Information submitted

COLUMBUS — Hunters checked 14,365 white-tailed deer during Ohio's extra gun-hunting weekend, Dec. 15-16, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources' (ODNR) Division of Wildlife.

That total is a decline of 14.3 percent from 2011, when hunters harvested 16,766 deer. In 2010, hunters bagged 20,916 deer over the same time period.

"The overall size of the deer herd is smaller, and the harvest is aligned with that decrease," said Mike Tonkovich, ODNR Division of Wildlife deer project leader. "We anticipated the 2012-2013 deer season harvest would be down 5 to 10 percent from last year. Most of Ohio's counties are above their target deer harvest number, and we have worked to get those numbers closer to the target through generous harvest regulations."

The counties reporting the highest numbers of deer checked during the 2012 deer-gun hunting weekend: Coshocton (489), Tuscarawas (483), Muskingum (474), Licking (444), Harrison (390), Belmont (387), Guernsey (382), Carroll (375), Ashtabula (372) and Knox (356). The top five counties remained unchanged from last year.

The extra gun-hunting weekend was first offered in 2006 in response to hunters' request for an increase in the amount of weekend days to pursue deer. Hunters still have opportunities to pursue deer this winter. Archery season remains open through Feb. 3, 2013. The statewide muzzleloader season is Jan. 5-8, 2013.

The white-tailed deer is the most popular game animal in Ohio, frequently pursued by generations of hunters. Ohio ranks eighth nationally in annual hunting-related sales and 10th in the number of jobs associated with hunting-related industries. Hunting has an $859 million economic impact in Ohio through the sale of equipment, fuel, food, lodging and more.

More information about Ohio deer hunting can be found in the 2012-2013 Hunting and Trapping Regulations or at wildohio.com. Hunters can also share photos by clicking on the Photo Gallery tab online.

Hunters are encouraged to donate any extra venison to organizations assisting Ohioans in need. ODNR Division of Wildlife is collaborating with Farmers and Hunters Feeding the Hungry (FHFH) to help pay for the processing of donated venison. Hunters who donate deer are not required to pay the processing cost as long as the deer are taken to a participating processor. To see which counties are involved in this program, go to fhfh.org.

Ohio's first modern day deer-gun season opened in 1943 in three counties, and hunters harvested 168 deer. Deer hunting was allowed in all 88 counties in 1956, and hunters killed 3,911 deer during that one-week season.

ODNR ensures a balance between wise use and protection of our natural resources for the benefit of all. Visit the ODNR website at ohiodnr.com.

Editor's Note: A list of white-tailed deer checked by hunters during the 2012 deer-gun hunting weekend, Dec. 15-16, is shown below. The first number following the county's name shows the harvest numbers for 2012, and the 2011 numbers are in parentheses.

Adams: 267 (323); Allen: 78 (122); Ashland: 234 (252); Ashtabula: 372 (387); Athens: 279 (332); Auglaize: 90 (82); Belmont: 387 (416); Brown: 220 (261); Butler: 101 (102); Carroll: 375 (442); Champaign: 77 (128); Clark: 63 (76); Clermont: 182 (226); Clinton: 63 (84); Columbiana: 320 (324); Coshocton: 489 (593); Crawford: 102 (91); Cuyahoga: 6 (2); Darke: 66 (71);

Defiance: 142 (174); Delaware: 102 (143); Erie: 41 (31); Fairfield: 169 (180); Fayette: 16 (23); Franklin: 26 (47); Fulton: 58 (85); Gallia: 230 (233); Geauga: 106 (160); Greene: 60 (74); Guernsey: 382 (446); Hamilton: 47 (91); Hancock: 77 (147); Hardin: 89 (103); Harrison: 390 (477); Henry: 64 (95); Highland: 239 (267); Hocking: 213 (281); Holmes: 286 (303); Huron: 195 (198); Jackson: 235 (215); Jefferson: 312 (369); Knox: 356 (373); Lake: 27 (46); Lawrence: 176 (205); Licking: 444 (483); Logan: 143 (200); Lorain: 181 (173); Lucas: 20 (30); Madison: 45 (50); Mahoning: 102 (176); Marion: 75 (80); Medina: 135 (157); Meigs: 259 (269); Mercer: 61 (57); Miami: 49 (70); Monroe: 203 (281); Montgomery: 23 (18); Morgan: 226 (242); Morrow: 133 (130); Muskingum: 474 (499); Noble: 235 (272); Ottawa: 9 (33); Paulding: 99 (124); Perry: 238 (228); Pickaway: 78 (93); Pike: 154 (161); Portage: 90 (167); Preble: 86 (72); Putnam: 47 (77); Richland: 194 (290); Ross: 214 (265); Sandusky: 54 (60); Scioto: 174 (224); Seneca: 139 (159); Shelby: 99 (97); Stark: 171 (175); Summit: 31 (44); Trumbull: 248 (242); Tuscarawas: 483 (541); Union: 81 (73); Van Wert: 64 (86); Vinton: 221 (231); Warren: 83 (110); Washington: 266 (330); Wayne: 115 (184); Williams: 123 (197); Wood: 70 (76); and Wyandot: 117 (160). Total: 14,365 (16,766).__PUBLIC__