

RESOLUTION # 23

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; and

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

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

23 **WHEREAS**, the Governor has issued an executive order banning bear hunting on
24 state-owned lands, many of which abut the private lands of farmers; and

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

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

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

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

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

41 **WHEREAS**, deer overpopulation in New Jersey is an established fact, with an
42 estimated 145,000 deer statewide, according to 2018 statistics from the Division of Fish &
43 Wildlife, white-tailed deer statewide; and

44 **WHEREAS**, a population of 15 to 20 deer per square mile is considered sustainable,
45 yet some parts of New Jersey have 120 to 140 deer per square mile; and

46 **WHEREAS**, a third of farmers surveyed by the New Jersey Farm Bureau recently
47 reported at least \$10,000 in annual crop damage from wildlife, primarily deer, and 5 percent
48 reported \$50,000 or more in annual wildlife crop damage; and

49 **WHEREAS**, extrapolated to the state's 10,000 farms, those numbers equate to
50 \$68,000,000 annually in wildlife crop damage, with the species most frequently cited by
51 farmers being whitetail deer; and

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

54 **WHEREAS**, the most recent state budget included \$100,000 to support the Hunters
55 Helping Hunger program in which deer shot by hunters can be butchered and donated to
56 food banks in the state; and

57 **WHEREAS**, a recent discussion at the annual New Jersey Farm Bureau Convention
58 included discussion of a lack of butchers willing to do the work needed to make Hunters
59 Helping Hunger successful; and

60 **WHEREAS**, an analysis by the State Farm Insurance Company from July 1, 2016 to
61 June 30, 2017 showed motorists in New Jersey had a 1-in-229 chance of having their vehicle
62 collide with a deer; and

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

65 **WHEREAS**, baiting, for wildlife, is an important tool to properly and safely control
66 hunting efforts in New Jersey, since residential and open-spaces areas often are in close
67 proximity; and

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

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

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

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

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

81 **WHEREAS**, a comprehensive, yearlong, multi-species wildlife-management plan,
82 including times when the farmer's crops are in the field and when they are not, with a permit
83 worded accordingly, would greatly help New Jersey's farmers plan for a consistent, goal-
84 oriented management of wildlife that causes damage both to crops and to farmland not
85 necessarily in production at the moment; and

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

89 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 105th State
90 Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 5-6, 2020, do
91 hereby urge the Governor, the Legislature, the New Jersey Fish and Game Council and/or
92 the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife and/or all other appropriate state, federal and
93 local agencies to effectuate the following:

- 94 1. Require those responsible for wildlife management on public lands, including
95 federal, state and local lands, to establish effective, proven methods of controlling
96 deer populations on those lands and encourage expanded hunter access on
97 privately-held lands.
- 98 2. Work with USDA-APHIS and the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife as
99 appropriate to expand black bird control programs in New Jersey.
- 100 3. Continue to work with the U.S. Department of the Interior, Division of Migratory
101 Birds, and the Atlantic Flyways Council to extend the statewide resident Canada
102 goose season to the maximum extent possible, not to interfere with migratory birds,
103 and increase the daily bag limit and to encourage greater control strategies for
104 Canada geese and snow geese.

- 105 4. Demand the Division of Fish and Wildlife allow the use of a farm's prior year's crop
106 damage from wildlife as the basis for issuing the current year's depredation permit
107 instead of requiring the current year's damage be documented first in order to issue
108 the current year's permit.
- 109 5. Increase the number of available turkey hunting permits and conduct and/or support
110 extramural research on turkey damage.
- 111 6. Support the expansion of wildlife damage surveys and plans for New Jersey, as well
112 as wildlife damage research and education at the Rutgers/NJAES Center for Wildlife
113 Damage Control.
- 114 7. Demand the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife stop the practice of pulling a
115 depredation permit if the carcass of a shot animal covered by that permit cannot be
116 found.
- 117 8. Continue to support a science-based black bear management methodology that
118 incorporates hunting seasons as needed.
- 119 9. Support the continued use of a multi-species depredation permit to streamline the
120 process of obtaining such permits for farmers facing crop damage from multiple
121 species, instead of requiring separate depredation permits for each species causing
122 damage.
- 123 10. Increase the number of trapping permits for beaver and remove restrictions on
124 depredation permits that hamper their proper implementation.
- 125 11. Allow "baiting" with corn, apples and other produce for the hunting of deer, bear
126 and other wildlife as it both helps to improve the safety of hunting in areas near
127 residential development and provides a revenue source for farmers and food
128 retailers.

129 **BE IT FURTHER\$ RESOLVED**, that we demand the Division of Fish & Wildlife permit
130 farmers to establish comprehensive, yearlong, multi-species wildlife-management plans,

131 including times when the farmer's crops are in the field and when they are not, with a permit
132 worded accordingly,

133 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we oppose any legislation, executive order or
134 regulation that would remove hunting as a method of controlling the state's black bear
135 population, especially those that expressly characterize bear hunting as "trophy hunting,"
136 thus showing a lack of understanding of the need to hunt bear to prevent crop and livestock
137 damage, and insist that the Governor consult state wildlife biologists in addressing bear
138 management.

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

145 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we demand the Legislature pass, and the
146 Governor sign, legislation amending N.J.S.A. 23:4-24.2 so that the Division of Fish and
147 Wildlife can make all decisions about baiting in order that it can be used as an effective tool
148 for wildlife management.

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

153 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we demand the passage by the Legislature and
154 the signing by the Governor of legislation to move the administration of the New Jersey deer
155 farming industry from the Division of Fish and Wildlife to the New Jersey Department of
156 Agriculture.

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

165 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we demand that the farmer members of the New
166 Jersey Fish and Game Council, nominated by the delegates to this convention, be
167 expeditiously appointed to that Council, as some nominated farmer members have waited
168 years for their appointments to become effective.

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

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

178 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we demand the Legislature reject any legislation
179 that would prohibit the use of snares as a means of controlling coyotes, foxes and beavers in
180 New Jersey.

181 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we demand New Jersey's Congressional
182 Delegation sponsor and support federal legislation to increase, by at least \$400,000, the
183 USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services budget for staffing and support for a pilot Cooperative

184 Waterfowl Damage Management Program in New Jersey, and to implement actions in
185 support of the “Depredation Order at Agricultural Facilities” contained in the Environmental
186 Impact Statement for Canada Geese.

187 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we demand New Jersey’s Congressional
188 Delegation consider legislation authorizing and funding the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to
189 make restitution to farmers for wildlife damage to crops and livestock, and for costs incurred
190 for materials and labor used to prevent damage caused by wildlife that the U.S. Fish and
191 Wildlife Service regulates.

192 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we demand the Division of Fish and Wildlife
193 broaden the allowed use of crossbows for use in hunting under a depredation permit, and
194 demand the Division of Fish and Wildlife explore the simplification of depredation permits
195 and opportunities for sportsmen to be added to permits at any time, and for depredation
196 reporting to be done with the automated check-in system to reduce farmer reporting.

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