

# How to Find Experienced Deer Hunters in Rappahannock County

RLEP has heard from its constituents that it is often difficult to find a skilled hunter to come to their property to reduce the deer population. As a result, RLEP has explored ways to connect RLEP constituents with experienced, licensed, and (possibly insured) deer hunters in the county.

This paper was prepared in collaboration with Tim Bostic of VA Department of Wildlife Resources. Tim is the designated game warden for Rappahannock County and he has a wealth of knowledge about deer hunting in this region. With his assistance, we have prepared a list of various hunt clubs and individual hunters who are known to be skilled and reliable. This document also contains information on special programs that allow increased hunting during deer hunting season and beyond.

***Disclaimer: RLEP has compiled this information from various public and private sources, as a public service to its members and the Rappahannock community at large. This information is not intended as legal advice, and RLEP makes no representations as to the accuracy or completeness of the contents hereof. Furthermore, RLEP has not directly vetted and does not officially endorse any of the hunt clubs or individual hunters identified herein.***

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## Deer Hunting Season

Deer season traditionally begins the first Saturday in October when hunting with bow and arrow is allowed. This is followed by the muzzleloading season (black powder) on the first Saturday in November. The general firearms season begins on the Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January.

Rappahannock County currently allows early/late antlerless deer seasons on private lands only. These two seasons are open from the first Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March.

Hunting licenses are required to kill deer unless expressly exempted by Va Code 29.1-301. Exemptions include landowners hunting on their own land. License-exempt individuals are allotted the same base license bag limit (quantity of game) as a licensed resident hunter. The base license requires an additional Deer / Turkey license which can be purchased for \$23 and allows the taking of six deer, of which only three may be antlered. Six additional antlerless tags can be purchased for \$18.

## **Hunt Clubs**

Hunt clubs are groups of hunters who pool their resources to lease large tracts of private land for hunting. These leases typically cover properties that can safely accommodate multiple hunters, offer varied terrain, and have abundant deer and other game. However, some Hunt Clubs are also interested in smaller pieces of land to give their members more varied options.

If you are interested in engaging a hunt club to cull deer on your land, it is best to contact them early in the calendar year (Spring) so the club can make sure their insurance coverage is adequate for additional hunting acreage.

### **Pros and Cons of Hunt Clubs for Landowners**

#### **Potential Advantages:**

- Generate income from leasing hunting rights. (often will cover property taxes, and more)
- A formal lease agreement may help reduce (though not eliminate) liability for hunting-related accidents
- Clubs typically have insurance policies for each hunt member
- More hunters willing to harvest game to reduce population

#### **Potential Challenges:**

- Increased hunting activity, with more hunters present more frequently
- Limited advance notice regarding hunter arrivals and departures
- Less control over when and where people hunt.
- Challenges in managing property access (ingress and egress)
- Focus could be on trophy kills (bucks) vs. population control (does) but landowners can recommend reduction of antlerless deer to keep lease.

Hunt Clubs may be a good option for landowners with large properties or absentee landowners who cannot personally manage hunting arrangements.

## **Hunt Clubs Operating in Rappahannock County (Note: Some of these Clubs are interested in smaller land tracts)**

### **Rappahannock Hunt Club**

- **Location:** Based in Washington, VA
- **Description:** A group of 20+ experienced, licensed, and insured hunters. Currently authorized to hunt on Eldon Farm and other large tracts in Rappahannock County.
- **Landowner Benefits:**
  - Hunters provide liability waivers and the club carries insurance for members.
  - The club coordinates with landowners to follow their rules on hunting times and property access.
  - They are open to hunting on smaller tracts of land.
  - Adhere to landowner requests.
- **Contact:** Junior Jenkins – [chelljrw2@gmail.com](mailto:chelljrw2@gmail.com), (540) 671-3337

### **Virginia Sports Club**

- **Location:** Based in Fairfax, VA
- **Description:** A well-organized club with an executive committee, safety officers, and tract stewards ensuring compliance with DWR regulations.
- **Landowner Benefits:**
  - All members undergo background checks before joining.
  - The club carries insurance for members.
  - Landowners can set specific rules for their property.
  - Hunters must pre-announce their hunting locations and obtain site approvals for tree stands from club safety officers.
  - Limits number of hunters per tract/per day.
  - Conservation Police Officers are honorary members.
- **Suitable for:** Any property size.
- **Contact:**
  - **John Eckenrode (President)**
  - Email: [President@VirginiaSportsClub.Org](mailto:President@VirginiaSportsClub.Org)
  - Phone: (703) 980-4938

### **CRL Hunt Club**

- **Description:** A group of approximately 15 experienced, licensed, and insured hunters who currently lease properties owned by Bill and Lila Fletcher in Rappahannock.
- **Landowner Benefits:**
  - Provides liability waivers.
  - Conducts background checks on members.
  - Limits the number of hunters per property based on herd size and acreage.
- **Contact:**
  - **Josh Sink**
  - Email: [Jsink@crlpro.com](mailto:Jsink@crlpro.com)
  - Phone: (703) 927-5497

# Informal Hunting Groups & Individual Hunters

Many hunters prefer to operate independently or in small groups rather than join a hunt club where dues are required. These hunters often do not pay for land access but offer a more personal relationship with the landowner, the flexibility of hunting on a landowner's schedule, and assurance that the hunters will comply with the owner's specified parameters.

## Potential Advantages for Landowners:

- Know exactly who will be hunting, when, and where - opportunity to develop a relationship with the hunters.
- Can establish specific rules regarding access, hunting times, and land use.
- Personalized, informal, flexible hunting agreements.

## Potential Challenges:

- Generally not paid; more of a gentleman's agreement.

## Flint Hill Group

- **Organized by:** Chuck Presgraves, Farm Manager at Chancellor's Rock Farm.  
[cpresgraves@chancellorsrock.com](mailto:cpresgraves@chancellorsrock.com)
- **Description:** A group of trained, experienced, and licensed hunters based in the Flint Hill area.
- **Landowner Benefits:**
  - Hunters provide signed liability waivers.
  - Each hunter carries their own insurance
  - Daily communication of hunt locations and times

## Other Individual Hunters Interested in Rappahannock Hunting:

The following hunters are available to hunt alone and are also able to provide small groups of trusted individuals for hunting.

- **Adam Jenkins** – [cadamj@aol.com](mailto:cadamj@aol.com)  
(540) 229-0527
- **Sean Knick** – [seanknick640@gmail.com](mailto:seanknick640@gmail.com)  
(540) 522-3723
- **Ben Hahn** – [hahnwedding511@gmail.com](mailto:hahnwedding511@gmail.com)  
(540) 222-1491
- **Kent White** – [kentwhite70@icloud.com](mailto:kentwhite70@icloud.com)  
(540) 575-1805

- **Allan Clark** – [thorntonriverorchard@gmail.com](mailto:thorntonriverorchard@gmail.com)  
(540) 252-7792
- **Rebecca Beardsley and Kris Forrest** - [rbeardsley22@gmail.com](mailto:rbeardsley22@gmail.com)
- **Jonathan Kerns**- (540) 760-3383
- **Mark Vitco** – (540) 222-2614
- **Reagan Curey** – (540) 718-9714
- **Ryan Campbell** – (540) 718-8581
- **Jeff Peyton** – (540) 905-6586

## **General Considerations for Landowners**

### **Liability Protection**

Concern about legal liability for recreationists prevents some landowners from permitting hunting on their property. However, the Virginia General Assembly has addressed this concern in Virginia Code Section 29.1-509. Amended in 1982, this law exempts landowners who provide recreational opportunities to the public from liability for injury or damages, provided:

- the landowner does not charge a fee; and
- there is no gross negligence or “willful or malicious failure to guard or warn against a dangerous condition, use, or structure” on the property.

The property owner should eliminate obvious hazards such as open wells and dilapidated buildings or fence off and identify with warning signs any hazard that cannot be eliminated, such as a rock quarry. The landowner may consider insuring their property against any casualty claims by obtaining comprehensive liability insurance. These are relatively inexpensive additions to standard and homeowner insurance policies.

### **Communication**

Landowners are agreeing to let hunters on their property with an armed weapon, and communication as to when and where they will be hunting, and for how long is key.

Landowners can ask sportsmen to help provide financial or other support in return for permission to access private property. Fundamentally, sportsmen are responsible for their own safety and for any damages they cause to the property of others.

Landowners can provide hunters with land permission cards (these cards set out codes of ethical conduct while the cardholders are on the property). (**See Appendix 1; Permission to hunt on**

**private property)** Landowners may want to clarify their objectives with hunters (income, population control, food source), any restrictions regarding the hunters' use of the property (areas or times to avoid) and expectations of how to access the property (by foot, ATV, or vehicle).

Finally, landowners should require sportsmen to show proof of insurance before granting permission to hunt. Sportsman insurance is available through insurance companies and national sportsman organizations.

## **Key Information to Request from Hunters**

Regardless of whether landowners engage a hunt club or individual hunters, they should provide access details (entry/exit points and parking arrangements). Landowners should also request:

1. **Proof of a valid hunting license and insurance.**
2. **Hunting schedule:** When hunters will arrive and leave.
3. **Signed liability waivers.**
4. **Deer retrieval plan:** Hunters should field dress and remove deer from the property.
5. **Equipment use policy:** Whether ATVs are permitted.
6. **Guest policy:** Hunters should not bring guests unless explicitly approved by the landowner.

## **Best Practices for Working with Hunters**

- **Meet in advance:** Walk the property and discuss landowner expectations.
- **Establish clear rules:** Define where and when hunting is allowed.
- **Request proof of insurance:** Ensure hunters carry personal liability insurance.

## **Other Land Management Options**

In addition to the regular hunting season, landowners can apply for **Damage Control Permits** (kill permits) through the **Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR)** to address deer damage on their property associated with overpopulation.

### **Damage Control Permits.**

A damage control permit can be authorized for hunting outside of the regular deer season.

- **Purpose:** Allows the removal of antlerless deer (with rare exceptions for antlered deer) in cases of significant agricultural (e.g., crop) or ornamental (e.g., tree) damage

• **Description:**

- Not considered hunting; certain hunting regulations are waived.
- Permits have set timeframes determined by Conservation Police Officers.
- Deer taken under these permits must be **consumed, donated, or buried**—not used for trophies or taxidermy.
- Contact DWR for specifics or research VA Code 29.1-529

## **Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP)**

DMAP is a site-specific deer management program implemented by the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR). The purpose of this program is to manage deer population density. As deer population density increases, herd condition and reproductive rates decline. Conversely, as deer population density decreases, herd health and reproductive rates improve. This improvement is the goal of DMAP – to maintain density at a rate that optimizes deer health and reproductive rates.

DMAP allows more liberal kill of antlerless deer (during any deer hunting season from September to March) than could be obtained under the current system of county deer hunting day regulations for either sex. For example, without DMAP, hunters are only allocated six deer per license. Hunters are able to purchase six additional antlerless tags. If the property qualifies and DMAP data collection procedures are followed, additional antlerless tags may be issued for the property at no cost by DWR Biologist.

DMAP tags are only available to kill antlerless deer (does and male fawns) and are not valid for antlered bucks. The primary goal of DMAP is to allow landowners and hunt clubs to work together on a local level to manage their deer herds. Secondary objectives include providing more data on deer populations in a particular area and improving communication between deer hunters, landowners, and the Department.

Under DMAP, landowners and hunt clubs set their own deer management goals and collect biological data on the deer they kill. In turn, wildlife biologists from VDWR analyze the data and provide the landowner with information necessary to make informed decisions about deer management issues. This one-on-one relationship, stressing communication and cooperation provides important biological data on deer herds across the Commonwealth and helps landowners learn more about their deer herd and deer management issues.

Most cooperators (e.g., landowners/hunt clubs) in DMAP are in some type of quality deer management (QDM) program where aggressive doe kills are combined with rules protecting young antlered bucks. Because of this, many people think of DMAP as only a QDM program. It can be, but it is much more flexible. The Department also has cooperators in DMAP, primarily in agricultural areas, whose stated objective is to reduce deer densities as low as they possibly can. In several of these areas, DMAP has been very successful.

For more information on DMAP in our region, please contact DWR Biologist for more information through the regional office:

David Kocka, DWR Biologist, Verona Office, P.O. Box 996, 517 Lee Hwy. Verona, VA 24482  
[david.kocka@dwr.virginia.gov](mailto:david.kocka@dwr.virginia.gov)

**VA DWR Verona Office: (540) 248-9360**

## **Reporting Violations**

If you witness hunting violations or need to report illegal activity, contact:

**VA DWR Crime Line: (800) 237-5712**

**VA DWR Fredericksburg Office: (540) 899-4169**

**VA DWR Verona Office: (540) 248-9360**

**Rappahannock Conservation Police Officer Tim Bostic – [william.bostic@dwr.virginia.gov](mailto:william.bostic@dwr.virginia.gov)**

**Phone: (540) 684-2016**