

## RESOLUTION # 8

### DEER IMPACTS ON AGRICULTURE

1           **WHEREAS**, an in-the-field analysis by Steward Green was recently completed to  
2 estimate deer populations in eight study areas, encompassing more than 12,730 acres, or  
3 approximately 25 square miles, in Atlantic, Burlington, Cumberland, Hunterdon, Mercer,  
4 Monmouth, Passaic, Somerset and Warren counties; and

5           **WHEREAS**, that study conclusively revealed that there are, on average,  
6 approximately 80-100 white-tailed deer per square mile in the areas covered by the study;  
7 and

8           **WHEREAS**, experts agree that a healthy and sustainable deer population density is  
9 far below what was found in the study, perhaps as low as five to 15 deer per square mile,  
10 and that the severe overpopulation in the areas studied has led to “economic loss from  
11 crop/landscape damage, automobile collisions, an increased risk of Lyme disease, as well as  
12 the continuation of depleted habitats that threaten New Jersey’s forest lands and other native  
13 wildlife”; and

14           **WHEREAS**, while the vast majority of crop farmers report at least some damage to  
15 crops from deer browsing, a third of farmers surveyed by the New Jersey Farm Bureau  
16 recently reported at least \$10,000 in annual crop damage from wildlife, primarily deer, and 5  
17 percent reported \$50,000 or more in annual wildlife crop damage; and

18           **WHEREAS**, production agriculture farmers across the state are enduring  
19 unacceptable levels of crop damage, incur out-of-pocket costs for protection, change  
20 cropping decisions and also are likely to have to hunt deer themselves on depredation  
21 permits in a constant effort to minimize monetary losses from over-abundant deer, and the  
22 overpopulation of deer in New Jersey also impacts the general public in the form of  
23 increased collisions between deer and automobiles on the state’s roads, the destruction of  
24 valuable home landscaping plants by deer feeding on those plants, disruptions to understory  
25 habitat for other wildlife species, disruption of forest regeneration, among other impacts; and

26           **WHEREAS**, there are 3,000 fewer hunters in New Jersey than there were just 10  
27 years ago, according to the Department of Environmental Protection; and

28           **WHEREAS**, discussions on the subject have revealed that there is a lack of butchers  
29 willing to do the work needed to make Hunters Helping Hunger successful, and funding that  
30 was included in the FY2020 state budget was not included in the FY2021 budget; and

31           **WHEREAS**, a comprehensive, long-term, multi-species wildlife-management plan,  
32 including not only the times when the farmer's crops are in the field but also when they are  
33 not, with a permit worded accordingly, is necessary to help New Jersey's farmers plan for  
34 and carry out a consistent, goal-oriented management of wildlife, especially deer, that  
35 causes damage to crops and remains present on the farmland throughout the annual farming  
36 cycle; and

37           **WHEREAS**, it has been the responsibility for nearly a half-century of the New Jersey  
38 Department of Environmental Protection to manage the state's deer population, and the  
39 failure to do so (as evidenced by the current extreme overpopulation) has created this  
40 economic hardship for New Jersey's agricultural industry, along with the rest of New Jersey's  
41 residents; and

42           **WHEREAS**, confidence among farmers in the NJDEP Division of Fish & Wildlife's  
43 ability and/or willingness to confront the issue is running low.

44           **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 106<sup>th</sup> State  
45 Agricultural Convention, assembled through a virtual platform hosted in Trenton, New  
46 Jersey, in accordance with COVID-19 pandemic recommendations, on February 17, 2021,  
47 do hereby demand that the Division of Fish & Wildlife continue to allow "baiting" with corn,  
48 apples and other produce for the hunting of deer, as it helps to improve both the safety and  
49 effectiveness of hunting in areas near residential development and provides a revenue  
50 source for farmers and food retailers.

51           **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we demand the Legislature pass, and the  
52 Governor sign, legislation amending N.J.S.A. 23:4-24.2 so that the Division of Fish and

53 Wildlife can make all decisions about baiting in order that it can be used as an effective tool  
54 for the management of deer and other wildlife.

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

61 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we demand the responsibility for managing the  
62 state’s deer population be moved from the NJDEP and placed instead in the New Jersey  
63 Department of Agriculture, which understands and will consider both the agricultural and  
64 broader societal impacts of the deer population when making decisions about the  
65 management of deer.

66 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we support the expansion of wildlife damage  
67 surveys and management plans for deer, as well as for other wildlife, for New Jersey, as well  
68 as deer/wildlife damage research and education by the Rutgers/NJAES Center for Wildlife  
69 Damage Control.