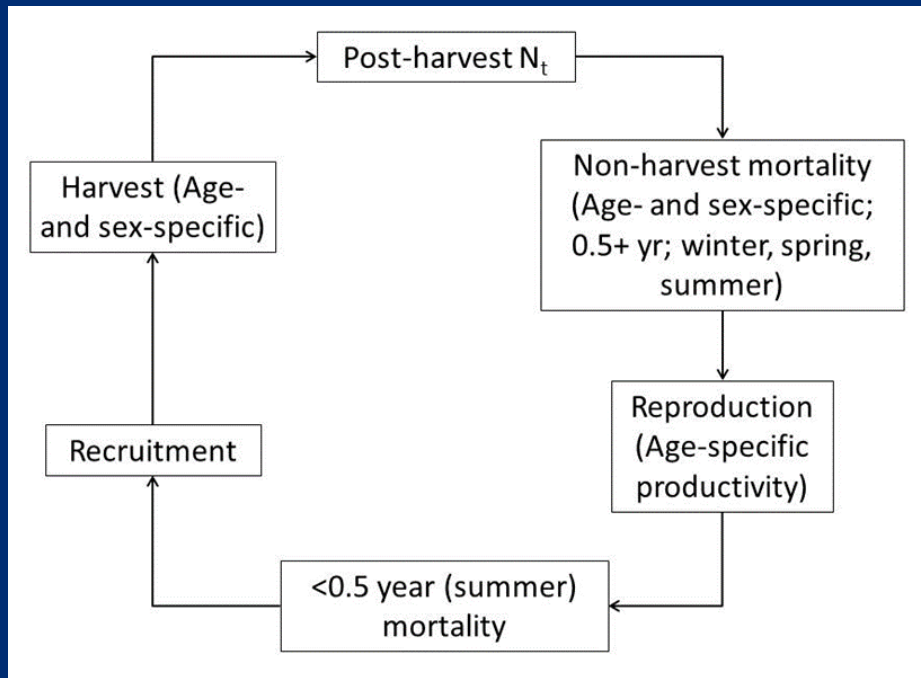
- relative importance





Evaluating Alternatives

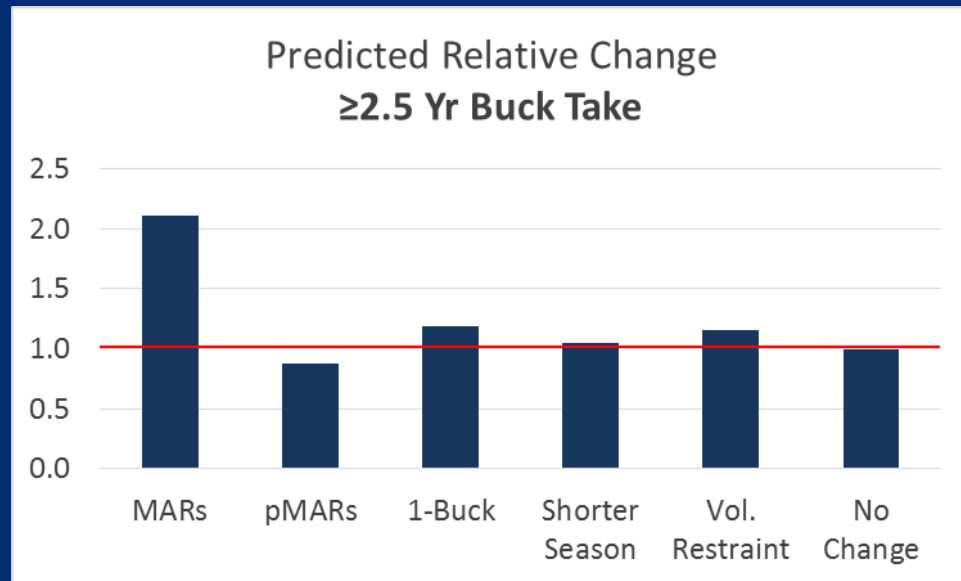
Deer Population Model – 5 year





Evaluating Alternatives

Deer Population Model



Mohawk Valley

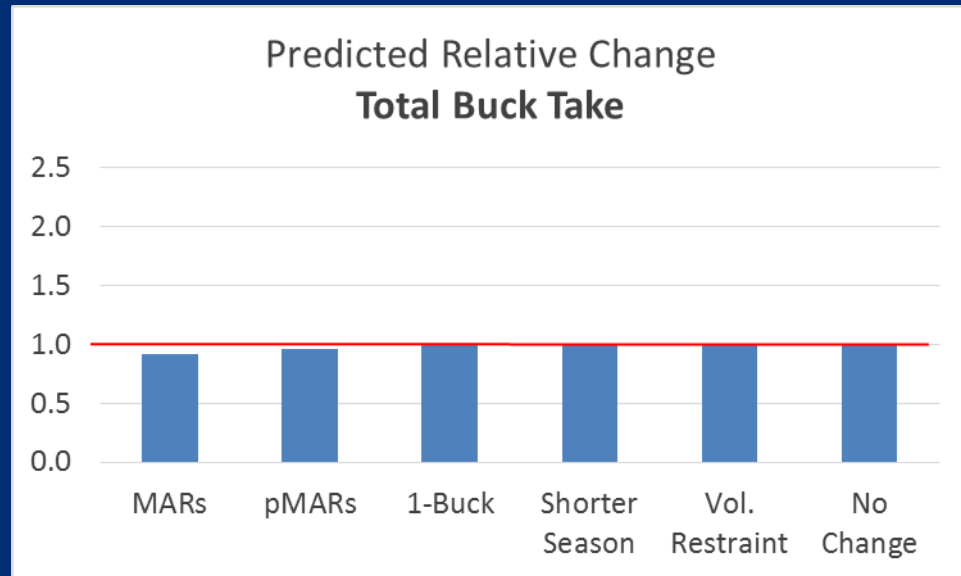


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Evaluating Alternatives

Deer Population Model



Mohawk Valley

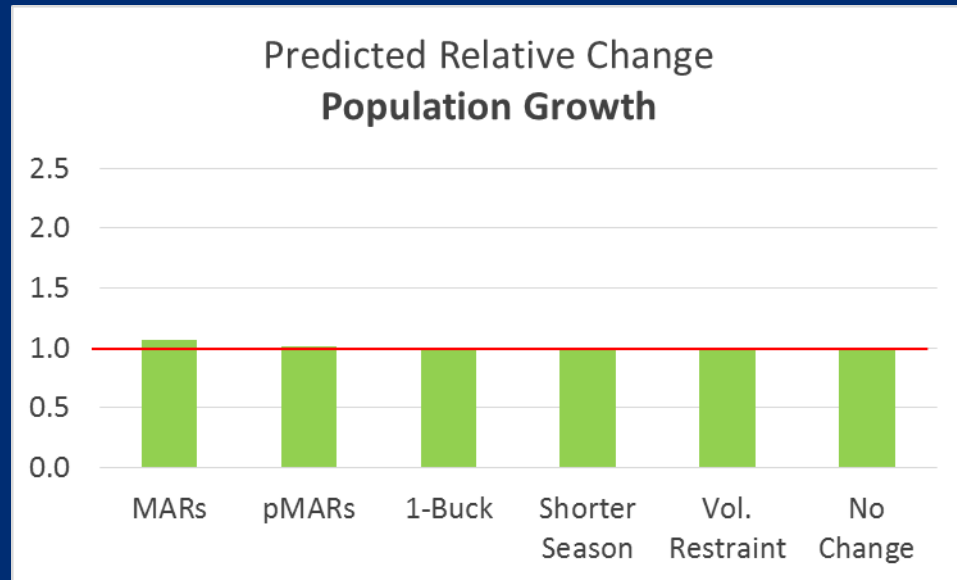


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Evaluating Alternatives

Deer Population Model



Mohawk Valley

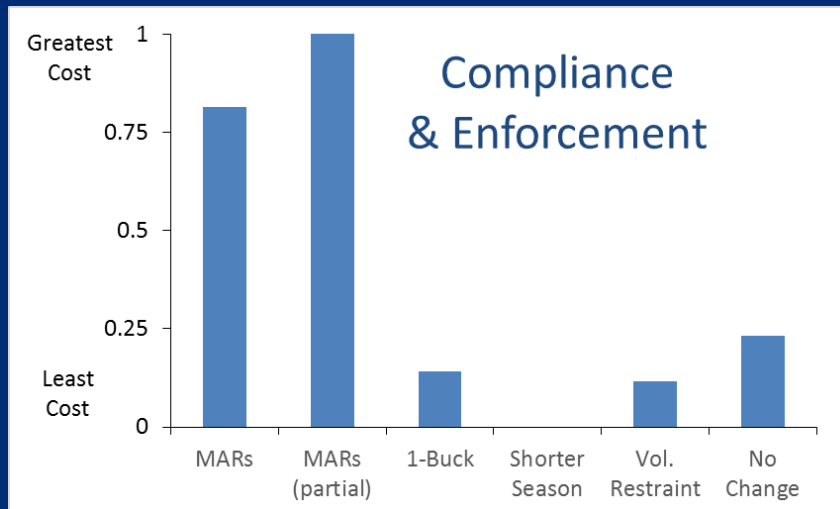


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Evaluating Alternatives

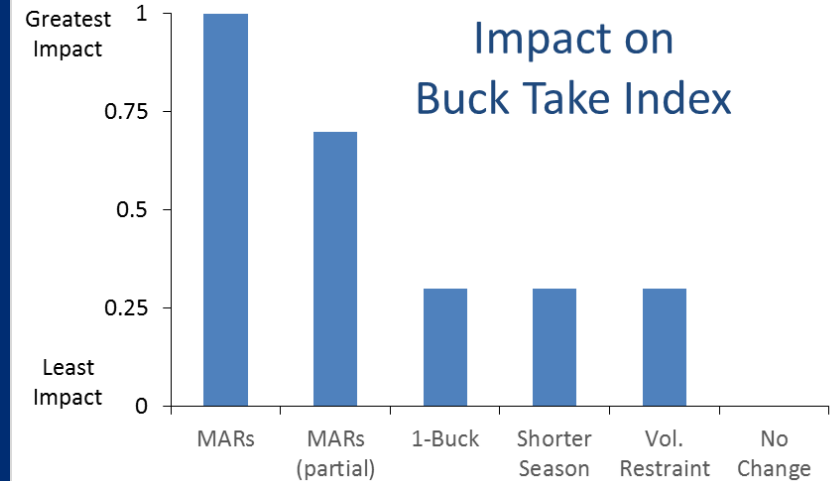
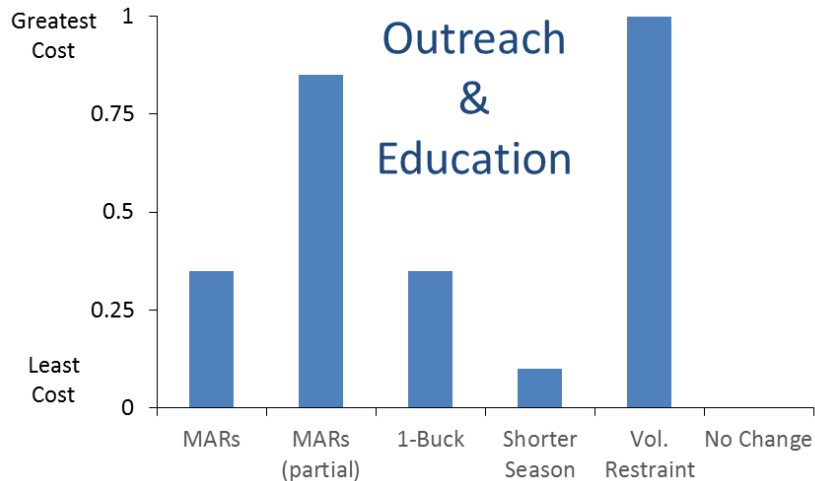
Relative Costs





Evaluating Alternatives

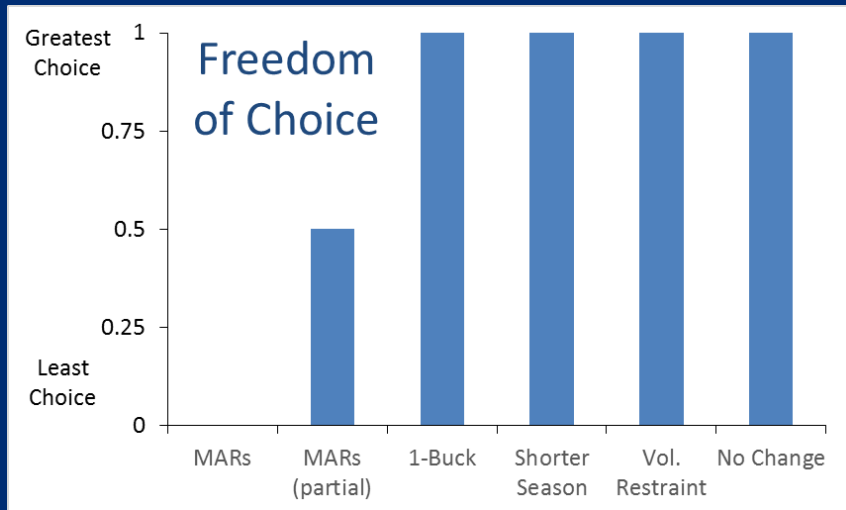
Relative Costs





Evaluating Alternatives

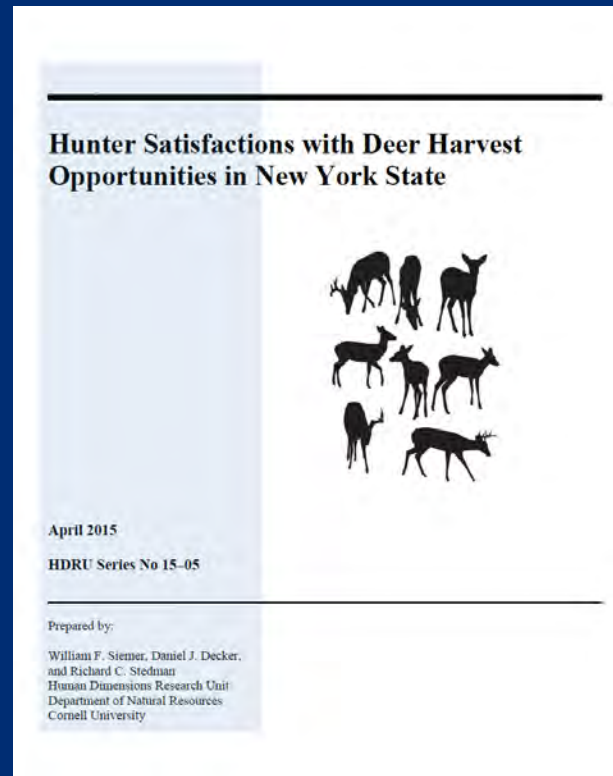
Relative Impact



Evaluating Alternatives

Hunter Survey

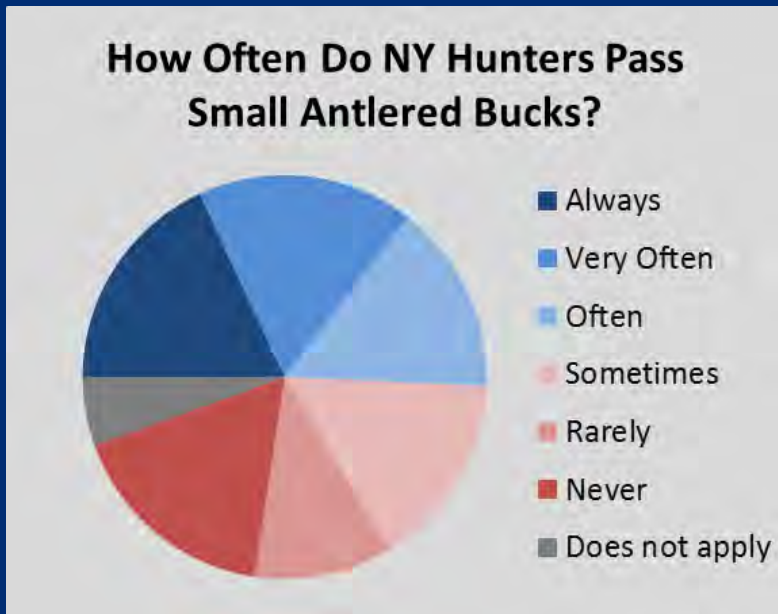
- What do hunters value?
 - objectives not alternatives
- Not a vote – tried that before
- 7,000 surveys mailed, fall of 2013
- 40% response rate





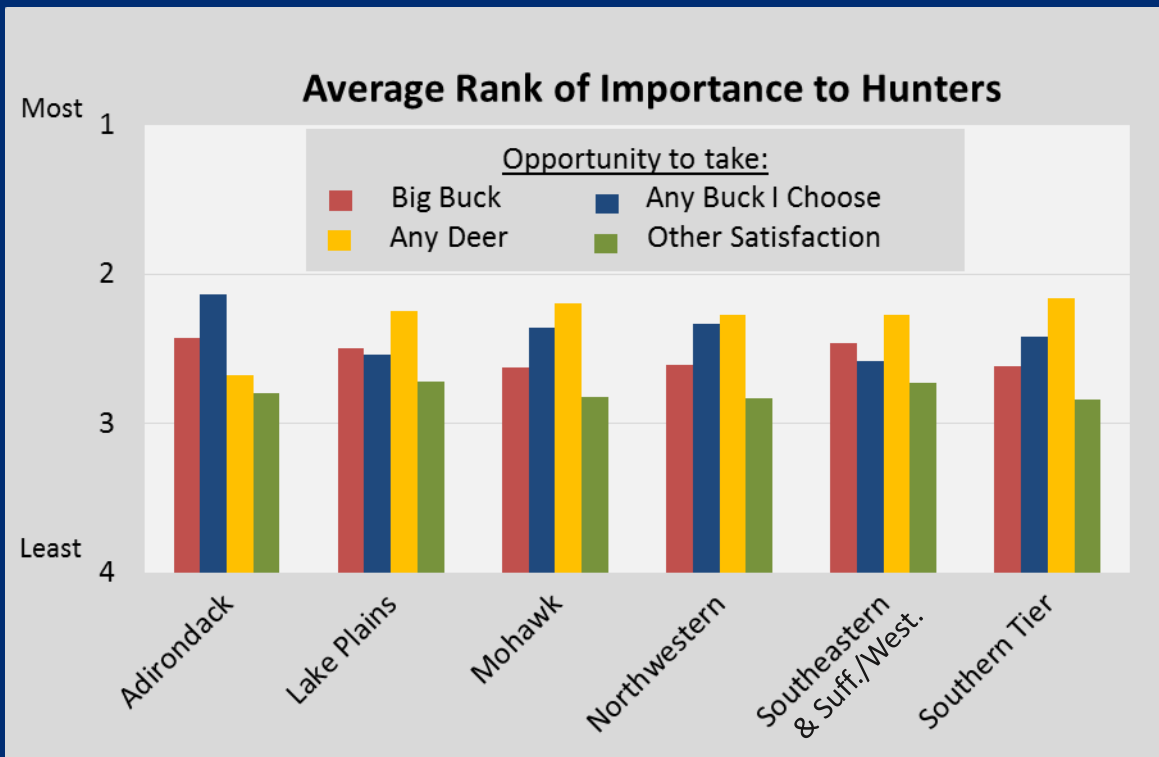
Evaluating Alternatives

Hunter Survey



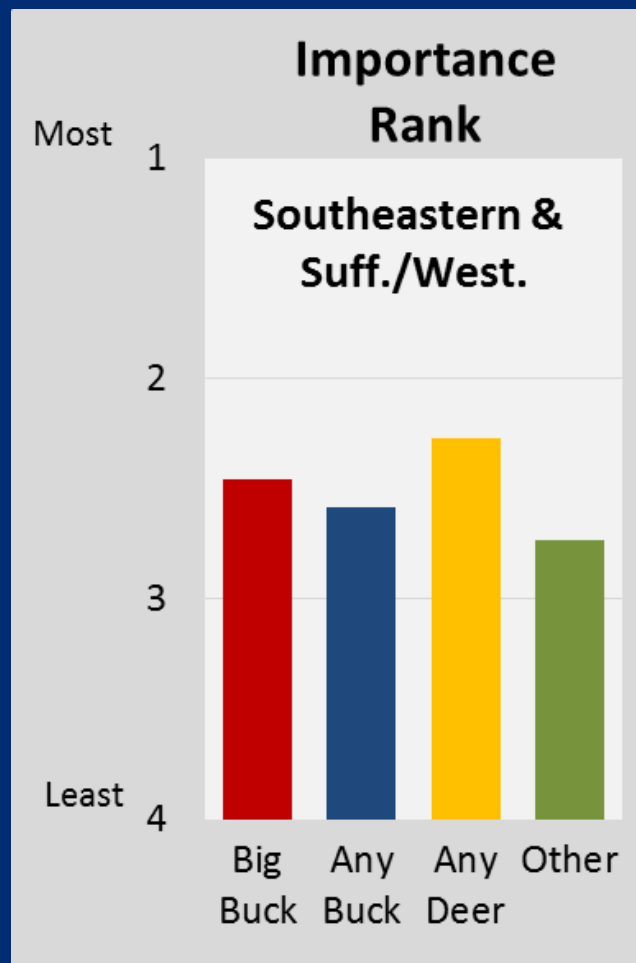
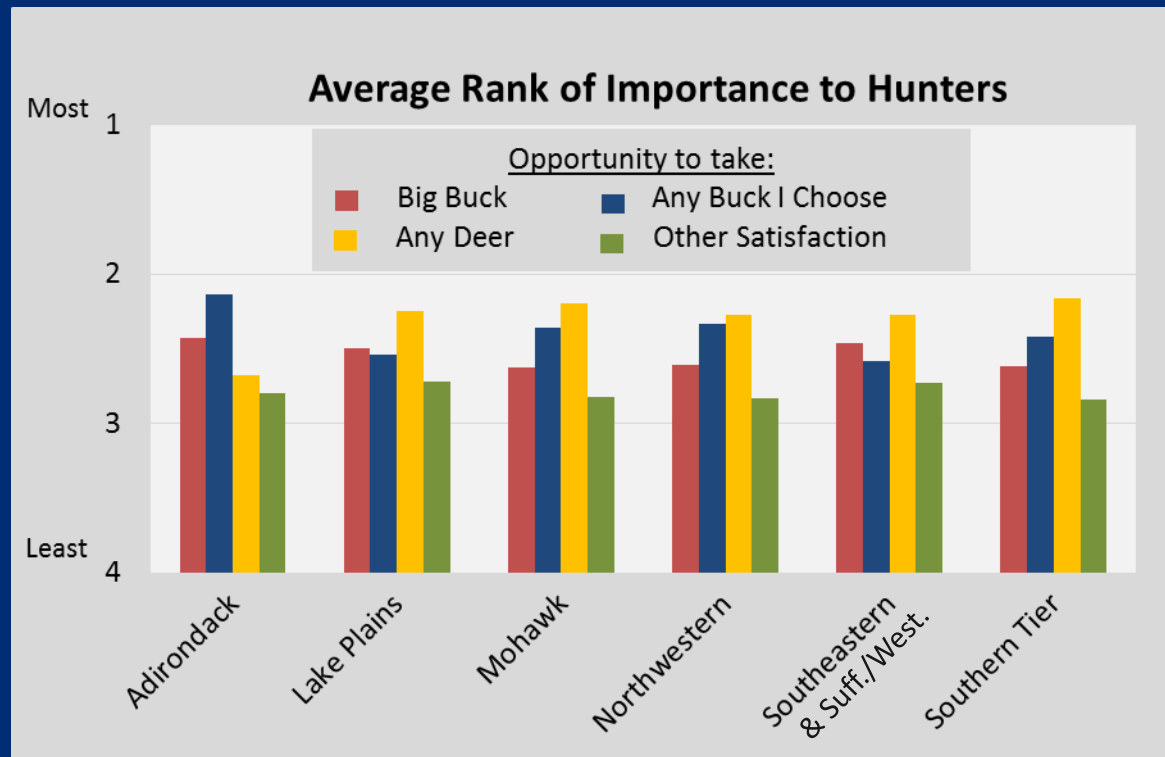


What do hunters value?





What do hunters value?



Trade-offs (weighting the objectives)

1. Maximize Hunter Satisfaction

- Maximize opportunity for a big buck
- Maximize opportunity for any buck
- Maximize opportunity for any deer
- Maximize other related satisfaction

75%



2. Minimize Deer Population Impacts

15%

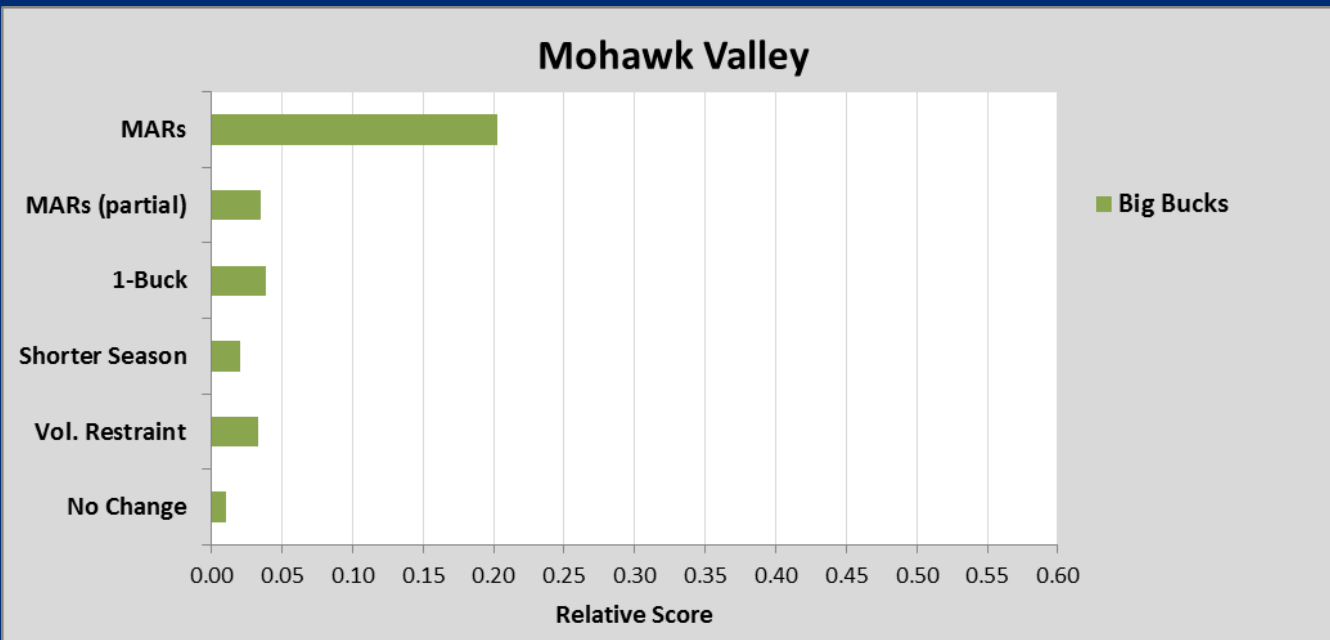
3. Minimize Management Cost

10%



Results for Mohawk Valley

To illustrate the process



Which
alternative
achieves the
highest relative
score?



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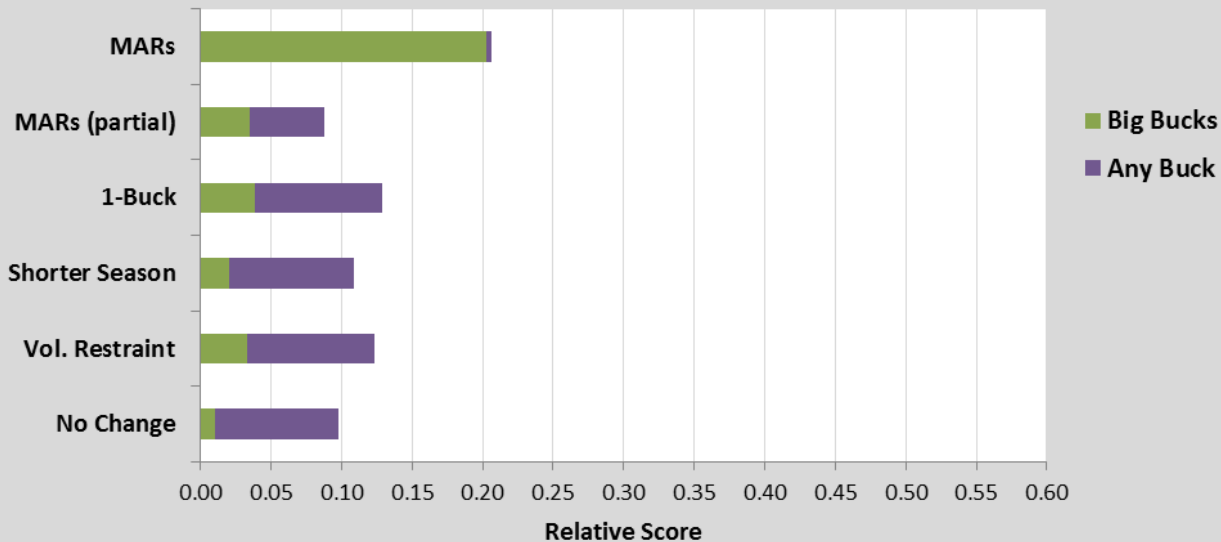


Results for Mohawk Valley

To illustrate the process



Mohawk Valley



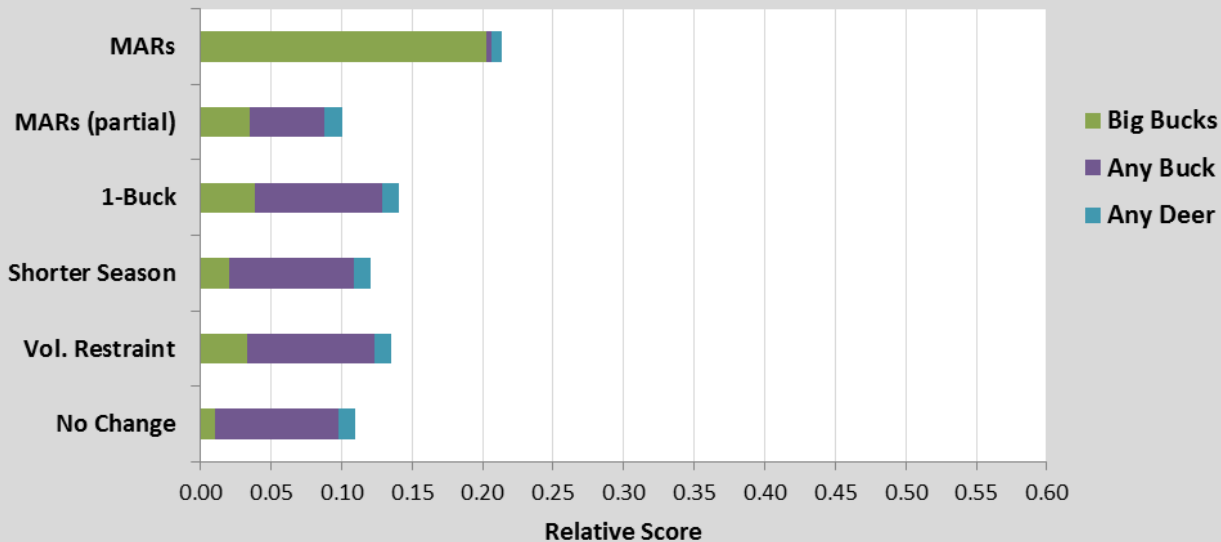


Results for Mohawk Valley

To illustrate the process



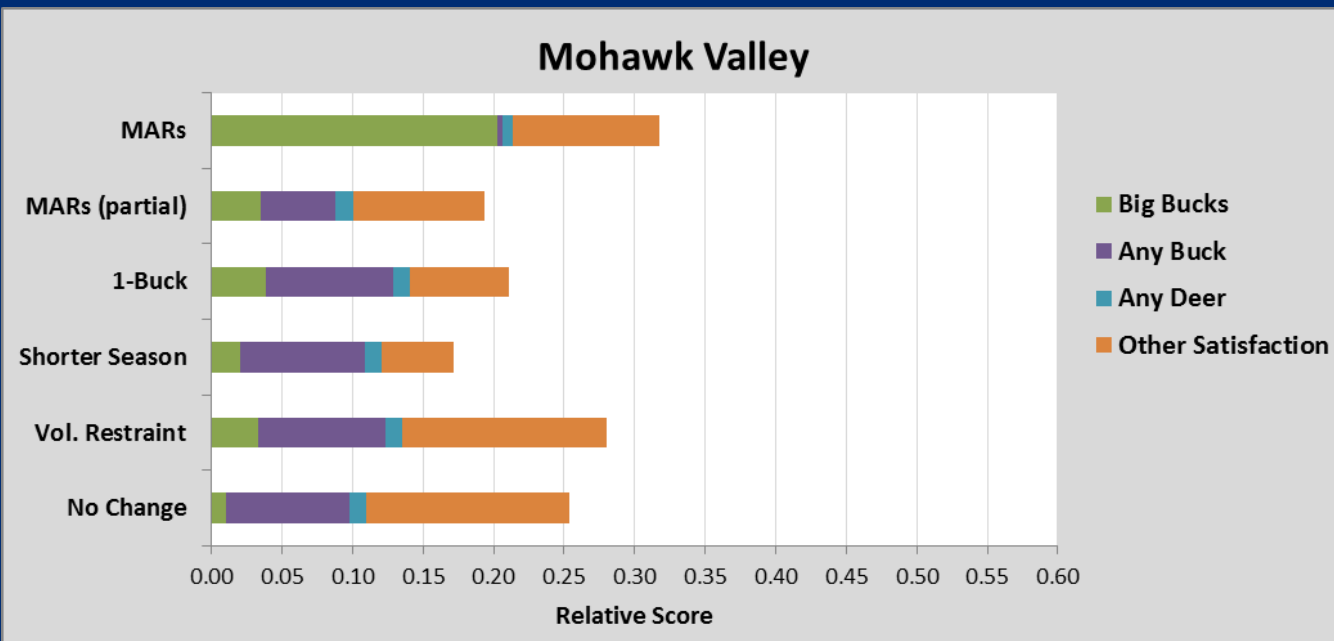
Mohawk Valley





Results for Mohawk Valley

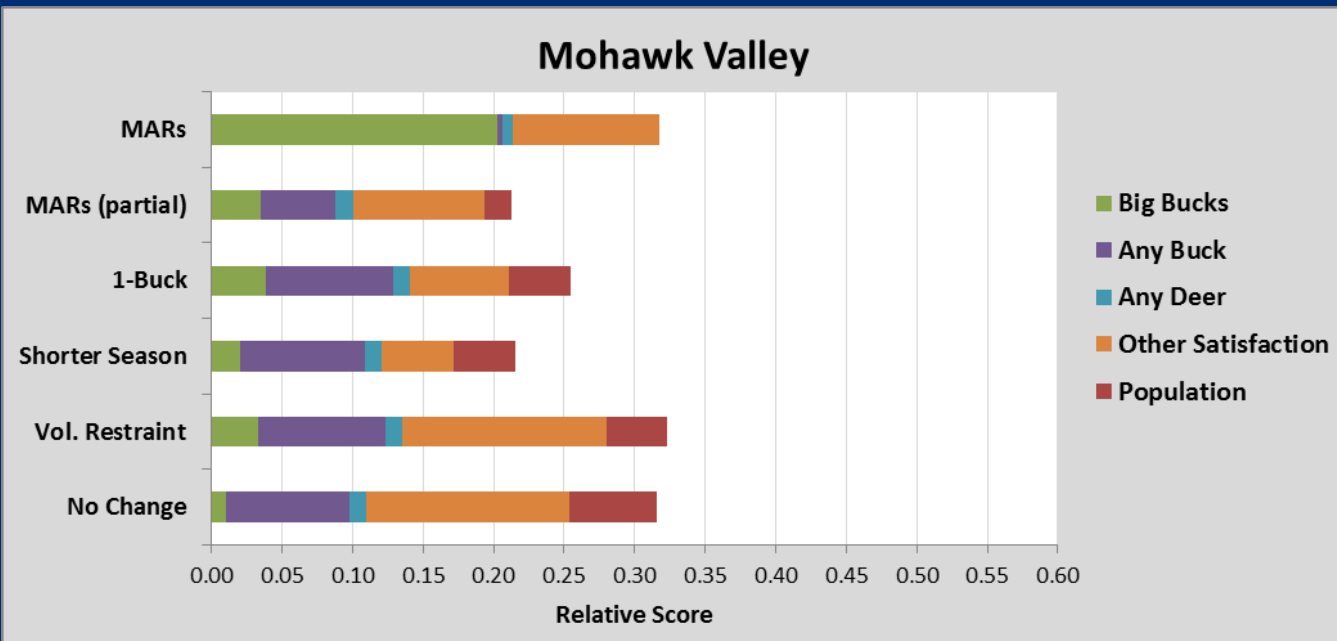
To illustrate the process





Results for Mohawk Valley

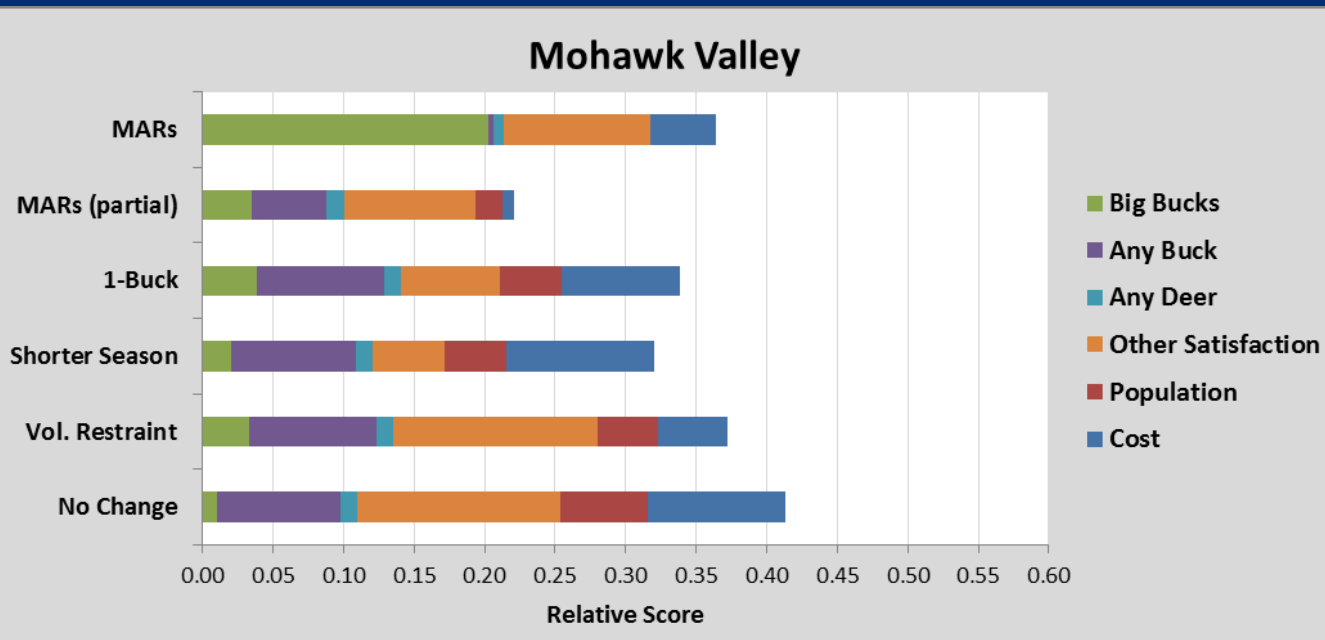
To illustrate the process





Results for Mohawk Valley

To illustrate the process



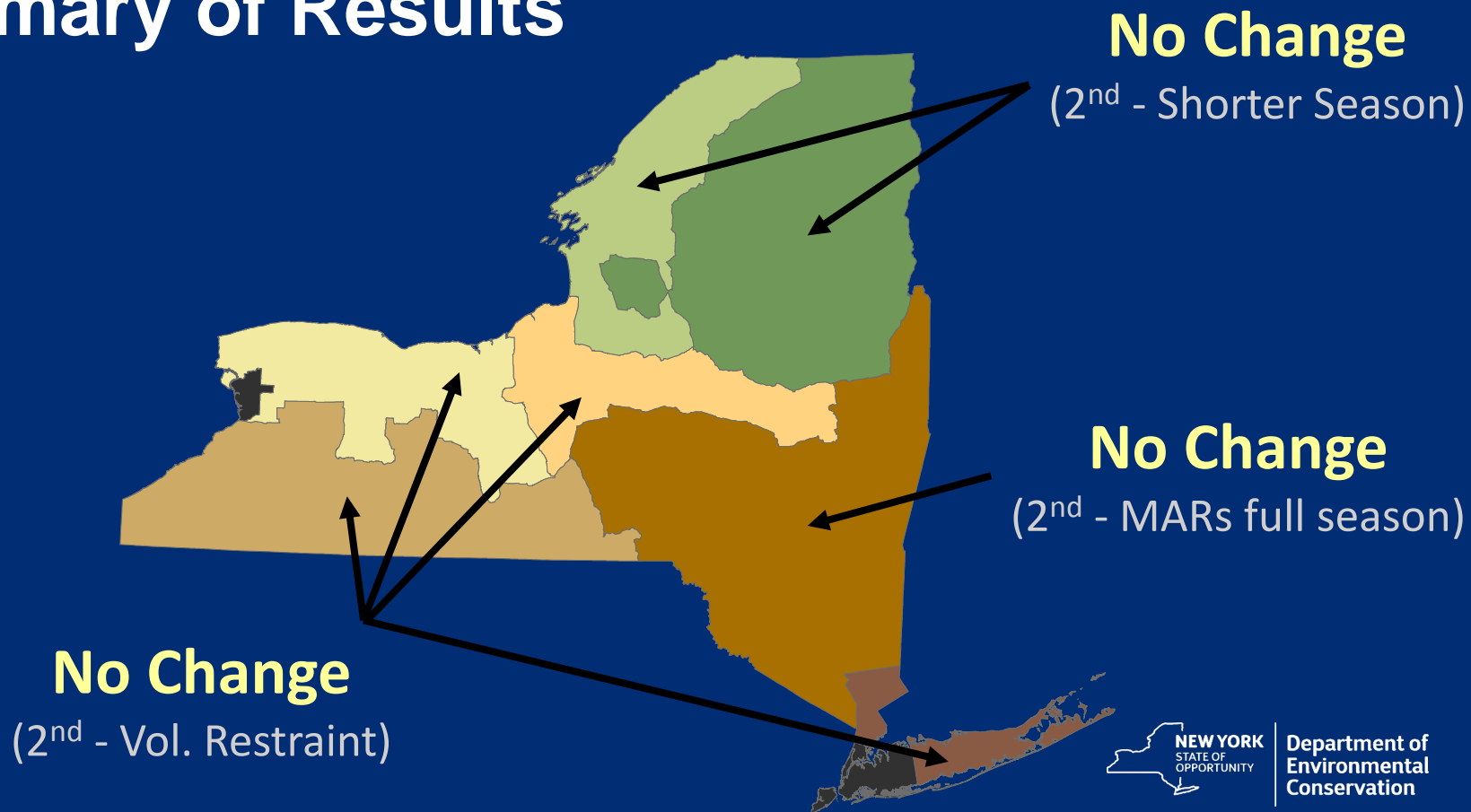
Outcome
No Change



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Summary of Results



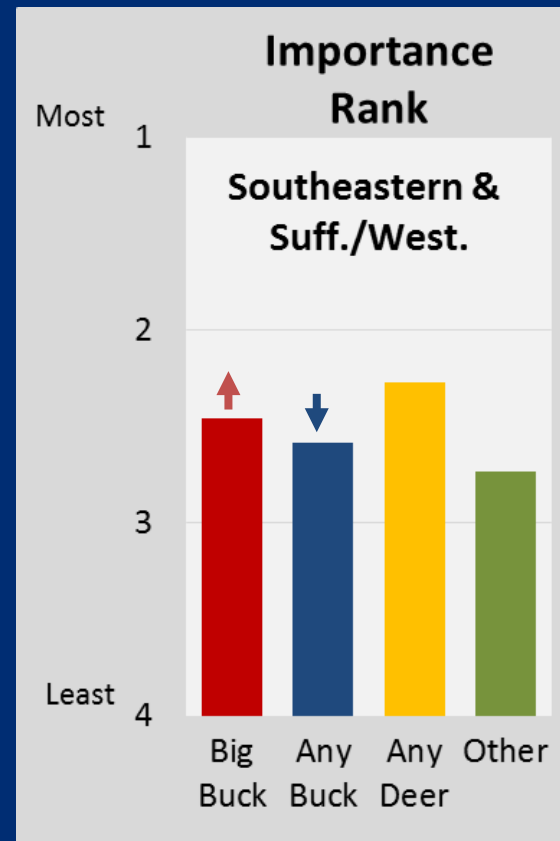
Summary of Results – Benefits of SDM

Hunter values drive the decision

Adaptive Process

Outcome not sensitive to minor variation in biological or survey data

If we exclude concern for population growth or cost, results stay as “No Change” or “Voluntary Restraint”



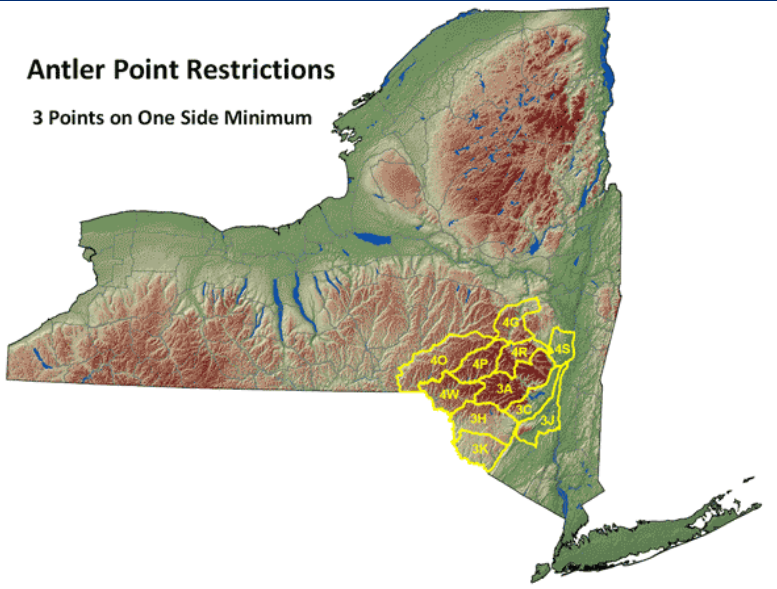


Next Steps

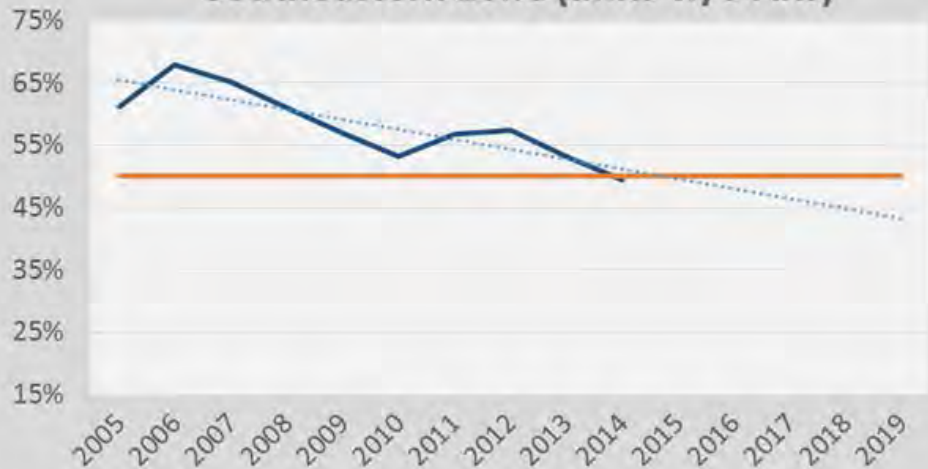
Existing AR program... no changes planned

Antler Point Restrictions

3 Points on One Side Minimum



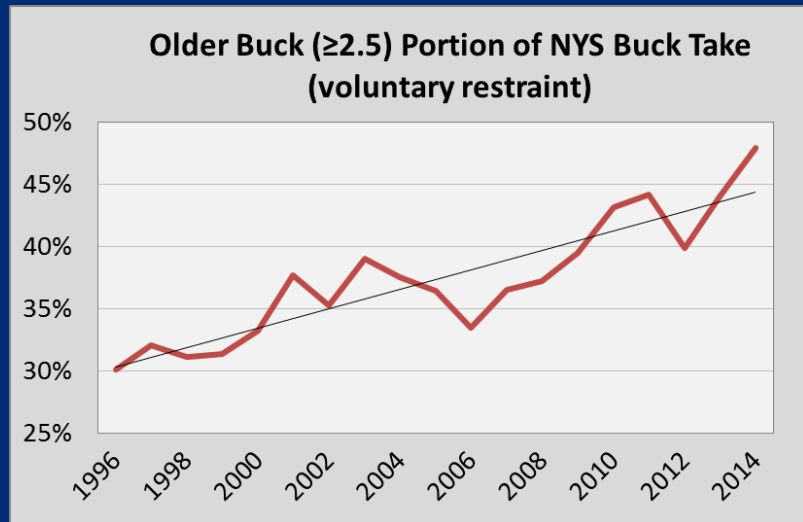
Trend in % Yearling Buck Take Southeastern Zone (units w/o ARs)





Encouraging Voluntary Restraint

*Hunters want more large bucks
AND
the freedom to choose.*





Encouraging Voluntary Restraint

From the Deer Plan

Educate hunters on their impact

Hunter Choices Matter!

Provide physical information about bucks

Enhance Data Collection to Inform Choices

Promote landowner-hunter co-ops

Foster Collaboration





Encouraging Voluntary Restraint

Consistent with public attitudes about hunting
Support hunting for meat, not trophies

Focus on more than antlers
Importance of habitat and
population management



Encouraging Voluntary Restraint

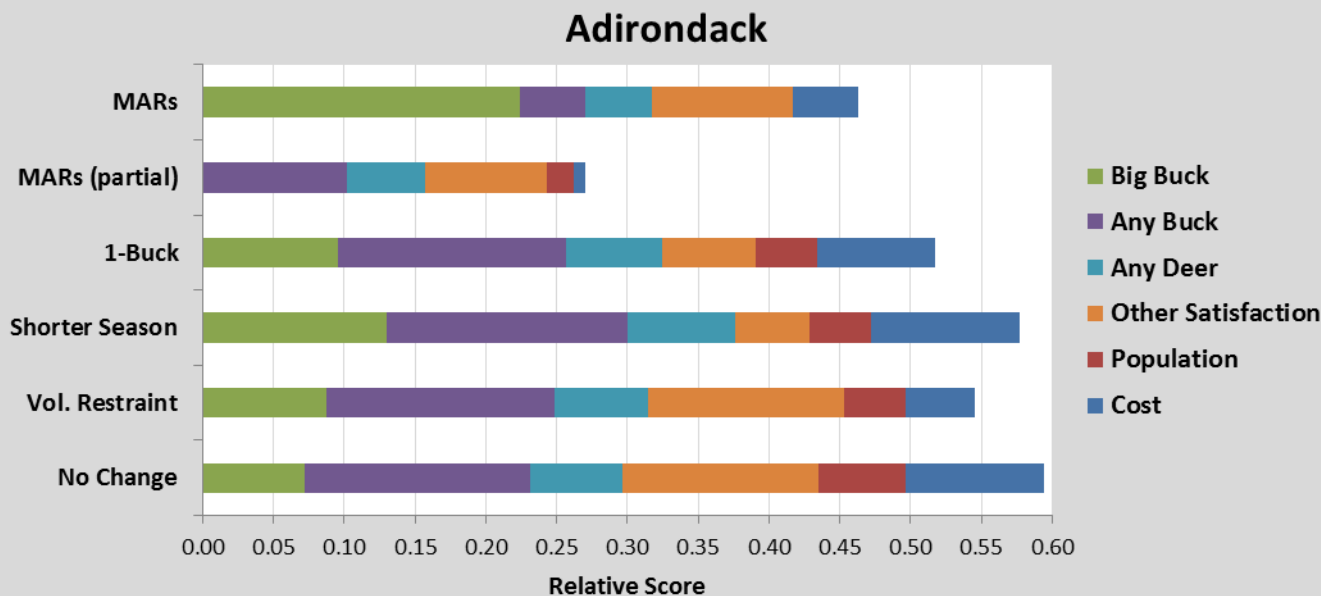
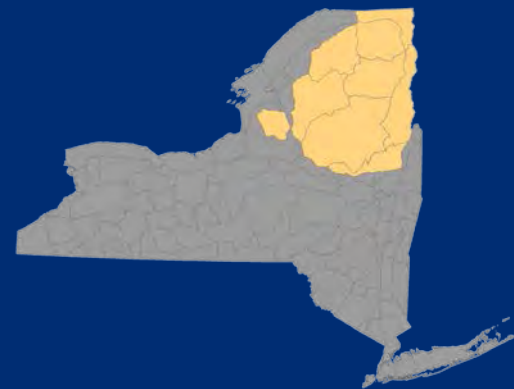
Discussion:

- Q & A on SDM
- How can you help make Voluntary Restraint most effective?



Buck Harvest Management
www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/27663.html

Results for Adirondacks:

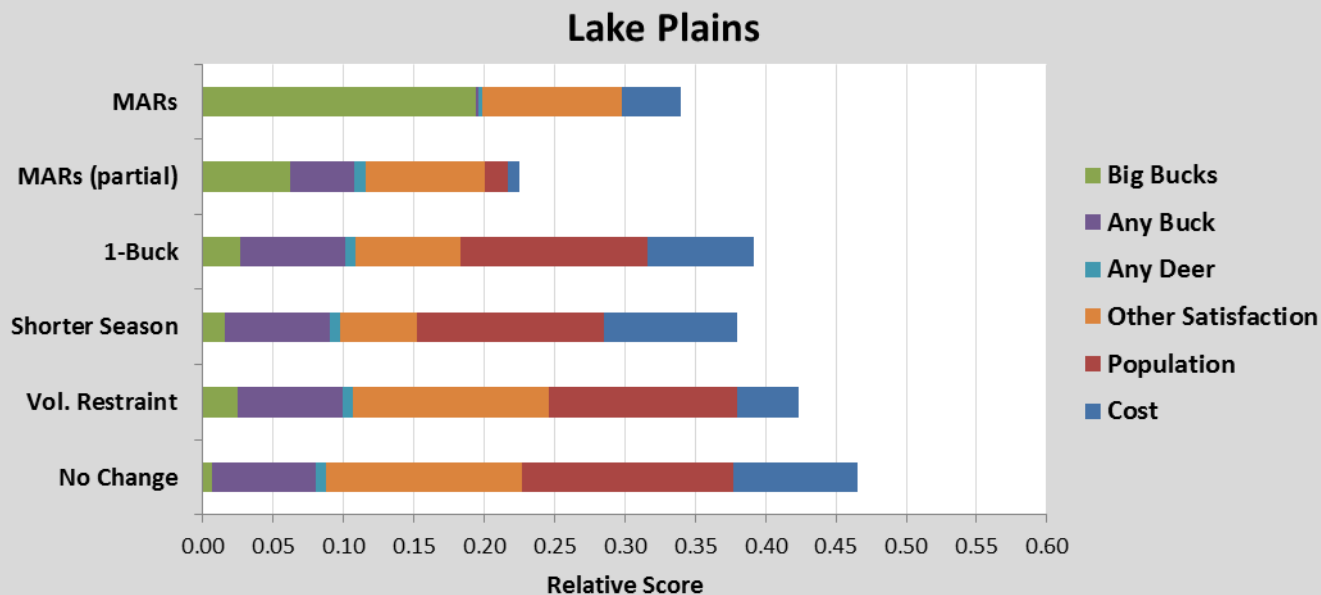


Outcome
No Change



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Results for Lake Plains

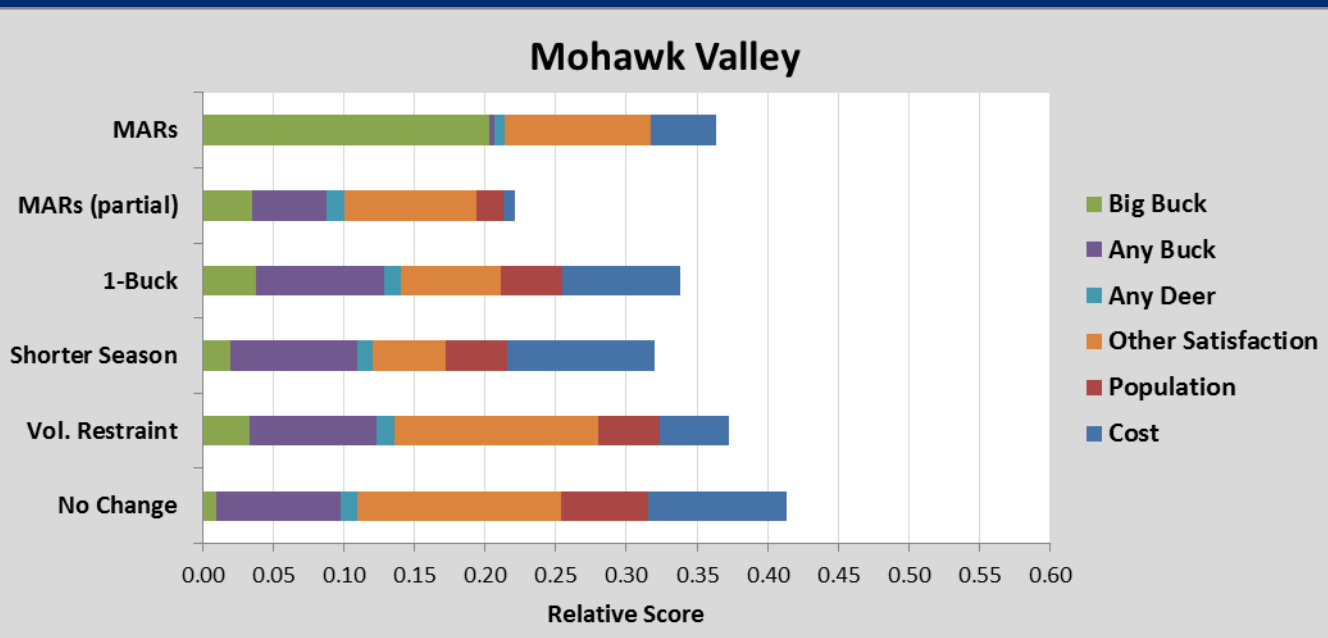


Outcome
No Change



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Results for Mohawk Valley:

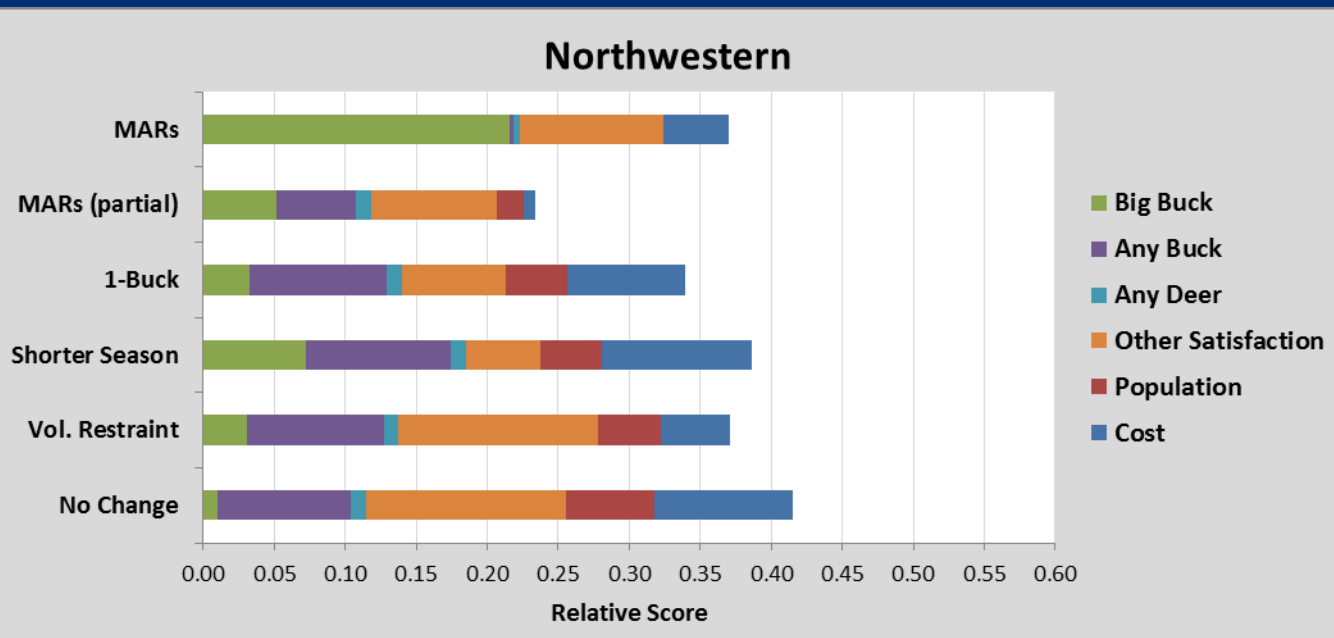


Outcome
No Change



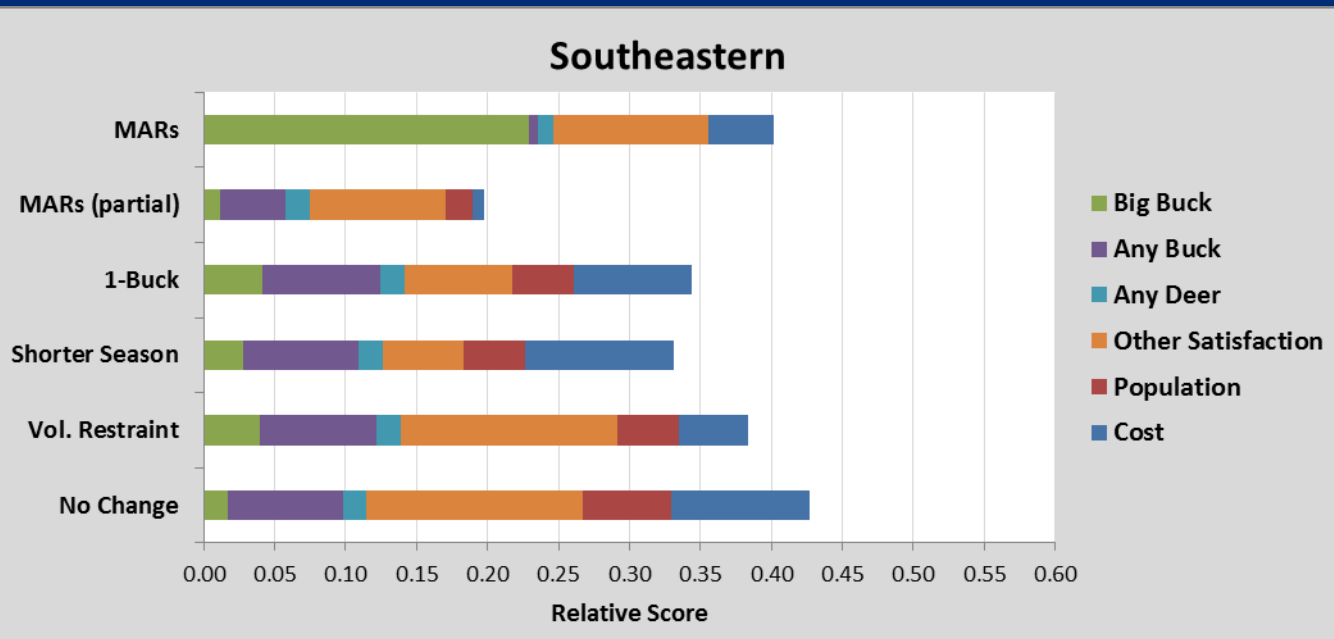
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Results for Northwestern:



Outcome
No Change

Results for Southeastern:

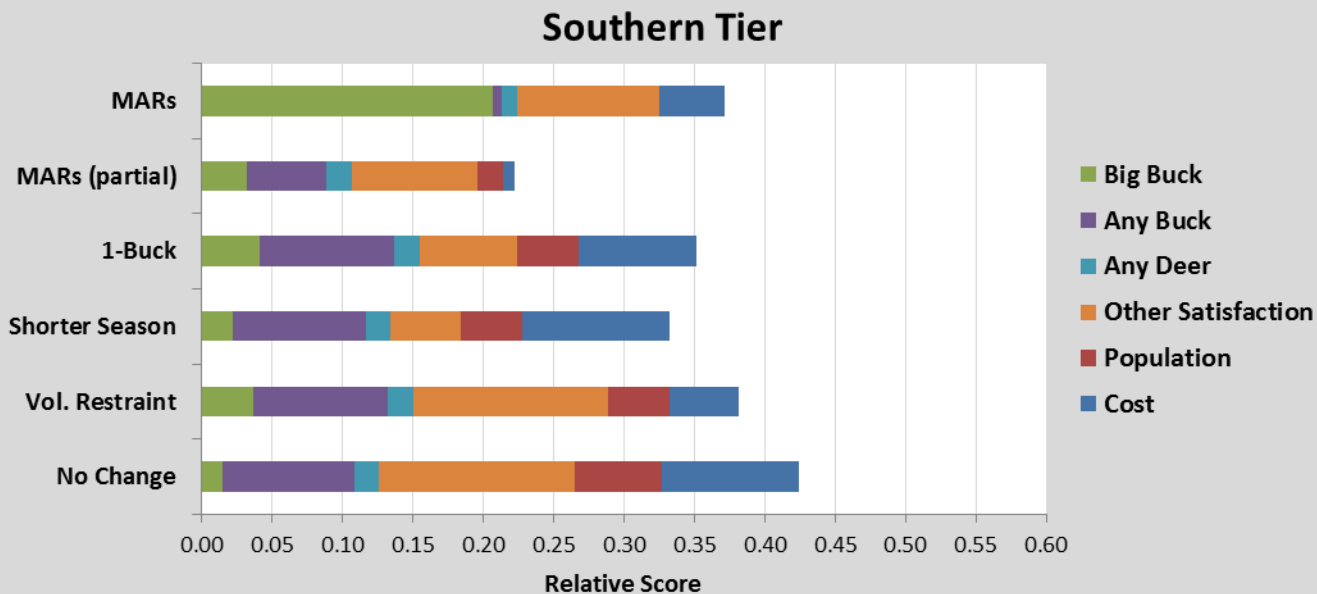


Outcome
No Change



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Results for Southern Tier:



Outcome
No Change



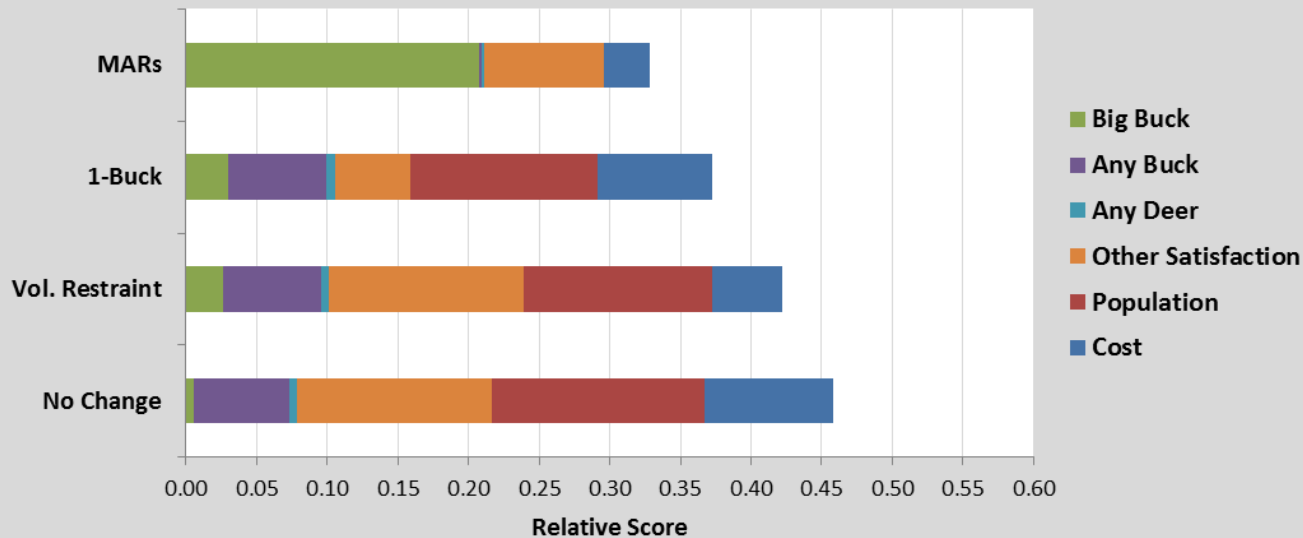
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Results for Suffolk-Westchester:



Suffolk-Westchester



Outcome
No Change