

RESOLUTION # 38

WILDLIFE AND AGRICULTURE

1 **WHEREAS**, excessive populations of wildlife, and the accompanying economic
2 and natural resource losses to farmers, livestock owners, homeowners, businesses and
3 public lands caused by such wildlife populations, continue at critical levels in New
4 Jersey; and

5 **WHEREAS**, widespread development in New Jersey has led deer, black bear,
6 geese, starlings, turkeys and other birds, as well as small mammals, to seek the
7 relatively open spaces of New Jersey farmland and its appurtenant woodlands,
8 infiltrating and feeding upon the crops farmers depend upon for their livelihood and that
9 residents depend upon for fresh, nutritious, locally grown and produced foods, and
10 risking the introduction of diseases common to wildlife into the domestic animal
11 population and to humans; and

12 **WHEREAS**, the burgeoning black bear population, in particular, poses a threat to
13 smaller agricultural animals such as sheep, goats and chickens - as well as to New
14 Jersey beekeepers' honeybee colonies that are vital to pollinating many of New Jersey's
15 leading produce crops and which account for a growing fresh honey supply - and these
16 bears have increasingly come into contact with humans in residential areas; and

17 **WHEREAS**, there have been several bear-human encounters in New Jersey in
18 the past several years, including the mauling death of a 22-year-old Rutgers University
19 student by a black bear in September 2014; and

20 **WHEREAS**, in an attempt to curb the black bear population, the New Jersey
21 Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Fish and Wildlife in 2015 expanded
22 the state's annual bear hunt to include additional areas and the use of bows and arrows;
23 and

24 **WHEREAS**, multiple bills in the Legislature seek to end the annual bear hunt and
25 replace it with “non-lethal” methods of limiting human-bear interaction such as requiring
26 the use of “bear-resistant” trash cans and prohibiting the feeding of bears by residents;
27 and

28 **WHEREAS**, the deer-farming industry has been strong in Europe, New Zealand
29 and Canada for years, and is growing rapidly in the United States; and

30 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey deer farmers need state support to protect the health
31 and well-being of livestock entering the food supply, through disease-control programs,
32 humane standards for care, and surveillance and response for diseases that impact their
33 animals; and

34 **WHEREAS**, protection from Chronic Wasting Disease is critical for New Jersey
35 deer farmers, and transfer of oversight to the New Jersey Department of Agriculture
36 would allow for implementation of a CWD management and monitoring program, which
37 does not exist in New Jersey under supervision by the DEP Division of Fish and Wildlife;
38 and

39 **WHEREAS**, legislation has been introduced and passed through the Assembly
40 Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, with the Senate version introduced and
41 assigned to the Senate Economic Growth Committee; and

42 **WHEREAS**, the 1999 Report to the Governor on Deer Management in New
43 Jersey and the 2005 adoption of the Comprehensive Black Bear Management Strategy
44 call for using hunting, among other methods, as a tool to manage that particular wildlife
45 population; and

46 **WHEREAS**, deer overpopulation in New Jersey is an established fact, with an
47 estimated 200,000 white-tailed deer statewide and 31,192 deer-vehicle collisions
48 occurring in New Jersey in 2011-2012, and significant crop damage from deer
49 experienced by farmers every season; and

50 **WHEREAS**, the use of snares is an important tool, especially for farmers seeking
51 to minimize crop damage, in the control of coyotes, foxes and beavers; and

52 **WHEREAS**, pending legislation would prohibit the use of “enclosed foothold
53 traps,” which the legislation’s sponsors say are “inconsistent with plain language and
54 legislative intent of 1984 law banning animal traps of steel-jaw leghold type...”; and

55 **WHEREAS**, the number of permits for beaver depredation (200 in 2015) is
56 significantly less than what is known to be needed by farmers; and

57 **WHEREAS**, the number of permits for beaver trapping is limited by statute to 200
58 permits per year for the entire state, which is significantly less than what is known to be
59 needed to manage the beaver population; and

60 **WHEREAS**, beaver depredation permits that are issued often carry restrictions
61 that make them, for all practical purposes, useless to farmers trying to control the
62 damage done by beavers; and

63 **WHEREAS**, David Chanda, the current Director of the New Jersey Division of
64 Fish and Wildlife, working within the framework of the Fish and Game Council, which
65 includes farmers among its membership, can determine wildlife policy in the state.

66 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 102nd
67 State Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 8-9,
68 2017, do hereby urge the Governor, the Legislature, the New Jersey Fish and Game
69 Council and/or the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife and/or all other appropriate
70 state, federal and local agencies to effectuate the following:

- 71 1. Urge those responsible for wildlife management on public lands, including
72 federal, state and local lands, to establish effective, proven methods of
73 controlling deer populations on those lands and encourage expanded hunter
74 access on privately-held lands.

- 75 2. Work with USDA-APHIS and the New Jersey Division of Fish & Wildlife as
76 appropriate to expand black bird control programs in New Jersey.
- 77 3. Continue to work with the U.S. Department of the Interior, Division of Migratory
78 Birds, and the Atlantic Flyways Council to extend the statewide resident Canada
79 goose season year-round and increase the daily bag limit and to encourage
80 greater control strategies for Canada geese.
- 81 4. Urge the Division of Fish & Wildlife to allow the use of a farm's prior year's crop
82 damage from wildlife as the basis for issuing the current year's depredation
83 permit instead of requiring the current year's damage be documented first in
84 order to issue the current year's permit.
- 85 5. Increase the number of available turkey hunting permits and conduct and/or
86 support extramural research on turkey damage.
- 87 6. Support the expansion of wildlife damage surveys and plans for New Jersey, as
88 well as wildlife damage research and education at the Rutgers/NJAES Center for
89 Wildlife Damage Control.
- 90 7. Urge the New Jersey Division of Fish & Wildlife to stop the practice of pulling a
91 depredation permit if the carcass of a shot animal covered by that permit cannot
92 be found.
- 93 8. Continue to support a science-based black bear management methodology that
94 incorporates hunting seasons as needed.
- 95 9. Support the creation of a multi-species depredation permit to streamline the
96 process of obtaining such permits for farmers facing crop damage from multiple
97 species, instead of requiring separate depredation permits for each species
98 causing damage.
- 99 10. Increase the number of trapping permits for beaver and remove restrictions on
100 depredation permits that hamper their proper implementation.

101 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we oppose legislation that seeks to prohibit
102 “deer baiting” by hunters in areas designated as “black bear habitat,” in part because the
103 legislation fails to define “black bear habitat,” leaving open to interpretation of the
104 Department of Environmental Protection what areas of the state in which someone could
105 be charged with breaking the law, as well as leading to a further increase in the existing
106 deer over-population that also causes millions of dollars in crop damage a year.

107 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Legislature to pass, and the
108 Governor to sign, legislation amending 23:4-24.2 so that the Division of Fish and Wildlife
109 can make all decisions about baiting in order that it can be used as an effective tool for
110 wildlife management.

111 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we gratefully acknowledge the Division of
112 Fish and Wildlife expanding the 2015 black bear hunt to include additional areas and the
113 use of bows and arrows, as these steps will help in controlling the expanding black bear
114 population in New Jersey.

115 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the passage by the Legislature and
116 the signing by the Governor of legislation to move the administration of the New Jersey
117 deer farming industry from the Division of Fish and Wildlife to the New Jersey
118 Department of Agriculture.

119 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Governor and Legislature to
120 support pending legislation that calls for moving the New Jersey Fish and Game Council
121 and the Division of Fish and Wildlife into the New Jersey Department of Agriculture,
122 creating a more logical alignment with USDA and its myriad of wildlife programs, and
123 thus resulting in a better-coordinated effort to balance the needs of wildlife with those of
124 the agricultural sector, provided that all concerns about such a realignment are
125 addressed through a combined effort of the NJDA and NJDEP, with an eye toward
126 accomplishing the missions of both departments.

127 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that regardless of the alignment of the agencies,
128 that the current Director of the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife meet with a
129 group of farmers and agricultural advocates designated by the State Board of Agriculture
130 to discuss ongoing issues regarding wildlife’s impact on agriculture in New Jersey.

131 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Legislature to pass, and the
132 Governor to sign, legislation that requires all publicly owned lands purchased or
133 operated with any public funds to be managed with site-specific wildlife management
134 plans, approved by the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife or the U.S. Fish and
135 Wildlife Service, in consultation with the Department.

136 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Legislature to reject pending
137 legislation that would prohibit the use of snares as a means of controlling coyotes, foxes
138 and beavers in New Jersey.

139 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge New Jersey’s Congressional
140 Delegation to sponsor and support federal legislation to increase, by at least \$400,000,
141 the USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services budget for staffing and support for a pilot
142 Cooperative Waterfowl Damage Management Program in New Jersey, and to implement
143 actions in support of the “Depredation Order at Agricultural Facilities” contained in the
144 newly-completed Environmental Impact Statement for Canada Geese.

145 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge New Jersey’s Congressional
146 Delegation to consider legislation authorizing and funding the U.S. Fish and Wildlife
147 Service to make restitution to farmers for wildlife damage to crops and livestock, and for
148 costs incurred for materials and labor used to prevent damage caused by wildlife that the
149 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regulates.