

BIG GAME REGULAR SEASON OPENING DAY LOTTERY CANCELLATION NOTICE

Beginning in 2021, the Big Game Regular Firearms Opening Day Hunt Lottery is discontinued. Instead, Opening Day will be like every other hunting day of the year. Hunters will use the iSportsman system.

WHAT WAS THE OPENING DAY LOTTERY?

The Opening Day Lottery was an annual event where hunters would enter a lottery to reserve a spot in a hunting area on Opening Day of the Big Game Regular Firearms Hunting Season.

- The lottery had been held annually at West Point since the 1980s when it served a much more useful purpose. At that time, all check in/out was in-person and hunting was a much more popular activity.
- Hunters would attend an in-person lottery draw and select spots in areas in the order their name was drawn until all lottery participants had chosen a spot or until all available spots in all areas were filled.
- The day before Opening Day, hunters would visit Hunt Control and check in early to their hunting area so that they could proceed straight to said area on Opening Day without visiting Hunt Control first.
- The iSportsman system, adopted at West Point in 2017, cannot accommodate this lottery so iSportsman was shut down on Opening Day requiring all hunters to in-person check in/out in person.

WHY IS THE HUNT LOTTERY BEING DISCONTINUED?

The Opening Day Lottery process required unnecessary time and effort from hunters:

- The lottery required hunters set aside time on lottery night and the day before Opening Day to check-in early. And again, shutting down iSportsman meant all check in/out was inconveniently in person.
- When the lottery first began, all check in/out was in-person anyway, but with iSportsman check in/out now possible, in-person check in/out is an unnecessary imposition and unwise given Covid-19.

The Opening Day Lottery process also required unnecessary time and effort from program managers:

- MWR Outdoor Recreation Division managed the lottery well for years but did so at a busy time of year as they closed campgrounds and moved facilities.
- DPW Natural Resources Branch staff managed early check-in and in-person check in/out and with iSportsman off, later needed to enter by hand into the system data iSportsman collects if left on.

Finally, the Opening Day Lottery was unpopular with West Point hunters:

- In 2020, in a survey Natural Resources conducted through Cornell University's Center for Conservation Social Sciences, only twenty percent of all respondents supported continuing the Opening Day lottery.

In light of its costs to hunters and managers and its lack of popularity, discontinuing the lottery in favor of a simpler, more efficient system is the best way to manage Opening Day this year and in years to come.

HOW WILL OPENING DAY OPERATE WITHOUT THE HUNT LOTTERY?

- Starting in 2021, Opening Day will be like any other hunting day. **Hunters will check in and out via the iSportsman system. Hunters will not need to come in to Hunt Control to check in/out.**
- All other rules remain in effect: **Guests and General Public users may not hunt on Opening Day and All deer and bear harvested on any day of Regular Season must be brought in to Hunt Control.**