

RESOLUTION # 18

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 retreat to 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 recently studied by the New Jersey Farm Bureau and Rutgers NJAES
12 reported at least \$10,000 in annual crop damage from wildlife, and five percent reported
13 \$50,000 or more in 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, with multiple
19 bear-human encounters reported over the past several years; 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 the
22 state's annual bear hunt to include additional areas and the use of bows and arrows; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

53 **WHEREAS**, a comprehensive, long-term, multi-species wildlife-management plan,
54 including times when the farmer’s crops are in the field and when they are not, with a permit
55 worded accordingly, would greatly help New Jersey’s farmers plan for a consistent, goal-
56 oriented management of wildlife that can cause damage to crops; and

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

60 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 107th State
61 Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, N.J., on February 9-10, 2022, do hereby
62 strongly urge that the Governor, the Legislature, the New Jersey Fish and Game Council
63 and/or the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife and/or all other appropriate state, federal,
64 and local agencies to effectuate the following:

- 65 1. Work with USDA-APHIS and the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife as
66 appropriate to expand black bird and starling control programs in New Jersey.
- 67 2. Continue to work with the U.S. Department of the Interior, Division of Migratory
68 Birds, and the Atlantic Flyways Council to extend the statewide resident Canada
69 goose season to the maximum extent possible, not to interfere with migratory birds,
70 and increase the daily bag limit and to encourage greater control strategies for
71 Canada geese and snow geese.
- 72 3. Increase the number of available turkey hunting permits and conduct and/or support
73 extramural research on turkey damage.
- 74 4. Support the expansion of wildlife damage surveys and plans for New Jersey, as well
75 as wildlife damage research and education at the Rutgers/NJAES Center for Wildlife
76 Damage Control.
- 77 5. New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife stop the practice of pulling a depredation
78 permit if the carcass of a shot animal covered by that permit cannot be found.
- 79 6. Continue to support a science-based black bear management methodology that
80 incorporates hunting seasons as needed.

- 81 7. Support the continued development and use of a multi-species depredation permit
82 to streamline the process of obtaining such permits for farmers facing crop damage
83 from multiple species, instead of requiring separate depredation permits for each
84 species causing damage.
- 85 8. Increase the number of trapping permits for beaver and remove restrictions on
86 depredation permits that hamper their proper implementation.
- 87 9. Allow “baiting” with corn, apples and other produce for the hunting of deer and
88 bear, as it both helps to improve the safety of hunting in areas near residential
89 development and provides a revenue source for farmers and food retailers.

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

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

100 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we strongly urge the passage by the Legislature
101 and the signing by the Governor of legislation to move the administration of the New Jersey
102 deer farming industry from the Division of Fish and Wildlife to the New Jersey Department of
103 Agriculture.

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

109 provided that all concerns about such a realignment are addressed through a combined
110 effort of the NJDA and NJDEP, with an eye toward accomplishing the missions of both
111 departments.

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

116 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that regardless of the alignment of the agencies, that
117 the current Director of the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife meet with a group of
118 farmers and agricultural advocates designated by the State Board of Agriculture to discuss
119 ongoing issues regarding wildlife's impact on agriculture in New Jersey by June 30, 2022.

120 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we strongly urge the Legislature to reject any
121 legislation that would prohibit the use of snares as a means of controlling wildlife in New
122 Jersey.

123 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we strongly urge that New Jersey's
124 Congressional Delegation sponsor and support federal legislation to increase, by at least
125 \$400,000, the USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services budget for staffing and support for a pilot
126 Cooperative Waterfowl Damage Management Program in New Jersey, and to implement
127 actions in support of the "Depredation Order at Agricultural Facilities" contained in the
128 Environmental Impact Statement for Canada Geese.

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