



Governor Patrick Morrisey

Director Brett W. McMillion

March 12, 2026


TO: Hunters, Anglers, Trappers, Landowners, Farm Groups and Others Interested in Making Recommendations for Hunting, Trapping and Fishing Regulations.

The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources is soliciting comments concerning the 2026-2027 big game hunting regulations, 2027-2028 hunting and trapping regulations and 2027 fishing regulations. Regulations meetings to solicit comments are scheduled for March 17 and 18, 2026.


The Division of Natural Resources is recommending most season dates, bag limits and creel limits similar to the 2025-2026 seasons (recommended changes are attached).

For us to obtain your recommendations and accurately record your comments and recommendations, it is necessary for you to complete and return the attached form prior to April 3, 2026, to the Division of Natural Resources, Wildlife Resources Section, Attn: Keith Krantz, P.O. Box 67, Elkins, West Virginia, 26241.

Your continued interest in the state's natural resources programs is greatly appreciated.



Paul R. Johansen, Chief
Wildlife Resources Section



Bobby L. Cates, Colonel
Law Enforcement Section

Please feel free to comment or provide recommendations on hunting, fishing, and trapping regulations or on any phase of our wildlife and law enforcement programs. Please use space provided on the following page. **Returning the attached tables is not necessary.**

Please complete the following section. Be sure only one form is submitted per individual or organization. Questionnaires without a name, an address, or unsigned will not be counted.

PLEASE PRINT

Individual, Group, or Organization Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Number or Members _____ Telephone _____

Signed _____ Date _____ County _____

WVDNR ID# _____

**PLEASE RETURN YOUR COMMENTS AND THE QUESTIONNAIRE
BY APRIL 3, 2026**

Return To:

Keith Krantz
WV Division of Natural Resources
Wildlife Resources Section
P.O. Box 67
Elkins, WV 26241

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE
2026-2027 HUNTING AND TRAPPING REGULATIONS**

1. The Division of Natural Resources proposes that the 2026 Black Bear Seasons be open as shown on the attached table.

Summary of Proposed Changes to Bear Seasons for 2026

- Special lottery hunt on select Wildlife Management Areas in counties open August 29 – September 7, 2026

Favor _____ Oppose _____

Comments: _____

1. The Division of Natural Resources proposes that the 2026 Antlerless Deer Season be open as shown in the attached tables.

Summary of Proposed Changes to Deer Seasons for 2026

- Wood County removed from special regulations to bag limit of 3 antlerless deer without requirement to harvest an antlerless deer prior to harvesting a second antlered buck.
- Pendelton County moved to bag limit of 3 antlerless deer with the special regulations as part of the CWD Containment Area.
- Fayette County (west portion) and Raleigh County (west portion) moved to limited permit bag limit of 1 antlerless deer.

Favor _____ Oppose _____

Comments: _____

3. The Division of Natural Resources proposes that a percussion side lock rifle or pistol, flintlock rifle or pistol be legal for hunting bear and wild turkey in Logan, McDowell, Mingo and Wyoming counties during the Mountaineer Heritage Season. Deer may only be hunted with long and recurve bows during this season in those counties.

Favor _____ Oppose _____

Comments: _____

4. The Division of Natural Resources proposes that all other big game hunting regulations for the 2026-2027 hunting seasons be open as shown on the attached table.

Favor _____ Oppose _____

Comments: _____

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE
2027-2028 HUNTING AND TRAPPING REGULATIONS**

1. The Division of Natural Resources proposes that the river otter bag limit be increased to 2 per day and the possession limit be increased to 2 per season beginning for the 2027-2028 season.

Favor _____ Oppose _____

Comments: _____

2. The Division of Natural Resources proposes that all other small game and furbearer hunting and trapping regulations for the 2027-2028 seasons be open as shown on the attached table.

Favor _____ Oppose _____

Comments: _____

**THE DIRECTOR OF THE DIVISION OF NATURAL RESOURCES SEEKS
YOUR OPINION ON THE FOLLOWING QUESTION**

1. The Director would like to know if you favor or oppose allowing youth hunters and Class Q permit holders to take one antlered buck during the Special Split Youth, Class Q and Class XS deer season with the following conditions:

- The antlered buck would count toward the youth and Class Q hunter's maximum annual bag limit for all deer seasons combined.
- The privilege would be in addition to the daily and season bag limits for antlerless deer already established.
- Class XS license holders would maintain the privilege to harvest antlerless deer during the special season.

Enacting this proposal is dependent upon pending legislative action to modify WV Code § 20-2-42x.

Favor _____

Oppose _____

Comments: _____

General Hunting and Trapping Regulation Comments: _____

FISH MANAGEMENT

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE 2027 FISHING REGULATIONS

1. The Division of Natural Resources proposes establishing a Class Q designation on the Fayette County Park ponds.

Favor _____

Oppose _____

(This change will provide additional fishing opportunities specifically for children under 15 years of age and individuals with permanent disabilities. The Fayette County Commission, owner of the ponds, are supportive of the proposed designation.)

Comments: _____

2. The Division of Natural Resources proposes changing the black bass slot limit on the Greenbrier River to include only smallmouth bass. The current slot limit requires all black bass (smallmouth, spotted, and largemouth) from 12 to 20 inches long to be returned to the water at once on a six-mile section beginning at the U.S. Route 60 bridge near Caldwell extending downstream to the U.S. Route 219 bridge at Ronceverte. A daily creel limit of six smallmouth bass with only one being over 20 inches will be permitted. Largemouth bass and spotted bass will be excluded from this regulation and will be under the general statewide daily creel limit of six per day with no size limit.

Favor _____

Oppose _____

(This change will provide protection for the recreationally important Smallmouth Bass fishery from the invasive Alabaman Bass)

Comments: _____

3. The Division of Natural Resources proposes changing the black bass slot limit on the New River to include only smallmouth bass. The current slot limit requires all black bass (smallmouth, spotted, and largemouth) from 14 to 22 inches long to be returned to the water at once from the confluence of the New and Gauley rivers upstream to the West Virginia/Virginia state line, excluding Bluestone Lake (from the dam upstream to the mouth of Indian Creek) and the 12-mile catch and release section (from the National Park Service Grandview sandbar access site upstream to the I-64 bridge at Sandstone). Daily creel limit of six smallmouth bass with only one being over 22 inches will be permitted. Largemouth bass and spotted bass will be excluded from this regulation and will be under the general statewide daily creel limit of six per day with no size limit.

Favor _____

Oppose _____

(This change will provide protection for the recreationally important Smallmouth Bass fishery from the invasive Alabaman Bass)

Comments: _____

4. The Division of Natural Resources proposes changing the current black bass catch and release regulation on the 12-mile section of the New River extending from the National Park Service Grandview Sandbar access site near Quinnimont upstream to the I-64 bridge at Sandstone to include only smallmouth bass. Largemouth bass and spotted bass will be excluded from this regulation and will be under the general statewide daily creel limit of six per day with no size limit.

Favor _____

Oppose _____

(This change will provide protection for the recreationally important Smallmouth Bass fishery from the invasive Alabaman Bass)

Comments: _____

5. All other fishing regulations will remain the same as in 2026.

Favor _____

Oppose _____

Comments: _____

General Fishing Regulation Comments: _____

Proposed 2026 Black Bear Seasons

Statewide bag limit two, provided at least one bear comes from Boone, Fayette, Kanawha, Logan, McDowell, Mingo, Raleigh or Wyoming counties.
 Youth, Class Q and Class XS Bear Season September 12 – 13, 2026 in all or parts of 26 counties open to bear hunting with dogs. May hunt with or without dogs.

Youth, Class Q and Class XS Bear Season October 17 – 18, 2026 in 51 counties open to firearms deer hunting, no dogs allowed.

Bow Season – 55 counties: Sept. 26 – Dec. 31

Gun Seasons: Refer to Table Below

7-Day Gun With or Without Dogs Oct. 3– Oct. 9 14-Day Gun Without Dogs Nov. 23 – Dec. 6 4-Week Gun With or Without Dogs Dec. 7– Dec. 31	10-Day Gun With or Without Dogs Aug. 29 – Sep. 7 4-Week Gun With or Without Dogs Dec. 7 – Dec. 31	4-Week Gun With or Without Dogs Dec. 7 – Dec. 31	6-Week Gun Without Dogs Nov. 23 – Dec. 31		4-Day Gun Without Dogs in Counties or Parts of Counties Open for Antlerless Deer Gun Hunting Oct. 22 – Oct. 25		14-Day Gun Without Dogs Nov. 23 – Dec. 6	7-Day Gun Without Dogs Sept. 19 – 25
Boone Fayette Kanawha Raleigh	Logan McDowell Mingo Wyoming *Special hunt on select WMA's.	Barbour (<i>E. of Rt. 92 or S. of Rt. 33 [Corridor H]</i>) Braxton (<i>E. of I-79</i>) Clay (<i>S. of Elk River</i>) Gilmer Grant Greenbrier Hardy Mineral (<i>W. of New Creek</i>) Monroe (<i>E. of Rt. 219</i>) Nicholas Pendleton Pocahontas Preston Randolph Ritchie Tucker Upshur (<i>E. of Rt. 20</i>) Webster	Barbour (<i>W. of Rt. 92</i>) Berkeley Braxton (<i>W. of I-79</i>) Brooke Cabell Calhoun Clay (<i>N. of Elk River</i>) Doddridge Hampshire Hancock Harrison Jackson Jefferson Lewis Lincoln Marion Marshall Mason Mercer Mineral (<i>E. of New Creek</i>) Monongalia Monroe (<i>W. of Rt. 219</i>) Morgan Ohio Pleasants	Putnam Roane Summers Taylor Tyler Upshur (<i>W. of Rt. 20</i>) Wayne Wetzel Wirt Wood	Barbour (<i>W. of Rt. 92</i>) Berkeley Boone Braxton (<i>W. of I-79</i>) Brooke Cabell Calhoun Clay (<i>N. of Elk River</i>) Doddridge Fayette Gilmer Hampshire Hancock Harrison Jackson Jefferson Kanawha Lewis Lincoln Marion Marshall Mason Mercer Mineral (<i>E. of New Creek</i>) Monongalia Monroe (<i>W. of Rt. 219</i>)	Morgan Ohio Pleasants Putnam Raleigh Ritchie Roane Summers Taylor Tyler Upshur (<i>W. of Rt. 20</i>) Wayne Wetzel Wirt Wood	Gilmer Ritchie	Barbour (<i>W. of Rt. 92</i>) Braxton (<i>W. of I-79</i>) Calhoun Clay (<i>N. of Elk River</i>) Harrison Lewis Mercer Monongalia Monroe (<i>W. of Rt. 219</i>) Roane Summers Taylor Upshur (<i>W. of Rt. 20</i>)

PROPOSED 2026 ANTLERLESS DEER SEASON HUNTING REGULATIONS (PRIVATE LAND)

Counties or Parts Thereof Closed to Antlerless (Class N/NN) Hunting	Counties or Parts Thereof Open to Limited Licenses for Resident and Non-resident (Must Apply) (Season Bag Limit: 1) Oct. 22-25; Nov. 23-Dec. 6; Dec. 10-13; Dec. 28-31	Counties or Parts Thereof Open to Unlimited Resident Class N and Nonresident Class NN (Season Bag Limit: 1) Oct. 22-25; Nov. 23-Dec. 6; Dec. 10-13; Dec. 28-31	Counties or Parts Thereof Open to Unlimited Resident Class N and Nonresident Class NN (Season Bag Limit: 3) Oct. 22-25; Nov. 23-Dec. 6; Dec. 10-13; Dec. 28-31	Counties or Parts Thereof Open to Unlimited Resident Class N and Nonresident Class NN. (<i>*see special regulation requirement below</i>) (Season Bag Limit: 3) Oct. 22-25; Nov. 23-Dec. 6; Dec. 10-13; Dec. 28-31
Logan McDowell Mingo Wayne (<i>south portion</i>) Wyoming	Boone (300) Fayette (<i>west portion 150</i>) Greenbrier (<i>north portion - 200</i>) Kanawha (<i>north portion 400</i>) Kanawha (<i>south portion 250</i>) Raleigh (<i>west portion 100</i>) Webster (350)	Braxton Cabell Clay Fayette (<i>east portion</i>) Lincoln Marshall Mercer Mineral (<i>west portion</i>) Nicholas Pleasants Pocahontas Raleigh (<i>east portion</i>) Summers Tucker Wayne (<i>north portion</i>) Wetzel Wirt	Barbour Brook Calhoun Doddridge Gilmer Grant Hancock Harrison Jackson Lewis Marion Mason Monongalia Ohio Pendleton Preston Putnam Randolph Ritchie Roane Taylor Tyler Upshur Wood	Berkeley Greenbrier (<i>south portion</i>) Hampshire Hardy Jefferson Mineral (<i>east portion</i>) Monroe Morgan Pendleton

*In these counties, or parts thereof, deer hunters are required to take an antlerless deer from the county, which may be taken during any deer season open to antlerless deer hunting, prior to harvesting a second antlered deer, from the county, during the combined deer seasons, including the **2027 Mountaineer Heritage Season**.

Proposed Opening and Closing Dates for the 2026-2027 Big Game Hunting Seasons

Species	Opening Date	Closing Date	Comments/Changes
Deer, Bear, and Turkey <i>(Mountaineer Heritage Season)</i>	January 14, 2027	January 17, 2027	
Bear <i>(Archery & Crossbow)</i>	September 26, 2026	December 31, 2026	
Bear <i>(Gun)</i> <i>(Selected counties)</i>	August 29, 2026	September 7, 2026	See attached bear tables for selected counties
	September 19, 2026	September 25, 2026	
	October 3, 2026	October 9, 2026	
	October 22, 2026	October 25, 2026	
	November 23, 2026	December 6, 2026	
	December 7, 2026	December 31, 2026	
Bear <i>(Youth/Class Q/Class XS)</i> – dogs permitted	September 12, 2026	September 13, 2026	Open in all or parts of 26 counties open to bear hunting
Bear <i>(Youth/Class Q/Class XS)</i> – dogs prohibited	October 17, 2026	October 18, 2026	Open in 51 counties open to a firearms deer hunting season
Wild Boar <i>(Gun)</i>	October 24, 2026	October 31, 2026	
	February 5, 2027	February 7, 2027	
Wild Boar <i>(Archery & Crossbow)</i>	September 26, 2026	December 31, 2026	
	February 5, 2027	February 7, 2027	
Deer <i>(Archery & Crossbow - Special Urban)</i>	September 5, 2026	December 31, 2026	
	January 11, 2027	January 31, 2027	
Deer <i>(Archery & Crossbow)</i>	September 26, 2026	December 31, 2026	
Deer <i>(Bucks Only)</i>	November 23, 2026	December 6, 2026	
Deer <i>(Antlerless)</i> <i>(Selected counties)</i>	October 22, 2026	October 25, 2026	See attached antlerless tables for selected counties
	November 23, 2026	December 6, 2026	
	December 10, 2026	December 13, 2026	
	December 28, 2026	December 31, 2026	
Deer <i>(Youth/Class Q/Class XS)</i>	October 17, 2026	October 18, 2026	Antlerless deer only
	December 26, 2026	December 27, 2026	
Deer <i>(Muzzleloader)</i>	December 14, 2026	December 20, 2026	
Turkey, Fall <i>(Selected counties)</i>	October 10, 2026	October 18, 2026	1, 2, and 4 week fall counties determined after 2026 spring gobbler season
	October 26, 2026	November 1, 2026	
	October 26, 2026	November 15, 2026	
Turkey <i>(Spring 2027 Youth Season)</i>	April 17, 2027	April 18, 2027	Bearded only
Turkey <i>(Spring 2027)</i>	April 19, 2027	May 23, 2027	Bearded only

**PROPOSED 2026 ANTLERLESS DEER HUNTING REGULATIONS
(PUBLIC LANDS)**

Season Dates: Oct. 22-25, Nov. 23 -Dec. 6, Dec. 10-13, and Dec 28-31, 2026

**WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS OPEN TO LIMITED LICENSES FOR RESIDENT AND
NONRESIDENT CLASS N/NN ANTLERLESS SEASON – BAG LIMIT OF 1**

Camp Creek SF (50) (Mercer Co.)	Greenbrier SF (50) (Greenbrier Co.)	Daniels Ridge WMA (50) (Monroe Co.)
Public Land (350) Randolph Co.	National Forest (500) Pocahontas Co.	National Forest (50) Nicholas Co.

**WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS OPEN TO UNLIMITED LICENSES FOR RESIDENT AND
NONRESIDENT CLASS N/NN ANTLERLESS SEASON – BAG LIMIT OF 1**

Amherst/Plymouth WMA (Putnam Co.)	Pruntytown WMA (Taylor Co.)	Coopers Rock SF (Monongalia/Preston Cos.)	Snake Hill WMA (Monongalia/Preston Cos.)
National Forest (Preston/ Tucker Grant/Hampshire/ Pendleton/Hardy Cos.)	Bluestone WMA (Summers/Mercer/Monroe Cos.)	Pleasant Creek WMA (Barbour/Taylor Cos.)	Wallback WMA (Roane/Clay/Kanawha Cos.)
Stonewall Jackson Lake WMA (Lewis Co.)	Moncove Lake WMA (Monroe Co.)	McClintic WMA (Mason Co.)	Beech Fork Lake WMA (Cabell/Wayne Cos.)

**WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS OPEN TO UNLIMITED LICENSES FOR RESIDENT AND
NONRESIDENT CLASS N/NN ANTLERLESS SEASON – BAG LIMIT OF 3**

Burnsville Lake WMA (Braxton Co.)

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS CLOSED TO ANTLERLESS SEASON

National Forest (Greenbrier/Monroe Cos.)

All other WMAs and public lands not listed in this table will have the same seasons and bag limits as private land in the respective county or portion of the county where the WMAs or other public lands are located.

Proposed Opening and Closing Dates for the 2027-2028 Hunting and Trapping Seasons

Species	Opening Date	Closing Date	Comments/Changes
Squirrel	September 11, 2027	February 29, 2028	
Squirrel (<i>Youth</i>)	September 4, 2027	September 5, 2027	
Raccoon (<i>Hunting</i>)	October 16, 2027	February 29, 2028	
Raccoon (<i>Trapping</i>)	November 6, 2027	February 29, 2028	
Ruffed Grouse	October 16, 2027	February 29, 2028	
Bobwhite Quail	November 6, 2027	January 1, 2028	Tomblin WMA closed
Cottontail Rabbit	November 6, 2027	February 29, 2028	
Snowshoe Hare	November 6, 2027	February 29, 2028	
Ring-necked Pheasant (<i>Statewide</i>) Hillcrest WMA	November 6, 2027 November 13, 2027	January 1, 2028 December 4, 2027	Cock birds only
Fox (<i>Hunting & Trapping</i>)	November 6, 2027	February 29, 2028	
Fox (<i>Hunting at night using any color artificial lights or night vision technology, including image intensification, thermal imaging, or active illumination</i>)	January 1, 2028	February 29, 2028	
Bobcat (<i>Hunting & Trapping</i>)	November 6, 2027	February 29, 2028	
Mink, Muskrat (<i>Trapping</i>)	November 6, 2027	February 29, 2028	
Fisher (<i>Trapping</i>)	November 6, 2027	January 31, 2028	
Beaver (<i>Trapping</i>)	November 6, 2027	March 31, 2028	
Otter (<i>Trapping</i>)	November 6, 2027	February 29, 2028	Proposed bag/poss. limit change
Crow (<i>Hunting</i>)	October 1, 2027 January 1, 2028	November 20, 2027 March 4, 2028	
Opossum, Skunk, Weasel, Woodchuck, English Sparrow, European Starling, and Pigeon (<i>Hunting</i>)	Year-round		
Coyote (<i>Hunting</i>)	Year-round		Hunting at night using any color artificial lights or night vision technology, including image intensification, thermal imaging, or active illumination, is permitted year-round. From September 1 - December 31, hunting at night is only permitted on private land with written consent from the landowner.
Skunk, Opossum, Coyote, and Weasel (<i>Trapping</i>)	November 6, 2027	February 29, 2028	
Elk, Porcupine, Song & Insectivorous Birds, Hawks, Owls, Falcons & Eagles	No Open Season		