

**Joint Committee on Administrative Rules and Regulations
Testimony of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks
K.A.R. 115-2-1; 115-4-4; 115-5-1; 115-25-12; 115-25-9; and 115-25-9a**

July 30, 2025,

Chair Wasinger and Members of the Committee,

Below are the regulations the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks are proposing to amend. What follows is an overview of the substantive changes to the regulations along with an explanation of what steps the regulations went through prior to entering the promulgation process. Please note that the Wildlife and Parks Commission has reviewed and initially approved each of these regulations.

K.A.R. 115-2-1 – Fees, Registration and Other Charges

This regulation is being changed to add three new discounted licenses for resident seniors between the ages of 65 and 74: (1) Five-year fishing license for \$50; (2) Five-year hunting license for \$50; and a (3) Five-year combination hunting and fishing license for \$90. The Department decided to pursue these new discounted rates in light of the legislative sunset of K.S.A. 32-9,100, which offered a discounted combination hunting and fishing license for seniors. It is also being amended to remove fees for mussel fishing and dealers since the authority to harvest mussels lapsed in 2022 when K.A.R. 115-17-9 was revoked.

The regulation is also raising the fee for the trout permit from \$12.00 to \$17.50. During the June 10, 2025, meeting of the Committee, the Department explained that the rising costs of procuring trout from other states has dramatically increased the cost of the program. Maintaining the program at current costs is becoming increasingly unsustainable. The Department directly interviewed trout anglers, asking if they would support an increase in fees to maintain the program, and the consensus was they would support such a change to maintain the trout program. The Department discussed this proposed change at three consecutive KDWP Commission meetings, and no negative public comment was received. The Department also solicited input from two of the largest sellers of trout stamps and neither believed it would experience a significant economic impact from the change. Following the previous meeting of this Committee, the Department provided the Committee with a cost-benefit analysis completed by the Department's Director of Fisheries. Highly summarized, the analysis demonstrates significant increases in costs coupled with declining revenues. The document is attached to this testimony. (Exhibit A)¹

¹ Exhibit A also contains a report of the number of fishing licenses sold over the last five years.

K.A.R. 115-4-4 – Big game; legal equipment and taking methods

This regulation is being changed solely to expand the type of shot hunters may use in taking big game. Currently, the regulation states that “hard-cast solid lead” and “conical lead” shot may be used when firing muzzleloaders. The regulation also states that “hard-cast solid-lead” shot may be used when firing centerfire rifles and handguns. The proposed change is to simply remove the word “lead” from each of these types of shot, thereby allowing hunters to use both lead and non-lead shot (*i.e.*, nontoxic shot) depending on which they choose to use.

The proposed rule change was discussed at several consecutive Wildlife and Parks Commission meetings. KDWP also discussed the proposed change with hunters, many of whom were not aware that the current regulation is limited to the use of lead projectiles. Hunters expressed support for the proposed change. In addition, the Department solicited input from businesses, many of which were also not aware that the current rule is limited to the use of lead projectiles. Businesses indicated that they do not anticipate much of an increase in sales because they do not sell many of the currently prohibited projectiles.

K.A.R. 115-25-12 and 115-5-1 – Night Vision Coyote Hunting Season

At the request of the Wildlife and Parks Commission, the Secretary researched and proposed extending the night vision coyote hunting season. The proposed change will add approximately three months to the season. The current season lasts from January 1 to March 31. The new season will begin on September 1 and last through March 31 of the following year but exclude firearm deer seasons to reduce conflict with rifle deer hunters. The Commission also requested that the regulation include a three-year sunset provision that would revert the season back to its prior date range if it is not removed by April 1, 2028.

As previously mentioned, this regulation was initiated by the Wildlife and Parks Commission after some of its members asked the Secretary to study the feasibility of an extended season. Department biologists researched the matter and presented biological data to the Commission. The Department conducted an extensive survey of thousands of Kansas citizens to measure public interest in expanding the season. A majority of all populations surveyed favored some expansion of the season. The Department also held three public comment sessions across the state at El Dorado, Junction City, and Hays to give all members of the public the opportunity to voice their opinions. The Department and Commission gathered public input and discussed the changes openly before the public at five consecutive Commission meetings beginning in October 2024 and ending in April 2025. Finally, Department staff solicited input from businesses it believed might be impacted through the sale of night vision coyote hunting equipment, and their responses were generally positive, indicating the change would likely enhance their revenues.

K.A.R. 115-25-9 – Deer

This regulation sets—among other matters—the number of valid antlerless deer permits a hunter may obtain for each Deer Management Unit, which are geographically defined areas across the state. Broadly speaking, data collected by the Department’s biologists indicate increasing deer populations in the southeastern and central part of the state and declining deer populations in the northwestern part of the state. Attached to this testimony is a map of Kansas showing the areas of the state where populations are increasing and decreasing. (Exhibit B) To effectively manage deer populations, the Department focuses on harvest of female (*i.e.*, “antlerless” deer). The change to this regulation adjusts not only the number of antlerless deer permits but also dictates the dates on which hunters may harvest deer during the “extended firearms season,” which occurs in January following the regular deer season.

Highly summarized, the number of antlerless deer tags available in the southeastern part of the state, extending north to Leavenworth and west to Pratt will see an increase of five additional tags (nine total). The number of antlerless deer tags available in the central part of the state near McPherson, extending north to Washington County and east to Doniphan County will see an increase of three additional tags (four total). The northwest corner of the state will see a reduction of antlerless tags from four to one. In addition to increased tags in the southeastern part of the state, the dates of the extended firearms season will be extended in this area, giving hunters more opportunities to harvest additional antlerless deer. Attached to this testimony is a map showing the DMUs in which tag amounts are being altered. (Exhibit C)

The Department annually gathers direct input from deer hunters and landowners as part of its annual deer harvest survey as well as through a standard landowner deer opinion survey. The Department discusses permit changes with guides and outfitters. The Department also presented these proposed changes to the public and Wildlife and Parks Commission during five consecutive Commission meetings, which began in August 2024 and extended to March 2025. When considering all the proposed changes, the Department might experience between a decrease in revenue of \$10,775 to an increase of the same amount, depending on whether hunters take advantage of the additional opportunities to harvest an antlerless deer. However, because it is up to private individuals to decide whether to purchase tags and harvest deer in certain units, the Department cannot know precisely what financial impact the change will have.

K.A.R. 115-25-9 – Deer Hunting on Military Bases

This regulation is amended annually to adjust the dates on which hunters can harvest deer on the military bases in Kansas—Fort Riley, Fort Leavenworth, and Smoky Hill Air National Guard Range. These dates, which are different from the regular statewide seasons, are set each year after consultation with the United States Department of Defense. The goal is to allow active-duty service members the opportunity to harvest deer on these bases while minimizing or eliminating conflicts with DOD mission objectives.

The Department gathered input from DOD program staff at the military bases. The Department also solicited input from the public and Wildlife and Parks Commission at its January 27, 2025, Commission Meeting. Historically, businesses have expressed support in maintaining seasons on military bases.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have at the appropriate time.

Respectfully submitted,



Kurtis Wiard
Chief Counsel
Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks

2025 Changes to Trout Stocking Program

Bryan Sowards, Director of Fisheries

The Trout Program started in 1994 as a program to add fishing opportunity in the winter. It was designed to be user funded through trout permit sales. Trout thrive in colder water temperatures, but mortality reaches 100% as water temperatures rise above 70°F. Therefore, the program provides trout anglers with opportunity during the winter but mitigates ecological issues as they disappear in the Spring. Typically, 10,000 to 12,500 Kansas anglers, or 3 to 5% of all fishing license holders, purchase a trout permit for \$12.00. This totals between \$120,000 to \$150,000 in annual income towards funding the program. The cost of trout has steadily increased over the years. More recently, the cost has increased exponentially with the current cost between \$6 and \$7.50 per pound or about \$3.60 and \$4.50 per fish (Figures 1 & 2).

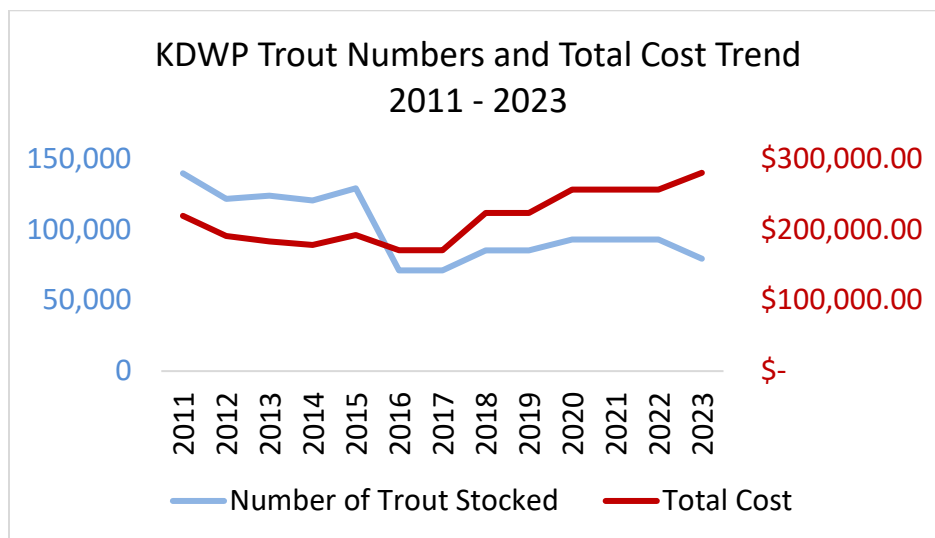


Figure 1. Total numbers of trout and total cost of trout funded through the Kansas Department of Wildlife's annual Trout Program.

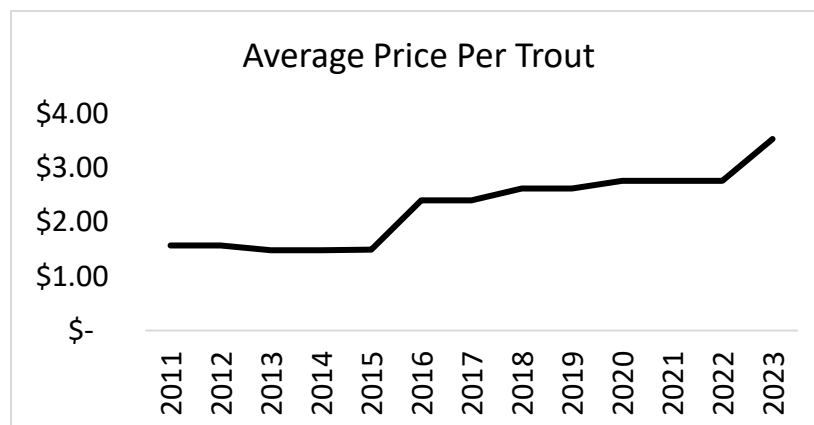


Figure 2. The average cost per trout purchased from commercial vendors from 2011 to 2023.

The total number of permits sold in the 2022/23 season was 10,077. This equates to \$121,000 of program income. During that year, we spent nearly \$280,000 on trout despite it being the fewest number of trout purchased in the last decade. Cost of the trout program is rising, but revenue remains stable (Figure 3). The last dramatic increase to the cost of trout occurred in 2016. The Department responded by stocking less trout to keep program expenditures from increasing. Ultimately, trout costs are outpacing permit sales by 125%. Rather than continue to decrease trout numbers throughout a 5-month season and diminish the quality of the program, other acceptable solutions were sought.

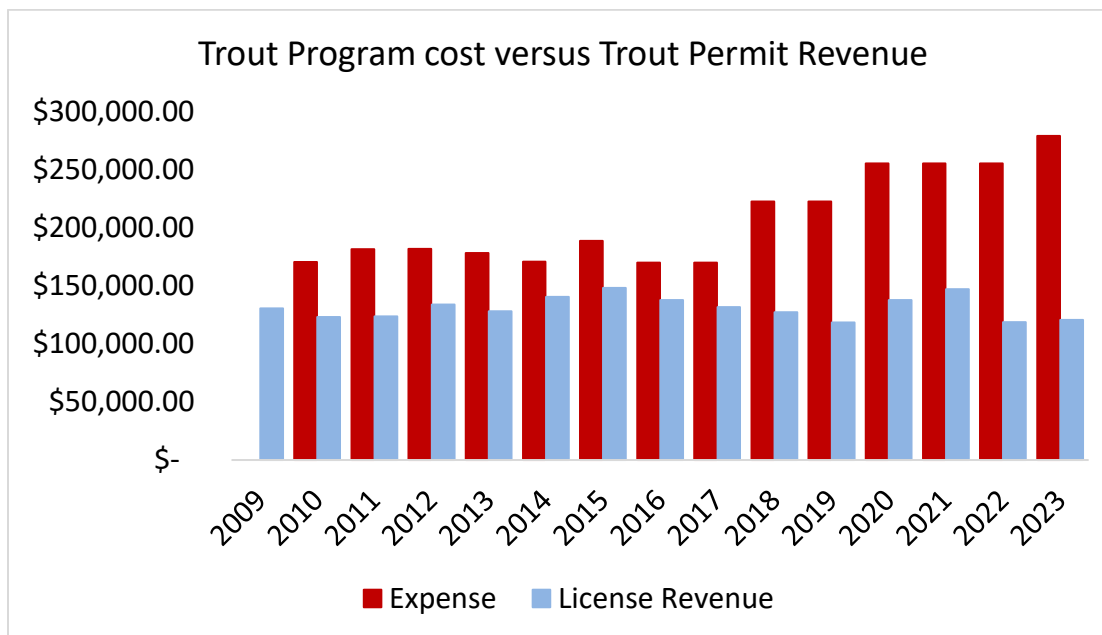


Figure 3. Annual Trout Program costs compared to revenue from trout permit sales from 2009 – 2023. *This does not include the cost of trout supplied to community lakes and funded through our CFAP program.

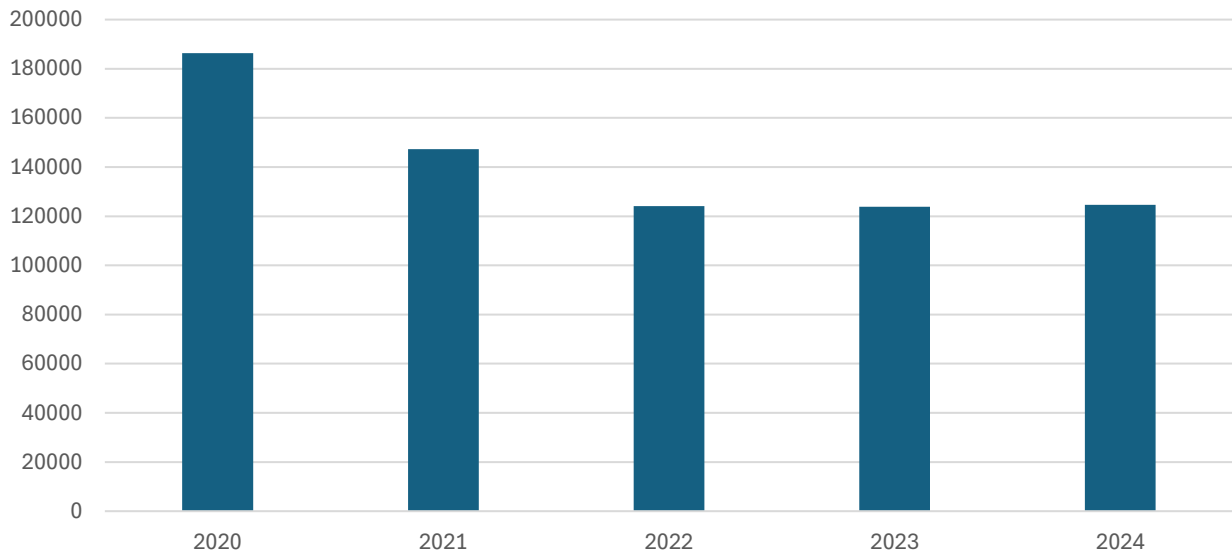
The Department surveyed 500 trout anglers while they were fishing at KDWP trout locations in 2023. The survey results indicated that consistent stocking throughout the season is important. Also, the most important months to fish were January and February. Most indicated that trout were not their primary fish through the year, and 92% stated they would still buy a fishing license if trout were not available to them through the program. The survey results indicated this is an opportunistic program where acceptable solutions could be reached. Lastly, some indicated a reasonable increase to the trout permit cost would not be prohibitive.

The cost of trout and importance of consistent stocking throughout the season led KDWP to propose reducing the trout season from November 1 through April 15 to December 1 through March 31. Although we will ultimately decrease the number of trout purchased, they will be stocked throughout a shorter season, minimizing potential impacts per fishing trip. Another option was to reduce the 5 per day creel limit to make the number of fish go further. We opted to not change the creel limit. Although many anglers noted that harvesting fish was not necessarily the most important reason they fished for trout, we will maintain an opportunity to harvest 5 fish per day for those that do choose to harvest and eat their catch. Since these fish will die as waters warm in the spring, the use of these fish through harvest is encouraged.

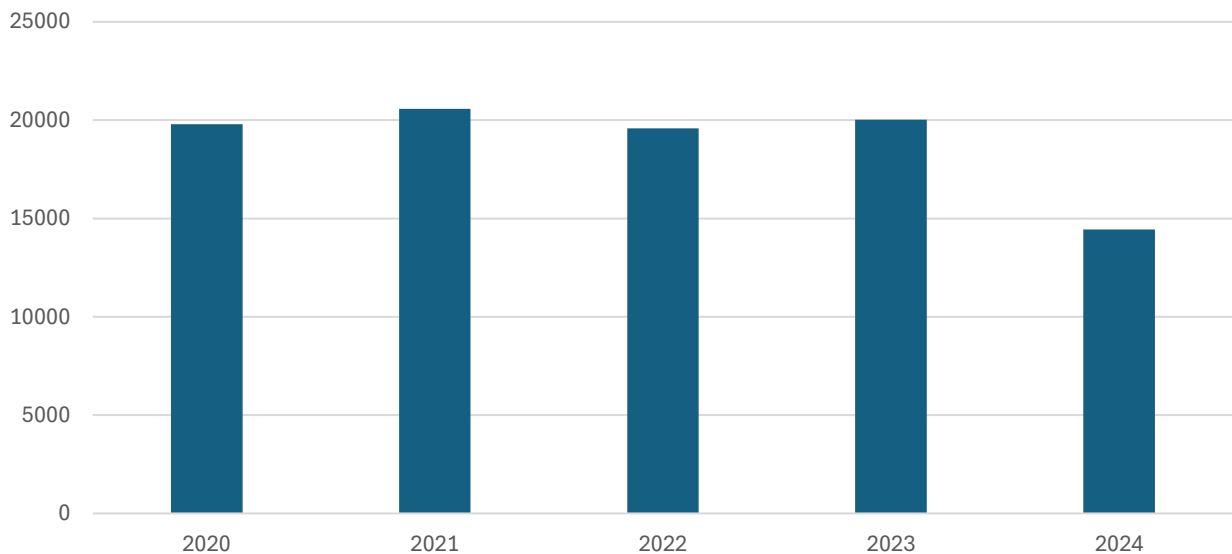
Five-Year Fishing License Trends for Resident and Nonresident Anglers

Type of Fishing License	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Annual Resident License	186290	147266	124090	123849	124659
Annual Nonresident License	19793	20583	19580	20026	14437
Five-Year Resident License	4863	6464	5753	5851	5796
Five-Day License	8358	7092	6294	6594	9320
Lifetime Resident License	617	805	708	651	572
Annual Trout Permit	12920	11859	10064	10590	11188
Single Day Resident License	14849	12869	11824	13963	17362
Single Day Nonresident License	16182	20428	17798	20656	22905
Resident Youth License (16 thru 20)	2190	1542	1735	1997	2336
Annual Youth Trout Permit (under 16)	21	732	763	967	1058

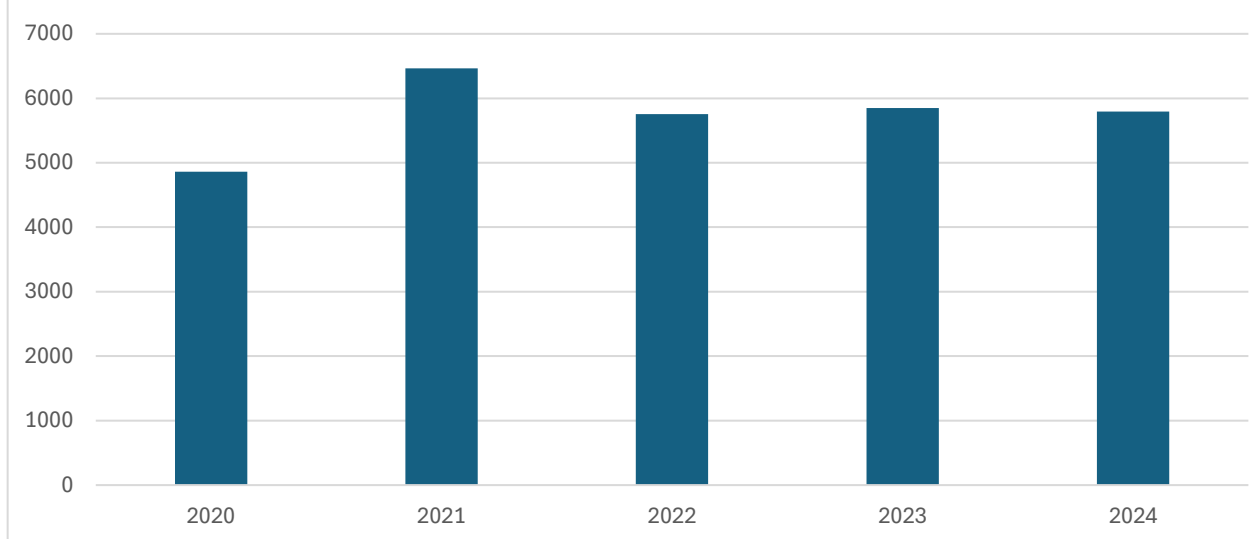
Annual Resident Fishing Licenses



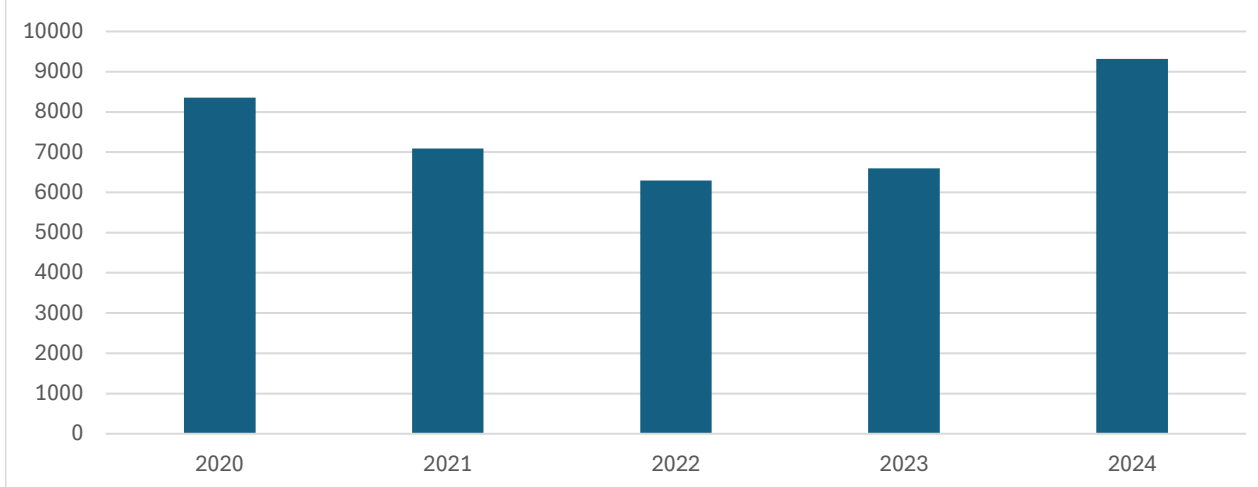
Annual Nonresident Fishing Licenses



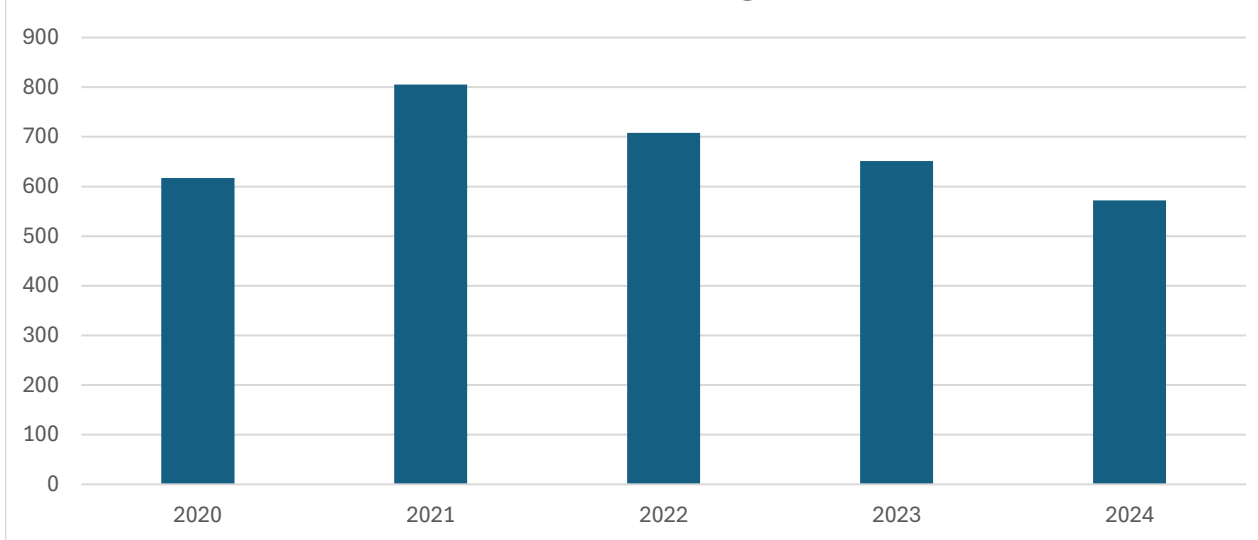
Five-Year Resident Fishing Licenses



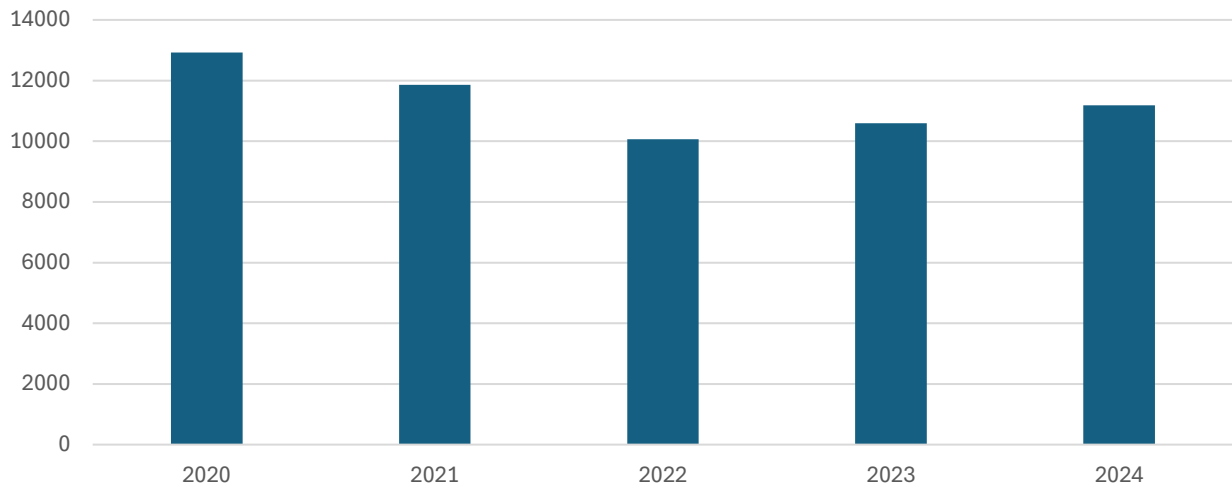
Five-Day Fishing Licenses



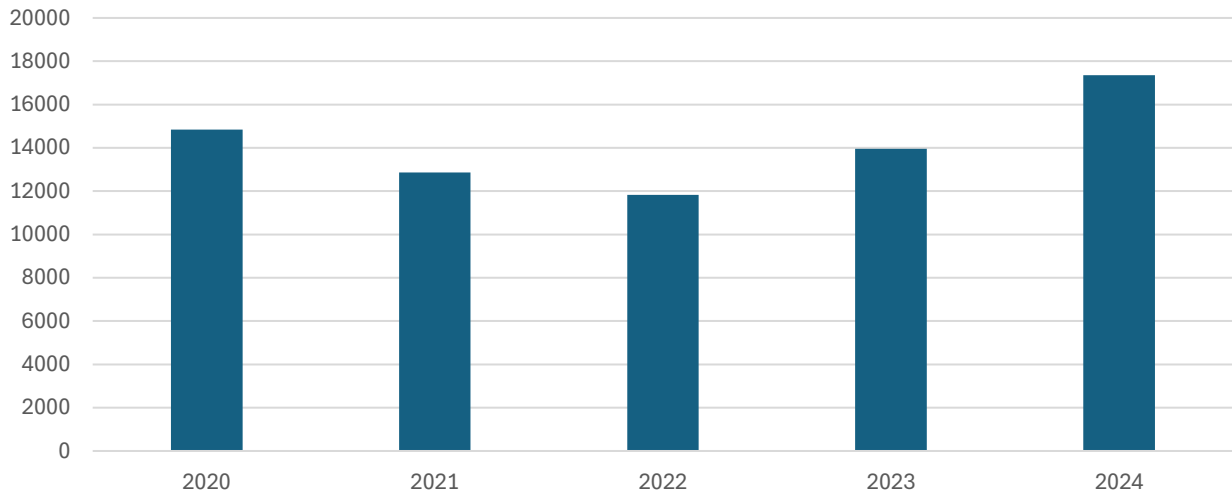
Lifetime Resident Fishing Licenses



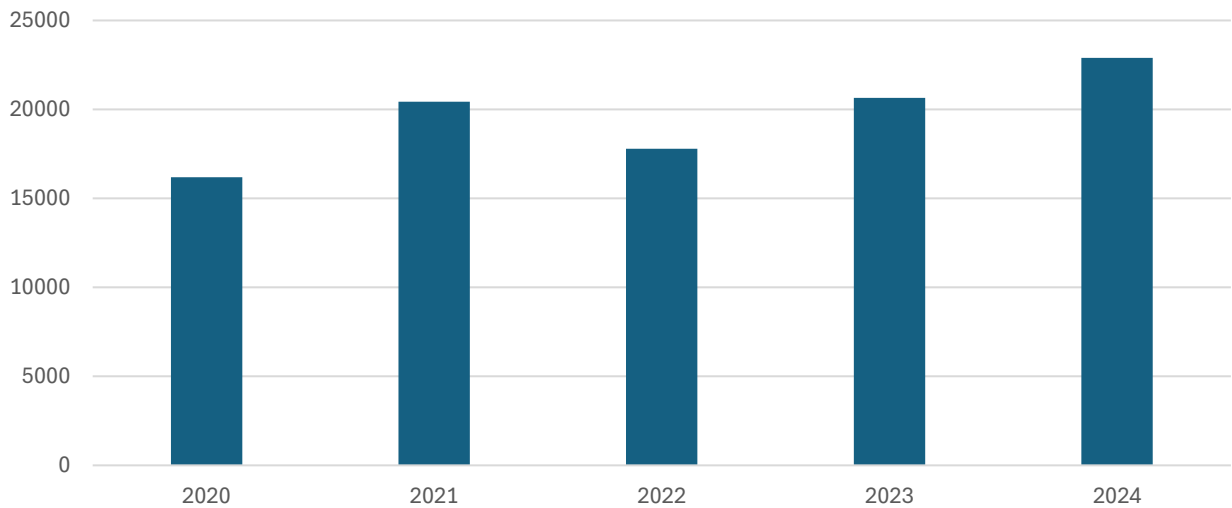
Annual Trout Permit



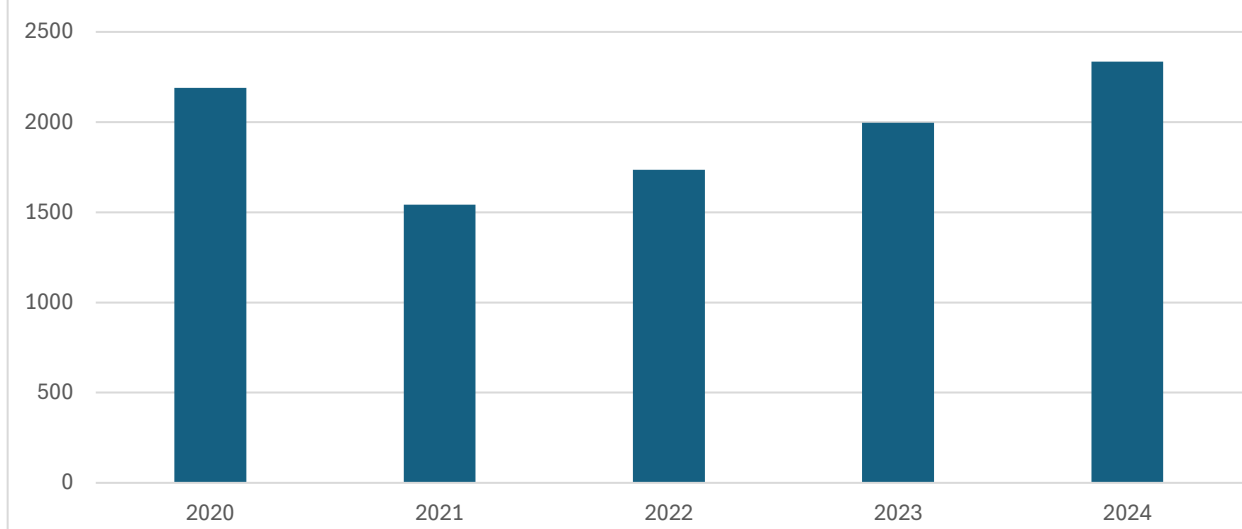
Single Day Resident Fishing License



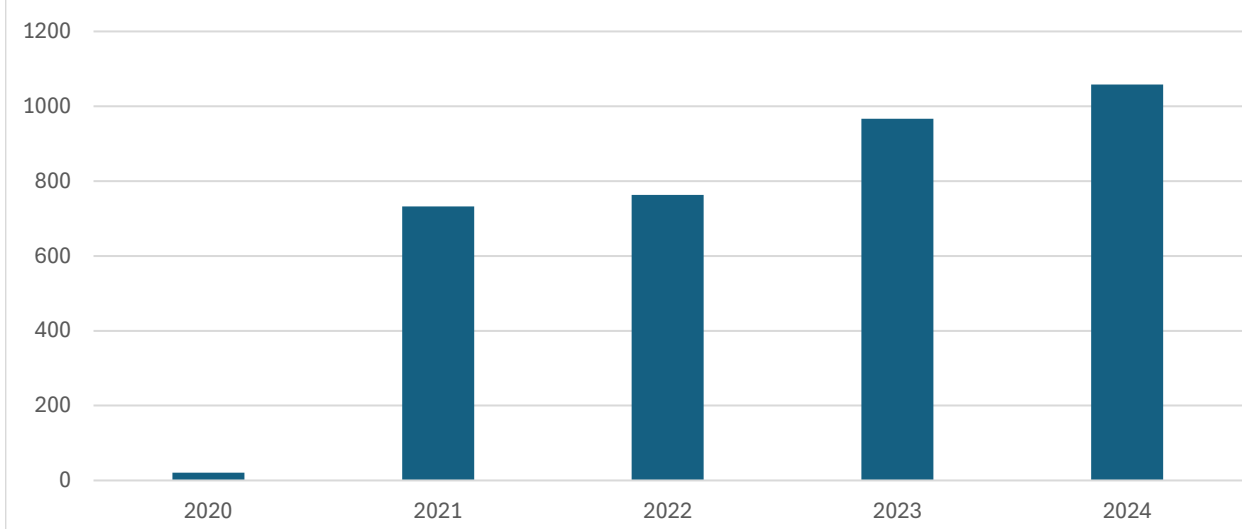
Single Day Nonresident Fishing License



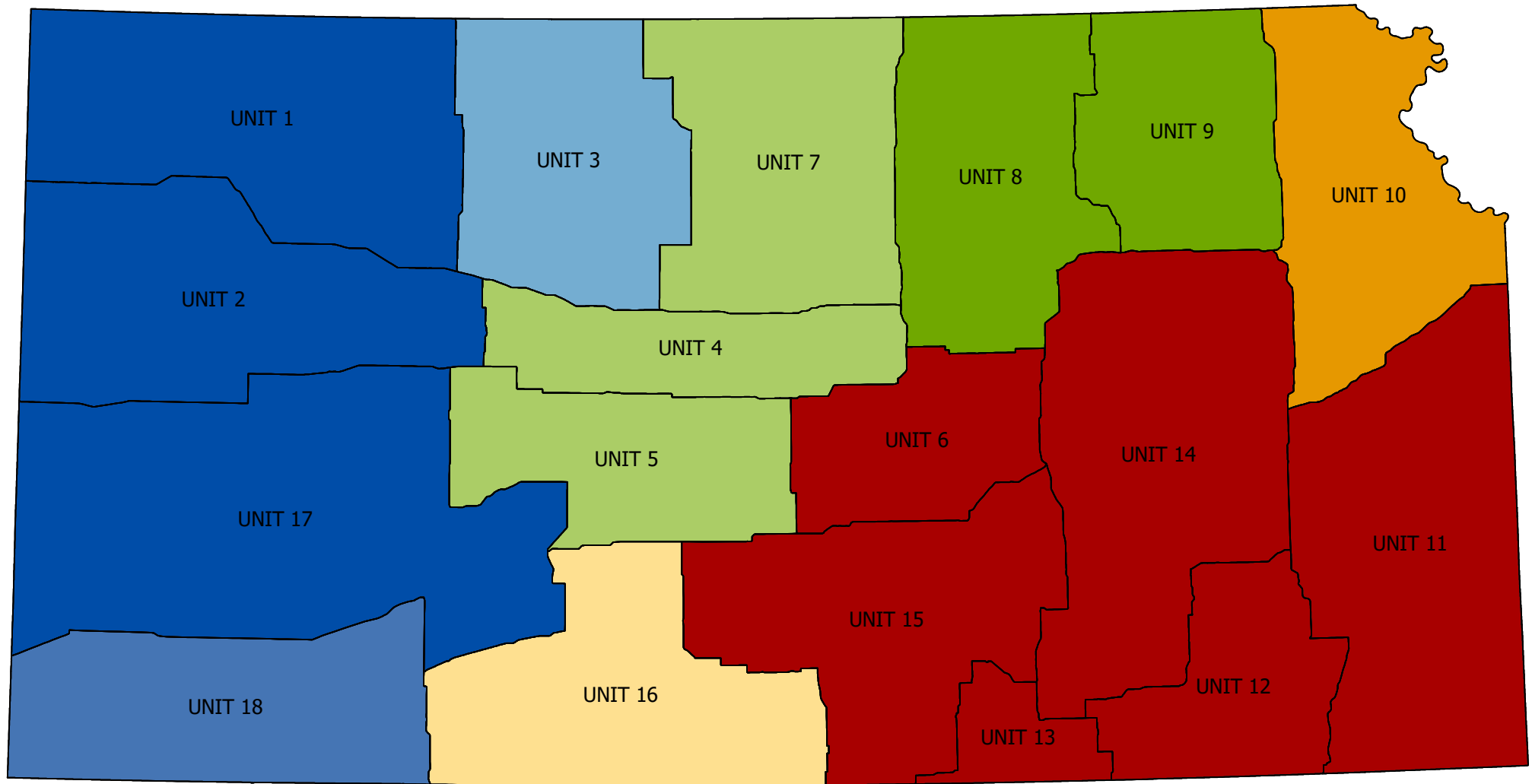
Resident Youth Fishing License (16 to 20)



Annual Youth Trout Permit (under 16)



Kansas Deer Population Trends

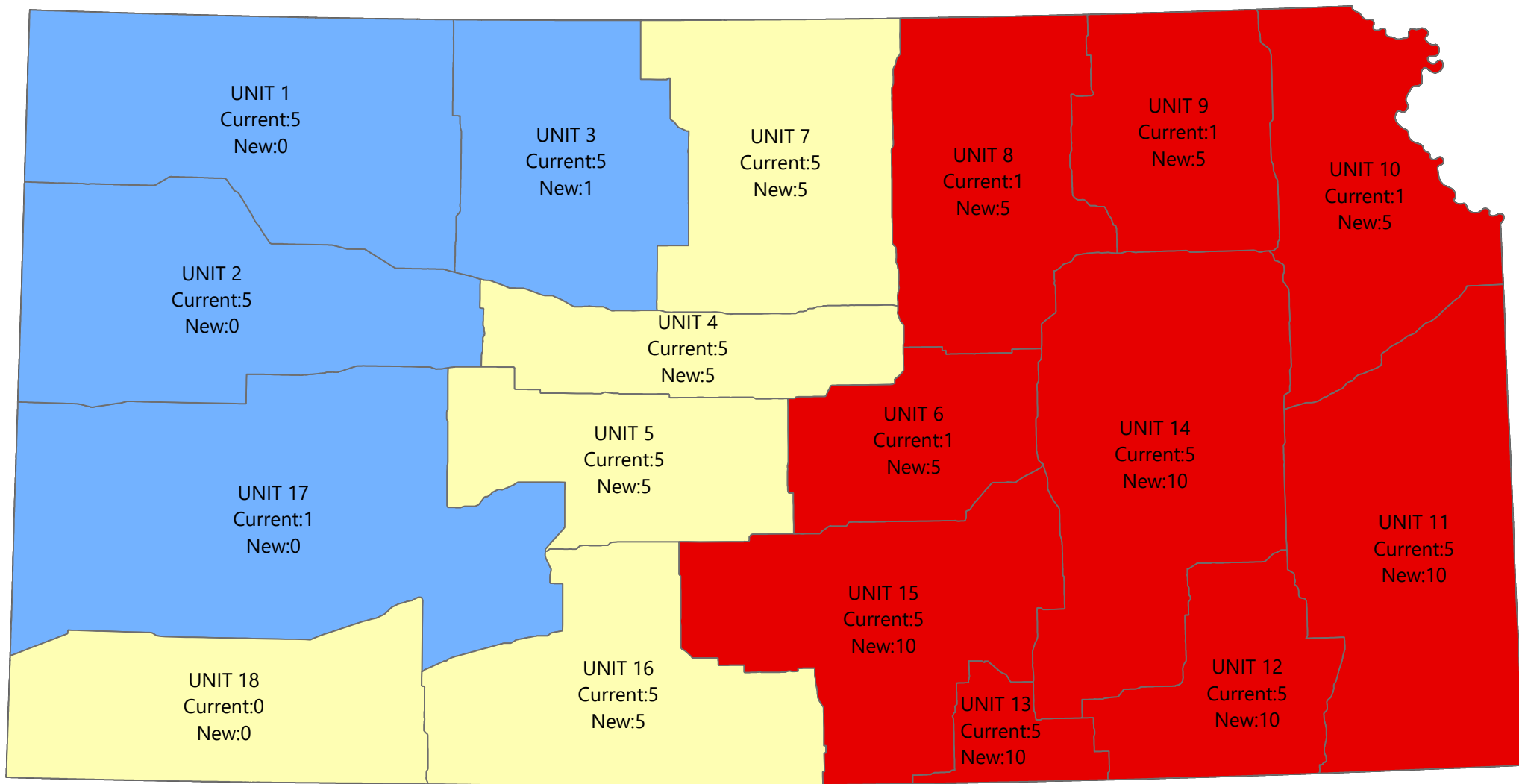


Deer Management Unit Trend



Source: KDWP Spotlight Survey Data
2020-2024

Kansas Whitetail Antlerless Only Tag Allocations and Population Trends



Deer Population Trends

- Declining
- Stable
- Increasing

