

RESOLUTION # 7

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 black bear, geese,
5 starlings, turkeys and other birds, as well as small mammals, to seek the relatively open
6 spaces of New Jersey farmland and its appurtenant woodlands, infiltrating and feeding upon
7 the crops farmers depend upon for their livelihood and that residents depend upon for fresh,
8 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**, while most farmers report at least some crop damage by deer annually,
11 a third of farmers surveyed by the New Jersey Farm Bureau recently reported at least
12 \$10,000 in annual crop damage from wildlife, and 5 percent reported \$50,000 or more in
13 annual wildlife crop damage; and

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

19 **WHEREAS**, there have been several bear-human encounters in New Jersey in the
20 past several years; and

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

24 **WHEREAS**, multiple bills in the Legislature have sought to end the annual bear hunt
25 and 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; and

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

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

32 **WHEREAS**, baiting, for wildlife, is an important tool to properly and safely control
33 hunting efforts in New Jersey, since residential and open-space areas often are in close
34 proximity; and

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

37 **WHEREAS**, the use of snares is an important tool, especially for farmers seeking to
38 control wildlife to prevent crop and property loss; and

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

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

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

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

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

54 **WHEREAS**, a comprehensive, long-term, multi-species wildlife-management plan,
55 including times when the farmer's crops are in the field and when they are not, with a permit
56 worded accordingly, would greatly help New Jersey's farmers plan for a consistent, goal-
57 oriented management of wildlife that causes damage both to crops and to farmland not
58 necessarily in production at the moment; and

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

62 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 106th State
63 Agricultural Convention, assembled through a virtual platform hosted in Trenton, New
64 Jersey, in accordance with COVID-19 pandemic recommendations, on February 17, 2021,
65 do hereby demand that the Governor, the Legislature, the New Jersey Fish and Game
66 Council and/or the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife and/or all other appropriate state,
67 federal and local agencies to effectuate the following:

- 68 1. Work with USDA-APHIS and the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife as
69 appropriate to expand black bird and starling control programs in New Jersey.
- 70 2. Continue to work with the U.S. Department of the Interior, Division of Migratory
71 Birds, and the Atlantic Flyways Council to extend the statewide resident Canada
72 goose season to the maximum extent possible, not to interfere with migratory birds,
73 and increase the daily bag limit and to encourage greater control strategies for
74 Canada geese and snow geese.
- 75 3. Increase the number of available turkey hunting permits and conduct and/or support
76 extramural research on turkey damage.

- 77 4. Support the expansion of wildlife damage surveys and plans for New Jersey, as well
78 as wildlife damage research and education at the Rutgers/NJAES Center for Wildlife
79 Damage Control.
- 80 5. Demand the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife stop the practice of pulling a
81 depredation permit if the carcass of a shot animal covered by that permit cannot be
82 found.
- 83 6. Continue to support a science-based black bear management methodology that
84 incorporates hunting seasons as needed.
- 85 7. Support the continued development and use of a multi-species depredation permit
86 to streamline the process of obtaining such permits for farmers facing crop damage
87 from multiple species, instead of requiring separate depredation permits for each
88 species causing damage.
- 89 8. Increase the number of trapping permits for beaver and remove restrictions on
90 depredation permits that hamper their proper implementation.
- 91 9. Allow “baiting” with corn, apples and other produce for the hunting of deer and
92 bear, as it both helps to improve the safety of hunting in areas near residential
93 development and provides a revenue source for farmers and food retailers.

94 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we demand the Division of Fish and Wildlife permit
95 farmers to establish comprehensive, long-term, multi-species wildlife-management plans,
96 including times when the farmer’s crops are in the field and when they are not, and issue a
97 permit worded accordingly.

98 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we oppose any legislation, executive order or
99 regulation that would remove hunting as a method of controlling the state’s black bear
100 population, especially those that expressly characterize bear hunting as “trophy hunting,”
101 thus showing a lack of understanding of the need to hunt bear to prevent crop and livestock
102 damage, and insist that the Governor consult state wildlife biologists in addressing bear
103 management.

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

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

116 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we demand that the farmer members of the New
117 Jersey Fish and Game Council, nominated by the delegates to this convention, be
118 expeditiously appointed to that Council, by June 30, 2021, as some nominated farmer
119 members have waited years for their appointments to become effective.

120 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that regardless of the alignment of the agencies, that
121 the current Director of the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife meet with a group of
122 farmers and agricultural advocates designated by the State Board of Agriculture to discuss
123 ongoing issues regarding wildlife's impact on agriculture in New Jersey by June 30, 2021.

124 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we demand the Legislature reject any legislation
125 that would prohibit the use of snares as a means of controlling wildlife in New Jersey.

126 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we demand New Jersey's Congressional
127 Delegation sponsor and support federal legislation to increase, by at least \$400,000, the
128 USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services budget for staffing and support for a pilot Cooperative
129 Waterfowl Damage Management Program in New Jersey, and to implement actions in

130 support of the “Depredation Order at Agricultural Facilities” contained in the Environmental
131 Impact Statement for Canada Geese.

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