



# *Sunday Hunting on Game Land Final Report*

*Facilitated and Prepared by:*



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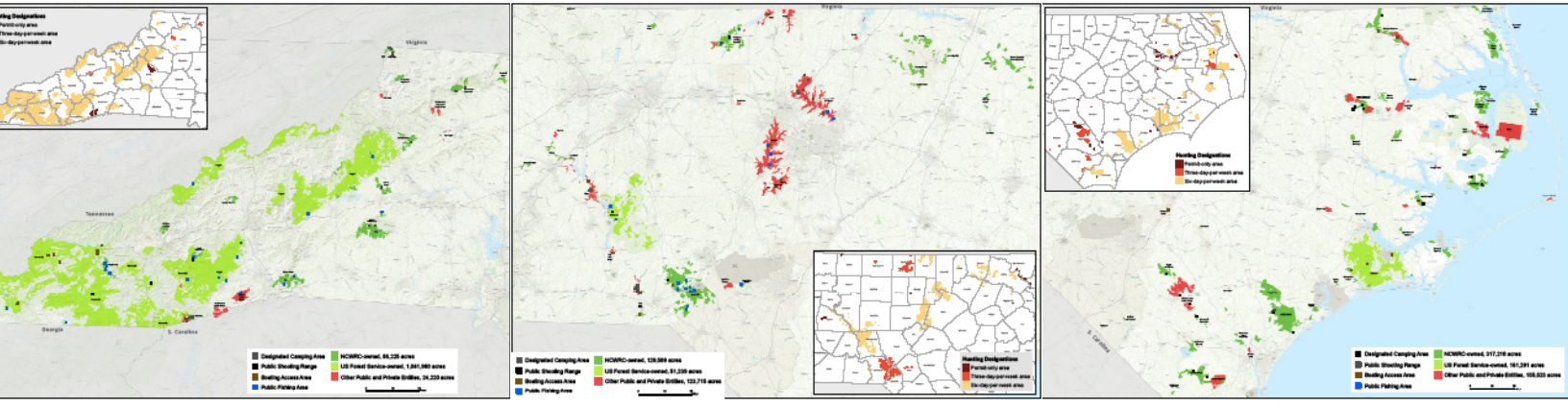
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## Executive Summary

The North Carolina Wildlife Resource Commission (WRC) wanted to better understand the attitudes, values and perceptions about Sunday hunting of users of 93 game lands administered by the state, or in cooperation with partners. This document frames consensus guidelines that resulted from the stakeholder focus group process.

Three regional focus groups held June 9 through June 11 2020 to review the summary themes from a statewide survey and regional listening sessions. The focus groups were professionally facilitated by Group Solutions of Atlanta, GA. These sessions:

- Clarified stakeholder perspectives on potential solutions that emerged from the survey and listening sessions.
- Framed and refined evaluation criteria for selecting game lands most suited for Sunday hunting.
- Explored the willingness of non-hunters to support game lands financially.

To balance the need for broad representation and full participation in discussions, focus group sizes were limited and each organization was asked to send a single representative. Separate sessions were scheduled for statewide stakeholder groups. 32 stakeholder groups were selected by WRC to represent:

- Known hunting and non-hunting organizations that currently use game lands.
- Diversity of hunting and non-hunting perspectives.
- Past participation in WRC advisory groups.
- Unique or non-traditional game land user perspective (i.e. climbers, bikers, etc.).

Pre-session one-on-one telephone briefings were scheduled with each participant to frame specific assumptions for the focus group meeting, answer specific questions, and confirm technical ability to participate in a virtual meeting. Expectations were set that the focus groups would be focusing on finding middle ground solutions, not win/lose alternatives. The possibility that compromise recommendations might be no one's preferred alternative was discussed. Participants were encouraged to think about any and all alternatives they could live with and to consider how to make these alternatives safe and workable. All participants expressed support of the process.

During the focus groups, potential options for Sunday hunting on game lands that had been generated by the survey and listening session were discussed and each group arrived at a similar conclusion:

### **Sunday hunting on a limited number of game lands is supported.**

The following criteria were recommended to help the Commission select game lands for an initial effort to allow Sunday hunting:

- Rural game lands that are not heavily used by non-hunters.
- Proximity to other game lands and public lands that allow non-hunting use.
- Current use patterns of game lands. Be sure the value of "precious properties" that are unique to specific user groups is evaluated when selecting suitable Sunday hunting game lands.
- Proximity to urban areas. De-emphasize game lands that are near urban or developing areas if the potential for conflict is judged to be high.
- Avoid game lands where past conflict has been a pattern. These may be in urban areas, or there may be other sources of friction between users. Save these properties for future consideration once lessons are learned.



## Overview

The North Carolina Wildlife Resource Commission (WRC) sought better understanding of the attitudes, values and perceptions by users of the 93 game lands administered by the state.

## Background

Recent North Carolina legislation authorized WRC to consider changes to long-standing Sunday hunting prohibitions. The Outdoor Heritage Act of 2015 removed the prohibition on hunting Sunday hunting on private lands, in place since 1868. The Outdoor Heritage Enhanced Act of 2017 granted WRC authority to implement rules for Sunday hunting on game lands.

Similar to the 2015 Act, this new Act continues to prohibit hunting:

- With a firearm between 9:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.
- For deer with the use of dogs.
- Within 500 yards of a place of worship.

Group Solutions of Atlanta, GA was commissioned to design and provide neutral facilitation for a statewide engagement process. The process consisted of:

- Over 30,000 respondents participated in a web-based survey. Respondents were divided on the topic for many of the same reasons gathered in the 2018 survey.
- Participants were asked to provide middle-ground options for NCWRC to consider.
- Findings from the survey were summarized and presented to over 400 individuals in 6 face-to-face facilitated listening sessions across the state and two online virtual listening sessions.

The middle-ground options determined by polling at the listening sessions were compiled. These options were used as potential elements of a consensus solution and used as input into 3 Regional Focus Groups held June 9 through June 11, 2020. The focus groups included 32 stakeholder groups representing diverse hunting and non-hunting perspectives. These discussions:

- Examined potential solutions from the survey and listening sessions.
- Framed criteria for selecting game lands most suited for Sunday hunting.
- Explored the willingness of non-hunters to support game lands financially.





## The goals of this process were to:

- Explore opinions and concerns about Sunday hunting on game lands.
- Identify values that make a quality experience on game lands.
- Frame potential ideas for Sunday hunting on game lands.
- Share highlights from the 2020 survey.
- Facilitate a productive and respectful statewide discussion.

## Process assumptions included:

- Focusing on framing solutions for the Commission, and not a re-hash of problems.
- The listening sessions and focus groups focused on potential compromise solutions as the best way for hunters and non-hunters to get more of what they would like now, and into the future.
- Expectations were set that compromises might not be anyone's first choice and that everyone might be a little unhappy with the final proposed solutions.

## Results and Conclusions

North Carolina's game lands are important to the quality of life for both hunters and non-hunting citizens.

There was strong agreement that North Carolina's investment in game lands must be preserved for future generations. The long-term benefit of game lands to NC citizens is a good starting point. Hunters and non-hunters share expectations that game lands should be safe, have abundant wildlife, and well-managed habitat.

Both groups had similar concerns about urban encroachment, habitat fragmentation, and the need to preserve game lands for future users are shared. Hunters and non-hunters want access to game lands and prefer to be able to use them without seeing too many other people.

A sense of vested "ownership" and respect for game lands is likely to increase if more NC citizens use them. Increasing opportunities for access is a shared priority for hunters and non-hunters. Coalitions can be built around wildlife and habitat that go beyond just hunting and fishing, and can include a broad array of game land users.

With some caveats, it was generally agreed by all participants in the process that everyone who uses game lands should contribute something toward maintaining them. While tricky to put in place, the option of promoting hunting licenses (or fishing licenses) to non-hunters got some traction, particularly if it meant a 3-to-1 Federal match of funds. A variety of alternatives were discussed. Additional WRC study is recommended to thoroughly understand the options and support for user-pay.

Safety on game lands is a shared concern. The process encountered a major disconnect between hunters who believe safety statistics tell the whole story and the very real experiences and fears of non-hunters. In the survey and sessions, many hunters also candidly expressed concerns about personal safety while hunting on game lands.

The process confirmed that, with a lot of careful listening, compromise solutions for opening Sunday hunting on a limited number of game lands could be developed.

These changes should be subject to a trial period, objective review, and appropriate modification as warranted.



## ***Guiding Principles and Considerations for Sunday Hunting on Game Lands***

The following cross-cutting principles emerged from the three focus group sessions:

### **Make solutions simple, easy and understandable**

- Focusing on species-related hunting options would cause confusion.
- Be clear if game lands are or aren't huntable. Partitioning a game land into user areas may add complexity.
- Be consistent with existing seasons and regulations, allow Sunday hunting of all species, by all legal weapons. However, concerns and opposition about hunting with dogs was routinely voiced.
- Stakeholders prefer plain language.

### **Avoid limiting opportunities to enjoy game lands**

- Strive to provide opportunities for all NC citizens to use game lands regardless of their preferred activity.

### **Seek continuous safety improvement on game lands**

- Hunters and non-hunters perceive safety VERY differently. Data showing limited hunting/shooting related injuries or fatalities will not resolve this issue. The perception of safety is important.
- An understanding of human dimensions will be necessary.
- Tailored education and outreach message for non-hunters would be helpful.

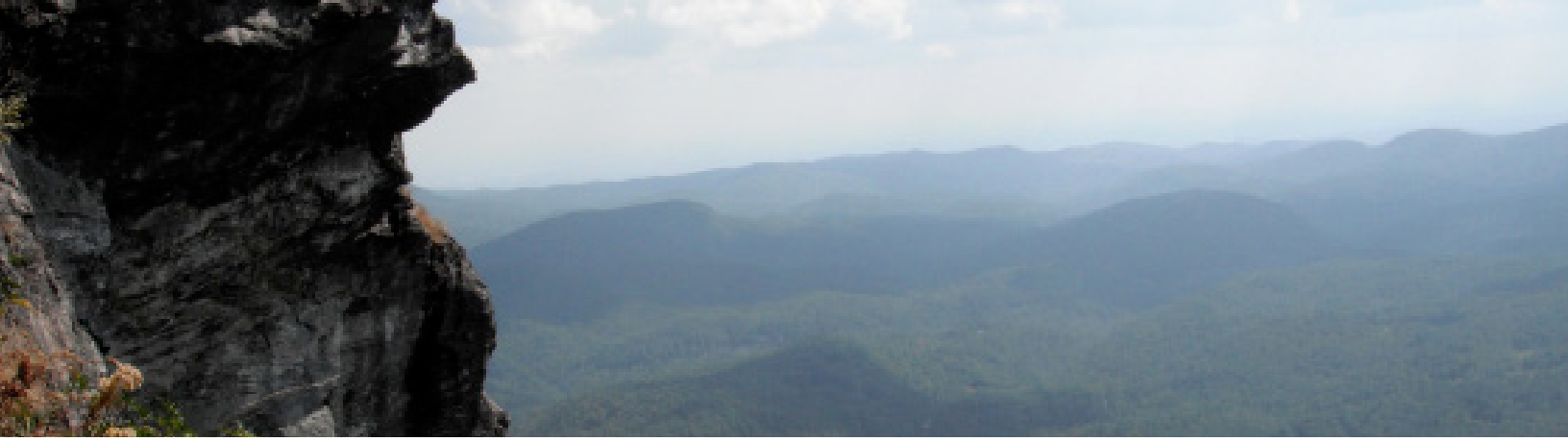
### **Keep the conversation going**

- Continue to involve as many specific user groups as possible.
- Ensure non-hunting stakeholders continue to be part of the conversation.

### **Get started with solutions, but move carefully and deliberately**

- Learn and adapt.
- Focus on incremental steps.
- Make future decisions based on new information and insight as it becomes available.





## **Criteria**

From the focus groups' discussion, the following key criteria were recommended for selecting game lands for the initial effort to allow Sunday hunting:

- Rural game lands that are not heavily used by non-hunters.
- Proximity to other game lands and public lands that allow non-hunting use.
- Current use patterns of game lands. Be sure the value of “precious properties” that are unique to specific user groups is evaluated when selecting suitable Sunday hunting game lands.
- Proximity to urban areas. De-emphasize game lands that are near urban or developing areas if the potential for conflict is judged to be high.
- Avoid game lands where past conflict has been a pattern. These may be in urban areas, or there may be other sources of friction between users. Save these properties for consideration in the future once lessons are learned.

## **Additional Considerations**

While the focus groups advocated for simplicity and clarity in any changes, there was recognition that there may be special situations where the following elements of a solution may be useful:

- Expanded trail buffers are complex to manage, but could be part of a solution on the Appalachian Trail or Mountains to Sea trail where future use is projected to increase.
- Consider promoting nearby State and Local parks that may be equally or better suited for some non-hunting activities than game lands. Consider promoting nearby State and Local parks that may be better suited for some non-hunting activities.
- Consider adding a day to existing 3 or 6 day-per-week game land where biologists are comfortable the resource would not be negatively impacted.
- Ensure the solution can be easily communicated.
- Phase in and communicate any changes. People are used to certain Sunday behaviors. Don't surprise them!
- If new locations are opened for Sunday hunting, changes will need to be supported with local signage at parking and access areas.
- Anticipate at least a year of education after any change is implemented. During the first year of implementation, extra effort should be made to avoid making compliance punitive.
- Implement regular news updates to major user groups that they can share with their members.



## **Hunter Concerns:**

Three recurring concerns were expressed by hunting groups:

- Non-restrictive access to public lands is a priority for all hunting groups
- Partitioning of game lands was viewed as complex, confusing and unworkable
- Limiting hunting opportunities by species or weapon was opposed

## **Additional hunter issues**

Some hunters believe they have already compromised. They view church setback zones, 9:30-12:30, and dog hunting provisions in the current law for private lands as compromises.

Increases in WRC education and outreach efforts will be essential. Efforts should include messages to help hunters and non-hunters better understand each other's perceptions when they are in the field. Non-hunters need to be aware of hunting seasons when using game lands. Hunters need to be aware of other users when they are on game lands. Structured dialogue between the two groups can proactively help avoid future conflict.

Trespass laws were strengthened in Pennsylvania when the Legislature approved Sunday hunting. This option could address concerns of adjacent private property owners who currently want a "day of rest" from trespassers, gunshots, dogs and noise.

Dog hunting was unpopular with many hunters and non-hunters. The noise and disruption were cited by landowners in rural areas as a big issue.





## **Non-Hunting Concerns**

### ***Birdwatching issues***

- The Carolina birding trail overlaps a number of game lands. Consider not moving forward with Sunday hunting at the most popular birding sites, and game lands with the highest bird biodiversity from expanded Sunday hunting.
- The Christmas bird count is a long running tradition that came up in every session. Consider preserving this tradition at Sandhills, Butner Falls of the Neuse and Jordan.
- Bird counts are being completed successfully in states with Sunday hunting. Consider what can be learned from the Texas birding trail and other popular birding spots.
- Explore how other states with Sunday hunting handle bird counts.

### ***Equestrian Issues***

- Consider game lands that prohibit horseback riding as potential candidates to open for Sunday hunting.
- Clarify rules in the upcoming regulation cycle and provide easy to understand language on the WRC internet.
- Re-assess game lands for additional opportunity. Seek year-round opportunities. Simplify the regulations.
- Consider the option of time slots for specific use, similar to what is being explored in New Mexico. Under this scenario, hunters would get to use the game lands part of the morning. Hunters would be off the land, or there would be no firearm discharge during mid-day when riders could be present and return later.

### ***Hiking and Climbing Issues***

- Pay attention to trails of statewide significance. (AT/Mountain to Sea).
- Although buffers were generally perceived to be problematic due to marking and enforcement, in some instances (i.e. Mountain to Sea and Appalachian Trails), expanded buffers may be part of a solution.
- Proactively anticipate future changes (i.e. Mountain to Sea will get more use as the trail expands).

### ***Biking Issues***

- Articulating a broader, more inclusive approach to game lands is important to SORBA.
- User fees are not opposed, but some of the funds would be expected to benefit bikers.
- Improved trails, signage and access might be part of this conversation.



## ***Alternatives the Process Considered***

Each of the three regional focus groups began with a list of potential alternatives from the survey and listening sessions. These included:

### **Designate different game lands for specific uses**

Choose different game lands for different uses on Sundays. This option includes some areas designated for hunting and some for non-hunting activities.

### **Archery hunting can address a lot of issues**

If applied to specific properties, not state-wide, archery-only hunting on Sunday had higher support. There are alternatives within the archery-only option that scored higher. Archery-only zones might be identified closer to trails. Archery-only hunting might make sense on smaller properties located in more urban areas.

Archery-only zones can provide a silent buffer between firearms and non-hunters. Over time, safety concerns could take care of themselves as all users become more comfortable with Sunday hunting.

### **Require all game land users to wear blaze orange during hunting seasons**

This was subject to a discussion specific to NOT wearing blaze orange during turkey and dove seasons. Wording can easily be devised to address this concern. Non-hunters will require ongoing education and communication to understand this requirement.

### **Monitor game lands for maximum capacity and limit access accordingly**

The need to balance the demand for popular game lands is inevitable. As an example, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission has a mobile phone application for signing in at Florida game lands. Onsite sign-in logs were another, lower-tech option.

### **Promote state and local parks that might better meet the needs of non-hunters**

This is a strategy to divert non-hunters to local and state parks that have opportunity and infrastructure and away from certain game lands. This option can be used in conjunction with all the others.

### **If Sunday hunting is allowed, limit hunting on other days of the week**

This option does not address the concerns of non-hunting users and local landowners that view Sunday as their day to be free of gunshots, truck noise, and dogs. This option does address game lands that are currently 3-day hunt areas.





### **Allow hunting of feral hogs on Sundays**

This option was not controversial. It can be expanded to other species. In general, species-specific options were viewed as a negative.

### **During turkey season allow turkey hunting on Sundays**

### **Add more game lands**

To increase non-hunters' willingness to pay, offering additional game land and amenities is a key deliverable. Test specific groups paying for specific land and infrastructure they value. Long-term, this is an excellent strategy for WRC.

### **Expand buffers**

Well-marked set-backs will provide some peace of mind in heavily utilized trail areas. Expanding existing trail buffers may be a promising area for closer review.

### **Specific permits**

Using permits for Sunday hunting on specific game lands near urban areas (Jordan) could work.

This option could spread out the hunting pressure on Sundays.



## ***Additional Alternatives That Were Reviewed***

Each focus group also considered additional alternatives that received lower levels of support from the survey and listening sessions. These included:

### **Sunday hunting on all game lands**

The favorite option with hunters but had little support from non-hunters and hunters opposed to Sunday hunting. It represents a win-lose option.

### **No changes to the current no hunting on Sunday law**

Supported by the majority of non-hunters and 24% of hunters also opposed Sunday hunting. It represents a win-lose option.

### **Allow Sunday hunting by lottery or permit only**

This polled low with hunters but might be viable on some game lands. Another option offered in the new survey was to address quality game management on Sundays. Another idea was a permit for buck-only hunting on Sunday.

### **All game lands go to 4-day week (M-W-F-Sat) for hunting exclusively; no other activities**

This was viewed by most as taking away something away, not as a solution. Yet, for some lands, only allowing hunting on certain days seemed reasonable to many.

### **Allow only squirrel or rabbit hunting on Sundays**

This didn't satisfy the safety concerns of non-hunters and seemed like a mere tease to the hunters.

### **Add Sunday hunting, but shorten the deer season (to keep hunting pressure consistent)**

No support for this option among hunters and non-hunters.

### **Offer hunting on select/alternate Sundays**

If it can be kept simple without complexity, it might get support. One variation offered in the listening sessions was to alternate by month. It could also serve as an option on select lands.





## **Willingness to Pay**

Each focus group explored the issue of equity and fairness of game land financial support. Overall, there was strong willingness to consider alternative fees for non-hunters that would support the maintenance of game lands.

### **Special Case**

The benefits to game lands of non-hunters buying hunting or fishing licenses were discussed. The potential for a Federal match gives this concept potential. Both hunting and fishing licenses provide an easy, currently available solution. If a new access license for non-hunters is adopted, participants ask that it include a check box to capture specific user activity.

User-Pay alternatives come with some strings attached and some “it depends” responses. Specific ideas and concerns included:

- Fees should be the same for hunters and non-hunters and reasonable (\$15-25.)
- Fees need to demonstrate appropriate use of funds. Fees would be more palatable for non-hunters if they are part of a vision for public lands that benefited everybody.
- Non-hunters do not speak with one voice. Support for fees varied by user group, with horseback riders offering some of the strongest support. Trial groups and paddlers expressed some reservations about fees.
- A checkoff box that would enable non-hunting activities to be tracked and monitored would be desirable.
- The administrative costs, return on investment, and details on how a fee would function need to be determined to gain the support of some non-hunting groups.
- Different messages and benefit statements need to be tested with non-hunting groups.
- Fees would need to be easy and convenient for hikers and dog walkers. Pay on the spot.
- Would age restrictions apply? At what age would someone need a permit to be on game lands?
- Alternatives for out of state game land users would need to be considered. Consider a multi-day out of state pass or other alternative.
- There is an opportunity to encourage non-hunters who use game lands to contribute even more. Those who are actively using game lands can do more.
- Simplicity is the key to any option adapted.



## Conclusions

Throughout this process stakeholders have expressed appreciation to WRC for multiple opportunities to share their perspectives and concerns about Sunday hunting on game lands. WRC's commitment to active listening was recognized and appreciated.

A high bar has been set. Continued transparency, openness and engagement of a broad range of stakeholders in an ongoing game land conversation is hard work, but will ultimately lead to solutions that are well understood and supported statewide.

A series of decision criteria and guiding principles have been identified by this process that will enable WRC to determine the feasibility of Sunday hunting on game lands. Future decisions should be made based on new information and insight as it becomes available.

The process has highlighted the potential for hunters and non-hunters to increase appreciation of, and support for, game lands in North Carolina. The willingness of non-hunters to consider user fees that will support game lands is a strong positive. Additional study will be required to develop these alternatives.

## Acknowledgments and Thank You

This process would have been impossible without regular check-ins and ongoing communication with WRC. Brian McRae and Carrie Ruhlman, provided reality checks, a constant flow of information and updates to the process, patience and good humor, without which this effort would have been impossible.

Special thanks go to Farley Mahlum, whose above-and-beyond outreach made for a successful survey and rapid responses to community questions.

Additional WRC contributions came from Brady Beck, Brent Wilson, Chesley Ward, Chris Baranski, Chris Bova, Chris Dawes, Chris Jordan, David Steward, David Turner, Jessie Birckhead, Paul Thompson, Richie Clark and Will Casola who provided subject matter expertise, logistical support for listening sessions and sounding boards for members of the general public who attended listening sessions.





## **Appendix A: Survey Questions**

### **2020 N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission Sunday Hunting on Game Lands Survey**

Thank you for participating in this N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) survey. Your responses will help identify issues and options related to Sunday hunting on game lands. The information you provide will also help the WRC better understand how North Carolina residents use game lands.

A few of the questions will require an answer. Once you start the survey, you need to complete all questions before exiting. The survey should take no more than 15-minutes.

**1. Do you use game lands for any outdoor activity such as hunting, hiking, biking, horseback riding, etc.?**

**Yes/No**

If Yes, drop to Q2

If No, skip to Q6

**2. How many days a year do you use game lands Please pick a whole number. Enter 0 if you don't use game lands.**

**3. Do you hunt in North Carolina?**

**4. Do you hunt on game lands? (Y/N)**

**5. On which of the 93 game lands do you hunt? Please check the game lands that you most often use. (You may check up to 5 game lands)**

**6. Which days of the week do you typically hunt on game lands? (Please check all days that apply: Mon-Sat)**

**7. In a typical year, how many days do you hunt on game lands? (Please enter a number between 1 and 365)**

**8. Do you participate in any non-hunting outdoor activities on game lands such as hiking, biking, horseback riding, etc.?**

**9. In a typical year, how many days do you participate in the following outdoor activities on any game land? For each activity enter the number of days. If you did not participate, enter zero.**

Biking/Boating (motorized)/Canoeing & Kayaking/Camping/Dog training/Fishing/Geocaching/Hiking/Horseback Riding/Target Shooting/Trapping/Bird/Wildlife Watching/Other – please specify

**10. On which of the 93 game lands do you participate in the outdoor activities selected above? (Please check all state game lands that you use.) Same list of 93 game lands.**

**11. Which day(s) of the week do you typically participate in the outdoor activities selected above on game lands? (Please check all days that apply: Mon-Sat)**



**12. To what extent do you support or oppose Sunday hunting on game lands?**

**13. Why do you believe the WRC should allow Sunday hunting on game lands?**

**14. Do you believe there are options that can address concerns about allowing Sunday hunting on game lands?**

**15. Why do you believe the WRC should not allow Sunday hunting on game lands?**

**16. Do you believe there are options that can address your concerns about allowing Sunday hunting on game lands?**

I believe many of my concerns can be addressed.

I believe some of my concerns can be addressed.

I am not sure if there are options that can address my concerns.

I am skeptical my concerns can be addressed, but I am willing to listen to options.

I do not believe there are any options that can address my concerns.

**17. Which of these statements best captures your use of game lands?**

I am a regular user of state game lands for my outdoor activities.

I am an occasional user state game lands for my outdoor activities.

I rarely use state game lands for my outdoor activities.

I never use state game lands for my outdoor activities.

**18. Please list the most important features of a game land for enjoying your favorite outdoor activities. (Examples: scenic view, large populations of a particular species, ponds, parking, trails, etc.)**

**19. There are game land users, including hunters, that oppose Sunday hunting on game lands in North Carolina. Do you have any suggestions for how the WRC could address the concerns of users opposed to Sunday hunting on game lands?**

**20. What is your vision for the future of game lands?**

**21. Please provide your current email address to receive additional information and updates on Sunday hunting on game lands.**

**22. Select the county you live in from the drop-down menu below.**

**23. What is your gender?**

**24. In what year were you born?**



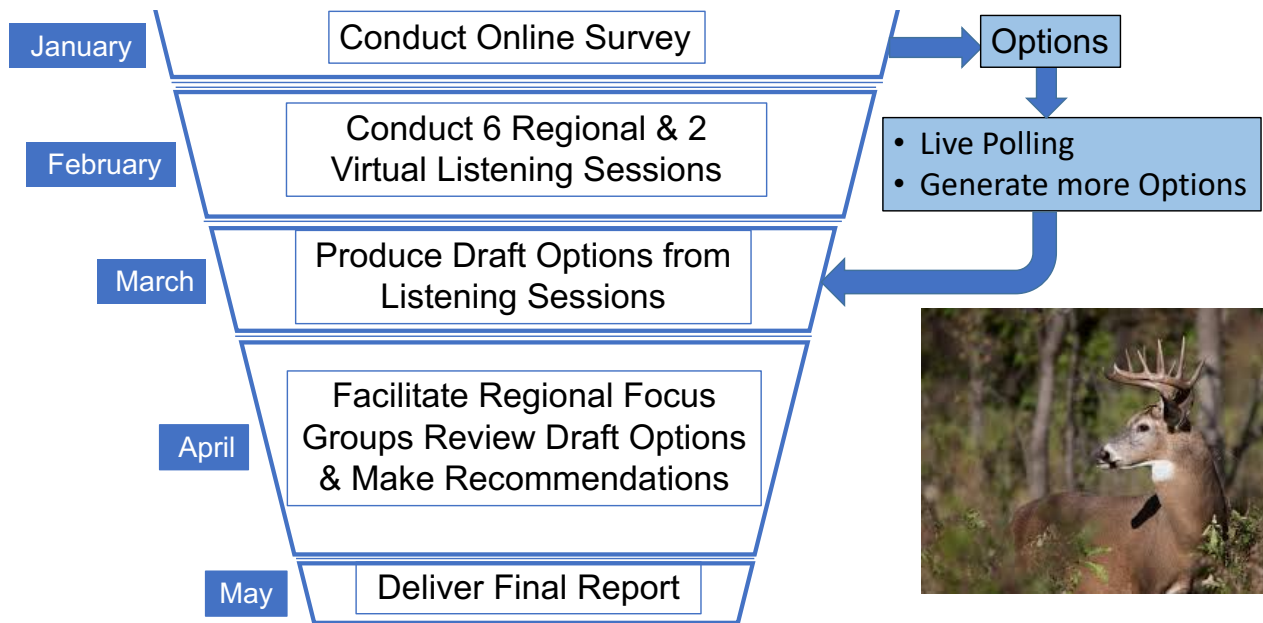
Appendix B: Survey Highlights



# 2020 N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission Sunday Hunting on Game Lands Survey

Brett Boston & Vern Herr  
*Group Solutions, Inc.*

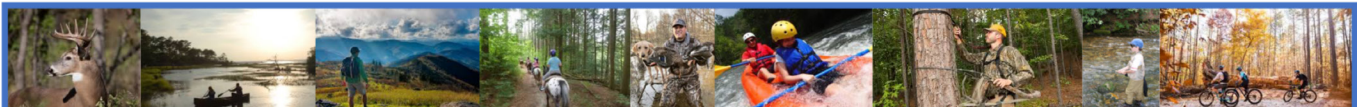
Preliminary Options



# About the Survey Data

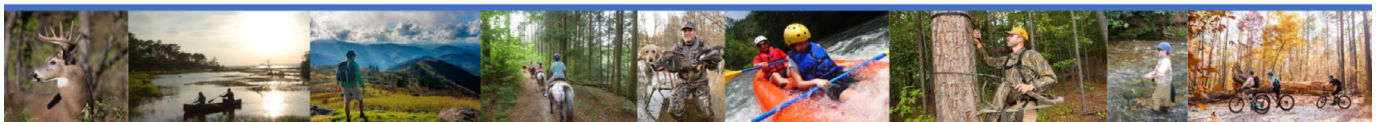
- This is a huge and statistically awesome sample size!
- The numbers are raw numbers and not fully analyzed
- The final numbers may be slightly different (+/- 2%) but will not significantly alter the big picture.
- We JUST downloaded the data and started processing, so there is more detailed info on the way.
- We are happy to answer your questions about the survey findings

Thank you for your input!



## Overview

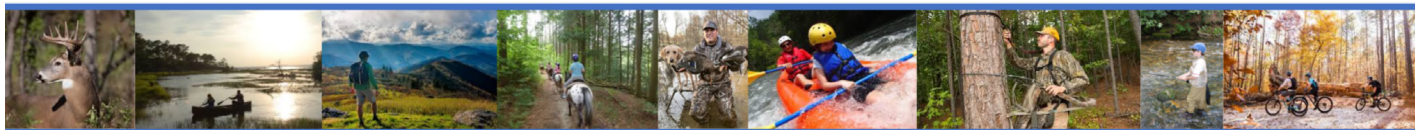
- **30,868 Responses**
- **25,021 Use game lands** – 81% of survey takers
- **17K+ hunt in NC**
- **15,455 Hunt on game lands**
- 14K+ told us...
  - What game lands they hunt on,
  - What days they hunt on each, and
  - How many days they hunt on each
- 17K+ Participate in some activity on game lands, other than hunting
- And they told us...
  - What game lands they use to recreate,
  - What days they recreate on each, and
  - How many days they recreate on each





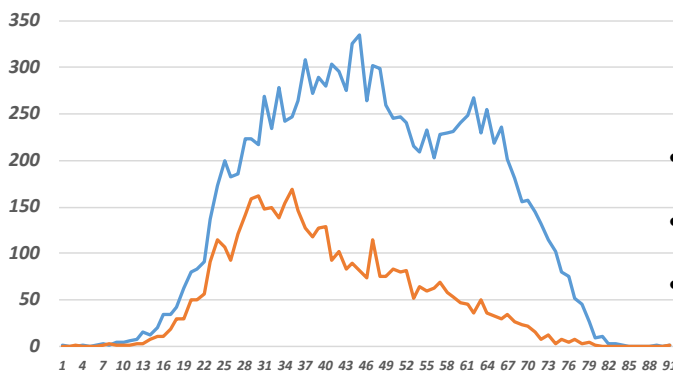
# Overview

- 27K+ told us their degree of support or opposition to Sunday hunting
- 25K+ told us their views about Sunday hunting
- 25K+ told us if they felt their concerns about Sunday hunting could be addressed with by exploring options
- 22K+ told us the about game land features that are important to them
- Almost 22K shared ideas for addressing concerns about Sunday hunting
- 21K+ people gave us thoughts about their vision for NC game lands
- 86% male and 13% female
- *And 8 people of over 120 years of age took the survey*

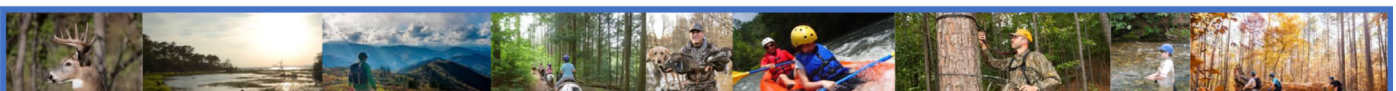


## Who were the survey takers?

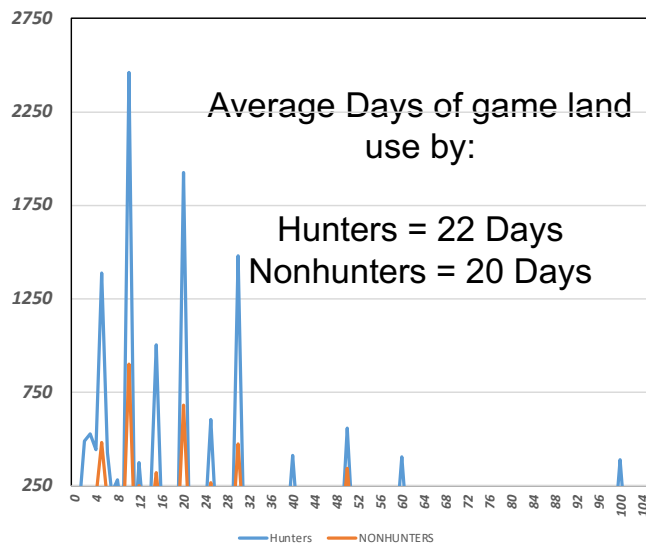
Hunters	Number	%	%	Number	Non-Hunters
Male	12,496	95.5%	56.5%	2,809	Male
Female	463	3.6%	40.2%	1,999	Female
Prefer not to Share	117	0.9%	3.2%	161	Prefer not to Share



- Average Age of Survey Takers = 53.7 years
- Of Hunters (taking survey) = 50.1 years
- Of Non-Hunters (taking survey) 57.7 years

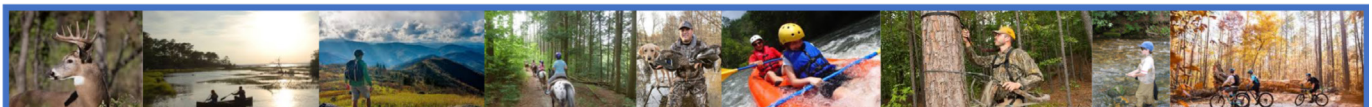


## They were regular users of game lands



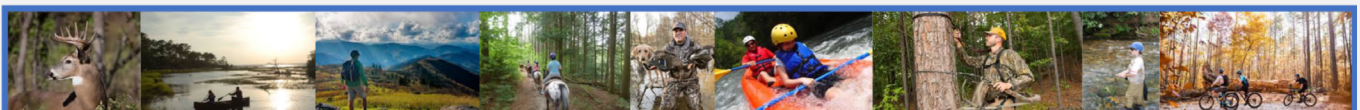
## Identical reported use patterns for Hunters and Non-Hunters

	Hunters	Non-Hunters
Occasional User	48.6%	49.2%
Regular User	46.2%	46.0%
Rarely Use	4.9%	4.4%
Never Use	0.3%	0.4%



## Rank order of most popular non-hunting game land activities by hunter and non-hunters

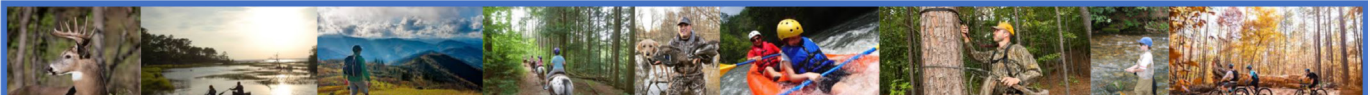
Game Land Activities	Hunters Ranking of Activity	Non-Hunters Ranking of Activity
Fishing	1st	4th
Hiking	2nd	1st
Camping	3rd	6th
Boating (Motorized)	4th	7th
Bird/Wildlife Watching	5th	2nd
Canoeing/Kayaking	6th	5th
Biking	7th	3rd
Target Shooting	8th	10th
Dog Training	9th	9th
Horseback Riding	10th	8th
Trapping	11th	12th
Geocaching	12th	11th
Other	13th	13th





**The average number of days hunters and non-hunters participate in non-hunting activities on game lands**

Game Land Activities	Average number of days reported participating	Average number of days reported participating
Fishing	21	13
Hiking	15	26
Camping	8	7
Boating (Motorized)	14	8
Bird/Wildlife Watching	12	20
Canoeing/Kayaking	8	7
Biking	8	13
Target Shooting	6	3
Dog Training	9	9
Horseback Riding	3	11
Trapping	2	0
Geocaching	1	2
Other	8	10



Which of these 93 game lands do you use for the outdoor activities you selected?

### For Hunting

#### Hunter's Top 5

- Pisgah NF  
21.7%
- Uwharrie NF  
17.9%
- Jordan  
13.4%
- Butner-Falls of Neuse  
12.3%
- Nantahala NF  
11.3%

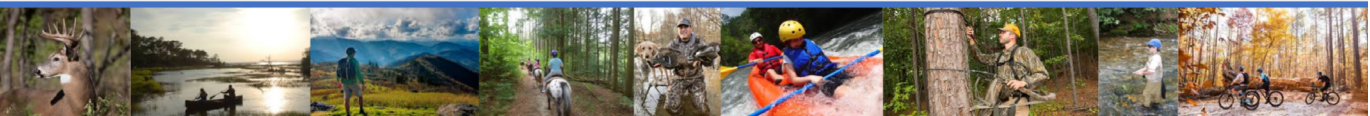
### For Non-Hunting

#### Hunter's Top 5

- Pisgah NF  
31.7%
- Uwharrie NF  
20.7%
- Nantahala NF  
18.1%
- Pisgah  
14.9%
- Jordan  
13.8%

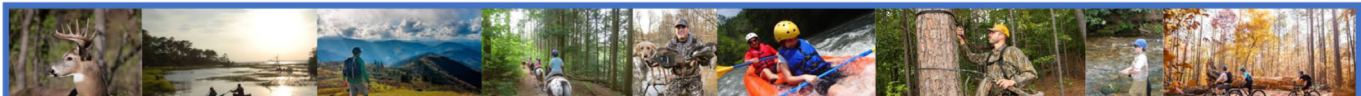
#### Non-Hunter's Top 5

- Pisgah NF  
47.7%
- Nantahala NF  
30.8%
- Uwharrie NF  
27.2%
- Dupont SF  
24.4%
- Pisgah  
21.0%



Which days of the week do you typically participate on game lands in the outdoor activities selected?

For Hunting	For Non-Hunting Hunters	For Non-Hunting Non-Hunters
Saturday 88.3%	Saturday 89.6%	Sunday 90.2%
Friday 55.4%	Sunday 72.9%	Saturday 86.9%
Monday 39.9%	Friday 56.0%	Friday 46.7%
Wednesday 37.9%	Monday 35.0%	Wednesday 31.2%
Thursday 36.0%	Thursday 33.0%	Thursday 30.5%
Tuesday 32.9%	Wednesday 32.8%	Monday 30.4%
	Tuesday 30.2%	Tuesday 28.0%

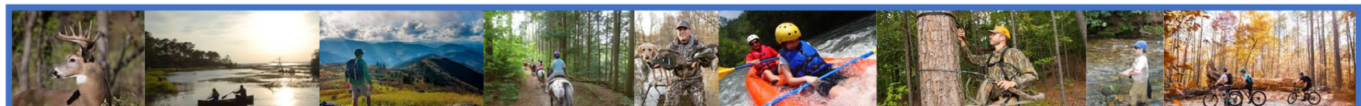


To what extent do you support or oppose Sunday hunting on game lands?

### Hunters

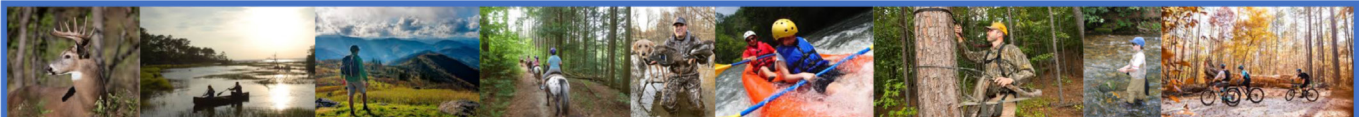
### Non-Hunters

<p>74% of Hunters Support or Somewhat Support Sunday Hunting</p>	<p>Totally Support 67.0%</p>	<p>22% of Non-Hunters Support or Somewhat Support Sunday Hunting</p>
	<p>Somewhat Support 6.8%</p>	
<p>24% of Hunters Oppose or Somewhat Oppose Sunday Hunting</p>	<p>Undecided 2.6%</p>	<p>75% of Non-Hunters Oppose or Somewhat Oppose Sunday Hunting</p>
	<p>Somewhat Oppose 5.2%</p>	
	<p>Totally Oppose 18.4%</p>	
	<p>Totally Support 17.0%</p>	
	<p>Somewhat Support 4.7%</p>	
	<p>Undecided 3.5%</p>	
	<p>Somewhat Oppose 11.8%</p>	
	<p>Totally Oppose 62.9%</p>	



## Why do you believe the WRC should allow Sunday hunting on game lands? (Hunters in Support)

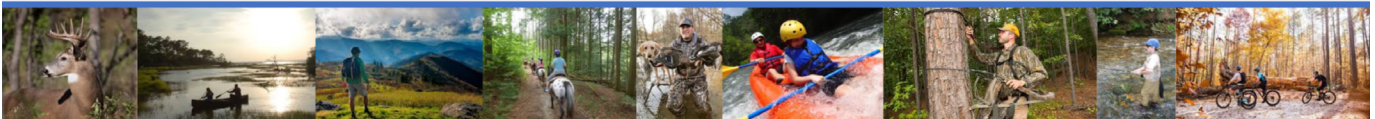
- It works on private lands in NC with minimal conflict
- Boost hunting interest (R3: keep the sport alive)
- Hunters pay for maintenance via licenses and fees
- No legal reason to restrict it
- It works in 40+ other states
- Remove barriers to working class hunters (weekends/cost)
- Reduce Saturday overcrowding
- Boost revenue for local economies
- Improve management of animal populations
- Increase opportunities for subsistence hunting



## Why do you believe the WRC should allow Sunday hunting on game lands?

(Non-Hunters in Support)

- Why not? Why is Sunday treated any different from any other day?
- I believe it allows more opportunity to those that work on Saturdays
- No scientific evidence suggests negative or adverse effects to game from Sunday hunting - decisions for a resource should be made based on biology...period.
- I believe hunting seasons do not need to be limited in the absence of demonstrated human risk or risk to stability of game populations.
- Hunting on other days doesn't create an untenable safety risk, so why would Sunday hunting be uniquely dangerous?
- I would hate to have a day of the week where hiking wasn't allowed, so I somewhat support all days being open to hunting
- I don't like hunting. Just because I don't hunt, I wouldn't want to take hunting away from the ones who enjoy hunting.
- Deer population needs more control as impacts of white-tailed deer are evident through NC
- No hunting on Sunday is a super outdated blue law.
- If you can't hunt on Sunday why should you be able to fish, or ride bikes, or hike on Sunday?





## Do you believe there are options that can address concerns about allowing Sunday hunting on game lands?

### Opposed to Sunday Hunting

Non-Hunters

No options	32.6%
Skeptical	32.3%
Not sure	14.7%
Many	12.3%
Some	8.3%

Hunters

No options	40.6%
Skeptical	21.2%
Many	15.0%
Not sure	13.0%
Some	10.3%

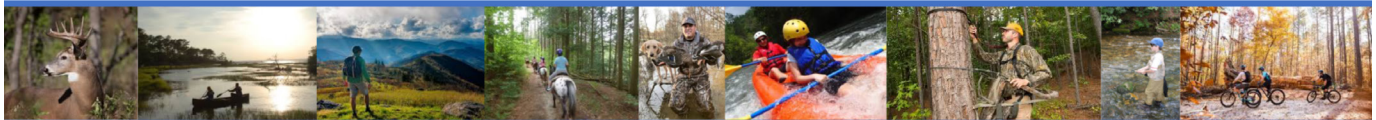
### For Sunday Hunting

Hunters

Many	69.0%
Some	17.8%
Skeptical	2.1%
No	3.0%
Prefer not to answer	8.0%

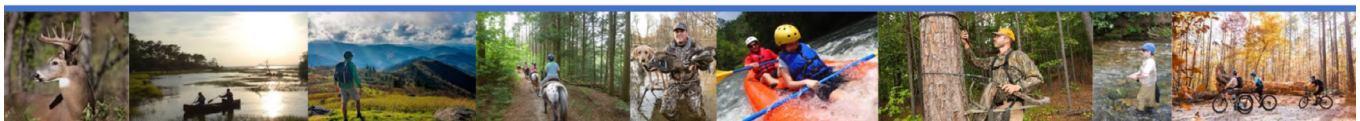
Non-Hunters

Many	66.6%
Some	19.2%
Prefer not to answer	7.5%
Skeptical	3.8%
No	2.9%



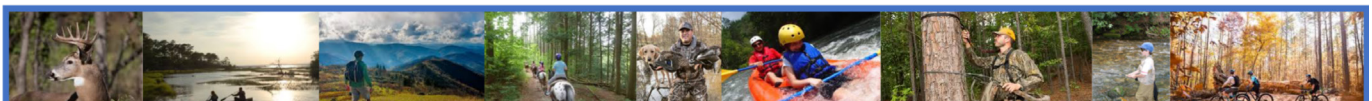
## Why do you believe the WRC should NOT allow Sunday hunting on game lands? (Hunters Opposed)

- Religious beliefs
- Safety for non-hunting Sunday users
- Saturday and Sundays are the only days ALL working people can enjoy the outdoors - It's not just hunters that work weekdays
- 6 days of hunting should be enough – give people and animals a break
- Tradition in NC – It has worked for 150 years
- Fairness issue: if I rest or observe a Sunday sabbath and others don't
- Firearm and dog noise impacts on other users, neighbors, churches
- Too much pressure on the resource already
- Inadequate enforcement now, what will an extra day cost?



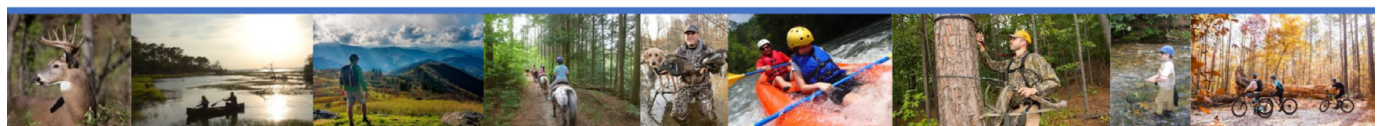
**Why do you believe the WRC should NOT allow Sunday hunting on game lands? (Non-Hunters)**

- Safety! Game lands are crowded with bikers and hikers who BTW should pay a user fee!
- One weekend day not to worry about my dogs being shot by deer or turkey hunter
- My opposition is based on religious beliefs, although I believe the time restrictions and set-back rules around houses of worship are good accommodations.
- A day to enjoy nature without dogs, guns shots, trucks speeding up and down the road.
- One day reserved for non-hunting activities and the ability of non-hunters to observe wildlife without interfering with hunting or causing a conflict between user groups.
- Landowners with properties bordering game lands need a day of rest.
- Sunday is usually the day most people can ride their horses.
- Safety - Most families, vacationer's and tourist enjoy the Pisgah National Forest on the weekend. Children are playing in the rivers, on the hiking trails and biking trails.
- I am hesitant to support Sunday hunting because it would create temptation to skip church to hunt in the morning.



**Please list the most important FEATURES of a game land for enjoying your favorite outdoor activities**

- Wild, unspoiled places with remarkable scenery (beautiful, clean)
- Large tracks of uninhabited land (being in nature, solitude)
- Managed and preserved for future enjoyment
- Accessible to all – children, seniors, handicapped
- A place for relaxation, quiet and restoration/renewal
- Quality hunting and fishing opportunities
- Safety – safe parking, activities, trails, safe hunting
- Diverse, quality habitat that is appropriately managed (fire, food plots, healthy game, clean water, undisturbed, natural, hardwoods)
- Great Trails – for hiking, walking, biking, ATVs, horses, handicapped access
- Infrastructure parking lots, signage marked trails, designated use areas



## What is your vision for the future of game lands?

Future-focused and sustainably managed

- Meets the needs of all North Carolinians
- To be used for hunting as well as other outdoor activities

Generous access and accessibility

- Better roads, parking etc.
- Senior and handicapped access (ATV trails)

Valued by all NC citizens, even if they don't actively use them

An acceptable mix of hunting opportunities and outdoor recreation.

Abundant game and non-game species

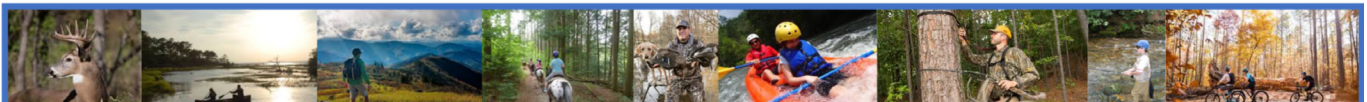
Quality habitat managed for the benefit of humans and wildlife

Designated places for various uses

Serene, remote wilderness places

They remain safe for all users - well patrolled

**A place for current & future generations to enjoy!**



## What is your vision for the future of game lands?

**All users pay their fair share**

- Create a sustainable funding model
- Without careful management and proper funding they shrink and deteriorate

**Keep them as-is**

- Preserve/protect/conservate what we have

**They expand and improve in quality**

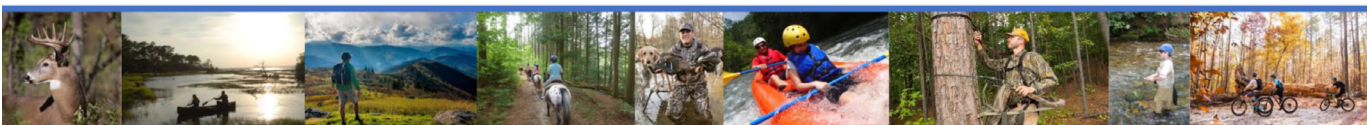
- More game lands and acreage
- Better/stricter management
- Cleaner
- Better road maintenance

**They MAY shrink, deteriorate, and disappear**

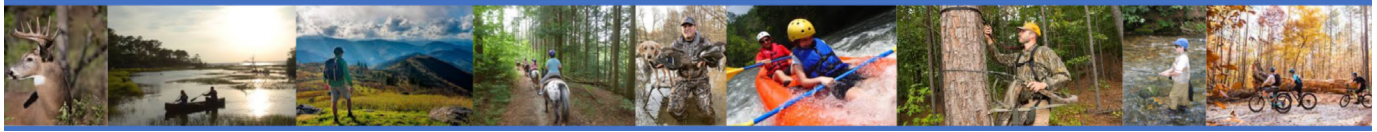
- Become overcrowded
- Development encroaches

**Ethical hunting and fair chase** - remove the bad eggs

**A place for current & future generations to enjoy!**







## Thanks for your participation!

Your input is important to us

Follow progress and updates on the website WRC project webpage at:

<https://www.ncwildlife.org/SundayHuntingGL>

Put any additional ideas you have on the comment card and drop it off in the box on the table.

Have a safe journey home.





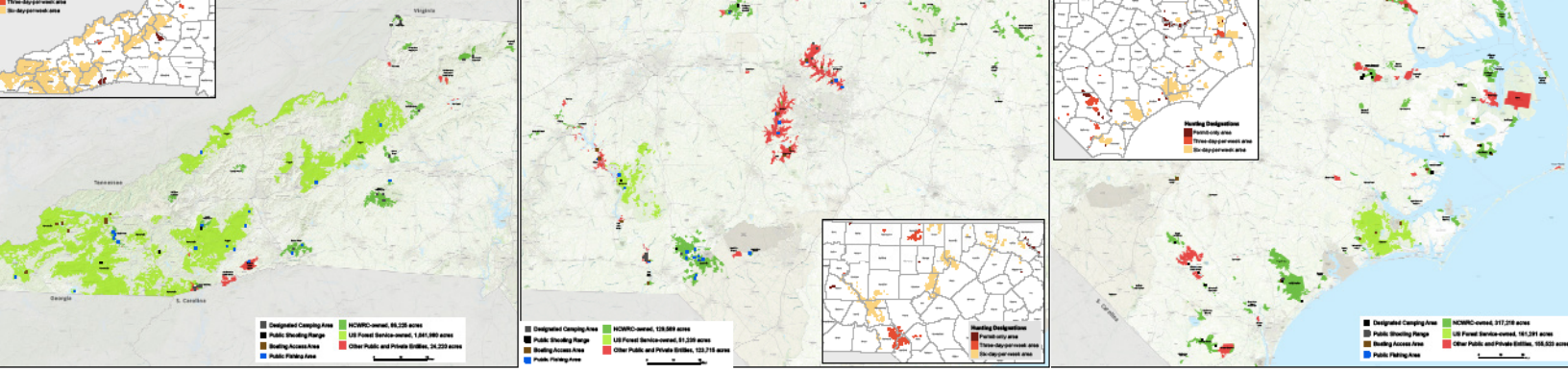
## ***Appendix C: A Quality Experience on Game Lands - Non-Hunters***

What constitutes a quality experience for non-hunters on game lands? Qualitative open-ended input from non-hunters was analyzed. The following themes emerged:

- Well-marked and well-maintained multi-purpose trails. Trails were at the top of every list with the exception of hikers, where it was the second most often mentioned theme.
- Scenic views and beauty. NC's natural beauty, scenic views were the second most-often mentioned theme for all other user groups.
- Peace and Quiet. The solitude and tranquility game lands offer are a primary reason many users prefer them.
- Abundant Wildlife. Encountering game and non-game species on game lands and the opportunity to view rare or endangered species, undisturbed.
- Wilderness Experience. Non-hunters value the vast blocks of unspoiled, untouched and unimproved NC game lands enable users to provide uncrowded experiences where they can relax and recharge from urban life. Included in this segment is an expectation that game lands should be protected for future generations.
- Access. Game lands that are easily accessible from the main road by car were mentioned by all groups. Users expect adequate safe, clean and well-maintained parking areas, especially on weekends.
- Safety. Fears of accidental gunshot and intimidation by those with high-powered weaponry were the lowest theme that occurred across all groups.

### **Other themes**

- Being in Nature. This theme, expressed exactly this way, occurred frequently enough to be mentioned. For some, this is reason enough to visit game lands.
- Varied habitat and terrain. Few states offer the combination of mountain to sea experiences that NC does. For some user groups this is an important attribute.
- Fitness and Exercise. Increasingly, game lands are becoming destinations for trail runners, hikers and mountain bikers whose priorities are challenge and adventure. As the game land users continue to age, this group may become more important in the future.
- Friends and Family. While not exclusive to non-hunters, the social connections of experience game land activities with friends and family is a significant part of a quality game land experience.



## Appendix D: NC WRC Listening Session Locations

### Week One:

All Sessions 7 pm to 9pm

Date	Location	Address
Monday 2/10	Martin Community College Auditorium Building 2	1161 Kehukee Park Rd, Williamston, NC 27892
Tuesday 2/11	Bladen Community College Auditorium	7418 NC Hwy 41W, Dublin, NC 28332
Wednesday 2/12	Foothills Higher Education Center HEC-163 Auditorium	2128 S Sterling St, Morganton, NC 28655
Thursday 2/13	Haywood Community College Regional High Technology Center (RHTC) Auditorium	185 Freedlander Dr, Clyde, NC 28721

### Week Two

Date	Location	Address
Monday 2/17	Virtual Meeting I and face to face at Raleigh NC WRC	1751 Varsity Dr, Raleigh, NC 27606
Tuesday 2/18	Alamance Community College Auditorium	1247 Jimmy Kerr Road, Graham, NC 27253
Wednesday 2/10	James Garner Center	210 Burnette St, Troy NC 27371
Thursday 2/20	Virtual Meeting II	



## Appendix E: Focus Group Participants

June 9	June 10	June 11
<b>Access Fund</b> Zach Lesch-Huie	<b>Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation</b> John Culclasure	<b>Association of County Commissioners</b> Amber Harris
<b>Appalachian Trail Society</b> Morgan Sommerville	<b>Jordan Lake Trails Conservation Association</b> Kate Helm	<b>Backcountry Hunters &amp; Anglers</b> Luke Weingarten
<b>Carolina Bird Club</b> Marilyn Westphal	<b>League of Municipalities</b> Amber Harris	<b>Carolinas' Nature Photographers Association</b> Jeff Eichinger
<b>Carolina Climbers Coalition</b> Mike Reardon	<b>National Deer Alliance</b> Torin Miller	<b>Mountains to Sea Trail</b> Kate Dixon
<b>Green River Access Fund</b> John Grace	<b>National Shooting Sports Foundation</b> Trevor Santos	<b>National Rifle Association</b> Erica Tergeson
<b>High Country Audubon Society</b> Guy McGrane	<b>National Wild Turkey Federation</b> Chris Coxen	<b>NC Audubon Society</b> Greg Andeck
<b>NC Backcountry Horsemen</b> Heather Cox	<b>NC Birding Trail</b> Lena Gallitano	<b>NC Bowhunters Association</b> Sean Maloy
<b>Pisgah Area SORBA</b> Tom Sauret	<b>NC Falconers Guild</b> Bob Pendergast	<b>NC Landowner Alliance</b> Carl Demaris
<b>Trout Unlimited</b> Mike Mihalas	<b>NC Horse Council</b> Sue Gray	<b>NC Wildlife Federation</b> Tim Gestwicki
	<b>New Hope Audubon</b> Barbara Driscoll	<b>Quality Deer Management Association</b> Kip Adams
	<b>NC Conservation Council</b> David Whitmire	<b>Ruffed Grouse Society</b> Brent Rudolph
	<b>Sierra Club</b> Robert Scull	<b>Uwharrie Trailblazers</b> David Craft
	<b>Sportsmen's Alliance</b> Jacob Hupp	

## Appendix F: WRC Focus Group Participants

June 9	June 10	June 11
Chris Bova	Chris Baranski	Chris Baranski
Will Casola	Brady Beck	Brady Beck
Chris Dawes	Jessie Birkhead	Jessie Birkhead
Chris Jordan	Chris Bova	Chris Bova
Brian McRae	Will Casola	Will Casola
Carrie Ruhlman	Richie Clark	Richie Clark
David Stewart	Chris Dawes	Chris Dawes
Paul Thompson	Brian McRae	Chris Jordan
Chesley Ward	Carrie Ruhlman	Brian McRae
	David Stewart	Carrie Ruhlman
	Paul Thompson	David Stewart
	David Turner	David Turner
	Chesley Ward	Brent Wilson
	Brent Wilson	