

Hunting, Fishing, & Food:
The Nutritional Significance of Wildlife Conservation
in Vermont

House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and
Forestry

January 14, 2026



Hunting & Fishing in Vermont

109,000 resident hunters and anglers

- 140K anglers; 95,400 residents
- 81K hunters; 70,000 residents
- Participation rates appear stable (11% hunt, 17% fish)
- Historically, sales increase during economic uncertainty

Top Towns (sales)

Top Counties (participation rates)

Fishing

Burlington

Hunting

Bennington,
St. Albans,
Barre, Milton

Grand Isle,
Orleans, Franklin

Orleans,
Essex,
Franklin



For the People of Vermont

Department's Role: to protect and maintain fish, wildlife, and plants 'in trust' for the public

Regardless of income, land ownership or location, 'in trust' ensures public access to:

- Sustainable hunting and fishing opportunities
- Affordable, quality experiences
- An ability to gather a meaningful amount of food from the land

Hunting & Fishing in Vermont

Annual Fishing: \$28 (\$.08 a day for a year of opportunity)

Annual Hunting: \$28 (\$.31 a day, 9/1 to 12/31)

Annual Combination Hunting & Fishing: \$47 (\$.13 cents a day)

- Add-Ons: Turkey, Archery, and Muzzleloader are \$23
- Other opportunities (i.e. antlerless deer lottery, early bear) range from \$5 to \$10
- No additional fees for trout, habitat, or access
- Youth under 15 fish don't need a license
- Permanent licenses (age 66 +) are one-time fee
- In 2023, approximately 19% of all infants born in Vermont were gifted a lifetime license
- **One in four** active resident hunters and anglers hold a lifetime or permanent license

Food as Motivation

Nationwide

- “**For meat**” is the top hunting motivation
- “**For fresh fish**” is a top 5 fishing motivation

Vermont

- By far the most important reason for bear
- Most important reason for small game
- Third most important reason for waterfowl
- No recent research on deer hunters or anglers

Food as Motivation

License sales and participation surged during the pandemic

Home and wild food procurement were associated with improved food security during the COVID-19 pandemic in two rural US states

- UVM & University of Maine
- Food insecure households **more likely** to hunt, fish and forage than people who were reported they were food secure
- Interest and participation in hunting and fishing, as a food source, increased during the pandemic.

2021 Vermont Median income: \$76,079

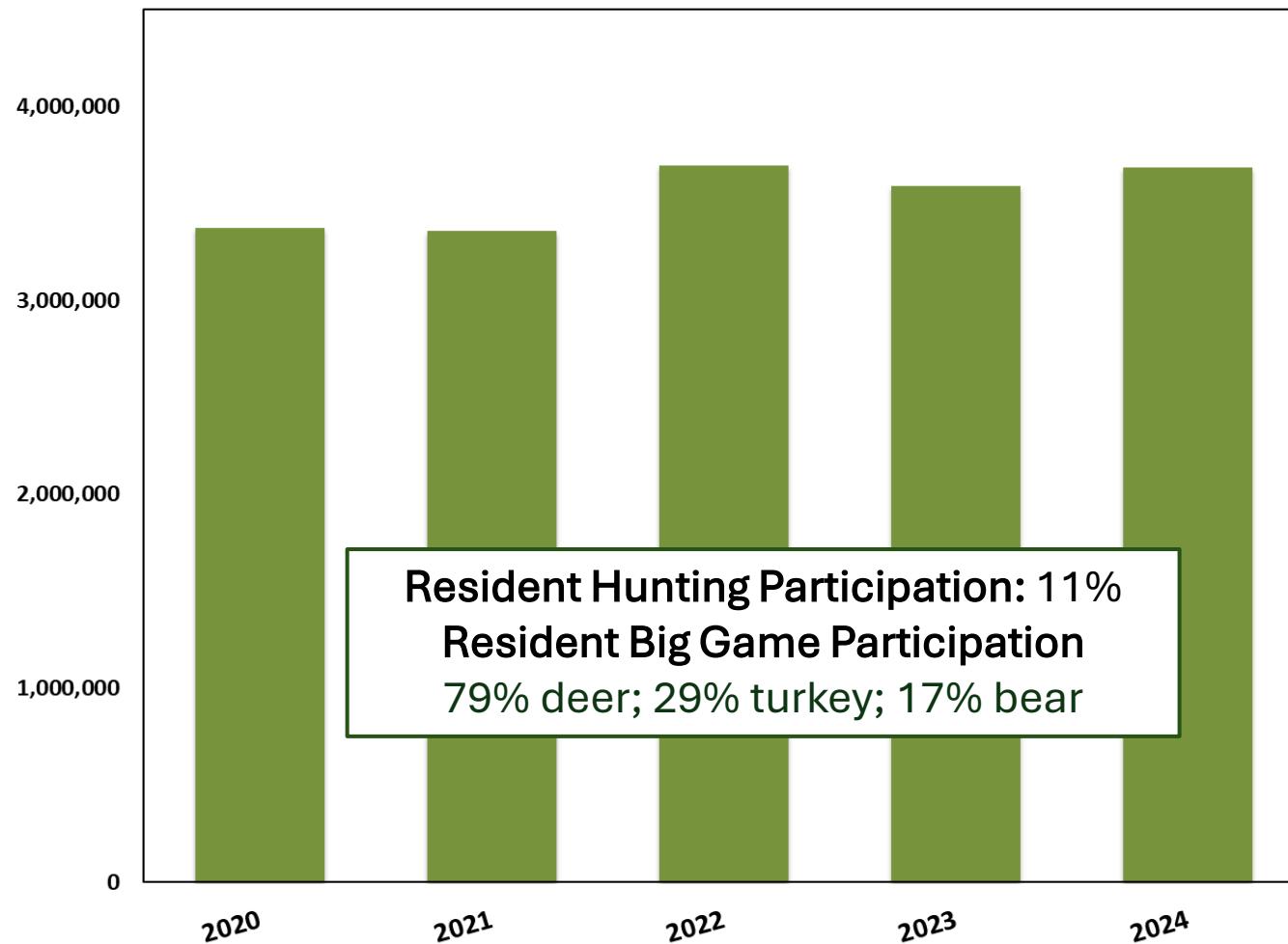
- Resident hunters, by zip: \$60,815
- Resident anglers, by zip: \$62,143

Big Game: Big Rewards

	Average Meat Yield (boneless, lbs)	2024 Harvest	Harvest, in lbs
Moose	300 lbs	54	14,850
Deer	50 lbs	16,266	813,300
Bear	50 lbs	908	45,400
Wild Turkey	8 lbs	5,928	47,424
			920,974 lbs

Equivalent to \$6 million in USDA ground beef (9/25)

Pounds (lbs.) of Big Game Through Regulated Hunting



Small Game - Waterfowl

Long and liberal seasons; minimal equipment and planning

Ruffed grouse most popular, but gray squirrel is increasing

- Younger hunters
- Champlain Valley
- New Americans

Residents: over 46,000 lbs of ducks and geese (2024)

Fishing

- Each year, raise 190,000 lbs of trout, salmon, and walleye
- Catchable size trout stocked in areas with significant public access, near urban centers
- Abundant, department-managed shore fishing opportunities
- Many (36%) Fishing Access Areas are universally accessible

Food-based Programming

Venison For Vermonters

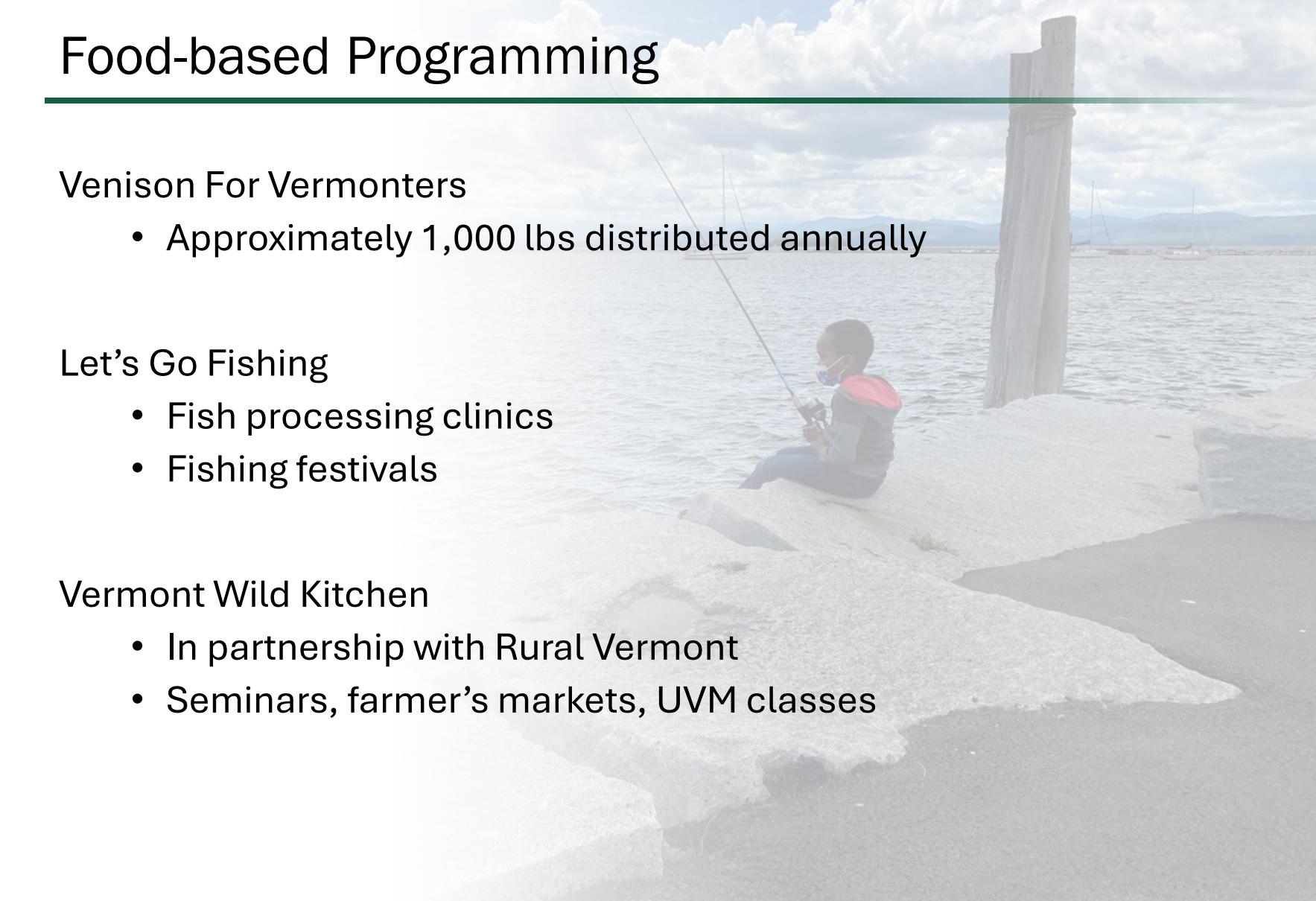
- Approximately 1,000 lbs distributed annually

Let's Go Fishing

- Fish processing clinics
- Fishing festivals

Vermont Wild Kitchen

- In partnership with Rural Vermont
- Seminars, farmer's markets, UVM classes



Connection to Mission

Habitat

- WMAs and SMAs
- Private Land & Farm Bill programs
- Vermont Conservation Design and Conservation Planning

All staff, no matter their duties, impact sustainable food production

- Law Enforcement
- Licensing
- Direct fish and game species management
- Fishing Access Areas
- Fish Culture Stations
- Hunter Education and Let's Go Fishing

For the People of Vermont

Department's mission is the conservation of fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the people of Vermont

1. Vermont's landscape and public waters remain significant sources of wild food
2. Open to all
3. And sustainable due to habitat conservation and highly regulated hunting and fishing

