

RESOLUTION # 13

WILDLIFE AND AGRICULTURE

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

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

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

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

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

21 **WHEREAS**, multiple bills in the Legislature have sought to end the annual bear hunt
22 and replace it with "non-lethal" methods of limiting human-bear interaction such as requiring
23 the use of "bear-resistant" trash cans and prohibiting the feeding of bears by residents; and

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

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

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

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

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

40 **WHEREAS**, deer overpopulation in New Jersey is an established fact, with an
41 estimated 200,000-plus white-tailed deer statewide and an analysis by the State Farm
42 insurance company from July 1 to June 30, 2017 showed motorists in New Jersey had a 1-
43 in-229 chance of having their vehicle collide with a deer; and

44 **WHEREAS**, significant crop damage from deer, among other wildlife, is experienced
45 annually by farmers; and

46 **WHEREAS**, baiting, for bear, deer and other wildlife, is a necessity to properly and
47 safely control hunting efforts in New Jersey, since residential and open-spaces areas often
48 are in close proximity; and

49 **WHEREAS**, the sale of corn, sweet potatoes, apples and other farm products
50 provides a strong revenue source for farmers and retailers; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

67 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 103rd State
68 Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 7-8, 2018, do
69 hereby urge the Governor, the Legislature, the New Jersey Fish and Game Council and/or
70 the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife and/or all other appropriate state, federal and
71 local agencies to effectuate the following:

- 72 1. Urge those responsible for wildlife management on public lands, including federal,
73 state and local lands, to establish effective, proven methods of controlling deer
74 populations on those lands and encourage expanded hunter access on privately-held
75 lands.
- 76 2. Work with USDA-APHIS and the New Jersey Division of Fish & Wildlife as
77 appropriate to expand black bird control programs in New Jersey.
- 78 3. Continue to work with the U.S. Department of the Interior, Division of Migratory Birds,
79 and the Atlantic Flyways Council to extend the statewide resident Canada goose

- 80 season year-round and increase the daily bag limit and to encourage greater control
81 strategies for Canada geese.
- 82 4. Urge the Division of Fish & Wildlife to allow the use of a farm's prior year's crop
83 damage from wildlife as the basis for issuing the current year's depredation permit
84 instead of requiring the current year's damage be documented first in order to issue
85 the current year's permit.
- 86 5. Increase the number of available turkey hunting permits and conduct and/or support
87 extramural research on turkey damage.
- 88 6. Support the expansion of wildlife damage surveys and plans for New Jersey, as well
89 as wildlife damage research and education at the Rutgers/NJAES Center for Wildlife
90 Damage Control.
- 91 7. Urge the New Jersey Division of Fish & Wildlife to stop the practice of pulling a
92 depredation permit if the carcass of a shot animal covered by that permit cannot be
93 found.
- 94 8. Continue to support a science-based black bear management methodology that
95 incorporates hunting seasons as needed.
- 96 9. Support the creation of a multi-species depredation permit to streamline the process
97 of obtaining such permits for farmers facing crop damage from multiple species,
98 instead of requiring separate depredation permits for each species 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 11. Permit "baiting" with corn, apples and other produce for the hunting of deer, bear and
102 other wildlife as it both helps to improve the safety of hunting in areas near
103 residential development and provides a revenue source for farmers and food
104 retailers.

105 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we oppose any legislation, executive order or
106 regulation that would remove hunting as a method of controlling the state's black bear

107 population, especially those that expressly characterize bear hunting as “trophy hunting,”
108 thus showing a lack of understanding of the need to hunt bear to prevent crop and livestock
109 damage, and insist that the Governor consult state wildlife biologists in addressing bear
110 management.

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

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

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

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

129 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Governor and Legislature to support
130 pending legislation that calls for moving the New Jersey Fish and Game Council and the
131 Division of Fish and Wildlife into the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, creating a more
132 logical alignment with USDA and its myriad of wildlife programs, and thus resulting in a
133 better-coordinated effort to balance the needs of wildlife with those of the agricultural sector,

134 provided that all concerns about such a realignment are addressed through a combined
135 effort of the NJDA and NJDEP, with an eye toward accomplishing the missions of both
136 departments, and additionally adding “commercial fishing” to the list of responsibilities to be
137 transferred to the Department of Agriculture.

138 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge that the farmer members of the New
139 Jersey Fish and Game Council, nominated by the delegates to this convention, be
140 expeditiously appointed to that Council, as some nominated farmer members have waited
141 years for their appointments to become effective.

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

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

151 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Legislature to reject any legislation
152 that would prohibit the use of snares as a means of controlling coyotes, foxes and beavers in
153 New Jersey.

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

160 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge New Jersey's Congressional Delegation
161 to consider legislation authorizing and funding the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to make
162 restitution to farmers for wildlife damage to crops and livestock, and for costs incurred for
163 materials and labor used to prevent damage caused by wildlife that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife
164 Service regulates.

165 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Division of Fish & Wildlife to
166 broaden the allowed use of crossbows for use in hunting under a depredation permit.