



Big game licensed harvest trends in the Yukon: 1995 to 2023

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Government of Yukon
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Acknowledgments

This report is a testament to the goodwill and responsible reporting by licensed hunters and their contribution to a consistent record of licensed wildlife harvest in the Yukon. We thank all of those hunters whose information is reflected in this report.

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Message from the Minister

Hunting is a way of life in the Yukon. We're fortunate to live in such an incredible place to be able to spend time outdoors and be on the land. Food security remains a high priority in the North amid affordability pressures, and it is essential that we can provide for our families and communities with ethically and sustainably harvested meat. The ability to harvest healthy wild meat helps strengthen local food systems, enhances self-reliance, and contributes to the well-being of families and communities.

The Licensed Harvest Trends Report provides us with an understanding of the harvest trends over the last 29 years. It supports our collective efforts to ensure the sustainable management of wildlife populations in the Yukon. Thank you to the hunters who made this report possible through diligent harvest reporting and for submitting feedback through the hunter effort surveys. I encourage all hunters to continue to hunt responsibly, ensure they know the regulations that apply to the land they are on, and report their harvest on time.

I invite all Yukoners to take the time to read this report and deepen their understanding of how we can work together to sustain wildlife populations and preserve this way of life for generations to come.

Wade Istchenko

**Hon. Minister of Environment
Government of Yukon**



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How to use this report

This document presents licensing and harvest information in a way that is easy to understand and does not attempt to explain observed trends in recognition of the many contributing factors that can influence these trends. Licensing and harvest trends are influenced by many interacting factors, including wildlife population dynamics, environmental conditions, socio-political context, human development, hunter behaviour and regulation changes.

To describe long-term trends, we compared annual averages from the first five hunting seasons of the reporting period (1995 to 1999) to those from the five most recent years of the reporting period (2018 to 2023, excluding 2020). We usually excluded 2020 from these averages to represent the long-term trends over the reporting period. Licensed harvest patterns in 2020 were significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. We highlight harvest trends in 2020 in the COVID-19 section on page 19.

When substantial variability occurred within the reporting period, we identified periods of higher and lower values and presented averages to describe overall patterns.

Throughout this document, a given year represents a hunting season (for example 1995 is equivalent to the 1995-1996 hunting season). A hunting season year runs from April 1 to March 31.

Definitions

Big game: A member of a species of wildlife prescribed by the [Wildlife Regulations, Schedule A, Part 1](#) as a species of big game animal.

Game Management Zone (GMZ) and Game Management Subzone (GMS): The Yukon is divided into 11 Game Management Zones, and each of these Zones includes many Game Management Subzones. Harvest of big game species is recorded on a subzone basis. Maps of GMSs are available at Yukon.ca and in the Yukon hunting regulations summary.

Non-resident outfitter guided: A person who is not a Yukon resident and hunts through a commercially operated and licensed outfitting business.

Non-resident special guided: A person who is a Canadian resident and not a Yukon resident who hunts under the limited entry special guide program (including those in Yukon that do not meet residency requirements for a Yukon hunting licence).

Permit Hunt Authorization (PHA): Permits issued through a weighted lottery to licensed resident hunters in areas where there are conservation concerns.

Threshold hunt: An area where a limit is placed on the number of a particular species available for licensed harvest, and once that limit is reached, the area is closed to hunting. Licensed hunters are eligible when they obtain a hunting seal for that species.

Yukon resident: A person who is a Canadian citizen or permanent resident; whose primary residence has been in the Yukon for at least 12 months before applying for a licence; and has been physically present in the Yukon for at least 185 days during those 12 months, or a person who belongs to a class of persons considered to be a Yukon resident by the regulations.

Executive summary

In this report, we present a 29-year overview of big game licensed harvest trends in the Yukon from the 1995 to 2023 hunting seasons. The purpose of the report is to identify how the harvest of Yukon's wildlife and licensing of hunters has changed over time, in order to provide context for all partners involved in wildlife harvest management. This report focuses on moose, caribou, thinhorn sheep, wood bison, black bears, grizzly bears, mountain goats, elk and deer. This report does not include subsistence harvest by Indigenous hunters.

Main findings

- The number of Yukon residents obtaining hunting licences increased over the reporting period as the Yukon's population increased. On average, 734 more resident licences were obtained per year in later years (2018 to 2023, excluding 2020) compared to earlier years (1995 to 1999). On average, 11.5% of Yukoners obtained a big game hunting licence per year. The number of Yukon residents obtaining hunting seals also increased over time for all species in this report.
- Most licensed hunters were Yukon residents (86%) and on average, resident hunters harvested 64% (1029 animals) of the total big game licensed harvest per year. 13% of licensed hunters were non-resident outfitter guided and they harvested 34% (566 animals) of the total big game harvest per year. Non-resident special guided hunters harvested on average 2% (41 animals) of the total big game harvest per year.
- Moose and caribou were the most obtained big game seals for licensed hunters.
- During the 2020 hunting season, travel restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic affected both resident and non-resident hunters. The number of non-resident hunters who obtained a licence declined from an annual average of 709 from 2015 to 2019 down to 347 in 2020. In 2020, resident hunters harvested the highest number of big game (1,335 or 82%), and non-resident hunters harvested the fewest big game animals (276 or 15% for outfitter guided and 24 or 1% for special guided) since 1995.

Total big game harvest

- The average number of big game animals harvested per year by licensed hunters declined from 1,761 in earlier years (1995 to 1999) to 1,607 in later years (2018 to 2023, excluding 2020).
- Moose, caribou and sheep were the most harvested big game species. Bison harvest has reached levels comparable to sheep harvest in recent years.
- Compared with non-resident outfitter guided hunters, resident hunters harvested proportionally more moose, bison, migratory caribou, black bears, mountain goats, elk and deer whereas non-resident outfitter guided hunters harvested proportionally more sheep and grizzly bears. Northern Mountain caribou harvest was similar between resident hunters and non-resident outfitter guided hunters.
- Locations of harvest suggest that resident and non-resident special guided hunters tended to harvest big game animals more frequently in accessible areas, near roads and communities, compared to non-resident outfitter guided hunters who tended to harvest animals in more remote areas.

Harvest by species

Moose: The average number of moose harvested by resident hunters declined from 550 per year (1995 to 1999) to 399 per year (2018 to 2023, excluding 2020). On average, resident hunters harvested 66% of the total licensed moose harvest. Less than 50% of the sustainable moose harvest was taken by licensed hunters for most areas of the Yukon from 2019 to 2023.

Caribou: The average number of migratory caribou harvested by licensed hunters declined from 258 per year from 1995 to 2009 to 67 per year from 2010 to 2023 with substantial year-to-year variability. Nearly all (98%) of migratory caribou harvested were from the Porcupine caribou herd. Northern Mountain caribou harvest declined for both resident hunters and non-resident outfitter guided hunters. Total harvest numbers for these resident and non-resident hunter groups were comparable.

Thinhorn sheep: The average number of sheep harvested per year by licensed hunters declined by 15% from 274 per year in earlier years (1995 to 1999) compared to 233 per year in later years (2018 to 2023, excluding 2020). The number of sheep harvested by licensed resident hunters was stable with an average of 85 sheep per year while non-resident outfitter guided harvest declined by 22% in later years (2018 to 2023, excluding 2020) compared to earlier years (1995 to 1999). On average, non-resident outfitter guided harvest accounted for 65% of harvested sheep. 83% of sheep harvest by licensed resident hunters was in Game Management Zones 5 and 7.

Wood bison: The number of bison harvested by licensed hunters increased when bison harvest transitioned from a restricted number of permits to an open season. The harvest increased from six animals in 1997 to a high of 284 in 2021. Nearly all harvested bison (97%) were harvested by licensed resident hunters.

Black bear: The average number of black bears harvested by licensed resident hunters increased from 73 per year (1995 to 1999) to 97 per year (2018 to 2023, excluding 2020), accounting for 87% of the annual black bear harvest. The number of black bears harvested by non-resident outfitter guided hunters decreased. Spring black bear harvest by licensed hunters increased while fall harvest decreased. On average, 85% of harvested black bears were reported as male.

Grizzly bear: The average number of grizzly bears harvested by licensed hunters per year across all years (1995 to 2023) was 70 (range 50 to 99). Most harvest occurred in the fall, and the number of females harvested per year declined since 1995. On average, non-resident outfitter guided hunters harvested 62% of the total licensed harvest.

Mountain goat: The number of mountain goats harvested by licensed hunters ranged from two to 16 per year across all years (1995 to 2023). The number of mountain goats harvested by resident hunters roughly doubled since 1995. Licensed resident hunters harvested younger mountain goats and more females compared to non-resident outfitter guided hunters.

Elk: Since elk hunting was introduced in 2009, harvest by licensed resident hunters fluctuated between three and 44 elk per year. Most elk harvest was from the Takhini Valley herd. The number of elk harvested varied along with changes to the number of Permit Hunt Authorizations and adaptive permits issued.

Deer: Deer harvest is by Permit Hunt Authorization and the number of deer harvested by licensed resident hunters averaged seven animals per year (range four to ten) since 2006. Most deer were harvested near Whitehorse.

Introduction

The Yukon's wildlife are integral to the lives and cultures of Yukoners. Effective stewardship of the Yukon's wildlife is carried out through shared responsibilities among governments, organizations and co-management partners. This report provides a 29-year overview of licensed big game harvest trends in the Yukon from the 1995 hunting season to the 2023 hunting season. This retrospective summary identifies how the harvest of Yukon's big game species has changed over time and provides insight for all partners managing wildlife harvest into the future.

This report draws on licensed hunter demographic information and distinguishes three types of licensed hunters: resident, non-resident outfitter guided and non-resident special guided. The report focuses on large mammals commonly hunted as big game: moose (*Alces alces*), caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*), thinhorn sheep (*Ovis dalli*, hereafter referred to as sheep), wood bison (*Bison bison*, hereafter referred to as bison), black bears (*Ursus americanus*), grizzly bears (*Ursus arctos*), mountain goats (*Oreamnos americanus*), elk (*Cervus elaphus*) and deer (*Odocoileus* spp.). For each species and type of licensed hunter, the report presents descriptive summaries of the following trends: number of hunters, number of animals harvested and when and where the harvest occurred. We present the age and sex composition, when applicable, for species with required harvest submissions of the skull or teeth (sheep, bison, black bears, grizzly bears and mountain goats).

Geographic harvest patterns are presented by species for the three types of licensed hunters. We map harvest distribution and areas of overlap among licensed hunter types. Key changes to hunting regulations from 1995 to 2023 are also summarized for reference.

Data in this document come from licensing and harvest information from licensed hunters. Licensed hunters are required under the *Wildlife Act* to obtain big game licences and species-specific seals to hunt big game and report big game harvest. Hunting licences are valid from April 1 to March 31 of the following year. Indigenous hunters must obtain a hunting licence and abide by the laws of General Application to hunt outside their own Traditional Territory unless they have permission to hunt in another First Nation's Traditional Territory, or to harvest species for which they do not have subsistence rights, such as elk and bison (Government of Yukon 2021). This report includes licensed harvest by Indigenous hunters who obtained a licence and seal and does not include subsistence harvest information by Indigenous hunters.

This report builds on previous summaries of harvest trends from 1979 to 2014 (Smith and Hare 1988, Milligan 2018). This report presents licensed harvest information starting in 1995, when licensed harvest reporting became mandatory.

Ultimately, this report provides a summary of harvest data and trends with the goal of contributing to informed discussions about wildlife management among co-management partners, stakeholders and the public.

Licensed hunter summary

Licences

The Yukon's human population increased from 30,766 in 1996 to an estimated 46,259 by the end of 2023 (Yukon Bureau of Statistics 2024). From 1995 to 2023, the number of individuals obtaining big game hunting licences increased along with the Yukon's population growth (Figure 1). In that period, the percentage of Yukon residents that obtained a big game hunting licence remained stable at an average of 11.5% (range 11.0% to 12.5%) of the Yukon population (Table 1).

828 more licences were obtained per year in later years (2018 to 2023, excluding 2020) compared to earlier years (1995 to 1999). 734 of these licences were obtained by Yukon residents (Figure 1).

Hunter effort surveys

Thank you to all hunters who filled out a hunter effort survey in the past few years. These surveys asked Yukon's hunting community about their motivations, practices, beliefs, satisfaction and how much effort they exerted to hunt. Information from these surveys help the Department of Environment understand hunting activity, hunter behaviour and evaluate harvest management and regulations. The Department of Environment conducted voluntary hunter efforts surveys in 2000, 2010 and from 2012 to 2023. Hunter effort survey reports are available on Yukon.ca.

Figure 1.

Number of big game hunting licences obtained per year in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.



Table 1.

Number of Yukon residents obtaining a big game hunting licence and Yukon's population census from 1996 to 2021 (Yukon Bureau of Statistics 2021).

Year	Number of resident big game hunting licences	Yukon population	Percentage of Yukon residents with a big game hunting licence
1996	3,681	30,766	12.0%
2001	3,241	28,674	11.3%
2006	3,375	30,372	11.1%
2011	3,716	33,897	11.0%
2016	4,485	35,874	12.5%
2021	4,445	40,232	11.0%

On average, 86% of big game hunting licences were obtained by Yukon residents, 13% by non-resident outfitter guided hunters and less than 2% by non-resident special guided hunters. Licence fees have remained unchanged since 1995: free for residents 65 years or over and for resident First Nations people and Inuvialuit, \$10 for residents, \$75 for non-resident Canadians and \$150 for non-resident aliens.

Hunters that are not Yukon residents must be guided when hunting big game animals. On average, 87% of non-resident hunters are guided by registered outfitters, accounting for an average of 562 licences per year (Figure 1). Non-resident outfitter guided hunters can hunt moose, caribou, bison, sheep, mountain goats, black bears, grizzly bears, wolves, wolverines and coyotes. Species availability varies by outfitting concession, and quotas apply to some species and areas (see Appendix 1 for a description of quotas).

A special guide licence allows a Yukon resident hunter to guide a Canadian citizen or Canadian permanent resident. On average, 13% of non-resident hunters are special guided. These licences were previously available to Yukon residents once every three years, and, since 2016, have been allocated under a lottery system. Currently, 100 special guided licences are available per year for moose or caribou and 25 permits are available per year for bison. Special guided hunters can also hunt wolves, black bears and coyotes. Grizzly bears were available to hunt by special guided hunters prior to 2014. Special guided hunters cannot hunt a given species in a Game Management Subzone (GMS) where that species is under a threshold or Permit Hunt Authorization (PHA).

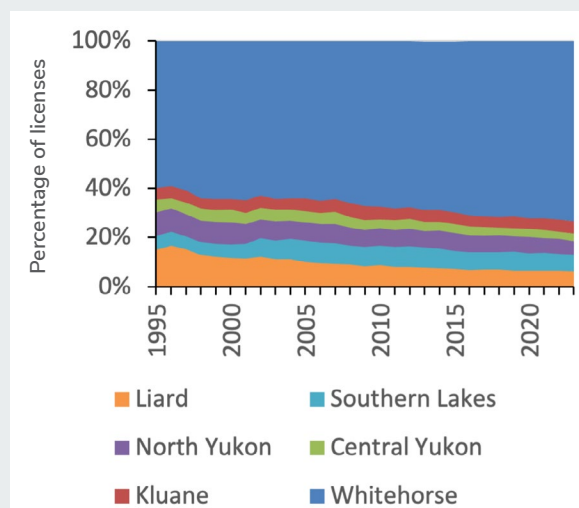
Hunter demographics

Yukon resident hunters

Most resident hunters lived in Whitehorse and the percentage of resident hunters from Whitehorse increased from 60% in 1995 to 73% in 2023 (Figure 2). During the same period, the percentage of resident hunters from the Liard region (Watson Lake, Ross River and Faro) decreased by 9%. Resident hunters from North Yukon (Dawson and Old Crow) decreased by 4% and resident hunters from Central Yukon (Carmacks, Keno City, Stewart Crossing, Pelly Crossing and Mayo) decreased by 2%. Resident hunting licences obtained in the Kluane (Beaver Creek, Burwash Landing, Champagne, Destruction Bay, Haines Junction and Silver City) and Southern Lakes (Carcross, Johnson's Crossing, Marsh Lake, Tagish and Teslin) regions remained stable (Figure 2).

Figure 2.

Percentage of resident licences obtained per year by region in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.

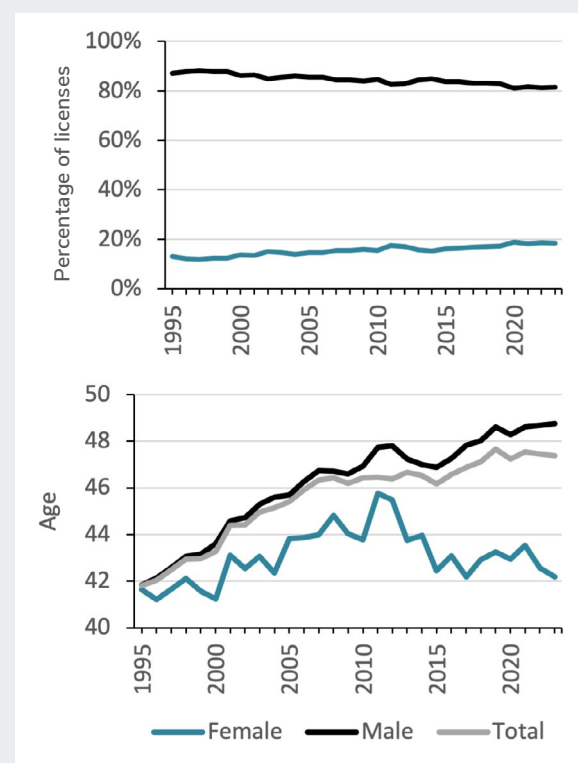


In 1995, the average resident hunter was 42 years old for both males and females (Figure 3). By 2023, the average age of male hunters increased to 49 years old.

The average age of female hunters increased to 46 years old in 2012, then decreased to 42 years old in 2023. The percentage of big game licences obtained by female Yukon residents increased from 12% (1995 to 1999) to 18% (2019 to 2023; Figure 3).

Figure 3.

Percentage of resident licences obtained by average age and sex of resident hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.

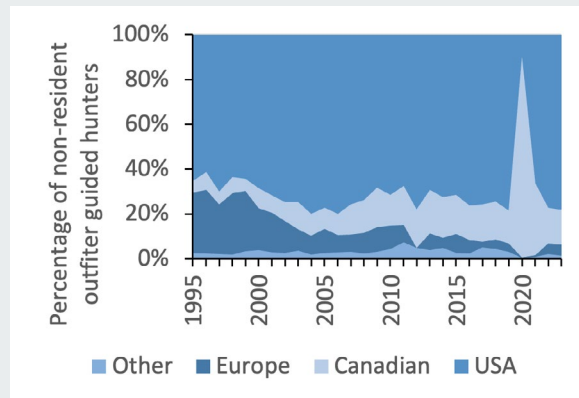


Non-resident outfitter guided hunters

Most non-resident outfitter guided hunters were from the United States (70% of non-resident outfitter guided hunters or 9% of all licensed hunters; Figure 4) from 1995 to 2023, excluding 2020. Due to travel restrictions in 2020, fewer international non-resident outfitter guided hunters obtained a big game licence, while the number of Canadian non-resident outfitter guided hunters increased (Figure 4).

Figure 4.

Percentage of non-resident outfitter guided licences obtained by hunter origin from 1995 to 2023.

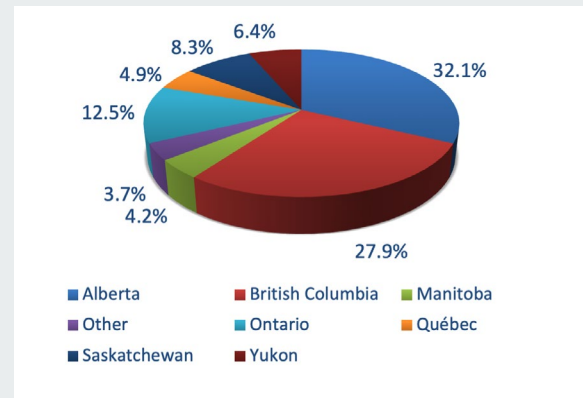


During the five years before 2020, the average number of Canadian non-resident outfitter guided hunters was 101 per year. In 2020, it increased to 270.

The average age of non-resident outfitter guided hunters increased from 47 years old in 1995 to 52 years in 2023. The average age of female non-resident outfitter guided hunters is highly variable ranging from 37 years old to 49 years old due to the low number of female hunters (Figure 5). The percentage of female non-resident outfitter guided hunters increased from an average of 12 hunters per year in earlier years (1995 to

Figure 6.

Percentage of non-resident special guided licences obtained by Canadian province or territory from 1995 to 2023.



1999) to 23 hunters per year in later years (2018 to 2023, excluding 2020).

Non-resident special guided hunters

Since 1995, most non-resident special guided hunters originated from Alberta (32%) and British Columbia (28%; Figure 6).

The average age of non-resident special guided hunters increased from 43 years in 1995 to 47 years in 2023 (Figure 7). On average, 3% of non-resident special guided hunters were female.

Figure 5.

Average age of non-resident outfitter guided hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.

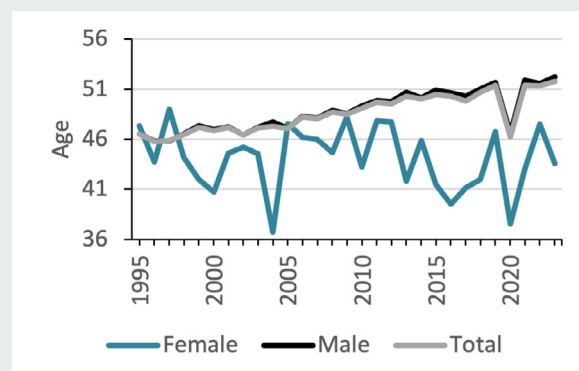
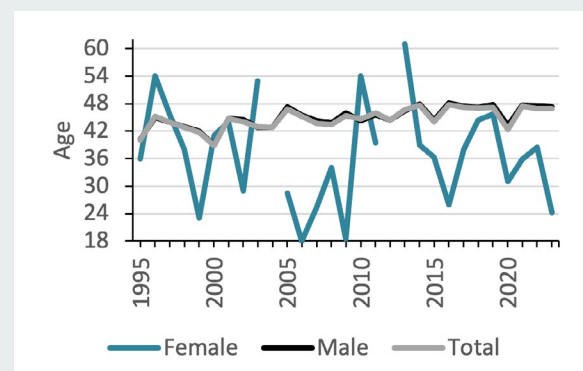


Figure 7.

Average age of non-resident special guided hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.



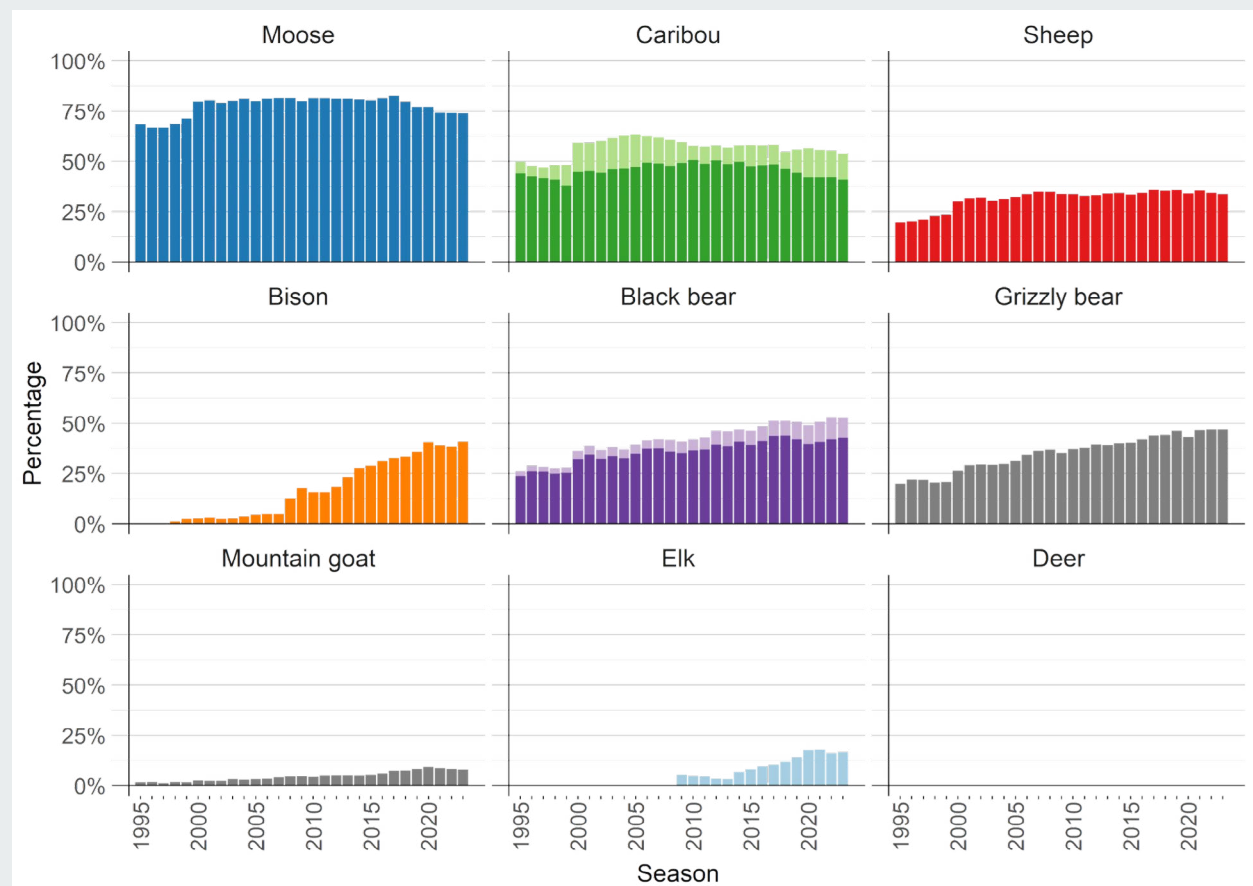
Seals

Licensed hunters are required to obtain a big game seal for each animal they plan to hunt. The number of seals obtained by licensed hunters increased from an average of 8,579 per year (1995 to 1999) to 17,824 per year (2018 to 2023 excluding 2020). Moose and caribou seals were the most popular throughout the reporting period, followed by sheep and bison. Bison surpassed sheep

in recent years. Black bear and grizzly bear seals were also frequently obtained (Figure 8). However, based on a 2020 hunter effort survey, most resident hunters who obtained a bear seal did not plan to hunt black and grizzly bears. They obtained a seal in case there was a conflict with a bear (Pongracz et al. 2025).

Figure 8.

Percentage of licensed hunters per year that had a seal per species in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023. Lighter bars for caribou and black bear represent the percentage of licensed hunters who obtained a second seal.



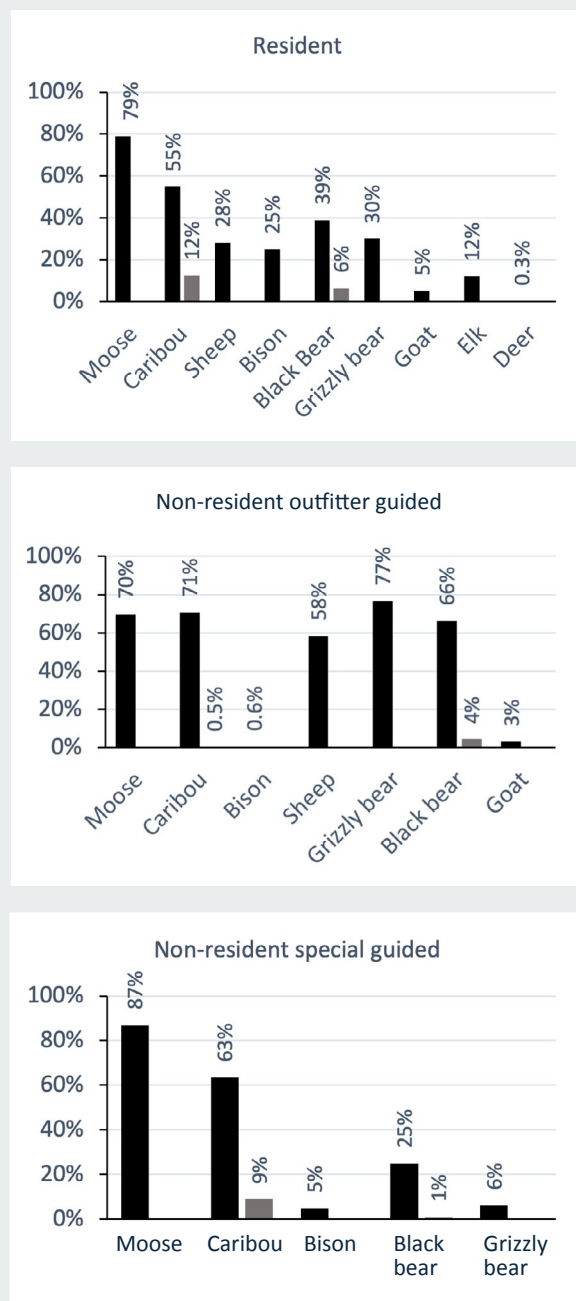
Moose seals were the most popular, with an average of 79% of resident hunters obtaining a moose seal since 1995 (Figures 8 and 9). Caribou seals were the next most popular, with 55% of resident hunters obtaining a caribou seal (Figures 8 and 9). From 1995 to 2023, the percentage of resident hunters obtaining bison, black bear, grizzly bear, mountain goat and elk seals increased, while sheep seals remained stable at 31% after 2000 (Figure 8). Fewer than 1% of resident hunters obtained a deer seal.

Among non-resident outfitter guided hunters, 71% obtained a caribou seal, followed by moose (70%) and sheep (58%). 77% of non-resident outfitter guided hunters obtained a grizzly bear seal (Figure 9).

Non-resident special guided hunters followed similar preferences to resident hunters, with 87% obtaining a moose seal and 63% obtaining a caribou seal (Figure 9).

Figure 9.

Average percentage of licensed hunters that had a seal per species in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023. Grey bars represent the percentage of licensed hunters who obtained a second seal for caribou and black bears.



COVID-19 pandemic

Public health measures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic were implemented in 2020 and included travel restrictions, border controls and self-isolation requirements within the Yukon and at national and international levels. These measures resulted in changes to licences obtained and big game harvest for resident and non-resident hunters. These changes occurred primarily in the 2020 hunting season, and to a lesser extent in 2021 and 2022. As a result, the analysis and interpretation of harvest trends presented in this report must take into account these observed changes.

During the 2020 hunting season, 4,778 Yukon residents obtained a licence, which is the highest number recorded from 1995 to 2023 (Figure 1). The number of big game animals harvested by resident hunters in 2020 (1,335 animals) was also the highest during the reporting period (Figure 10).

In contrast, the number of non-resident hunters obtaining a licence declined from an average of 709 per year from 2015 to 2019 to 347 in 2020 (Figure 1; Table 2). Following the COVID-19 pandemic, non-resident outfitter guided hunters obtained the highest number of licences since 1995 (682 in 2022; Figure 1, Table 2). Fewer seals were purchased by non-resident outfitter guided hunters in 2020 (979) compared to an average of 2,393 seals per year from 2015 to 2019.

Table 2.

Number of licences obtained by non-resident hunters in the Yukon from 2015 to 2023.

Season	Non-resident outfitter guided	Non-resident special guided	Total
Avg. 2015 to 2019	616	93	709
2020	299	48	347
2021	550	79	629
2022	682	93	775
2023	630	100	730

During 2020, the number of big game animals harvested by non-resident outfitter guided hunters was the lowest recorded from 1995 to 2023 (Figure 10). Two hundred and fifty-three (253) big game animals were harvested that year compared to an average of 561 per year from 2015 to 2019.

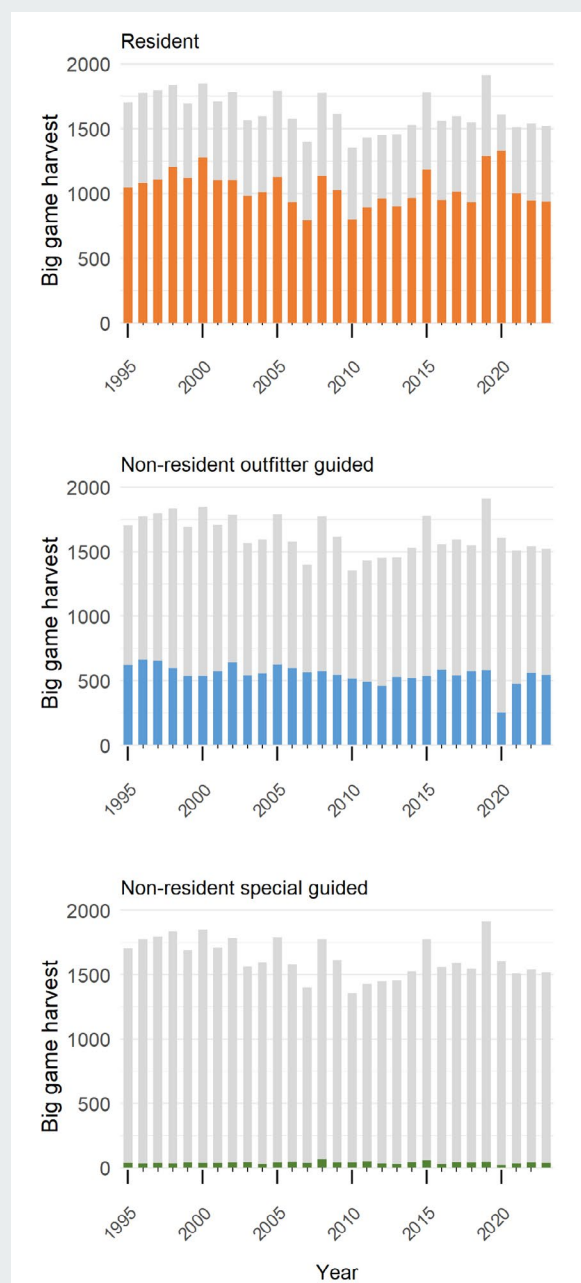
The origins of non-resident outfitter guided hunters also changed in 2020. The average number of Canadian non-resident outfitter guided hunters per year was 101 (16% of total non-resident outfitter guided) during the five years preceding 2020. In 2020, the number of Canadian non-resident outfitter guided hunters increased to 270 (90% of total non-resident outfitter guided). In 2021, the number of Canadian non-resident outfitter guided hunters was 177 (32%).

Big game harvest

From 1995 to 2023, the average number of big game animals harvested per year by licensed hunters declined from 1,761 (1995 to 1999) to 1,607 (2018 to 2023, excluding 2020; Figure 10).

Figure 10.

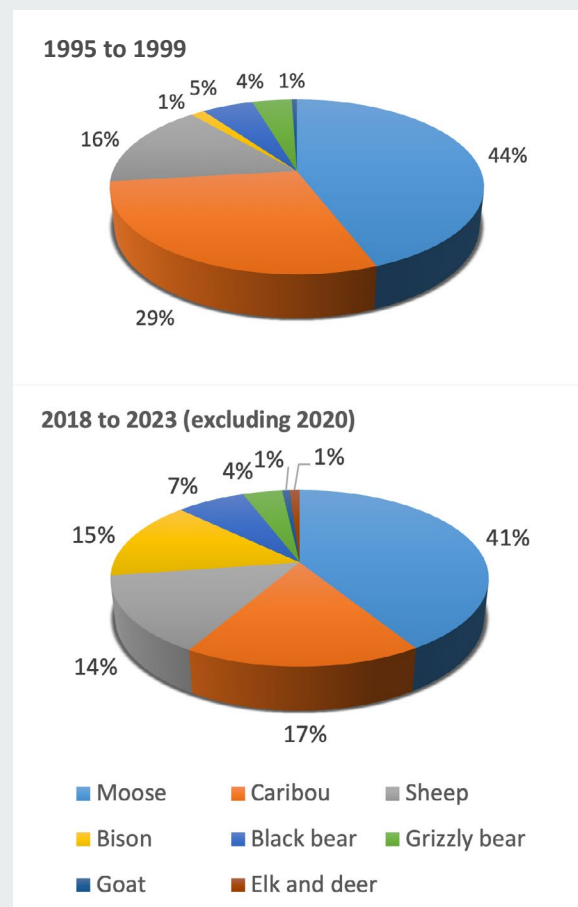
Number of big game animals harvested by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023. Grey bars represent the total licensed harvest.



The relative species composition of harvested big game animals changed from 1995 to 2023, with fewer caribou and more bison harvested (Figure 11). As a percentage of total big game harvest, caribou harvest declined by 12% (from 29% to 17%), while bison harvest increased by 13% in later years (2018 to 2023, excluding 2020) compared to earlier years (1995 to 1999; Figure 11). The percentage of harvest attributed to moose, black bears, mountain goats, grizzly bears and sheep remained relatively stable between the two periods, varying by plus or minus 3% (Figure 11).

Figure 11.

Annual average percentage of big game species harvested in the Yukon by licensed hunters from 1995 to 1999 and 2018 to 2023 (excluding 2020).

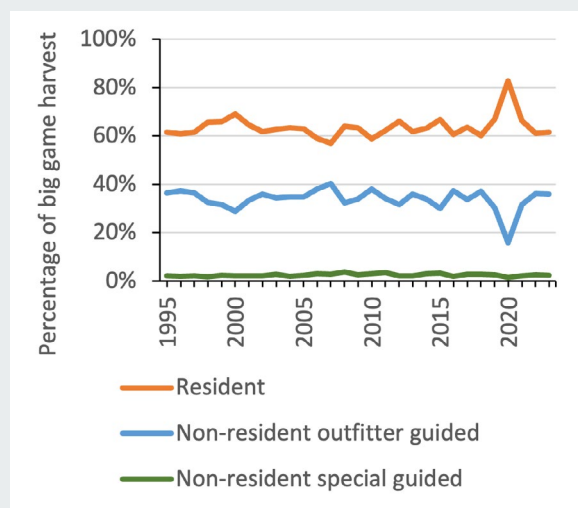


The introduction of bison, deer and elk licensed hunts (in 1997, 2006 and 2009, respectively) provided new big game species harvest opportunities. Deer and elk hunting opportunities are limited and represent a limited percentage of total big game harvest (Figure 11).

Resident hunters harvested on average 1,029 (64%) of big game animals per year. Non-resident outfitter guided hunters harvested on average 566 (34%) and special guided hunters harvested 41 (2%) big game animals per year. From 1995 to 2023, the percentage of big game harvested by hunter type remained relatively stable, with the exception of 2020 (Figure 12). On average, 801 resident hunters, 429 non-resident outfitter guided hunters and 36 non-resident special guided hunters harvested one or more big game animals during a hunting season.

Figure 12.

Percentage of big game harvested by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.



Timing of harvest

Since 1995, hunting season dates for some species, populations or areas have changed periodically. These changes were limited and are presented in each species section. To provide a consistent reference point, general seasonal timing is presented based on the 2023 season dates (Table 3).

Table 3.

Big game hunting season dates in the Yukon in 2023.

Species	Start	End
Moose	Aug. 1	Oct. 31
Caribou - Porcupine	Aug. 1	Jan. 31
Caribou - Fortymile	Aug. 1 Dec. 1	Sep. 9 Mar. 31
Caribou - Woodland	Aug. 1	Oct. 31
Thinhorn sheep	Aug. 1	Oct. 31
Bison	Sep. 1	Mar. 31
Black bear	Apr. 15 Aug. 1	June 21 Nov. 15
Grizzly bear	Apr. 15 Aug. 1	June 21 Nov. 15
Mountain goat	Aug. 1	Oct. 31
Elk	Apr. 1	Mar. 31
Deer	Aug. 1	Nov. 30

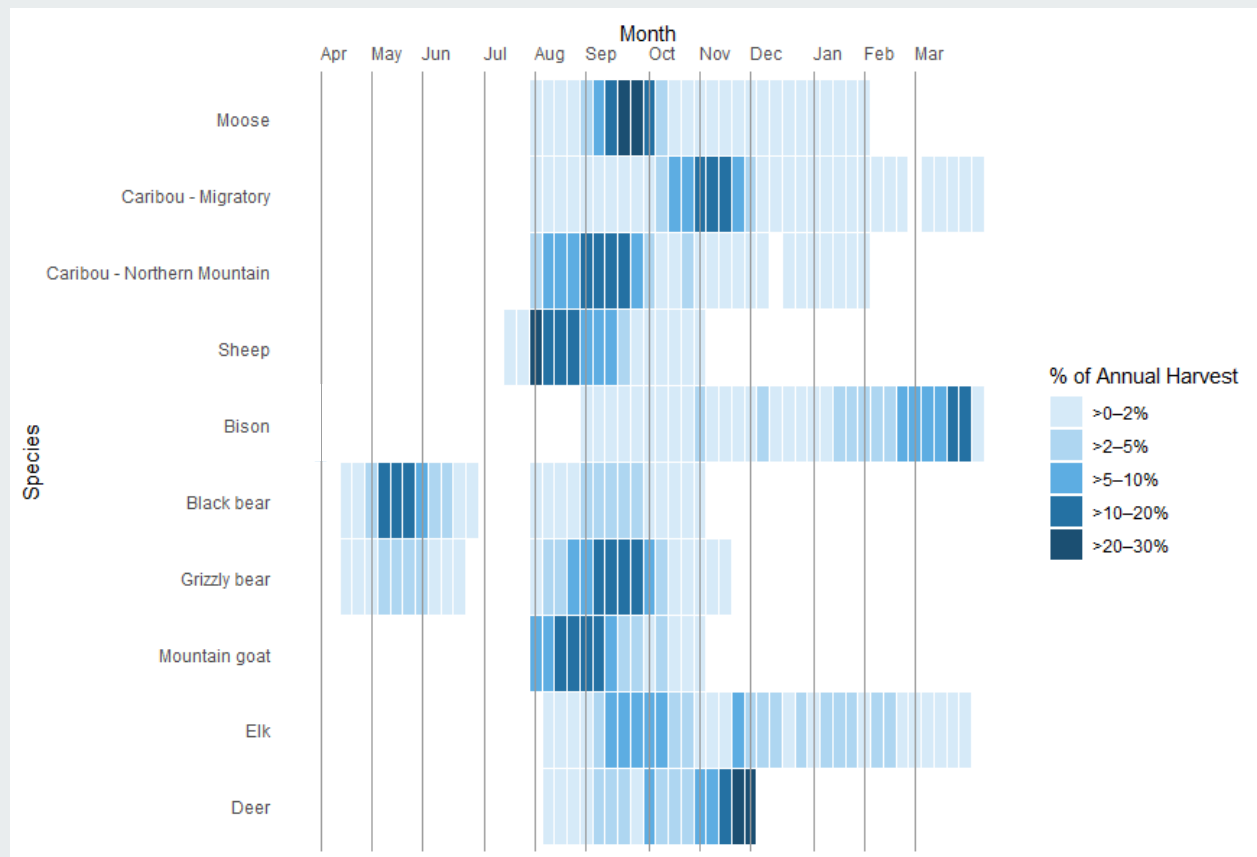
The spring harvest (April 15 to June 21) consists mostly of black bear harvest with some grizzly bear harvest. The main species harvested during the fall season (August 1 to October 31) include sheep, mountain goats, woodland caribou, grizzly bears, elk and moose.

The main species harvested during the winter season (November 1 to March 31) include migratory caribou, deer and bison.

Elk harvest is distributed throughout the year (Figure 13). Kluane Wildlife Sanctuary sheep opens July 21. Trapping concession holders can harvest caribou and moose up to January 31.

Figure 13.

Percentage of big game harvested per week by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.



Moose

Moose range throughout the Yukon with a small exception in southwest Yukon where the terrain is dominated by rugged mountains and glaciers. Yukon's moose population is estimated at approximately 70,000 based on available information.

Management and regulation

Moose are managed using Moose Management Units (MMU), which are groupings of GMSs. In total, there are 61 MMUs that encompass, to the best extent possible, biologically distinct moose populations (Government of Yukon 2016a). In 2016, the Department of Environment released science-based guidelines for the management of moose in the Yukon (Government of Yukon 2016a). These guidelines provide a framework for monitoring moose populations and describe harvest management decisions specific to moose populations in the Yukon.

Licensed hunters can harvest one male moose each year. The cost of a moose seal increased from \$5 to \$10 in 2017.

Since 1995, several regulation changes related to moose harvest were implemented in alignment with sustainable harvest objectives. Table 4 summarizes moose specific regulation changes that may have affected licensed harvest trends.

Seals

The number of moose seals obtained by licensed hunters increased from a low of 2,898 in 1996 to a high of 4,223 in 2016 before declining to 3,776 in 2021 (Figure 14). The number of seals obtained by non-resident outfitter guided hunters varied from 353 to 511 from 1995 to 2023 with a general increasing trend. 2020 was markedly lower with non-resident outfitter guided hunters obtaining 190 seals. The highest number of moose seals issued to non-resident outfitter guided hunters was in 2022 (511 seals). The number of moose seals obtained by non-resident special guided hunters ranged from a low of 54 in 1996 (excluding 39 in 2020) to a high of 91 in 2008 and 2017 and averaged 76 seals per year (Figure 14).

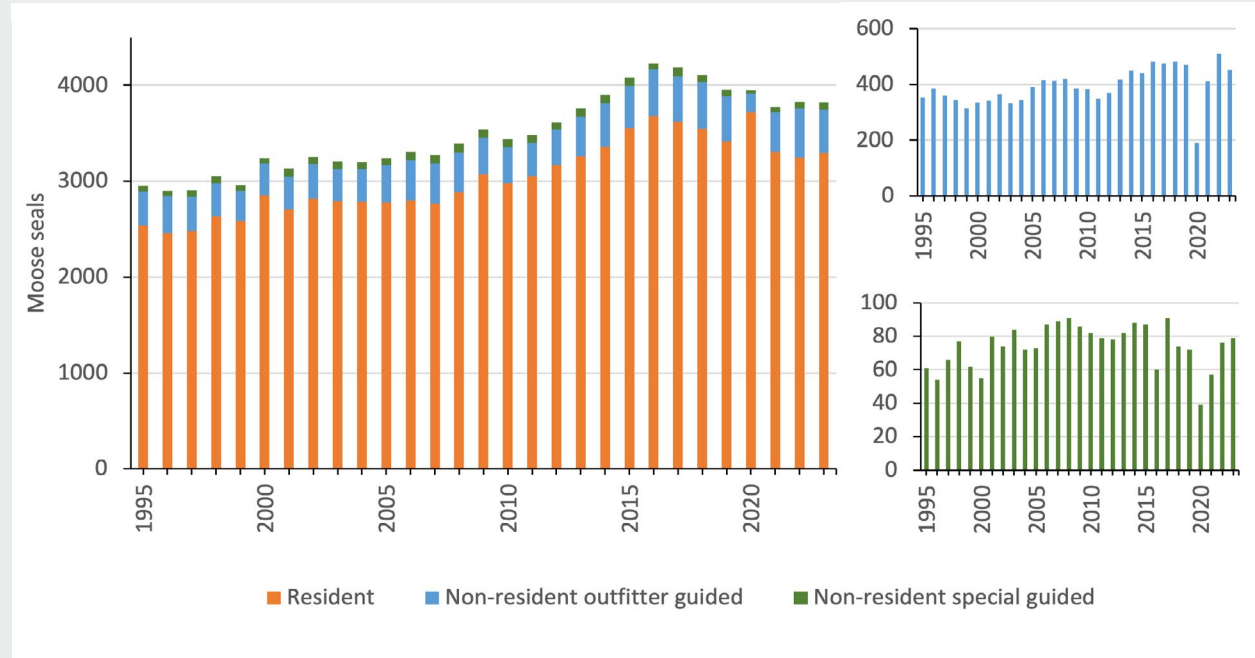
Table 4.

Key moose harvest management regulation changes in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.

Season	GMZ or GMS	Regulation change
1996	GMZ 7 and majority of GMZ 9	PHA and extended season registration put in place.
2018	GMZ 7 and majority of GMZ 9	End of the extended season registration hunt.
2000	5-14, 5-15, 5-18 to 5-20, 5-27 to 5-47	Moose hunting permits now available: 10 permits issued.
2001	5-14, 5-15, 5-18 to 5-20, 5-27, 5-29	Permit is no longer required.
2015	4-44 to 4-46	Harvest threshold set in Faro area.
2022	5-48 to 5-50	Sifton-Miners MMU is now on PHA: 12 permits issued.
2022	8-20, 8-22, 10-01, 10-02, 10-03	South Canol MMU is now on PHA: 10 permits issued.
2022	2-56, 2-58, 2-59, 2-62, 2-63, 4-04, 4-05, 4-06	Mayo MMU now a threshold hunt opening on Sep 1. Threshold set at 11.

Figure 14.

Number of moose seals obtained by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.



Harvest

The number of moose harvested by resident hunters decreased from an annual average of 550 (1995 to 1999) to 399 (2018 to 2023, excluding 2020). Three of the five lowest years of moose harvest since 1995 occurred during the last three years of the reporting period, while the three highest years of moose harvest occurred prior to 1999 (Figure 15). The average number of moose harvested by non-resident outfitter guided hunters was 222 moose per year (excluding 2020). Apart from 2020, harvest by non-resident special guided hunters remained stable at an average of 22 moose per year (Figure 15).

From 1995 to 2023, resident hunters accounted for an average of 66% of total licensed moose harvest (Figure 16).

Harvest sustainability

The sustainable harvest for moose within an MMU is based on recommendations described in science-based guidelines for the management of moose in the Yukon (Government of Yukon 2016a).

The percentage of the sustainable harvest taken by licensed hunters for a given MMU was calculated using annual average licensed harvest from 2019 to 2023 and available population estimates (see Government of Yukon 2016a, pages 15-16). These calculations were based on licensed harvest only. Subsistence harvest data were not available, and therefore the total harvest for each MMU is unknown. In northern Yukon, no population survey information was available to evaluate harvest sustainability. However, in these areas, licensed harvest of moose was low (Figures 17 and 18).

For most MMUs in the Yukon, licensed hunters harvested less than 50% of the sustainable moose harvest from 2019 to 2023. Out of the 42 MMUs included in this assessment, 32 (76%) were below 50% (Figure 17). MMUs with PHAs had licensed harvest less than 50% of the sustainable moose harvest. Licensed hunters harvested 50% to 75% of the sustainable moose harvest in seven MMUs (17%) and more than 75% in three MMUs (7%; Figure 17).

Figure 15.

Number of moose harvested by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023. Grey bars represent the total licensed harvest.

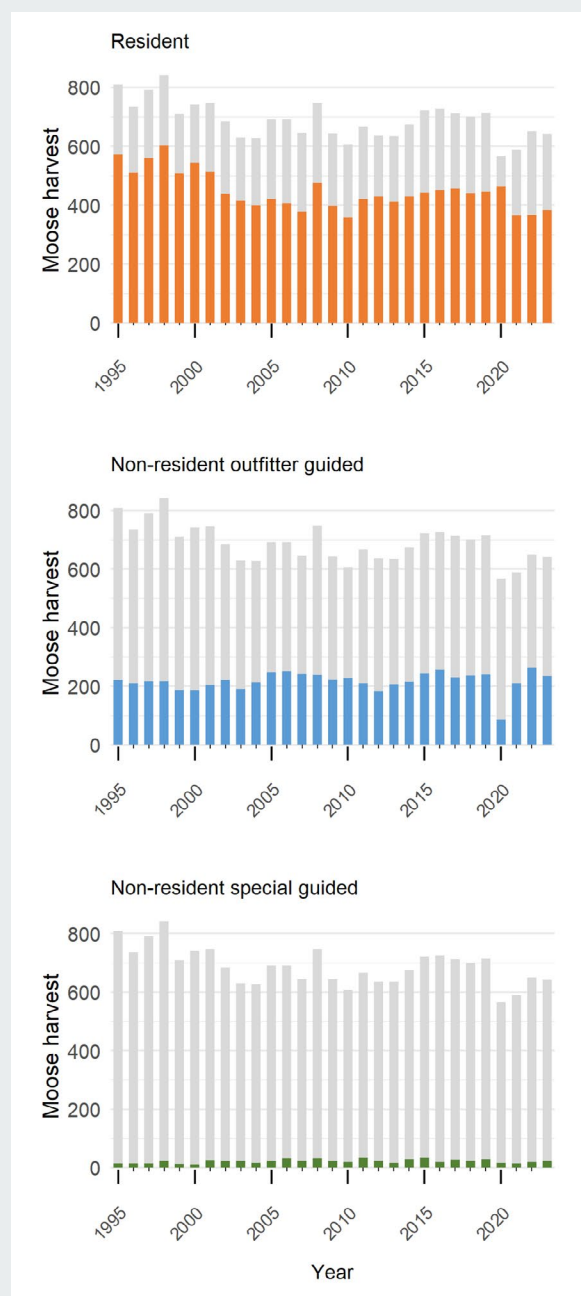
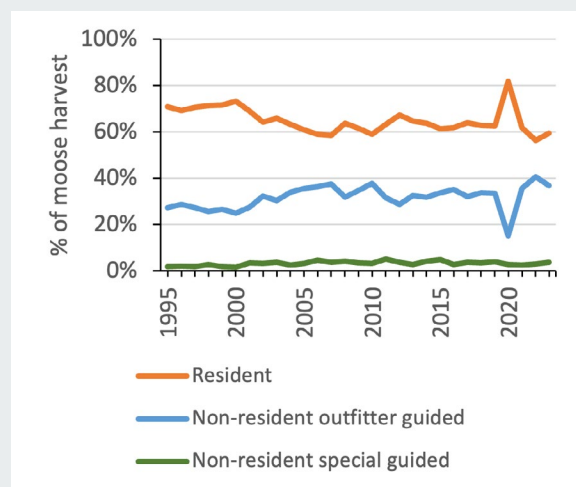


Figure 16.

Percentage of moose harvested by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.



Threshold hunts were implemented in the Mayo MMU in 2022 and Faro MMU in 2015. Licensed harvest in the Mayo MMU was over 25% and less than 50% of the sustainable moose harvest. Licensed harvest in the Faro MMU exceeded 75% of the sustainable harvest; however, the moose population has remained stable (Figure 17; Beatty et al. 2024).

Harvest distribution

We observed that the distribution of moose harvest by licensed hunters varied from 1995 to 2023 (Figure 18). In the Sifton-Miner area, licensed resident harvest increased prior to 2021 and decreased in subsequent years following the introduction of a PHA in 2022 (Figure 19). Harvest by non-resident outfitter guided hunters remained dispersed, with higher harvest occurring in Game Management Zone (GMZ) 4 (Figure 20). GMSs with the highest overlap of moose harvest between resident and non-resident outfitter guided hunters varied from 1995 to 2023 (Figure 21).

Figure 17.

Average percentage of sustainable moose harvest taken by licensed hunters by Moose Management Unit in the Yukon from 2019 to 2023 (PHA = Permit Hunt Authorization).

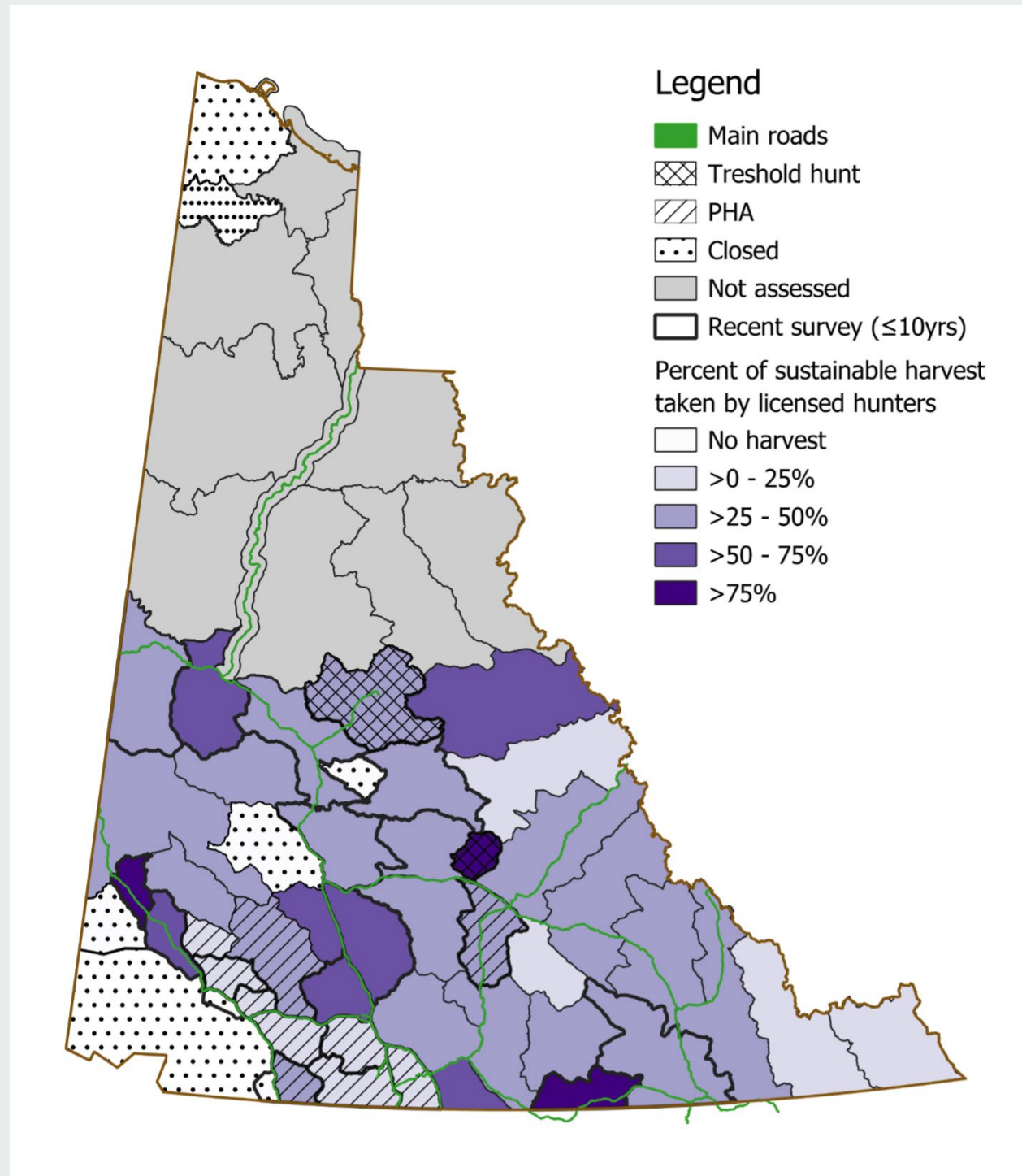


Figure 18.

Annual average number of moose harvested by all licensed hunters by Game Management Subzone.

Legend

■ Main roads

Annual harvest by licensed hunters

■ >0 - 5

■ >5 - 10

■ >10 - 15

■ >15 - 24

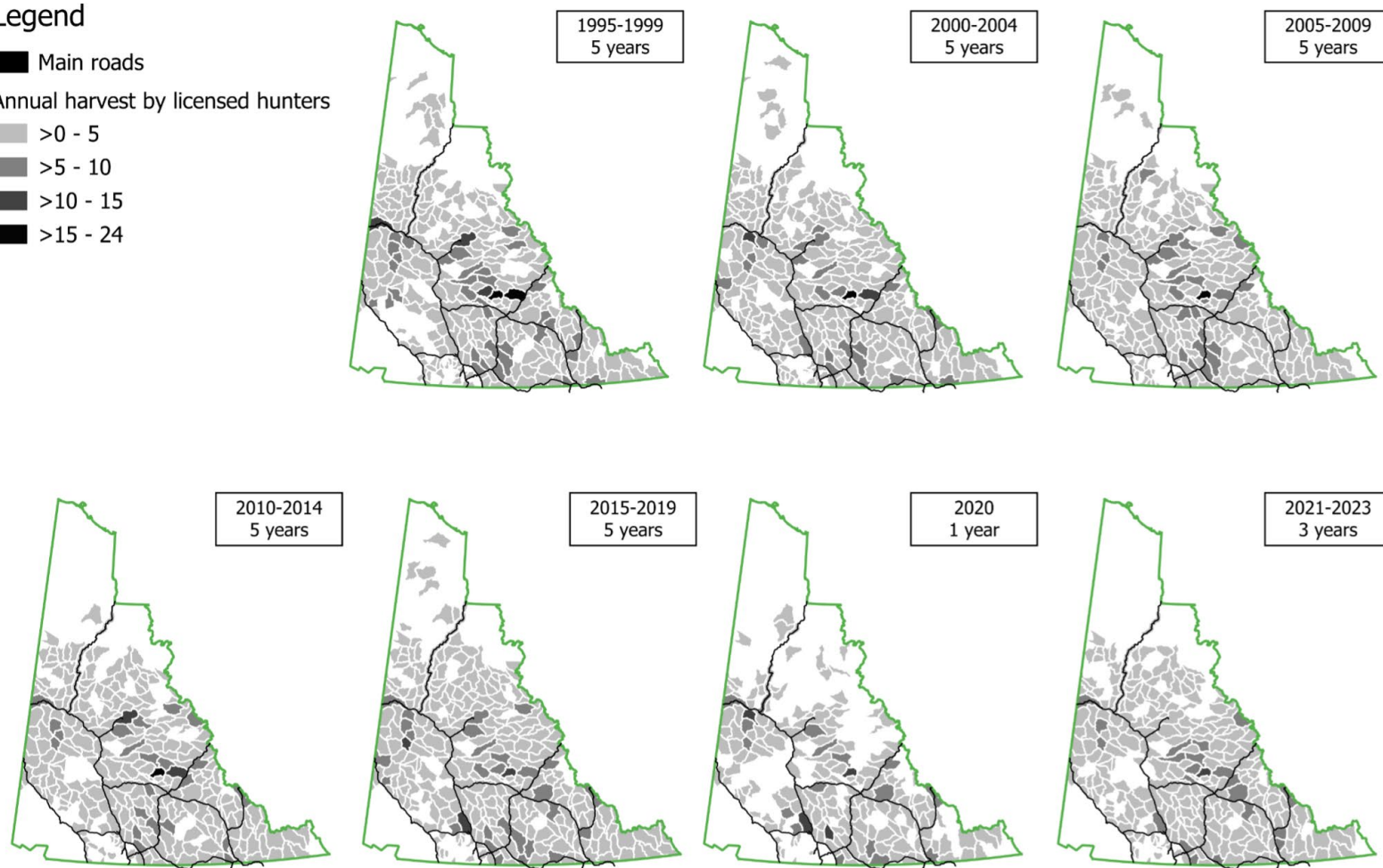


Figure 19.

Annual average number of moose harvested by licensed resident hunters by Game Management Subzone.

Legend

■ Main roads

Annual harvest by resident

■ >0 - 3

■ >3 - 6

■ >6 - 9

■ >9 - 18

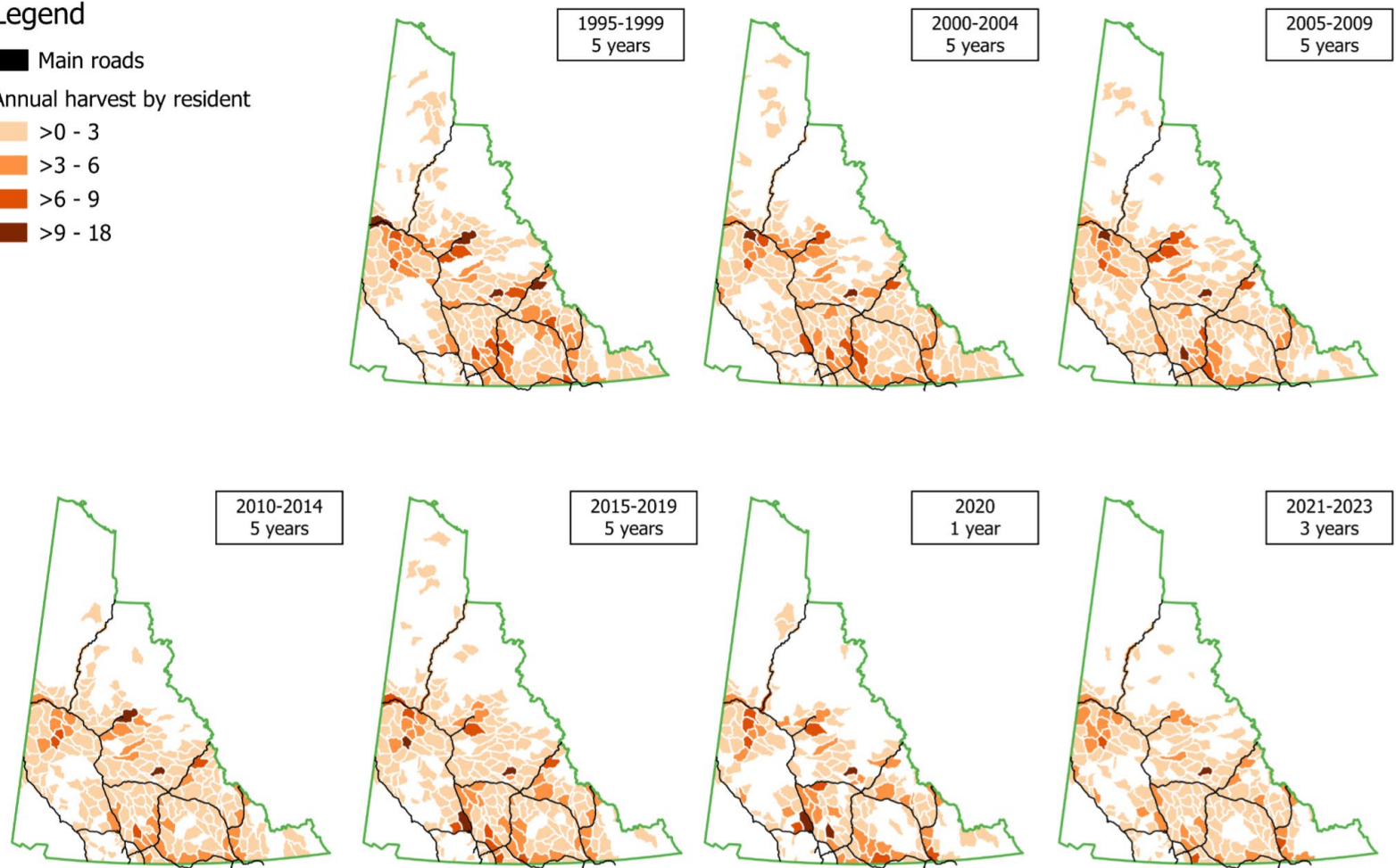


Figure 20.

Annual average number of moose harvested by non-resident outfitter guided hunters by Game Management Subzone.

Legend

■ Main roads

■ No outfitting concessions

Annual harvest by non-resident
outfitter guided

■ >0 - 2

■ >2 - 4

■ >4 - 6

■ >6 - 11

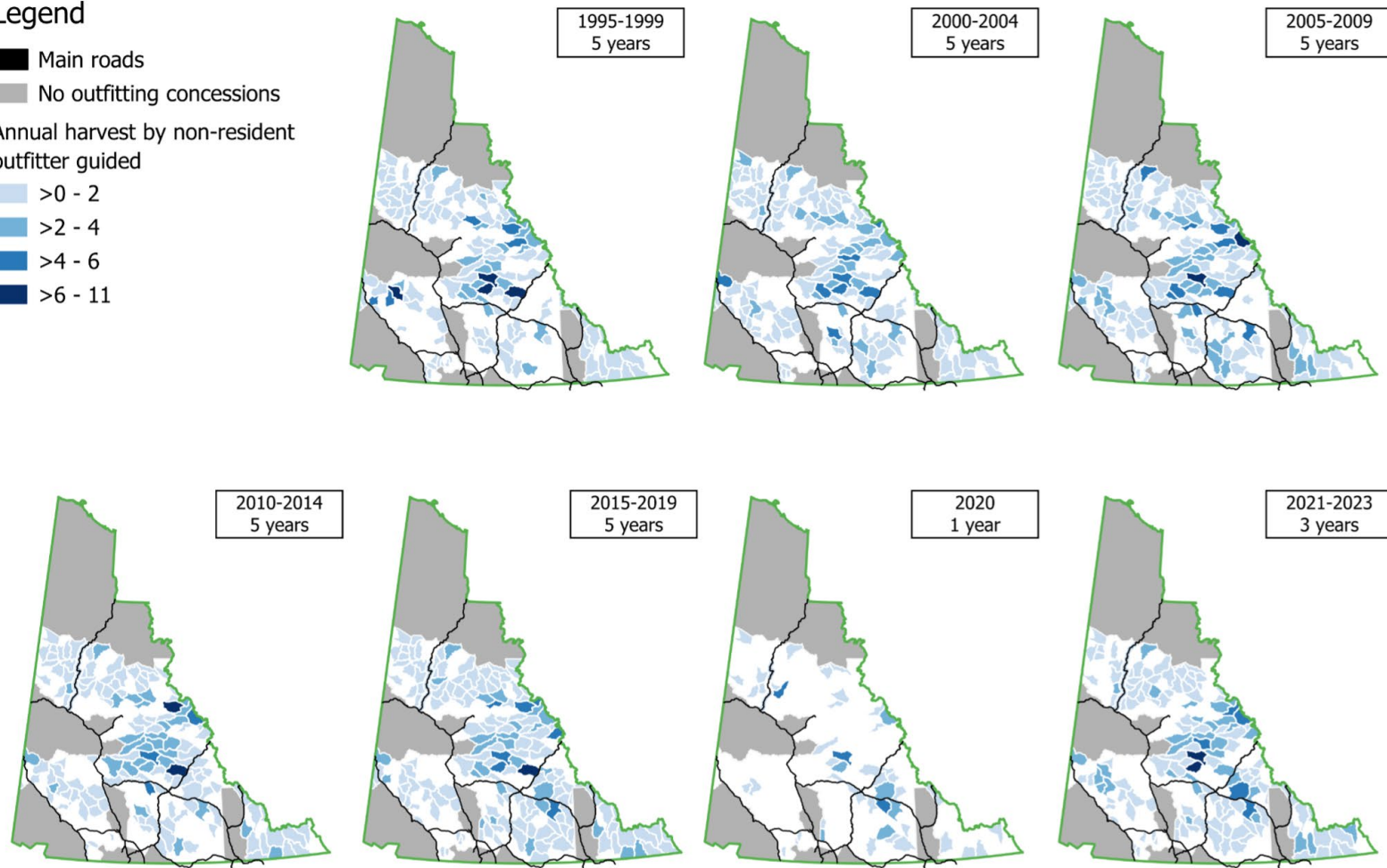
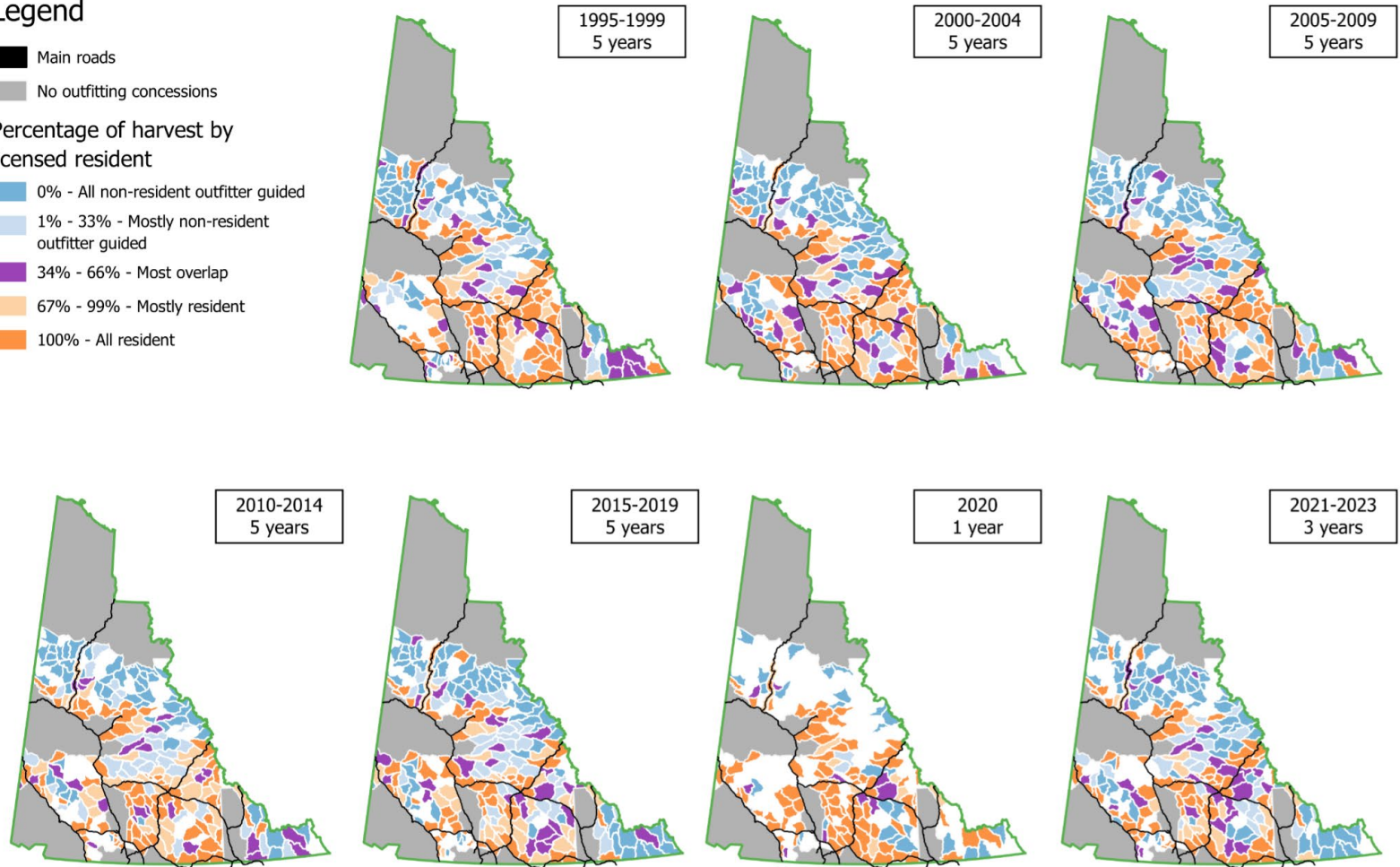


Figure 21.

Annual average percentage of moose harvested by licensed resident hunters by Game Management Subzone. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of moose harvested by resident hunters by the total number of moose harvested by resident hunters and non-resident outfitter guided hunters. Harvest by non-resident special guided hunters was not included in these maps.

Legend

- Main roads
- No outfitting concessions
- Percentage of harvest by licensed resident**
 - 0% - All non-resident outfitter guided
 - 1% - 33% - Mostly non-resident outfitter guided
 - 34% - 66% - Most overlap
 - 67% - 99% - Mostly resident
 - 100% - All resident



Caribou

In the Yukon, there are three migratory caribou herds, 26 herds from the Northern Mountain population of woodland caribou and one group from the Boreal population of woodland caribou.

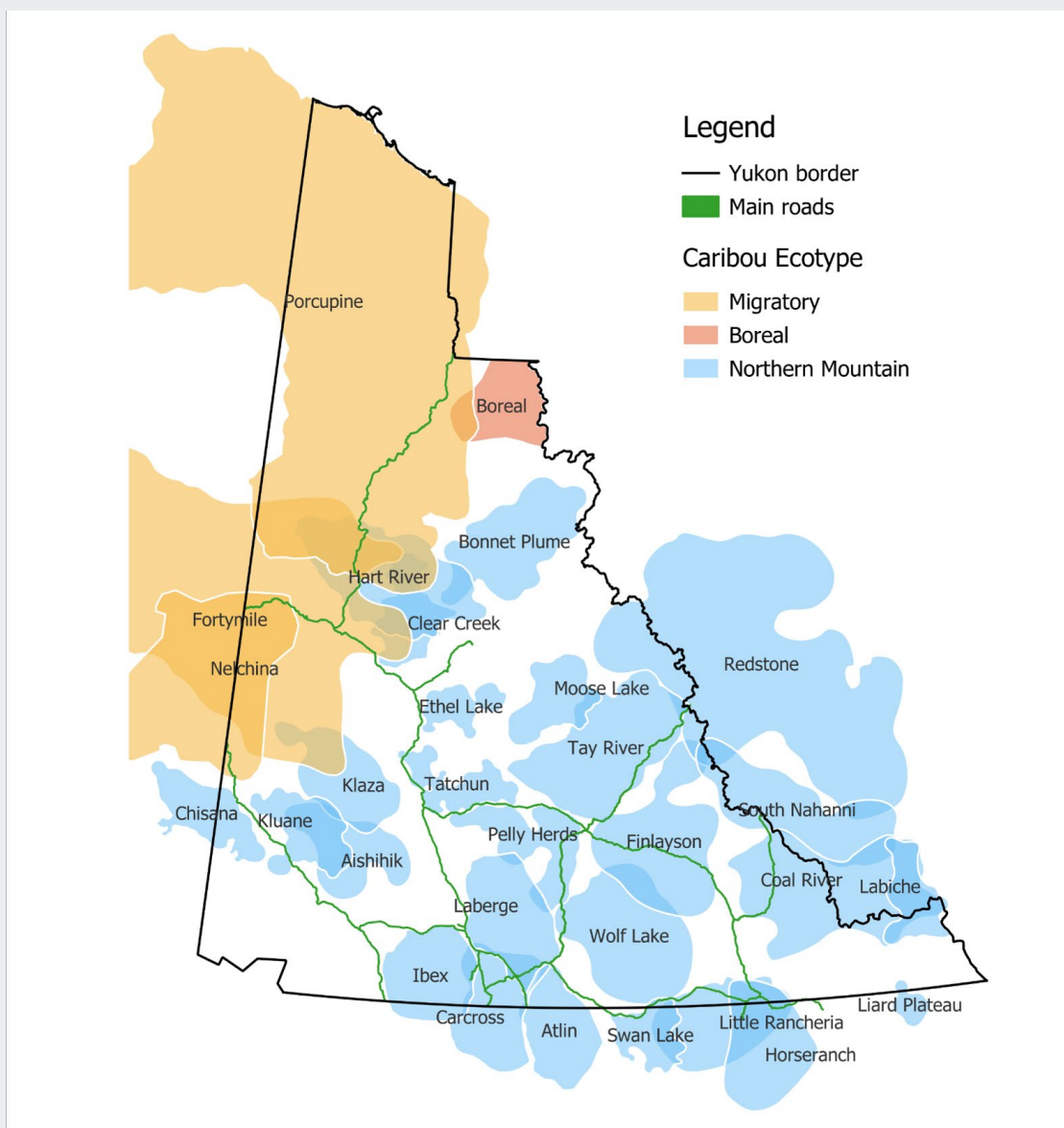
The three migratory caribou herds (Nelchina, Fortymile and Porcupine) have extensive portions of their ranges in Alaska. The Porcupine caribou herd also extends into the Northwest Territories. In 2023, these herds represented approximately 256,000 caribou

based on available population estimates.

The 26 Northern Mountain caribou herds occupy some or all of their range in the Yukon, with several herds extending into British Columbia, Alaska and the Northwest Territories. The estimated number of Northern Mountain caribou is 42,000. The Boreal caribou group is distributed in a small area in northeast Yukon with most of its subpopulation's range within the Northwest Territories (Figure 22).

Figure 22.

Caribou herd ranges in the Yukon as of 2023.



Management and regulation

Northern Mountain caribou are managed by herd in accordance with science-based guidelines for the management of Northern Mountain caribou in the Yukon (Government of Yukon 2016b). In addition, three herds (Porcupine, Fortymile and Chisana) are guided by herd-specific management plans. These plans and guidelines provide a framework for monitoring and implementing harvest management decisions specific to caribou populations in the Yukon.

Licensed hunters can harvest their first caribou from any herd. Licensed hunters can harvest a second caribou, but it must be from the Porcupine caribou herd. The cost of a caribou seal for residents increased from \$5 to \$10 in 2017. Since 1995, several regulation changes related to caribou harvest were implemented in alignment with sustainable harvest objectives based on status and population trends of various herds. Table 5 summarizes caribou specific regulation changes that may have affected licensed harvest trends.

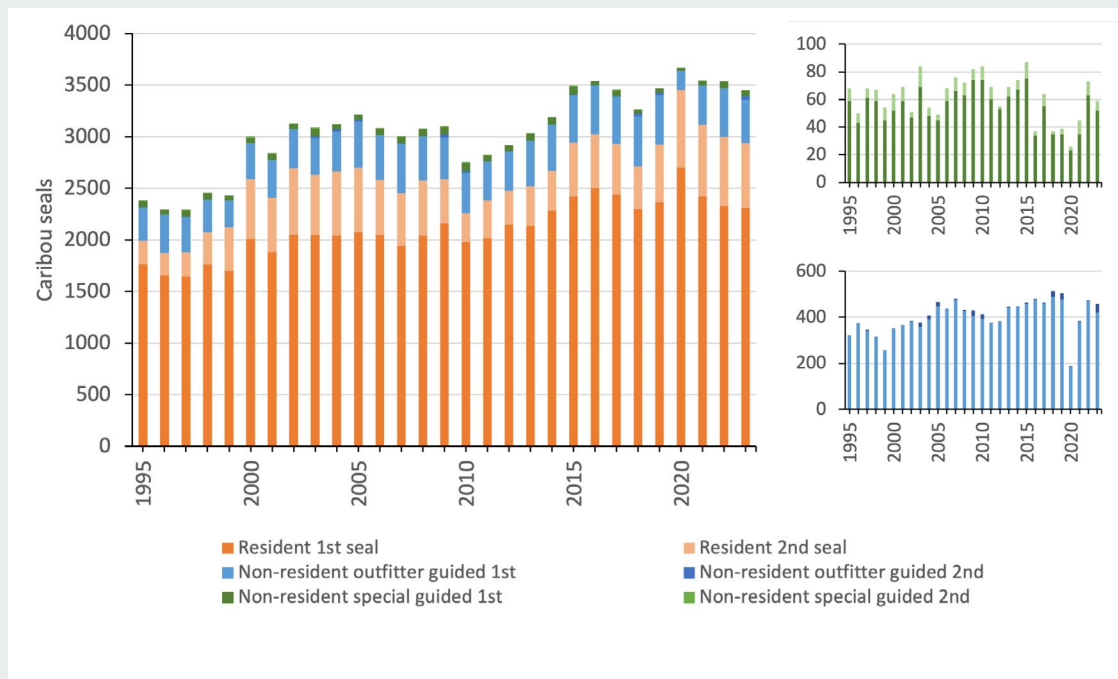
Table 5.

Key caribou harvest management regulation changes in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.

Herd	Season	GMZ or GMS	Regulation change
Migratory			
Fortymile	1996	3-01, 3-06	Fortymile caribou hunting closed.
	2019	2-19, 2-20, 2-21, 2-24	Fortymile caribou herd opened on permit (winter threshold).
	2020	3-01 to 3-06, part of 3-07, 3-10, 3-12	Fortymile caribou herd fall registration opened.
Porcupine	2002	1-04, 1-05, 1-12 to 1-72,	Cow hunting season extended to January 31.
	2010	2-01 to 2-44, 2-66 to 2-69	Cows protected from hunting.
Nelchina	2022	5-04 to 5-06	Threshold hunt for Nelchina caribou (was closed before).
Northern Mountain			
Chisana	1996	5-06, 5-07	Chisana caribou hunting closed.
Laberge	1996	8-12 to 8-17, 8-26, 8-27	Laberge caribou hunting closed.
Finlayson	1998	10-05 to 10-09,	Permit hunt for Finlayson caribou (was open before).
	2018	10-17 to 10-19, 11-02 to 11-18,	Finlayson caribou PHA reduced to 0.
	2019	11-20 to 11-23	All licensed hunting of Finlayson caribou prohibited (no quota, no PHA).
Aishihik	2002	5-27, 5-29 to 5-43, 5-45 to 5-47	PHA for Aishihik Caribou (was closed before).
Klaza	2002	5-22 to 5-26	PHA for Klaza caribou (was closed before).
Various herds	2012	5-04, 5-05, 5-08, 5-15 to 5-17	Caribou hunting closed.

Figure 23.

Number of caribou seals obtained by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.



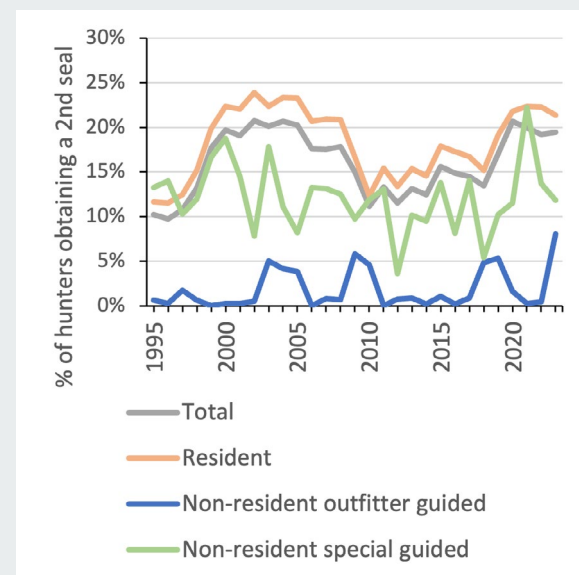
Seals

The number of caribou seals obtained by licensed hunters increased from an average of 2,373 per year in earlier years (1995 to 1999) to 3,455 per year in later years (2018 to 2023, excluding 2020; Figure 23). The number of seals obtained by resident hunters generally increased from a low of 1,872 in 1996 to a high of 3,455 in 2020. The number of seals obtained by non-resident outfitter guided hunters generally increased from a low of 258 in 1999 to a high of 514 in 2018. The number of seals obtained by non-resident special guided hunters ranged from 37 to 87 (excluding 2020) and averaged 62 per year (Figure 23).

The percentage of resident hunters who obtained a second caribou seal was at its highest (above 20%) from 1999 to 2008 and from 2020 to 2023 (Figure 24). On average, 2% of non-resident outfitter guided and 12% of non-resident special guided hunters obtained a second seal for caribou.

Figure 24.

Percentage of licensed hunters who obtained a second caribou seal in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.



Harvest

Licensed hunters harvested caribou from fewer GMSs in later years (average of 80 GMSs per year from 2018 to 2023, excluding 2020) compared to earlier years (average of 105 GMSs per year from 1995 to 1999).

Migratory caribou

During the reporting period, 98% of migratory caribou harvested by licensed hunters were from the Porcupine caribou herd. Licensed harvest opportunities for the Nelchina and Fortymile herds were limited due to conservation concerns and accessibility. There are currently no opportunities for non-residents to hunt these two herds.

The total number of migratory caribou harvested by licensed hunters in the Yukon declined from an average of 258 per year from 1995 to 2009 to an average of 67 per year from 2010 to 2023, with substantial annual variability (Figure 25). Years with higher harvest coincided with years when the Porcupine caribou were more available to hunters. The Porcupine caribou herd fluctuated between 123,000 and 218,000 animals from 1995 to 2017. The herd undertakes long migrations between calving areas on the coastal plains of Alaska and wintering range in Alaska, the Yukon and Northwest Territories. In some years, portions of their migratory and wintering areas occur near the Dempster Highway, where they are more accessible to licensed hunters. Since 2010, the herd has used areas near the Dempster Highway less frequently. For visualizations of migratory caribou harvest distribution trends, see Appendix 2.

Figure 25.

Number of migratory caribou harvested by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023. Grey bars represent the total licensed harvest.

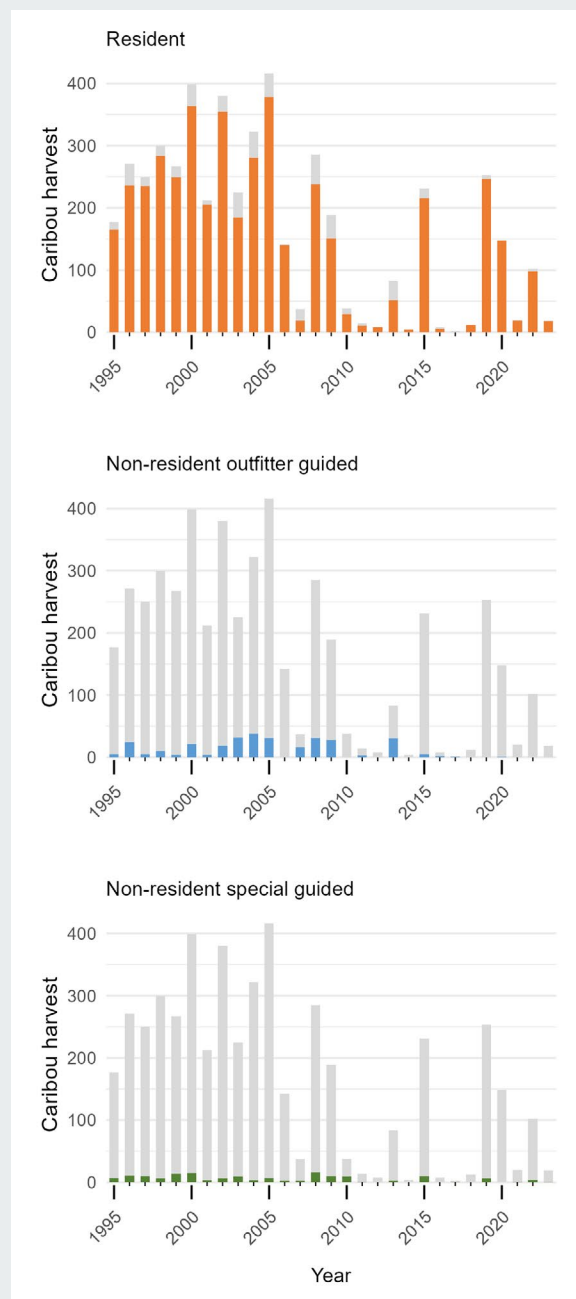
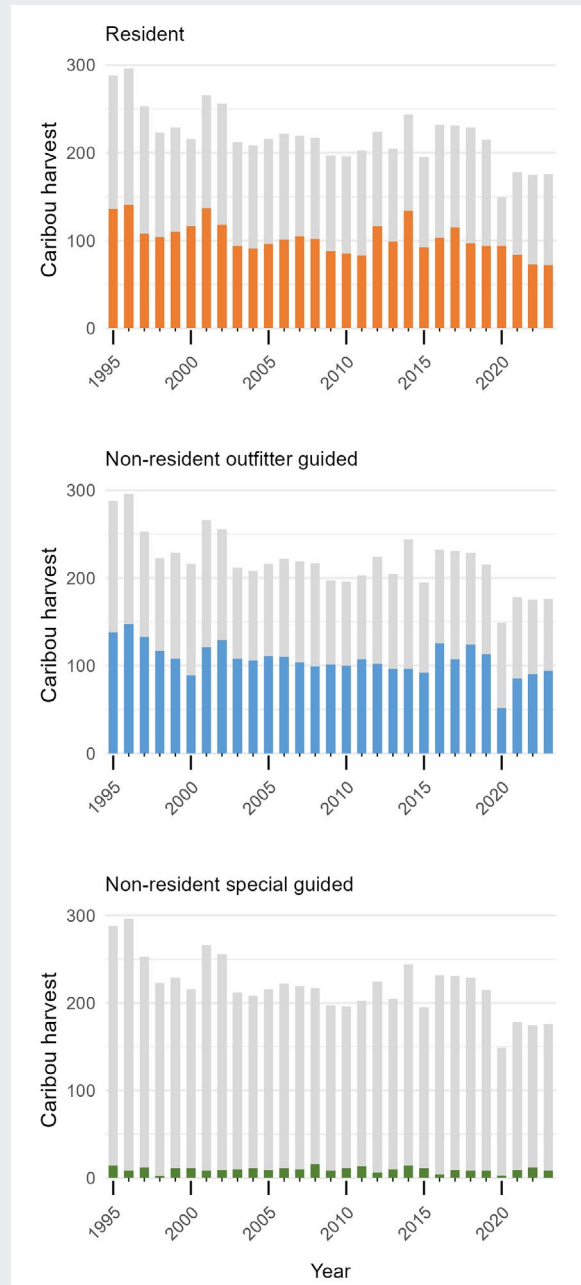


Figure 26.

Number of Northern Mountain caribou harvested by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023. Grey bars represent the total licensed harvest.



Northern Mountain caribou

The number of caribou harvested by licensed hunters decreased from an annual average of 260 (1995 to 1999) to 195 (2018 to 2023, excluding 2020). The last four years represent the lowest annual harvest numbers since 1995 (Figure 26). Northern Mountain caribou harvest by resident and non-resident outfitter guided hunters had a similar declining trend. Northern Mountain caribou harvest by non-resident special guided hunters was stable (Figure 26).

On average, resident hunters and non-resident outfitter guided hunters harvested 46% (103 caribou) and 49% (107 caribou), respectively, of the total Northern Mountain caribou per year, while non-resident special guided hunters harvested 4% (ten caribou; Figure 27).

Figure 27.

Percentage of Northern Mountain caribou harvested by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.



Harvest sustainability of Northern Mountain caribou

Sustainable harvest for each Northern Mountain caribou herd is based on recommendations from science-based guidelines for the management of Northern Mountain caribou in the Yukon (Government of Yukon 2016b). The percentage of the sustainable harvest taken by licensed hunters for each Northern Mountain caribou herd was calculated using the annual average licensed harvest from 2019 to 2023 and available population estimates (for a complete description, see Government of Yukon 2016b, pages 14 to 15). These calculations were based on Yukon licensed harvest only. Subsistence harvest data were not available, and therefore the total harvest for Northern Mountain caribou herds is unknown.

From 2019 to 2023, licensed hunters harvested less than 50% of the sustainable harvest for most Northern Mountain caribou herds (18 or 69%; Figure 28). Six of those herds were closed to licensed hunting and three had not had licensed harvest since 2019. Licensed hunters harvested above 50% and up to 75% of the sustainable harvest in four (15%) herds and more than 75% in four (15%) herds (Figure 28).

Licensed harvest was managed with PHAs for two herds, the Klaza and Aishihik herds. Licensed harvest for the Klaza and the Aishihik herds were 25% to 50% and 50% to 75%, respectively, reflecting permit allocations (Figure 28).

Harvest distribution

From 1995 to 2023, licensed hunters harvested Northern Mountain caribou from about 25 fewer GMSs. We observed that many of these subzones were in southeast Yukon (Figure 29). Resident hunters and non-resident special guided hunters tended to harvest Northern Mountain caribou more frequently in road-accessible areas, such as the North Canol and Nahanni Range roads (Figures 30 and 31). Non-resident outfitter guided hunters harvested Northern Mountain caribou in more remote areas (Figure 32). The harvest of Northern Mountain caribou by resident and non-resident outfitter guided hunters tended to overlap most around Kluane Lake, Tombstone Territorial Park, the Robert Campbell Highway and the North Canol Road (Figure 33).

Figure 28.

Average percentage of sustainable caribou harvest taken by licensed hunters from each Northern Mountain caribou herd in the Yukon from 2019 to 2023 (PHA = Permit Hunt Authorization).

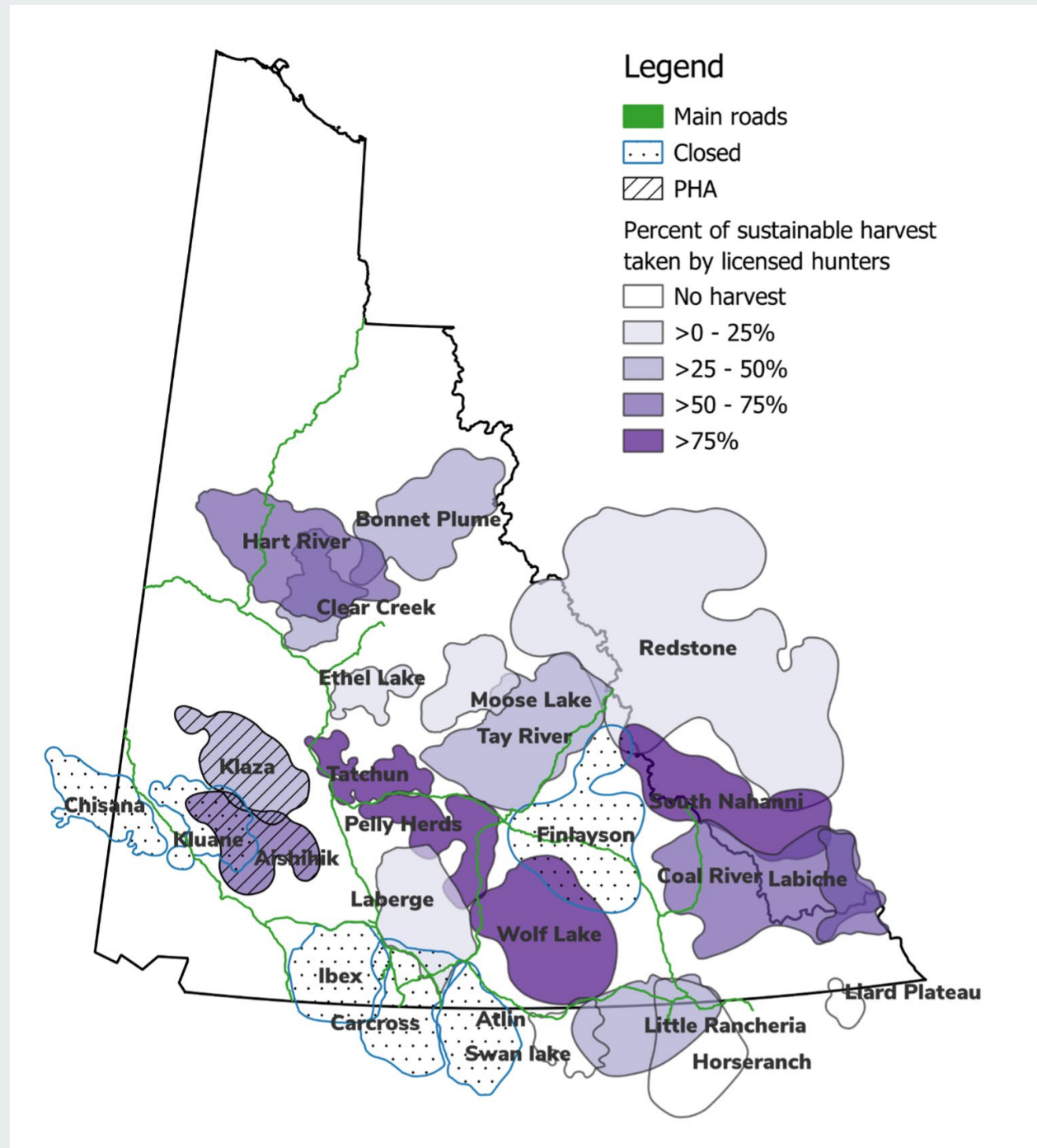


Figure 29.

Annual average number of Northern Mountain caribou harvested by licensed hunters by Game Management Subzone.

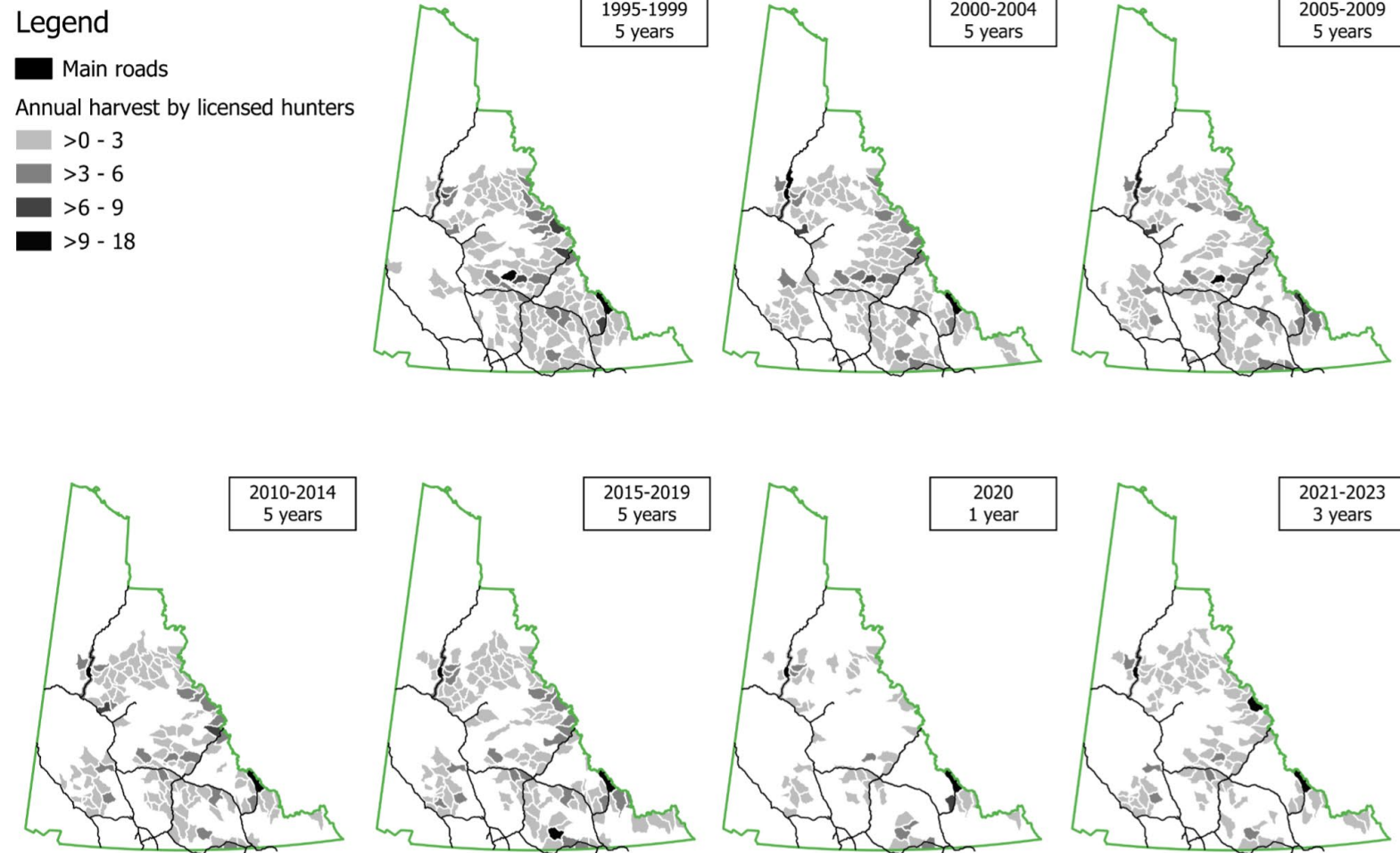


Figure 30.

Annual average number of Northern Mountain caribou harvested by licensed resident hunters by Game Management Subzone.

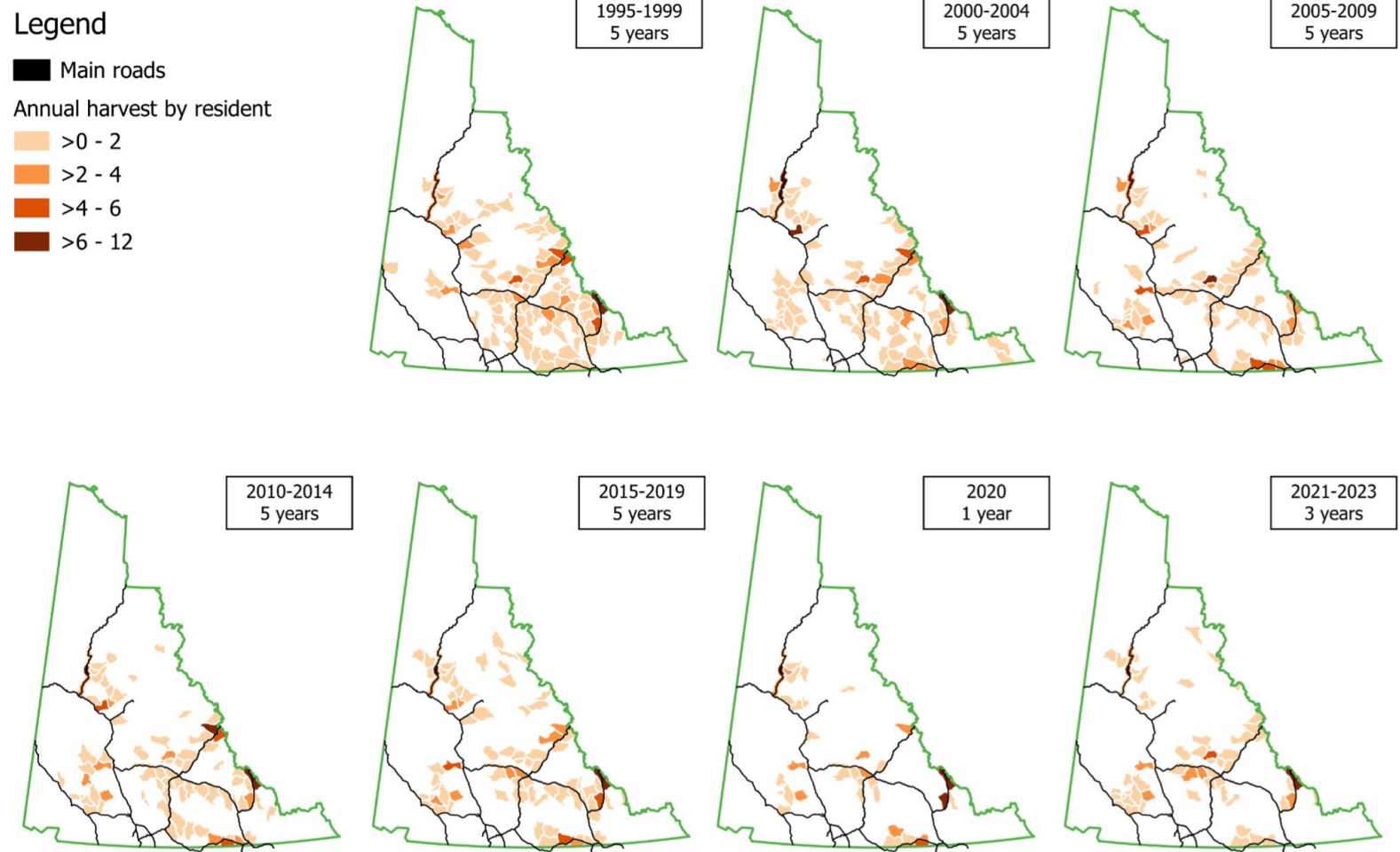


Figure 31.

Annual average number of Northern Mountain caribou harvested by non-resident special guided hunters by Game Management Subzone.

Legend

■ Main roads

Annual harvest by non-resident
special guided

■ >0 - 0.5

■ >0.5 - 1

■ >1 - 2

■ >2 - 3

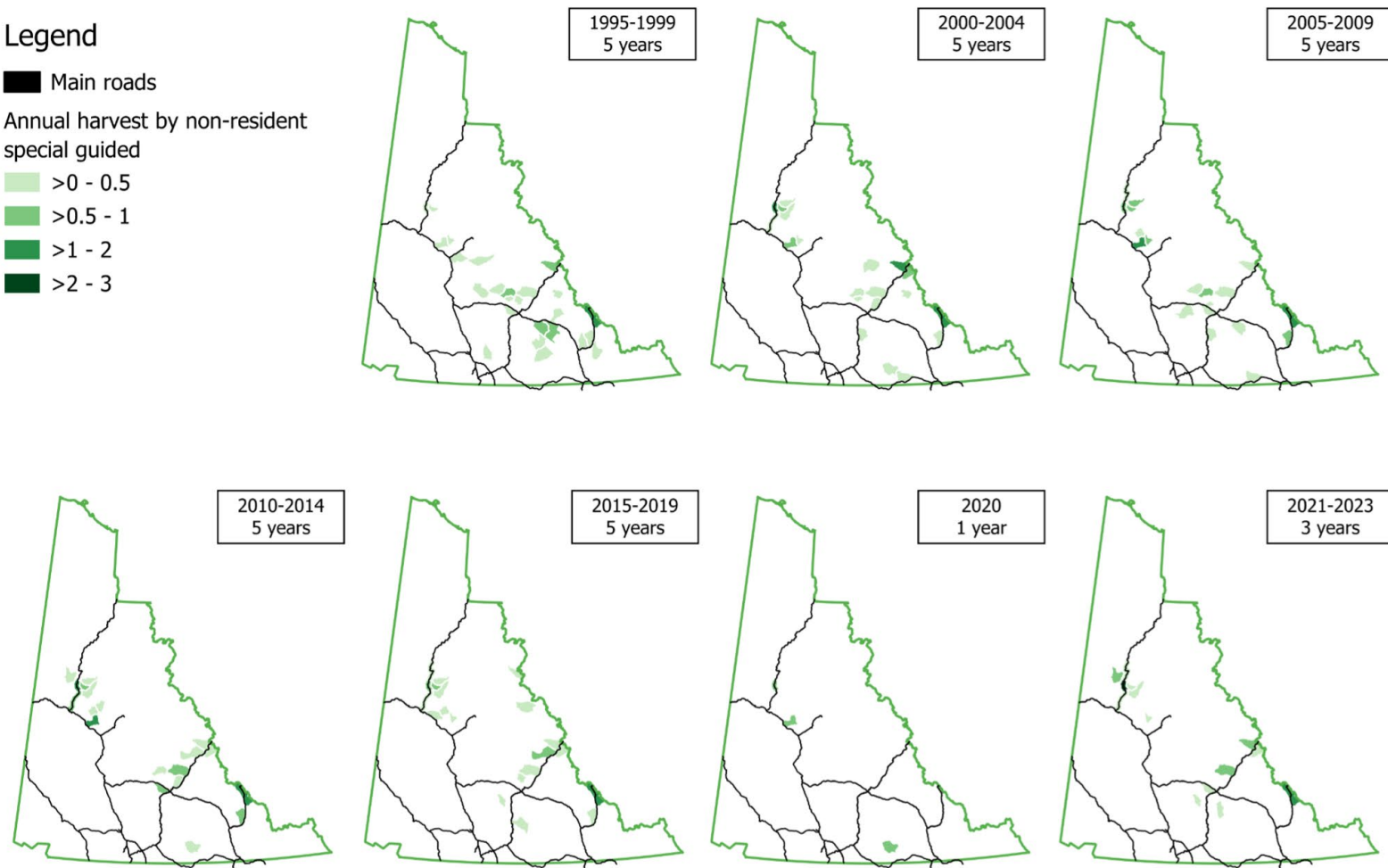


Figure 32.

Annual average number of Northern Mountain caribou harvested by non-resident outfitter guided hunters by Game Management Subzone.

Legend

■ Main roads

■ No outfitter concessions

Annual harvest by non-resident
outfitter guided

■ >0 - 2

■ >2 - 4

■ >4 - 6

■ >6 - 11

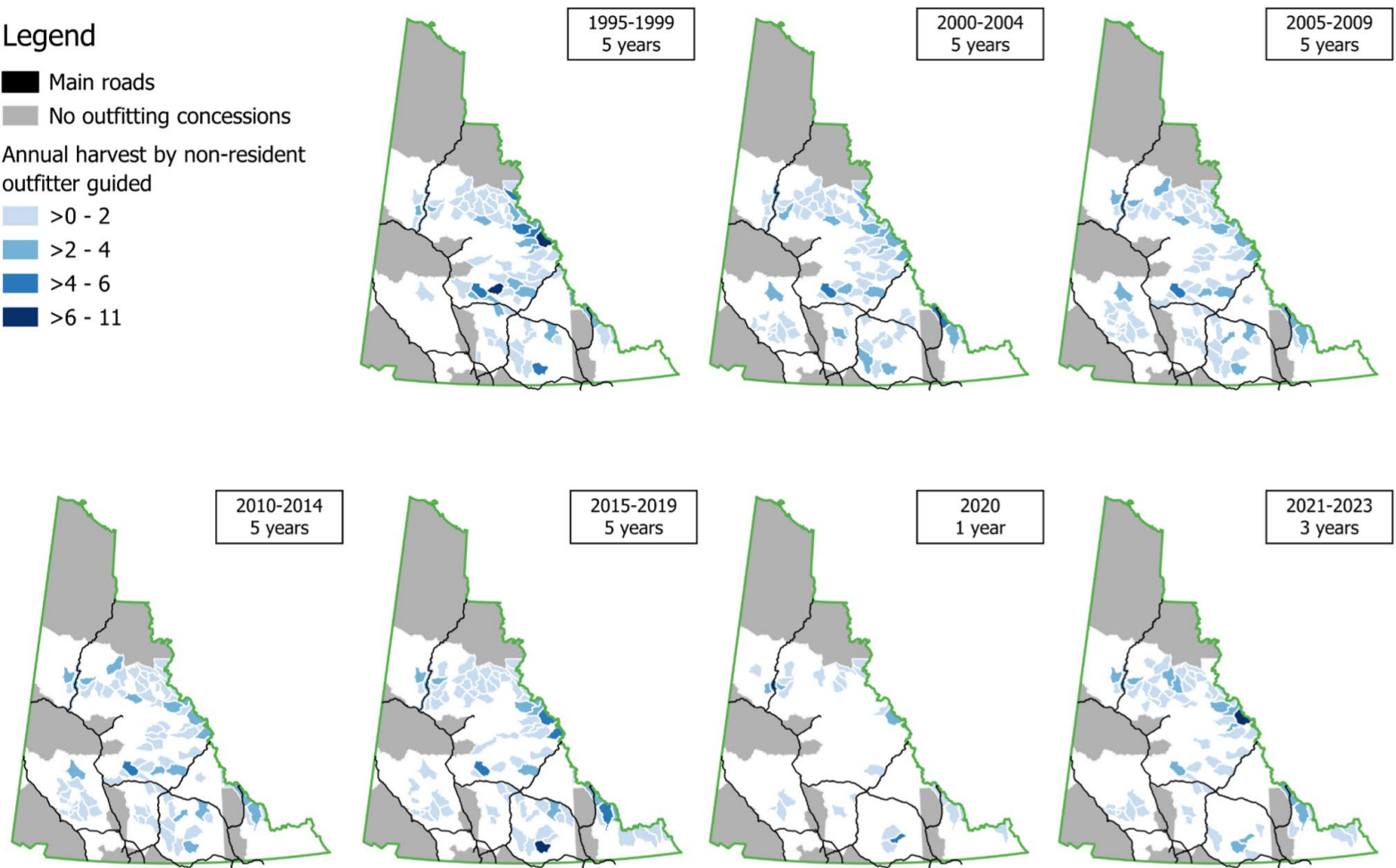
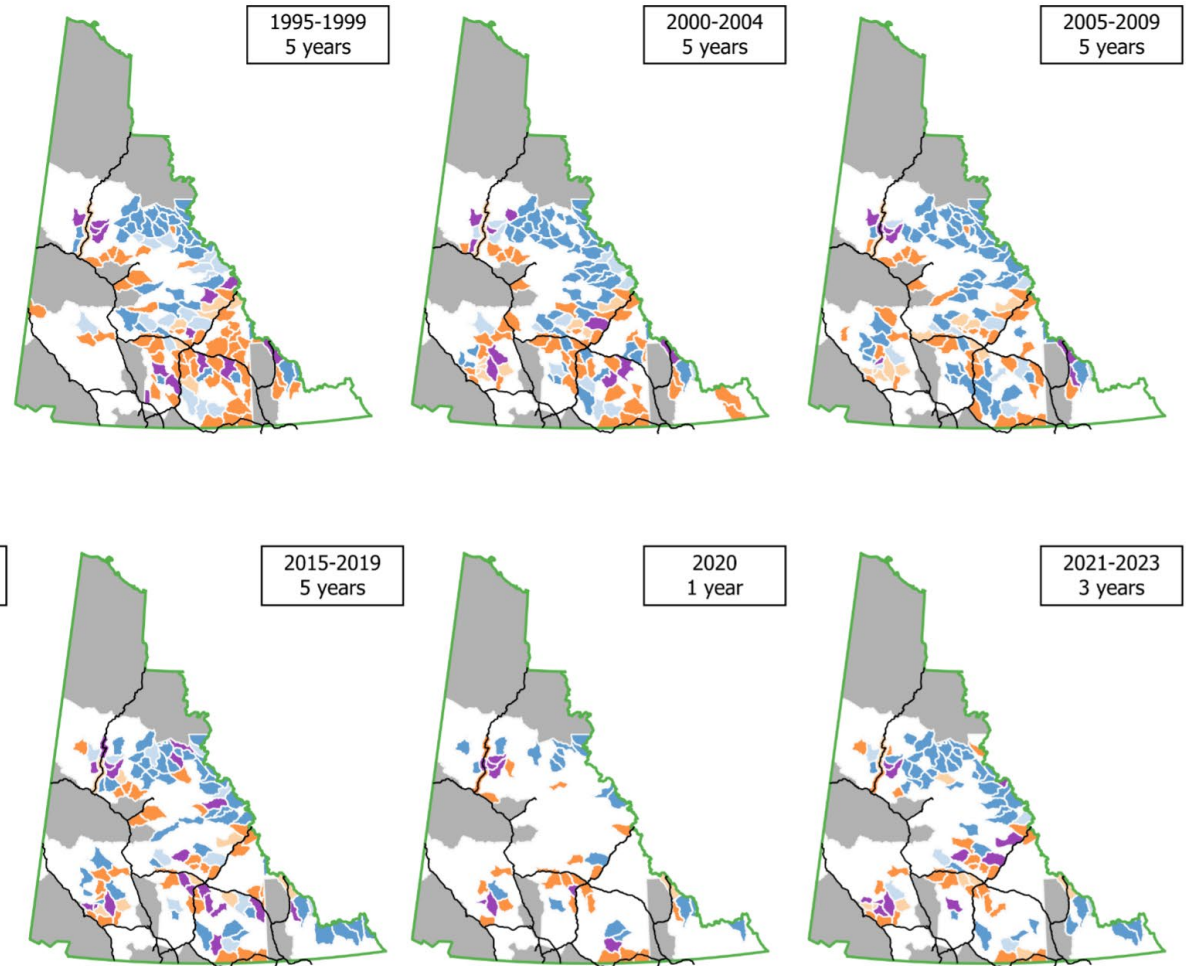


Figure 33.

Annual average percentage of Northern Mountain caribou harvested by licensed resident hunters by Game Management Subzone. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of Northern Mountain caribou harvested by resident hunters by the total number of Northern Mountain caribou harvested by resident hunters and non-resident outfitter guided hunters. Harvest by non-resident special guided hunters was not included in these maps.

Legend

-  Main roads
-  No outfitting concessions
- Percentage of harvest by licensed resident**
 -  0% - All non-resident outfitter guided
 -  1% - 33% - Mostly non-resident outfitter guided
 -  34% - 66% - Most overlap
 -  67% - 99% - Mostly resident
 -  100% - All resident



Thinhorn sheep

There are an estimated 22,500 thinhorn sheep in the Yukon. There are two subspecies of thinhorn sheep, Dall's sheep and Stone's sheep, as well as individuals with an intermediate colour called Fannin's sheep. Thinhorn sheep generally occupy mountainous alpine habitats from the Arctic to southern Yukon.

Management and regulation

In 2019, the Department of Environment released science-based guidelines for the management of Thinhorn sheep in the Yukon (Government of Yukon 2019). These guidelines provide a framework for monitoring and implementing harvest management decisions specific to sheep populations in the Yukon.

Licensed hunters can harvest a male sheep each year that is eight years old or older or has full curl horns. Compliance with regulations is monitored by compulsory submissions and measurements of sheep horns. Since 1995, several regulation changes related to sheep harvest were implemented in alignment with sustainable harvest objectives. Table 6 summarizes sheep specific regulation changes that may have affected licensed harvest trends.

Seals

The number of licensed hunters that obtained a sheep seal increased from 855 in 1995 to a peak of 1,839 in 2019. Since 2019, the number of seals slightly decreased (Figure 34). The number of seals obtained by resident hunters followed a similar trend and ranged from a low of 538 in 1996 to a high of 1,566 in 2020. On average, the number of sheep seals obtained by non-resident outfitter guided hunters from 1995 to 2011 was 305 per year with three periods of highs and lows. The number of sheep seals obtained per year by non-resident outfitter guided hunters gradually increased from 282 in 2012 to 439 in 2019. Following this, a low of 188 seals was recorded in 2020. From 2021 to 2023, an average of 388 seals were obtained by non-resident outfitter guided hunters per year (Figure 34).

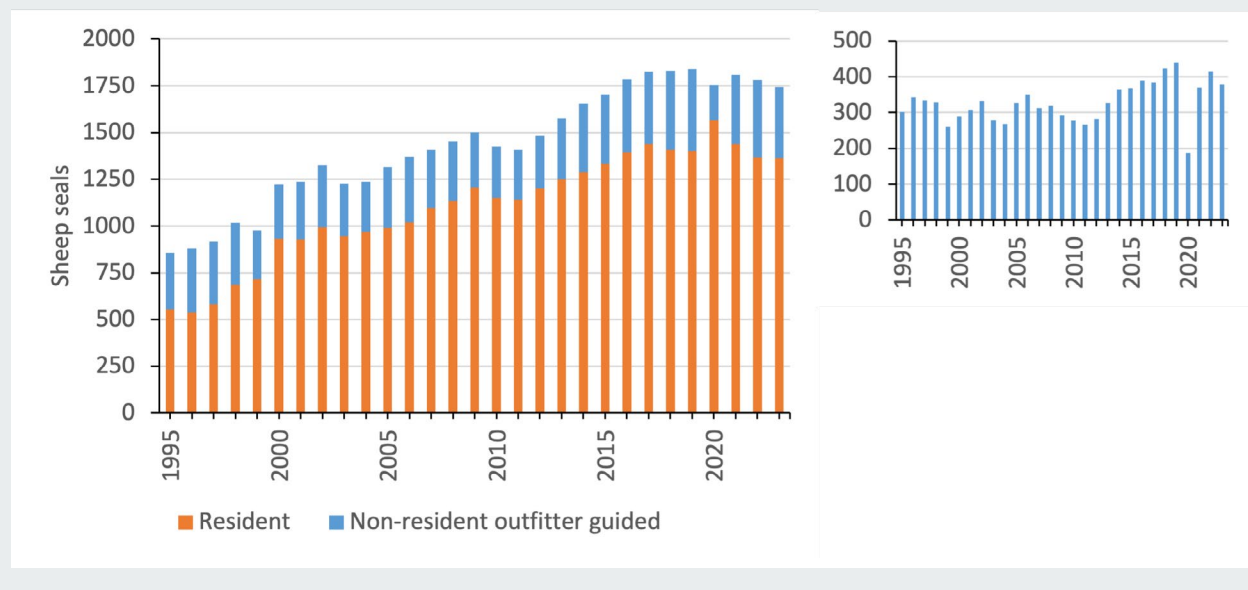
Table 6.

Key thinhorn sheep harvest management regulation changes in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.

Season	GMS	Regulation change
2004	1-25, 1-28	Permit hunt for sheep (Richardson Mountains). Two permits available.
2006	6-04, 6-06 to 6-08	Two sheep permits annually within the Kluane Wildlife Sanctuary; one for resident hunter, one for auction to non-resident hunter (guided by a Yukon outfitter).
2009	5-50	Permit required to hunt in Miners Range (Pilot Mountain). Six permits available.
2012	7-14, 7-16	Sheep hunting on permit only.
2012	7-19	Sheep hunting closed.

Figure 34.

Number of thinhorn sheep seals obtained by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.



Harvest

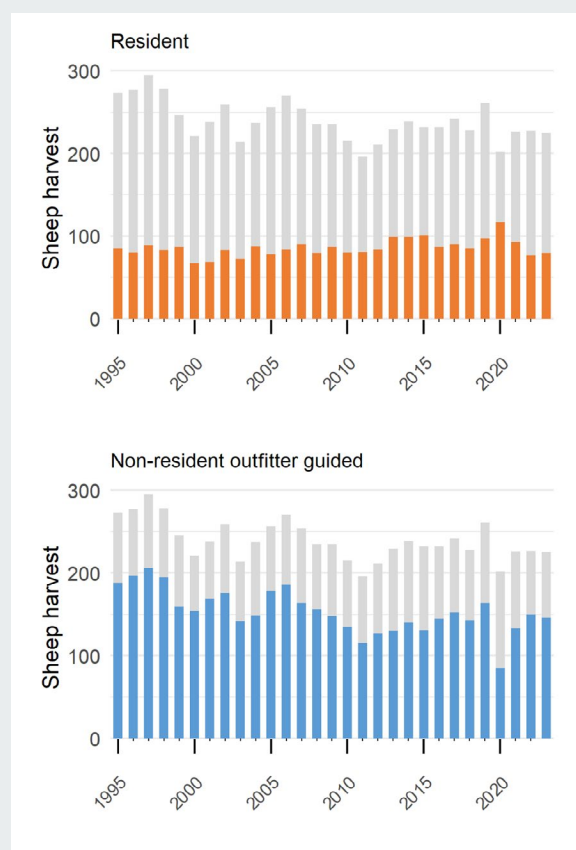
Since 1995, the average number of sheep harvested by licensed hunters fluctuated and declined 15%, from 274 per year (1995 to 1999) to 233 per year (2018 to 2023 excluding 2020; Figure 35).

Resident hunters harvested an average of 85 (range 67 to 101) sheep per year (excluding 2020; Figure 35). In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, resident hunters harvested 117 sheep. 2022 and 2023 had the lowest harvest by resident hunters since 2008. Lower harvest numbers during those years coincided with above-average snow depths from the preceding winter. Prior years with higher harvest (2013 to 2015) coincided with high sheep numbers in GMZs 5 and 7 (Government of Yukon 2018a and 2018b), where on average 83% of licensed resident harvest takes place per year.

The average number of sheep harvested by non-resident outfitter guided hunters declined 22%, from 189 per year (1995 to 1999) to 147 per year (2018 to 2023, excluding 2020; Figure 35).

Figure 35.

Number of thinhorn sheep harvested by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023. Grey bars represent the total licensed harvest.



On average, resident hunters harvested 35% of sheep harvest per year while non-resident outfitter guided hunters harvested 65% (excluding 2020; Figure 36).

Since 1995, the average age of sheep harvested by licensed hunters fluctuated from 8.5 to 9.6 years old (Figure 37). On average, non-resident outfitter guided hunters harvested sheep 0.6 years older than resident hunters (Figure 37). The average horn length ranged from a low of 897 mm to a high of 939 mm (Figure 37).

Harvest density and distribution

In recent years, sheep harvest densities were highest in southwest Yukon, where sheep population densities are relatively high within Yukon (Figure 38; Hegel and Russell 2018, Hegel et al. 2018). Most licensed hunters harvested sheep in mountain ranges in southwest Yukon (GMZs 5 and 7) and north of Dawson and Mayo (GMZs 2 and 4; Figures 38 and 39). The majority of resident hunters harvested sheep in GMZs 5 and 7 (33% and 51%, respectively; Figure 40).

We observed that the harvest of sheep by non-resident outfitter guided hunters tended to be more dispersed in remote areas (Figure 41). The majority of harvest overlap between resident hunters and non-resident outfitter guided hunters occurred in GMZs 5 and 7 where sheep ranges are most accessible (Figure 42).

Figure 36.

Percentage of thinhorn sheep harvested by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.

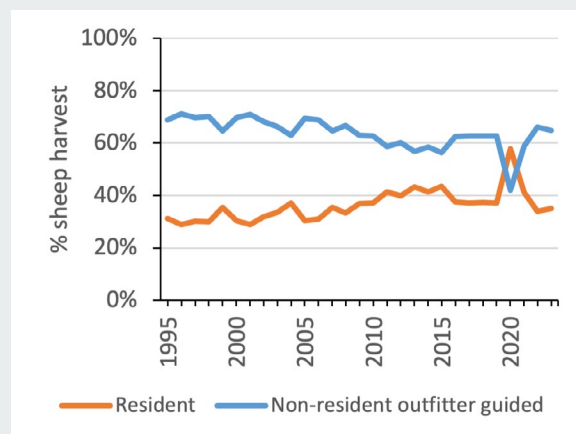


Figure 37.

Average age and horn length of thinhorn sheep harvested by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.

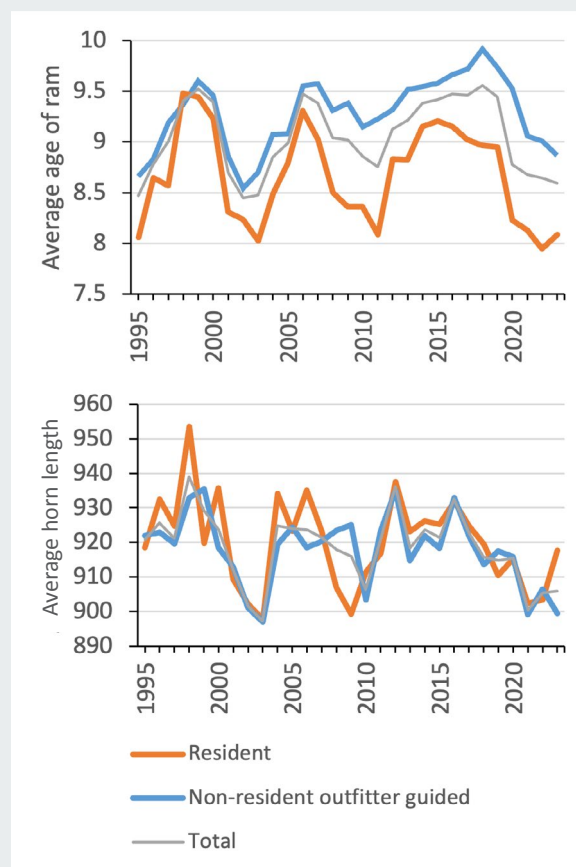


Figure 38.

Average density of thinhorn sheep harvested by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 2019 to 2023. Density is defined as the number of sheep harvested annually per 100 km².

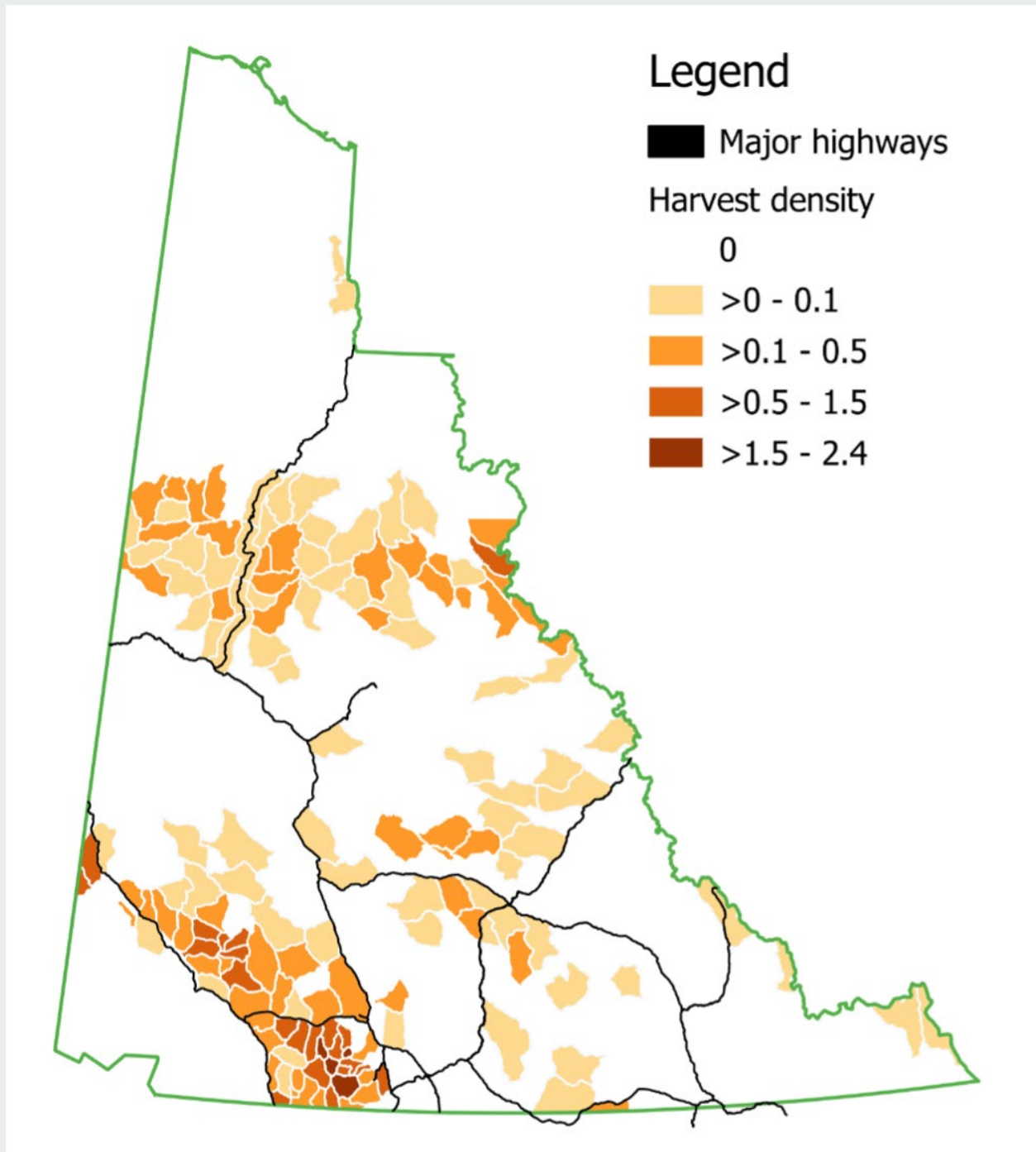


Figure 39.

Annual average number of thinhorn sheep harvested by licensed hunters by Game Management Subzone.

Legend

■ Main roads

Annual harvest by licensed hunters

■ >0 - 2

■ >2 - 4

■ >4 - 6

■ >6 - 13

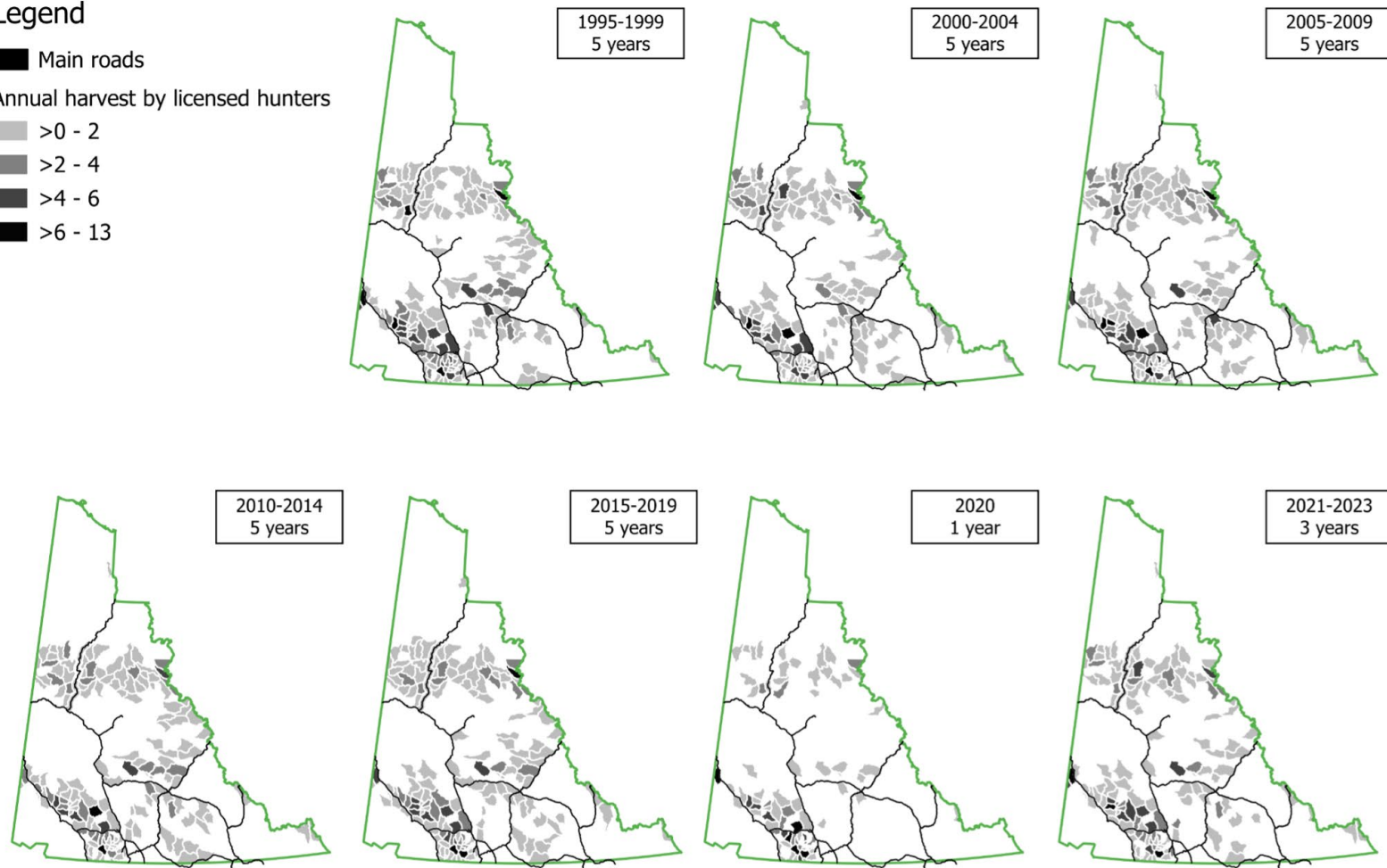


Figure 40.

Annual average number of thinhorn sheep harvested by licensed resident hunters by Game Management Subzone.

Legend

■ Main roads

Annual harvest by resident

■ >0 - 2

■ >2 - 4

■ >4 - 6

■ >6 - 13

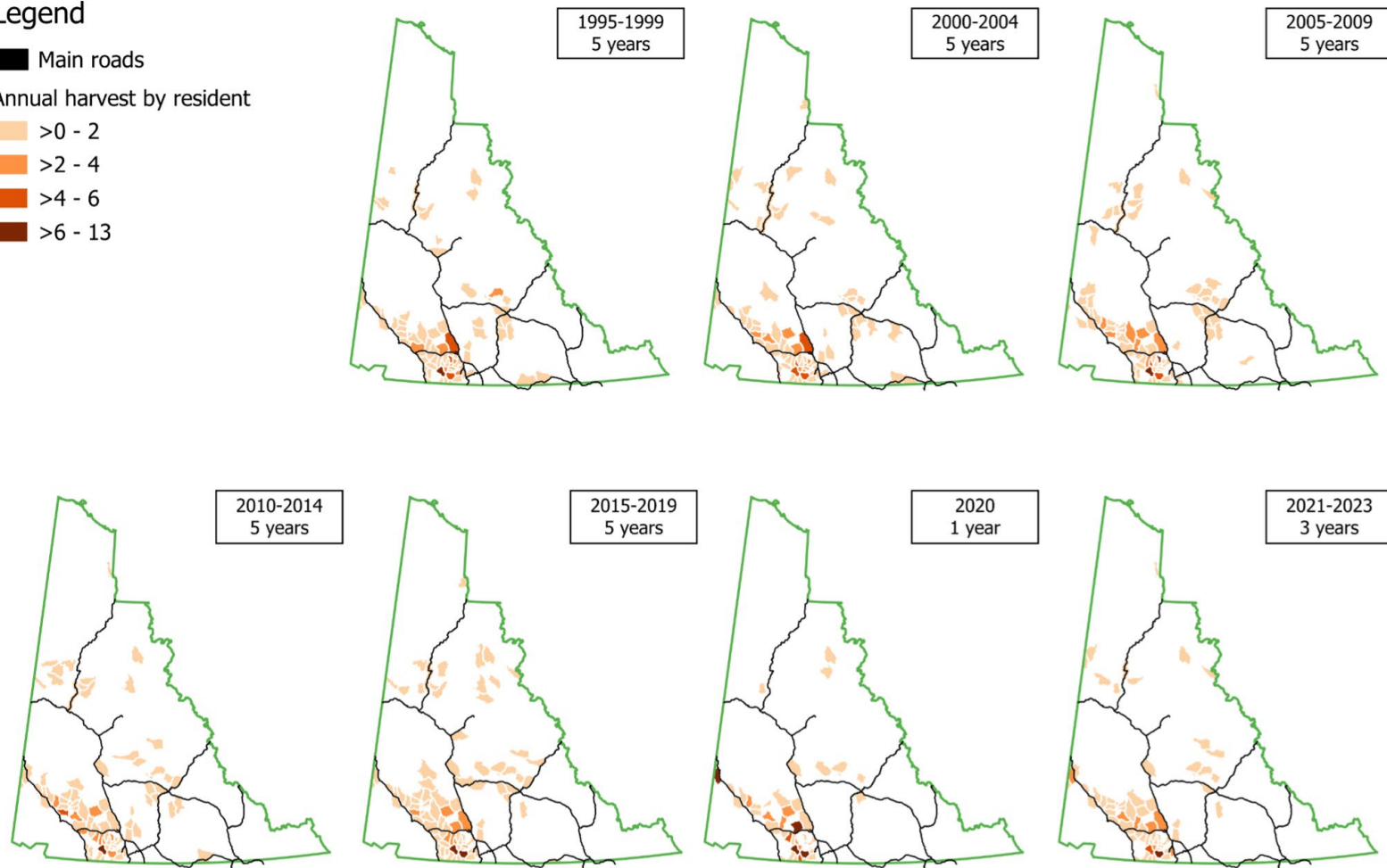


Figure 41.

Annual average number of thinhorn sheep harvested by non-resident outfitter guided hunters by Game Management Subzone.

Legend

■ Main roads

■ No outfitting concessions

Annual harvest by non-resident
outfitter guided

■ >0 - 2

■ >2 - 4

■ >4 - 6

■ >6 - 9

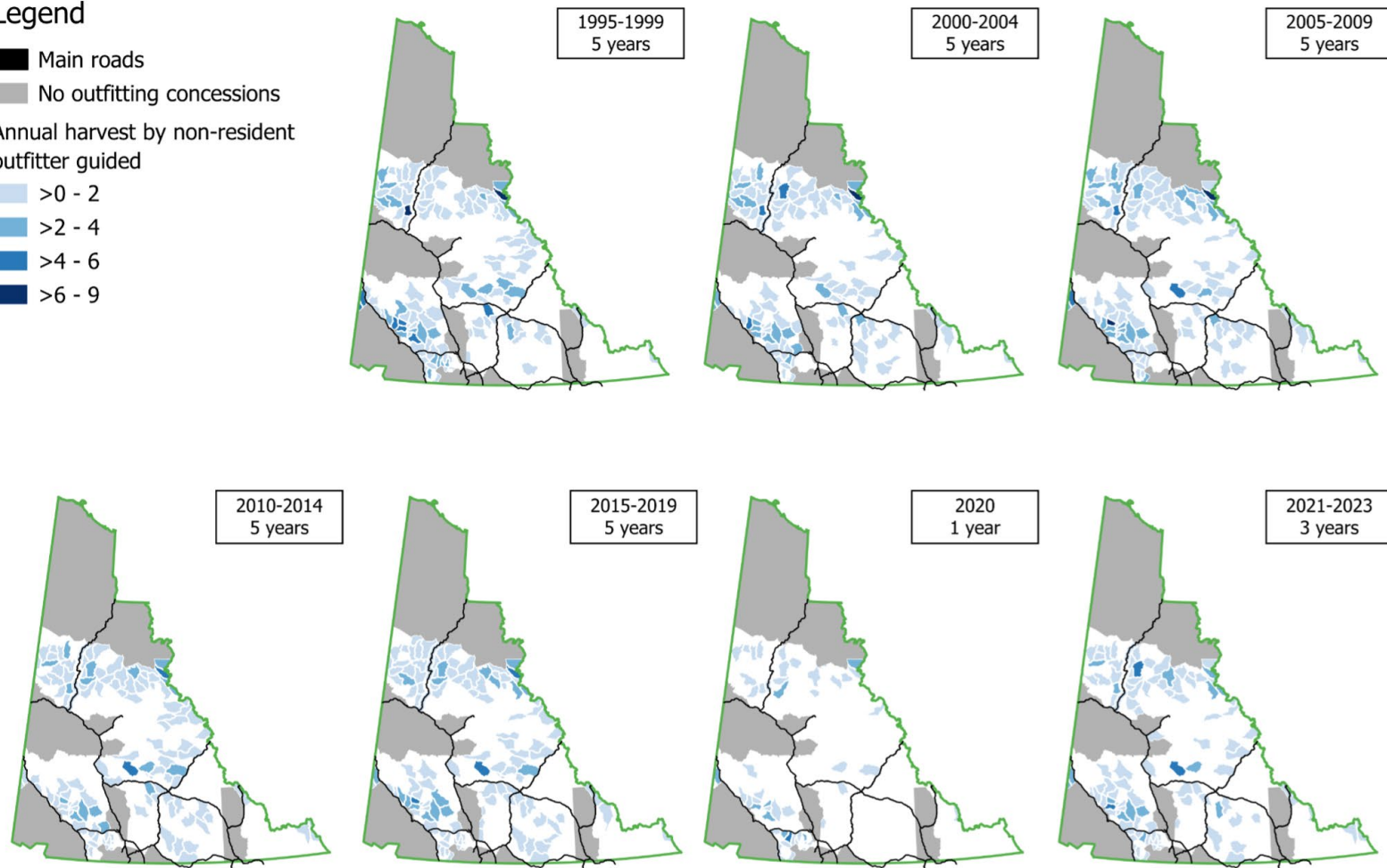


Figure 42.

Annual average percentage of thinhorn sheep harvested by licensed resident hunters by Game Management Subzone. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of thinhorn sheep harvested by resident by the total number of thinhorn sheep harvested by resident hunters and non-resident outfitter guided hunters.

Legend

Major roads

No outfitting concessions

Percentage of harvest by licensed resident

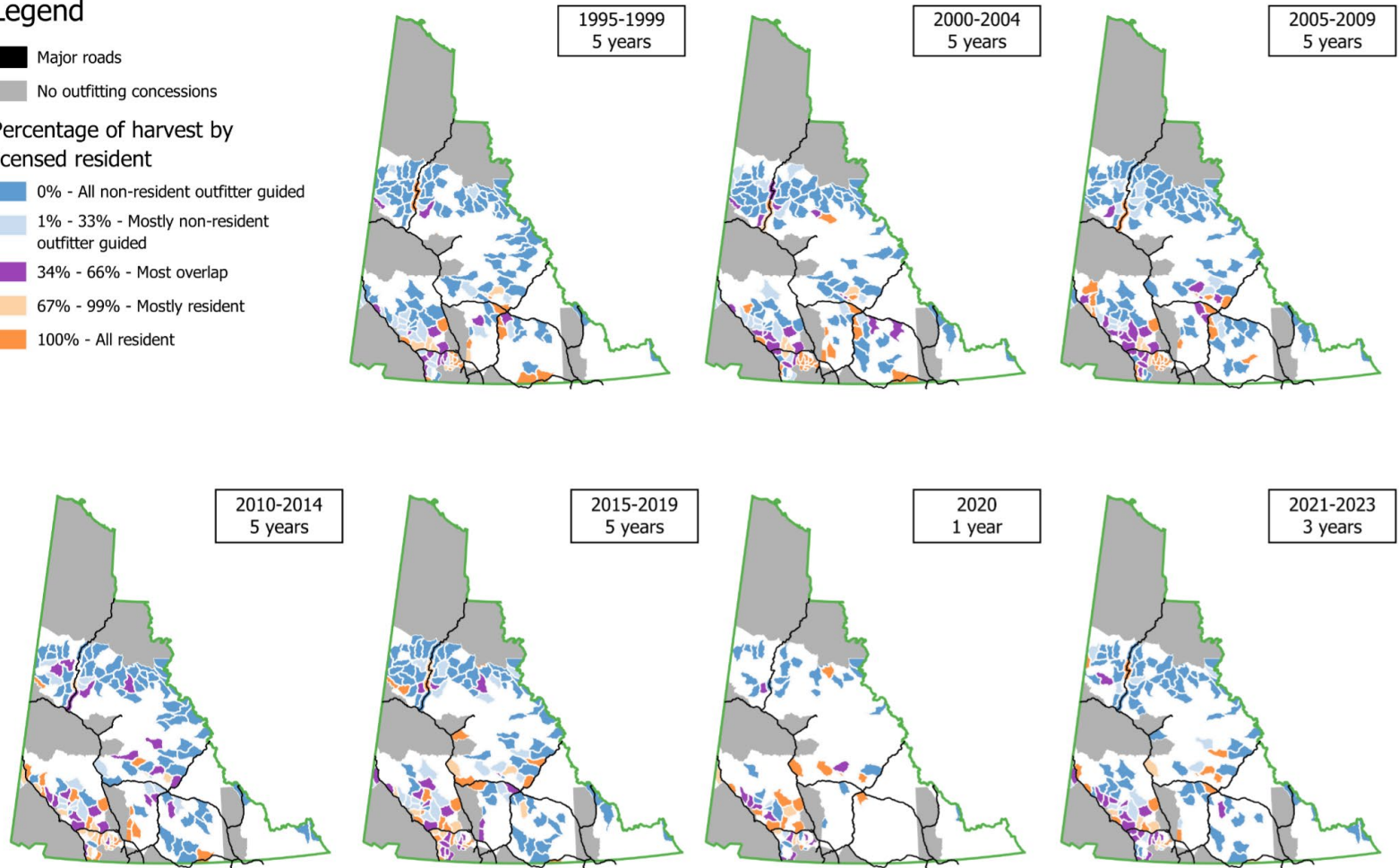
0% - All non-resident outfitter guided

1% - 33% - Mostly non-resident outfitter guided

34% - 66% - Most overlap

67% - 99% - Mostly resident

100% - All resident



Wood bison

There are three populations of wood bison in the Yukon; the Aishihik, Nordquist and Nahanni populations. Following the release of 170 bison during the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Aishihik population has increased and was estimated at 1,951 adults in the summer of 2022 (Jung et al. 2023). The Nordquist population was estimated at 85 adults in 2024 (T. Jung, Senior Wildlife Biologist, Government of Yukon, pers. comm.) and ranges largely along the Alaska Highway between Watson Lake and Muncho Lake, British Columbia. The Nahanni population was estimated at 544 bison and ranges largely in adjacent British Columbia and the Northwest Territories (Conference of Management Authorities 2025).

Management and regulation

Since 1998, three bison management plans were developed for the Aishihik herd, with the most recent published in 2024 (Government of Yukon 2024). This plan provides a framework for monitoring and implementing harvest management decisions while aligning with national and international conservation efforts.

Licensed hunters can harvest one bison each year. Licensed hunting of the Aishihik bison population began in March 1998 (1997-1998 hunting season). Licensed harvest is not permitted for the Nordquist and Nahanni bison herds in the Yukon.

From 1997 to 2007, licensed bison harvest in the Aishihik area was managed through a PHA lottery. During this period, both the number of permits issued and the length of the hunting season changed as the bison population information was updated. The number of permits issued per year ranged from six in 1997 to 155 in 2007 (Table 7). Beginning in the 2008 hunting season, a fall licensed harvest (September 1 to October 31) was introduced within defined corridor areas along portions of the North Klondike Highway (1 km) and the Alaska Highway (3 km). In the same year, a larger bison area was opened to licensed harvest from November 1 to March 31.

From 2013 to 2020, harvest guidance included direction for hunters to harvest female bison (Table 7). In 2013, the bison seal fee for licensed resident hunters was reduced from \$50 to \$10.

Table 7.

Key bison harvest management changes in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.

Season	Regulation or harvest management change
1998 to 2007	Permit hunts issued for Aishihik bison. The number of permits grew from six to 155 and were primarily issued through a lottery system.
2008	Limit on the number of permits removed and lottery discontinued.
2009	Season extended to September 1 to October 31 along 1 km and 3 km buffers of portions of the North Klondike and Alaska highways to dissuade Aishihik bison herd from using roadsides. A larger area was opened for hunting from November 1 to March 31.
2013	Hunters encouraged to target female bison to help maintain a stable population.
2016	Up to 25 non-resident special guided permits made available.

The number of permits available for non-resident outfitter guided hunters has changed over the years. In 2023, 15 permits were available (Appendix 1).

Since 2016, 25 bison permits have been available to non-resident special guided hunters through a lottery process.

Seals

Since 1997, the number of seals obtained for bison grew steadily, from six in 1997 to an average of 1,978 over the past five years (Figure 43). Bison are now Yukon's third most obtained ungulate seal by resident hunters. Bison also represent a hunting opportunity outside the main hunting season.

The number of non-resident outfitter guided hunters who obtained a bison seal ranged from zero to nine (Figure 43). Since 2016, non-resident special guided hunters obtained an average of 15 seals per year, excluding 2020 (Figure 43).

Harvest

The number of bison harvested by licensed hunters increased from six in 1997 to a high of 284 in 2021 (Figure 44). Resident hunters accounted for 97% of the annual harvest. Resident harvest exceeded 200 bison in the last five hunting seasons (Figure 44).

Non-resident outfitter guided hunters harvested between zero and seven bison per year (Figure 44). Non-resident special guided hunters harvested between three and ten bison per year.

Since 1998, licensed hunters predominantly harvested male bison (47% to 68% per year; Figure 45). In total, 57% of bison harvested in the Yukon were male. In 1997, the six bison harvested were males as permits were limited to males.

Figure 43.

Number of wood bison seals obtained by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.

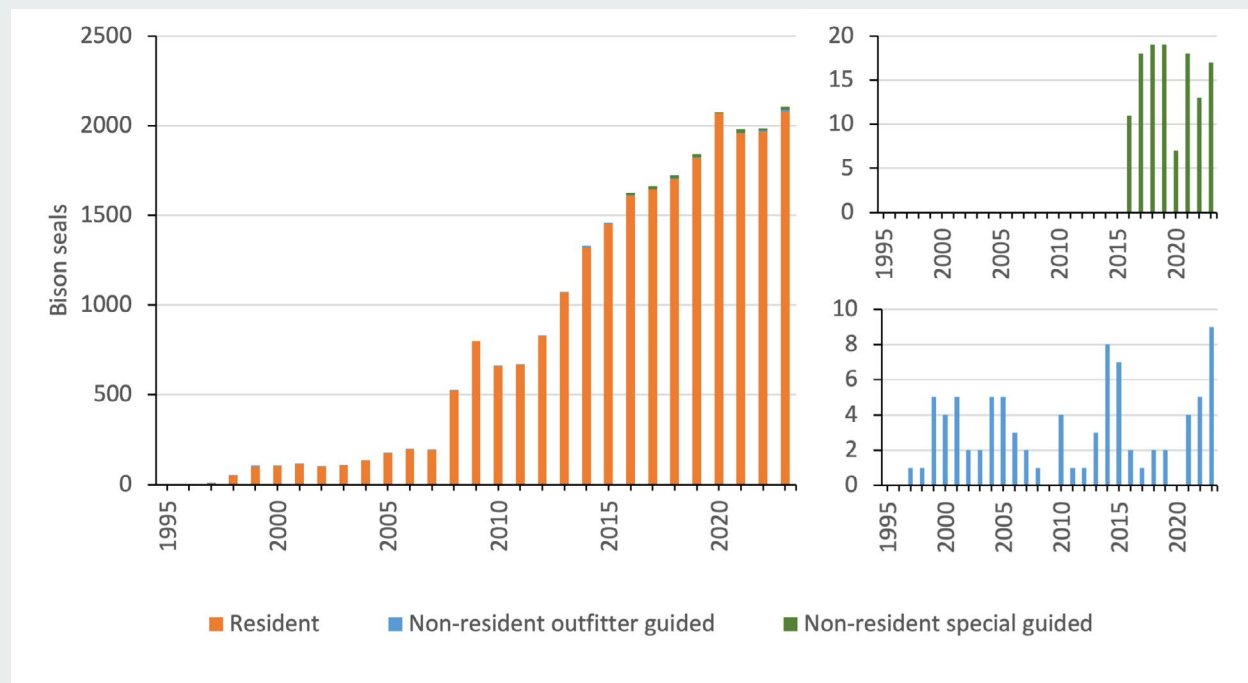


Figure 44.

Number of wood bison harvested by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023. Grey bars represent the total licensed harvest.

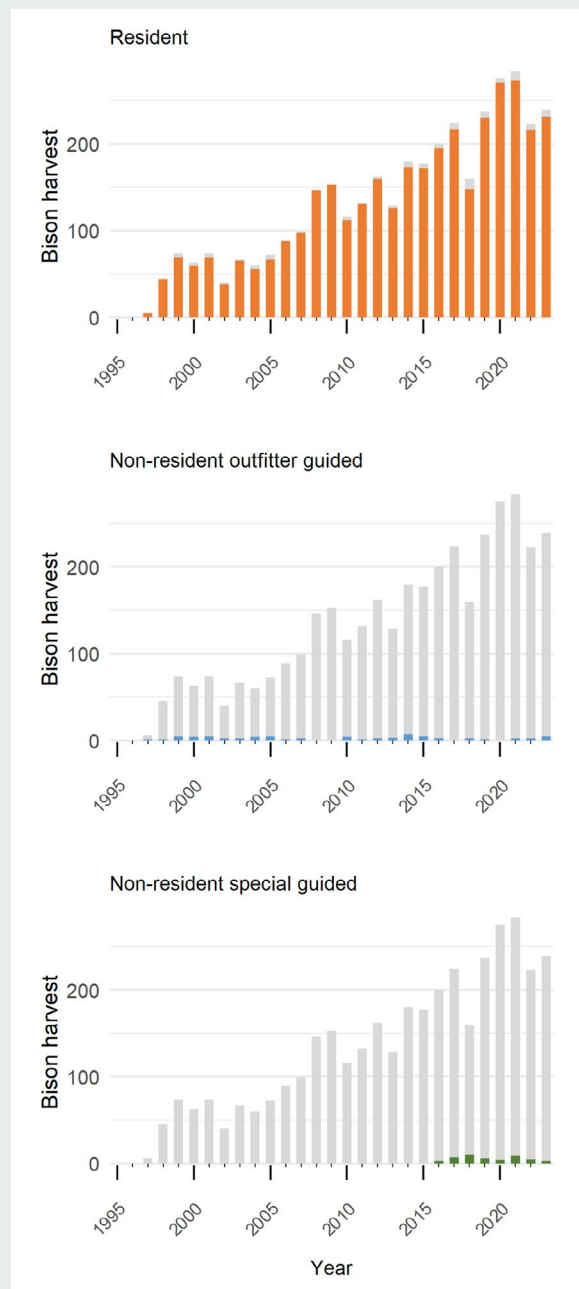
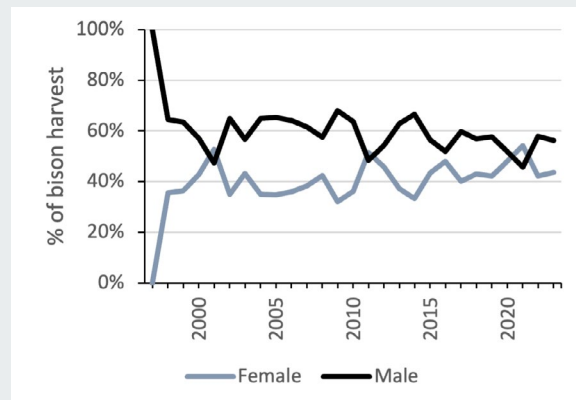


Figure 45.

Percentage of female and male wood bison harvested by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1997 to 2023.



Harvest density and distribution

From 2019 to 2023, the highest densities of bison harvest occurred near the Braeburn and Nordenskiöld areas south towards Taye Lake. Kloo Lake and Aishihik Lake also had a high density of harvest (Figure 46). When bison hunting opened, harvest occurred near Aishihik Lake and Champagne, particularly in GMSs 5-40 and 5-42. In subsequent years, licensed hunters harvested bison in more GMSs (Figure 47). For visualizations of bison harvest distribution trends by hunter type, see Appendix 2.

Figure 46.

Average density of wood bison harvested by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 2019 to 2023. Density is defined as the number of bison harvested annually per 100 km².

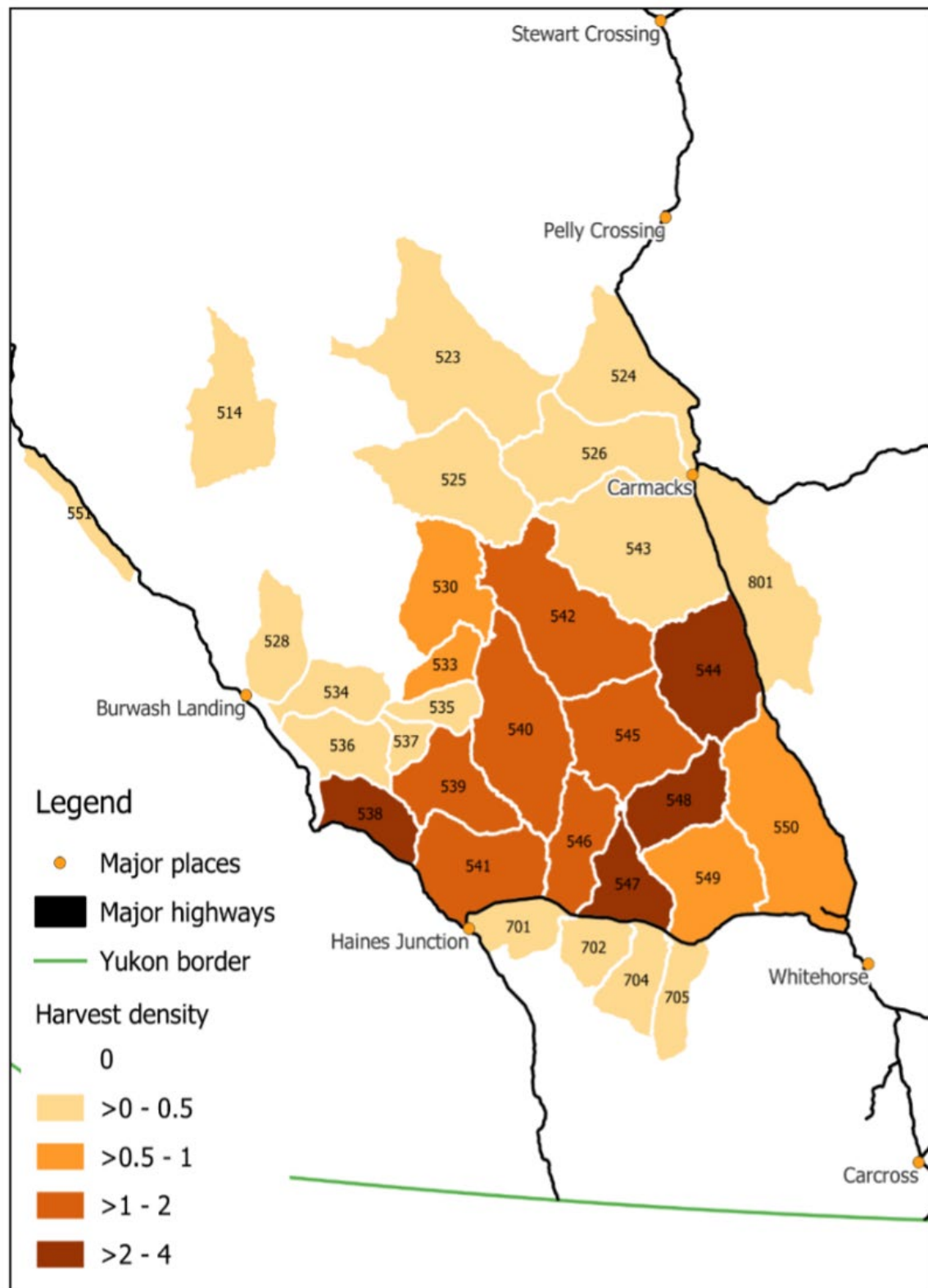


Figure 47.

Annual average number of wood bison harvested by licensed hunters by Game Management Subzone.

Legend

■ Major roads

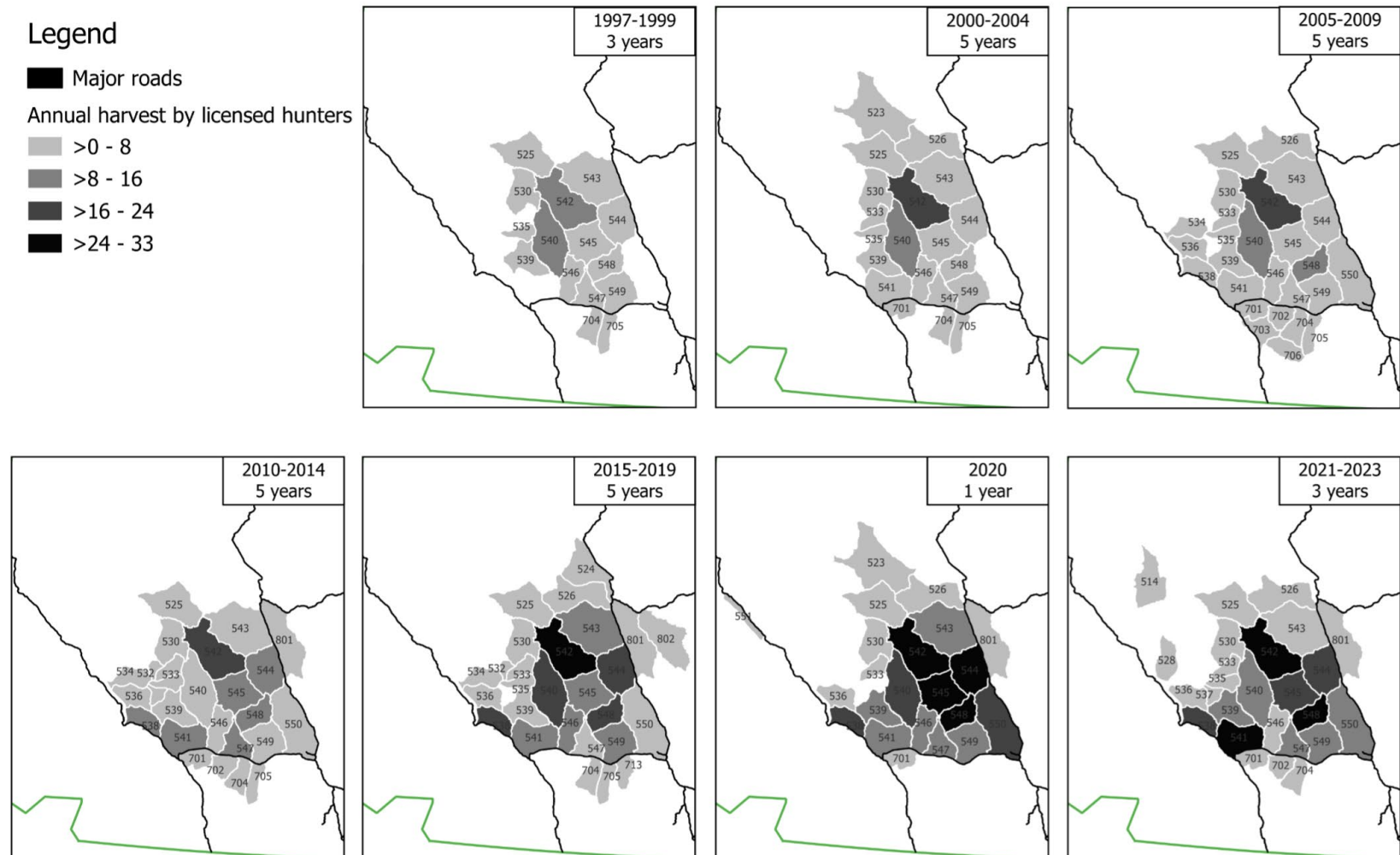
Annual harvest by licensed hunters

■ >0 - 8

■ >8 - 16

■ >16 - 24

■ >24 - 33



Black bear

Black bears range throughout the Yukon except for a small area in southwest Yukon and on the Yukon North Slope. They typically live in forested areas and can occasionally be found in other habitats in search of food. Black bears den for six to seven months per year, beginning as early as late September and emerging from early to mid-May.

Management and regulation

Licensed hunters can harvest two black bears of any sex per hunting season. Bear cubs and female bears accompanied by a bear cub are protected from hunting. Since 1995, there have been two changes to black bear harvest regulations. The first was in 2001 when the spring hunting season was extended from June 15 to June 21 to match the grizzly bear spring hunting season.

The second change came in 2020, allowing hunters to take either the meat or the pelt

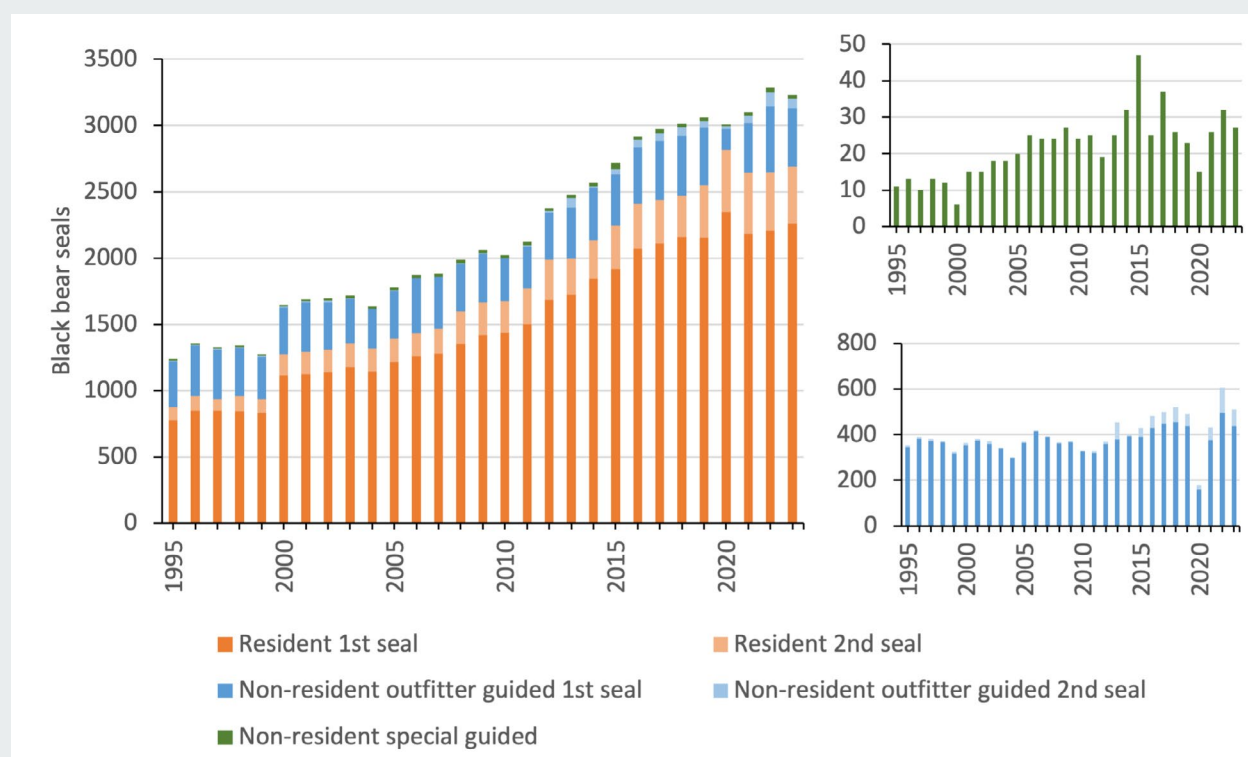
of their harvested animal. Prior to this, the hunter was required to take the pelt.

Seals

The number of licensed hunters that obtained a black bear seal increased from 1,239 in 1995 to a high of 3,285 in 2022. The number of seals obtained by resident hunters followed a similar trend with a high of 2,817 in 2020 (Figure 48). The percentage of resident hunters that obtained a second seal increased from 11% in earlier years (1995 to 1999) to 17% in later years (2018 to 2023, excluding 2020). This increase does not necessarily reflect an interest in black bear hunting. Based on a 2020 hunter effort survey, 62% of resident hunters that obtained a black bear seal did not plan to hunt black bears. They obtained a seal in case there was a conflict with a bear (Pongracz et al. 2025).

Figure 48.

Number of black bear seals obtained by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.



Before 2012, non-resident outfitter guided hunters obtained 361 black bear seals on average per year. Since 2012 (excluding 2020), the average was 431 per year (Figure 48). Prior to 2012, a second seal was obtained by six non-resident outfitter guided hunters per year, on average. Since 2012 (excluding 2020), the average number of non-resident outfitter guided hunters obtaining seals increased to 54 per year.

The annual average number of non-resident special guided hunters that obtained seals was 12 in the late 1990s, then generally increased to a high of 47 in 2015. Since 2015, the number of black bear seals obtained by non-resident special guided hunters has varied from 15 to 37 (Figure 48).

Harvest

Black bear harvest by licensed hunters fluctuated from 53 to 142 with an average of 94 black bears per year since 1995. The number of black bears harvested by resident hunters increased from an average of 73 per year in earlier years (1995 to 1999) to 97 per year in later years (2018 to 2023, excluding 2020; Figure 49). On average, resident hunters accounted for 88% of the annual black bear harvest.

From 1995 to 2000, non-resident outfitter guided hunters harvested an average of 20 black bears per year. After 2000, harvest was lower with an average of eight black bears per year (Figure 49). On average, non-resident outfitter guided hunters accounted for 12% of the annual black bear harvest.

Non-resident special guided hunters harvested 20 black bears in total (range zero to two per year) from 1995 to 2023. 15 of these black bears (75%) were harvested between 2005 and 2015 (Figure 49). Non-resident special guided hunters accounted for less than 1% of the annual black bear harvest.

The percentage of male and female black bears harvested was fairly stable (Figure 50). Black bear harvest was predominantly male.

On average, 85% of black bears harvested were males (86% for resident hunters, 81% for non-resident outfitter guided hunters and 70% for non-resident special guided hunters).

Figure 49.

Number of black bears harvested by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023. Grey bars represent the total licensed harvest.

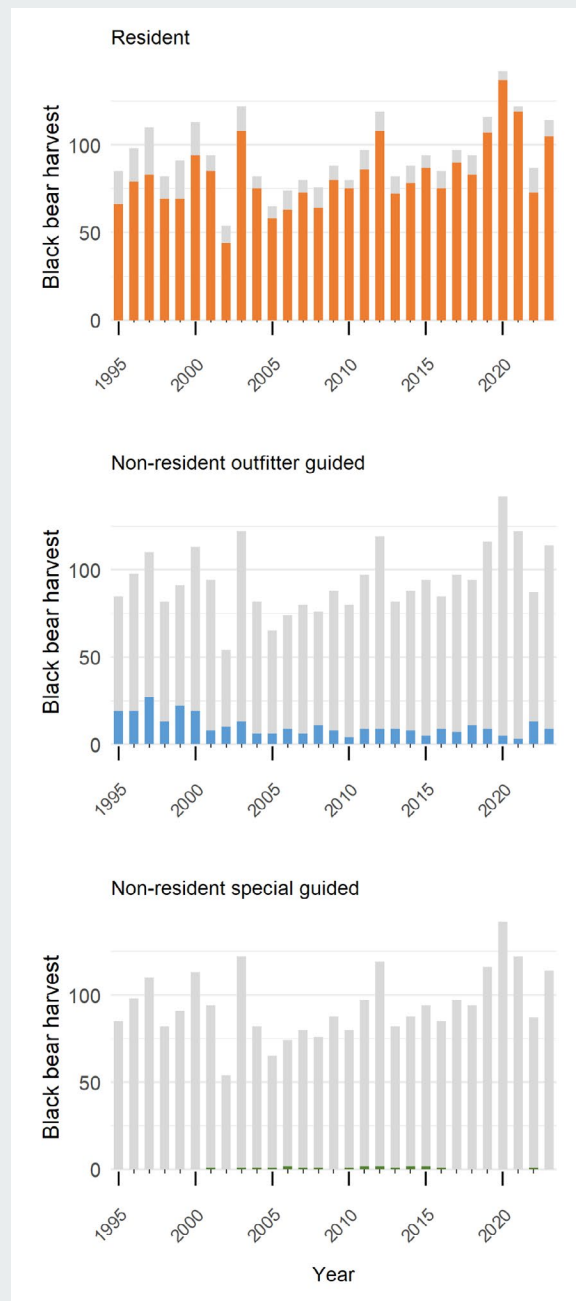
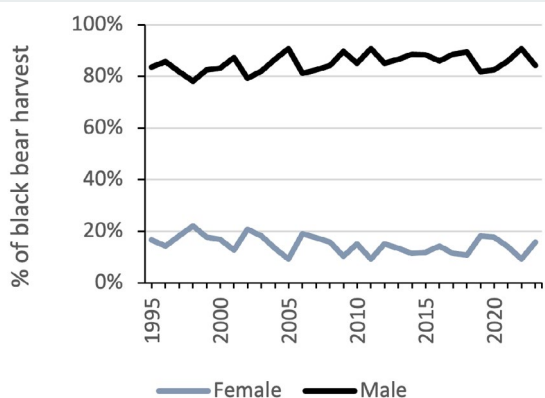


Figure 50.

Percentage of female and male black bears harvested by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.



Since the late 1990s, the number of black bears harvested in the spring season increased while the number of black bears harvested in the fall decreased (Figure 51). From 1995 to 1999, around 60% of black bears were harvested in the spring per year, compared to 80% in the past five years. The percentage of female black bears harvested was higher in the fall (24%) than the spring (12%).

The average age of harvested black bears varied from five to ten years old and was similar among males and females. On average, harvested black bears were eight years old. 56% of harvested black bears were seven years old and younger. The most common age for harvested black bears was four and five years old (12% each; Figure 52). The oldest black bear harvested was 26 years old (Figure 52).

Harvest density and distribution

Most licensed black bear harvest occurred in the southern portion of the Yukon (Figures 53 and 54). We observed that resident hunters tended to harvest black bears in GMSs near roads and communities in southern Yukon (Figure 55). Black bear harvest by non-resident outfitter guided hunters was limited and more dispersed (Figure 56). As a result, we observed limited overlap in black bear harvest between resident and non-resident outfitter guided hunters (Figure 57).

Figure 51.

Number of black bears harvested in the spring and fall hunting seasons by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.

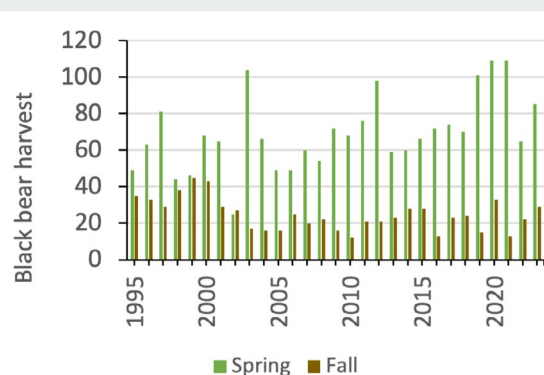


Figure 52.

Age and sex composition of harvested black bears in the Yukon from 1995 to 2021. The oldest harvested black bear reported was 26.

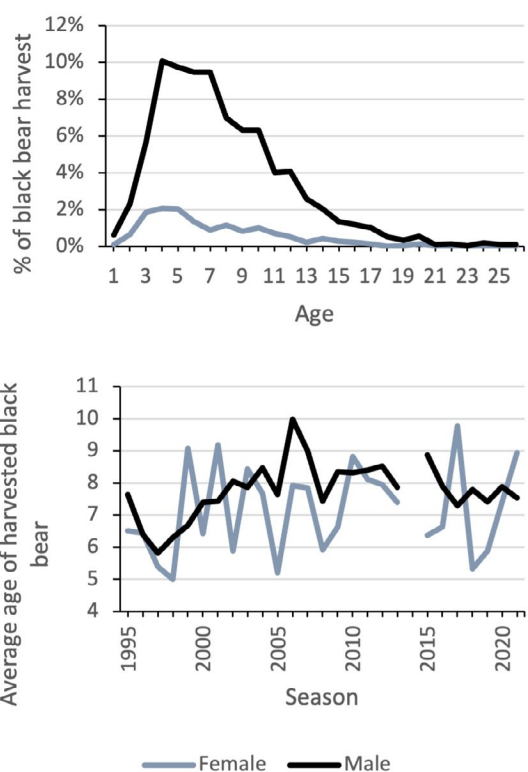


Figure 53.

Average density of black bears harvested by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 2019 to 2023. Density is defined as the number of black bears harvested annually per 100 km².

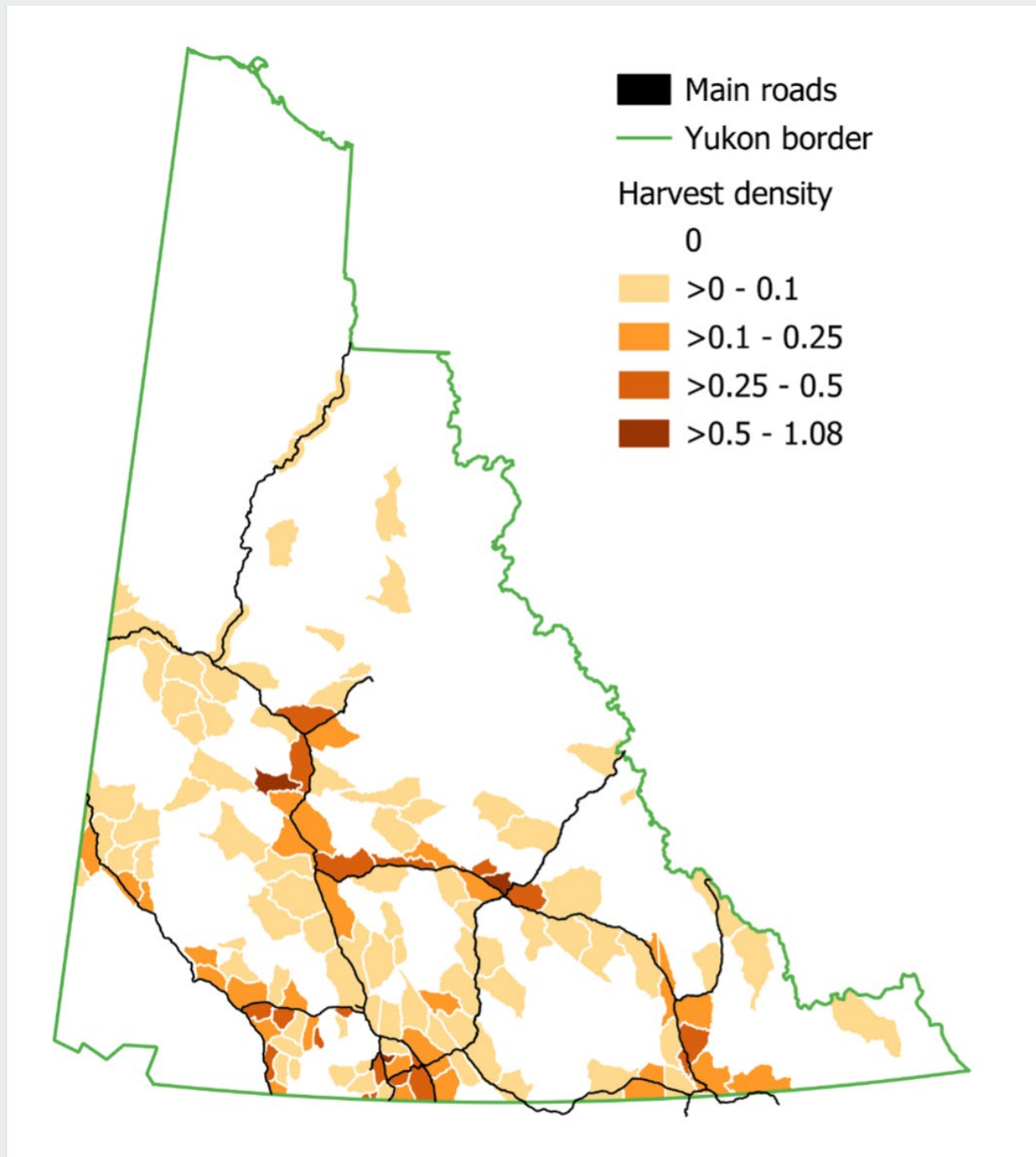


Figure 54.

Annual average number of black bears harvested by licensed hunters by Game Management Subzone.

Legend

■ Main roads

Annual harvest by licensed hunters

■ >0 - 1

■ >1 - 2

■ >2 - 3

■ >3 - 7

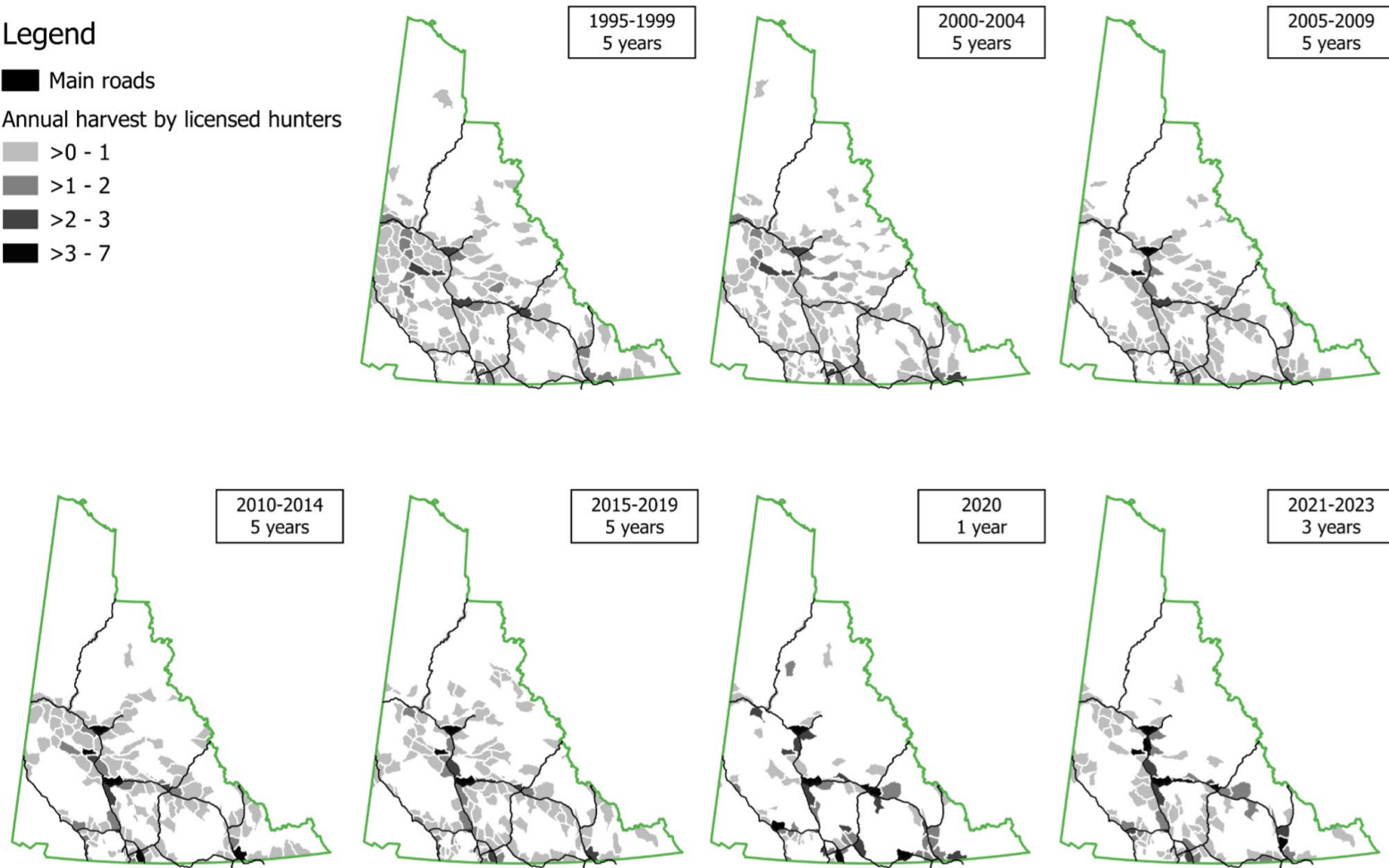


Figure 55.

Annual average number of black bears harvested by licensed resident hunters by Game Management Subzone.

Legend

■ Main roads

Annual harvest by resident

■ >0 - 1

■ >1 - 2

■ >2 - 3

■ >3 - 4

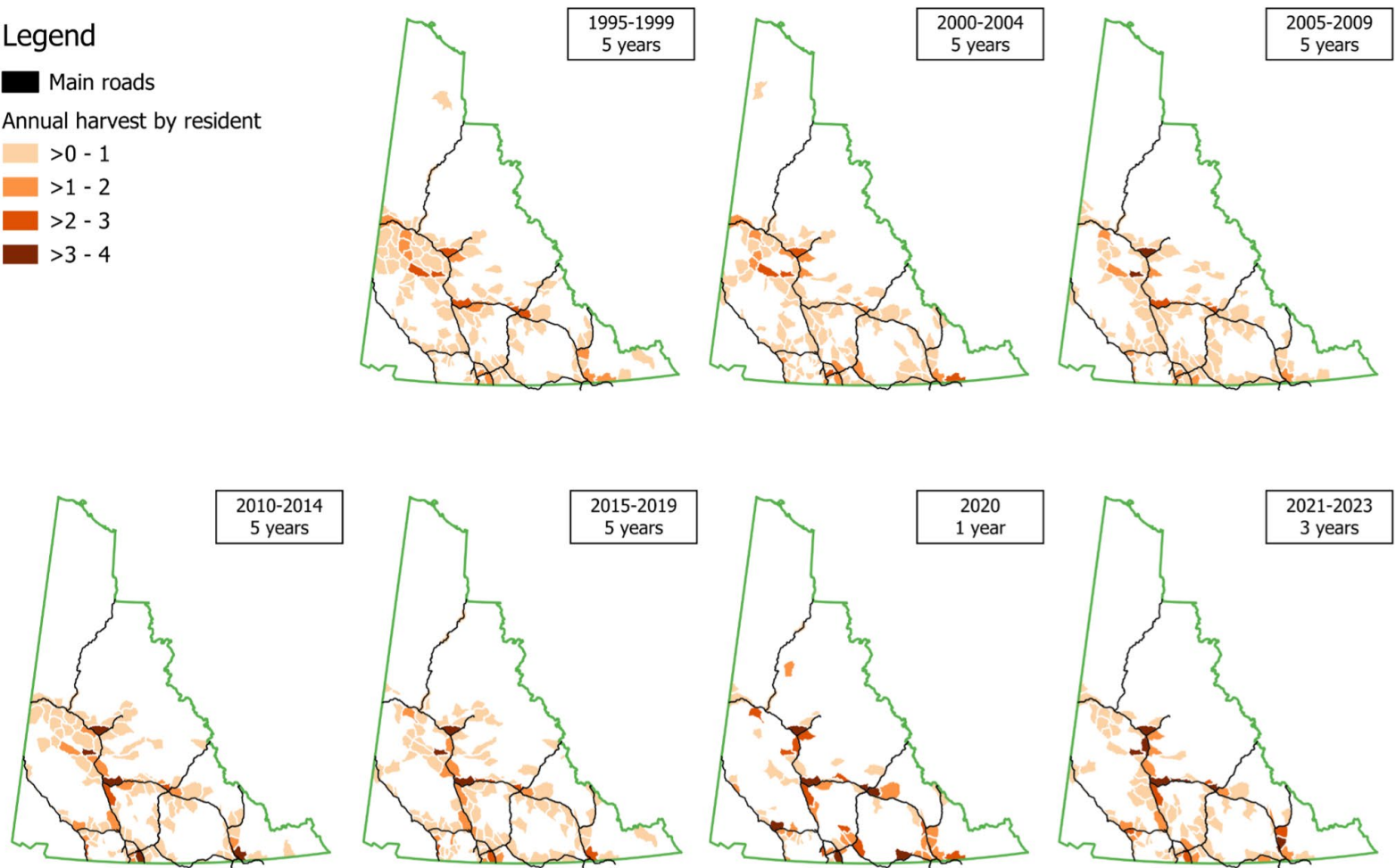


Figure 56.

Annual average number of black bears harvested by non-resident outfitter guided hunters by Game Management Subzone.

Legend

■ Main roads

■ No outfitter concessions

Annual harvest by non-resident
outfitter guided

■ >0 - 0.5

■ >0.5 - 1

■ >1 - 1.5

■ >1.5 - 2

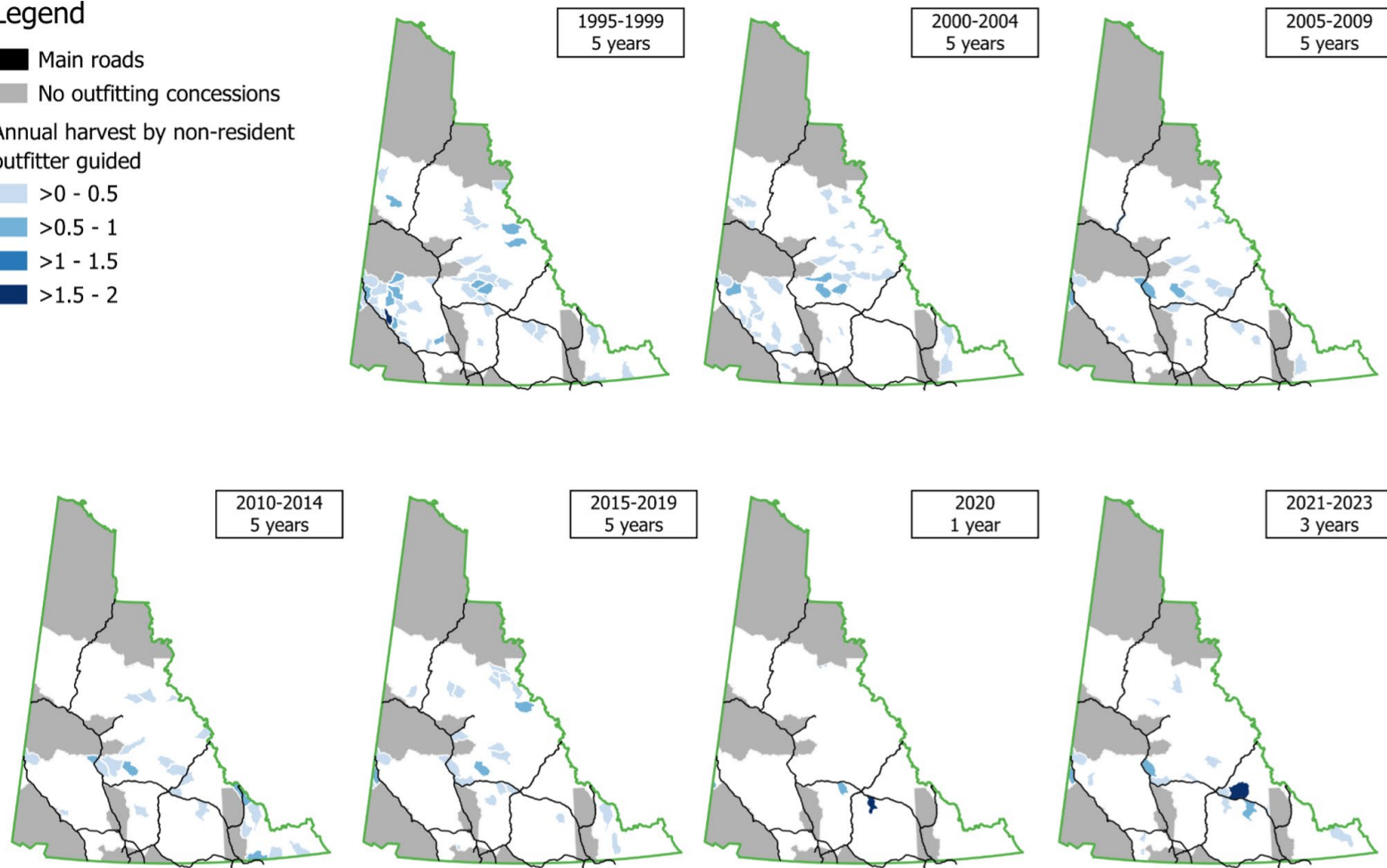
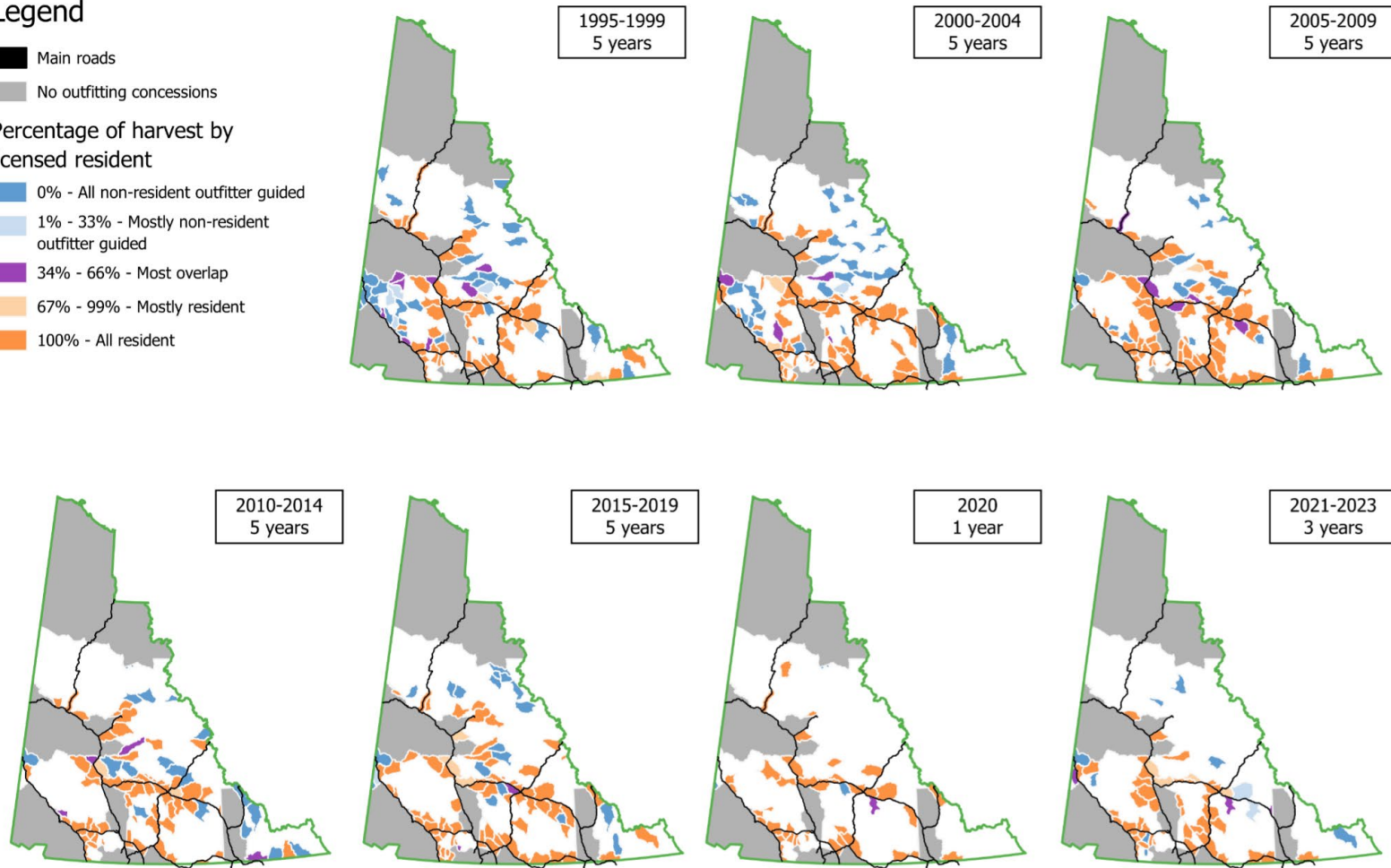


Figure 57.

Annual average percentage of black bears harvested by licensed resident hunters by Game Management Subzone. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of black bears harvested by resident hunters by the total number of black bears harvested by resident hunters and non-resident outfitter guided hunters. Harvest by non-resident special guided hunters was not included in these maps.

Legend

- Main roads
- No outfitting concessions
- Percentage of harvest by licensed resident**
 - 0% - All non-resident outfitter guided
 - 1% - 33% - Mostly non-resident outfitter guided
 - 34% - 66% - Most overlap
 - 67% - 99% - Mostly resident
 - 100% - All resident



Grizzly bear

Grizzly bears range throughout the Yukon and are found in a variety of habitats including forest, alpine and tundra. Grizzly bears den for six to seven months per year, beginning as early as late September and emerging from early to mid-May.

Management and regulation

Grizzly bears are managed using Bear Management Units, which consist of 29 groupings of game management subzones that align largely with outfitting concession boundaries. In 2019, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board and the Department of Environment released *A Conservation Plan for Grizzly Bears (Ursus arctos) in Yukon* (Yukon Grizzly Bear Conservation and Management Plan Working Group 2019).

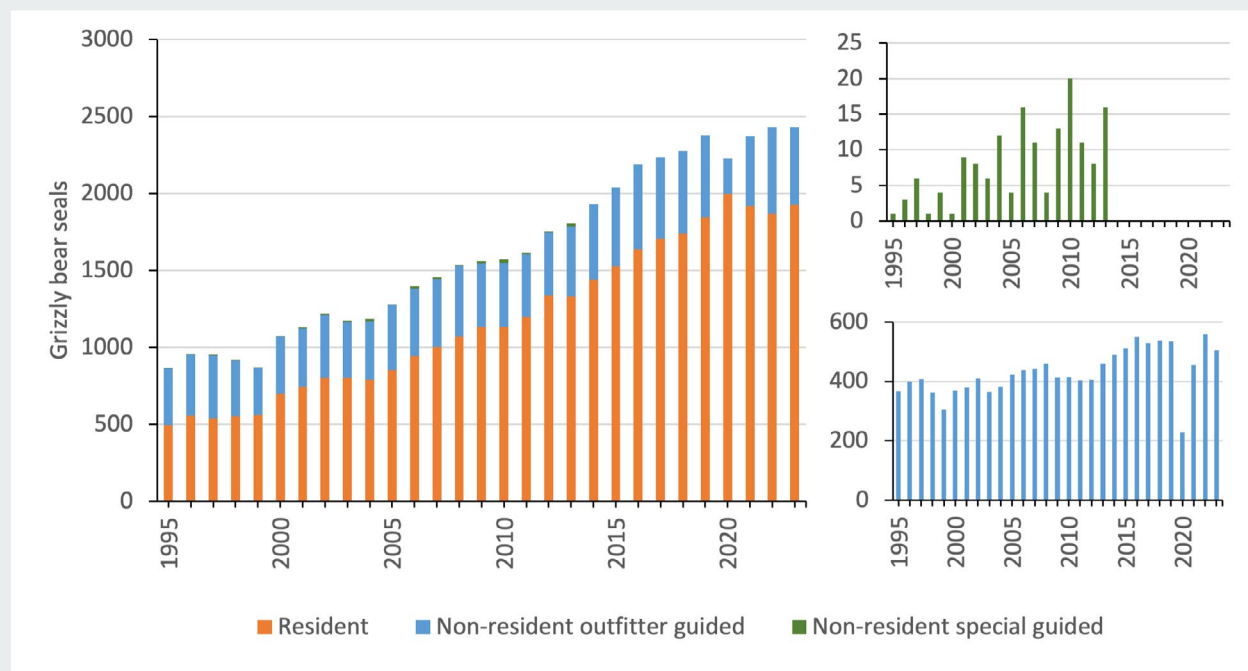
This plan provides an overall vision, including aspirations, values and commitments of Yukoners for the conservation of grizzly bears and includes guidance for sustainable harvest.

Management plans, along with traditional and local knowledge, and Indigenous perspectives, form part of the information considered when making management decisions related to harvest (Wildlife Management Advisory Council (Northwest Territories), Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope), and Inuvialuit Hunters and Trappers Committees 2022).

Licensed hunters can harvest one grizzly bear every three years. Bear cubs and female bears accompanied by a bear cub are protected from hunting. Changes to the hunting regulations occurred in 2013 when grizzly bear hunting was closed for non-resident special guided hunters and in 2022 when roadside hunting for grizzly bears was prohibited within 100 metres of roads in several areas in southern Yukon. Outfitters are under a harvest quota system (see Appendix 1).

Figure 58.

Number of grizzly bear seals obtained by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.



Seals

The total number of licensed hunters that obtained grizzly bear seals increased from a low of 864 in 1995 to a high of 2,429 in 2023 (Figure 58). In 1995, 495 resident hunters obtained a seal. This number grew to a high of 1,999 in 2020 (Figure 58). This increase does not necessarily reflect an increased interest in grizzly bear hunting. Based on a 2020 hunter effort survey, 71% of resident hunters that obtained a grizzly bear seal did not plan to hunt grizzly bears. They obtained a seal in case there was a conflict with a bear (Pongracz et al. 2025).

The number of non-resident outfitter guided hunters that obtained seals ranged from a low of 306 in 1999 to a high of 560 in 2022 (Figure 58).

Non-resident special guided hunters were able to harvest grizzly bears until 2013. From 1995 to 2013, they obtained an average of eight seals per year (range from one to 20; Figure 58).

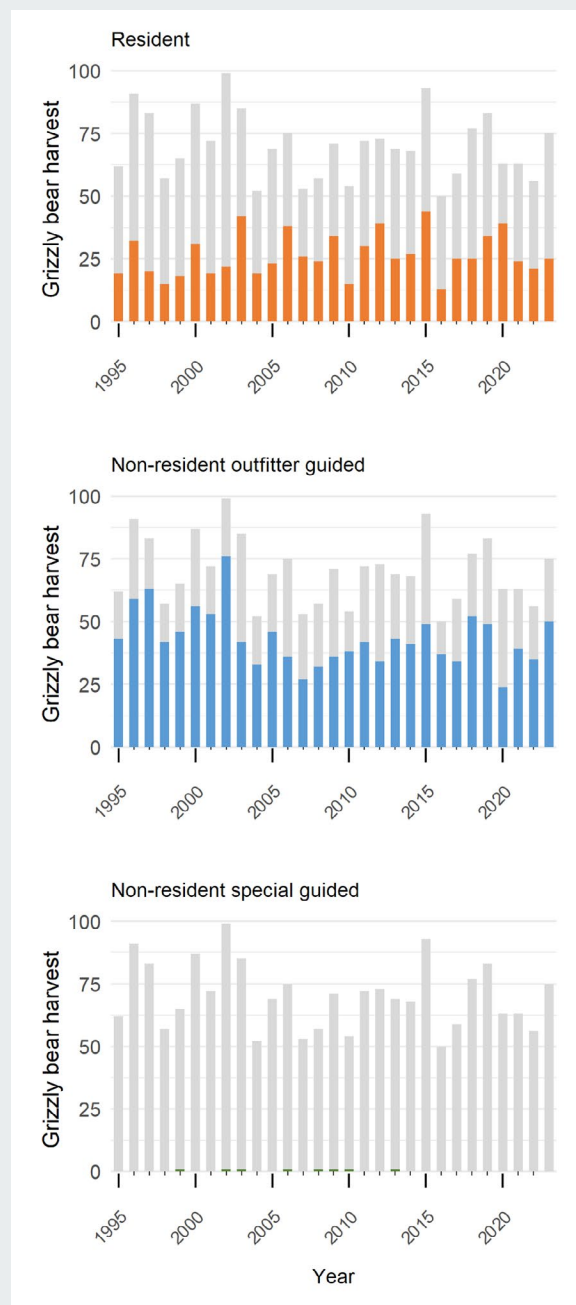
Harvest

Licensed hunters harvested an average of 70 grizzly bears per year and this number fluctuated from 50 to 99 (Figure 59). Resident hunters harvested an average of 22 grizzly bears per year (range 13 to 44). Non-resident outfitter guided hunters harvested an average of 48 grizzly bears per year (range 44 to 76, excluding 2020). On average, non-resident outfitter guided harvest accounted for 62% of licensed grizzly bear harvest. In total, non-resident special guided hunters harvested eight grizzly bears (ranging from zero to one per year) from 1995 to 2013 (Figure 59).

Grizzly bear harvest was predominantly male. On average, 69% and 68% of grizzly bears harvested per year were male for resident and non-resident outfitter guided hunters, respectively. Female grizzly bear harvest declined from an average of 24 (1995 to 1999) to 19 per year (2018 to 2023, excluding 2020), resulting in the lower

Figure 59.

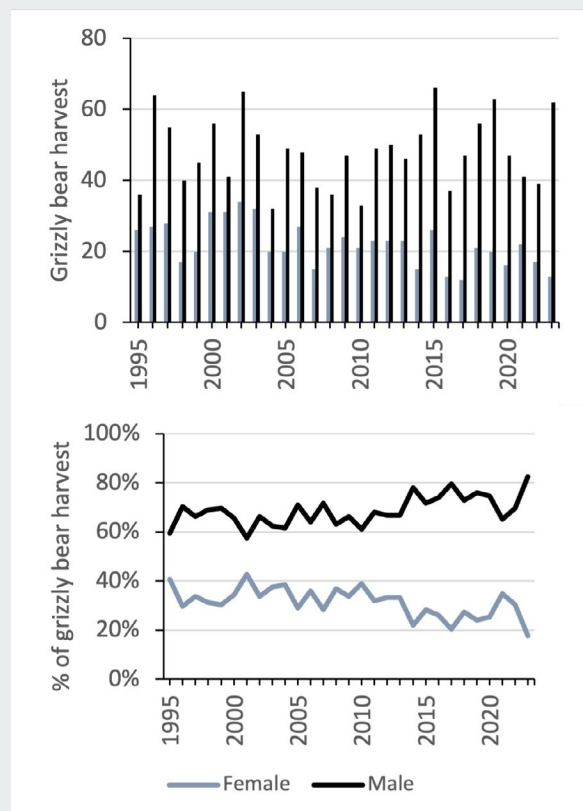
Number of grizzly bears harvested by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023. Grey bars represent the total licensed harvest.



percentage of females harvested (Figure 60). Three of the eight (38%) grizzly bears harvested by non-resident special guided hunters from 1995 and 2013 were male.

Figure 60.

Number and percentage of female and male grizzly bears harvested by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.



In total, 78% of grizzly bears harvested in the spring season were male, compared to 67% in the fall. Fall grizzly bear harvest was relatively consistent, averaging 57 per year. Spring harvest decreased from an average of 19 per year in earlier years (1995 to 1999) compared to 12 per year in later years (2018 to 2023, excluding 2020; Figure 61).

From 1995 to 2021, the average age of harvested grizzly bears was 9.4 years old. 54% of harvested grizzly bears were eight years old or younger (Figure 62). The most common age for harvested grizzly bears was three and four years old (10% each). The average age of harvested female grizzly bears fluctuated between 6.1 and 11.2 years old, while males fluctuated between 7.8 and 12.7 years old. The oldest harvested grizzly bear reported was a 37-year-old male (Figure 62).

Figure 61.

Number of grizzly bears harvested in the spring and fall hunting seasons by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.

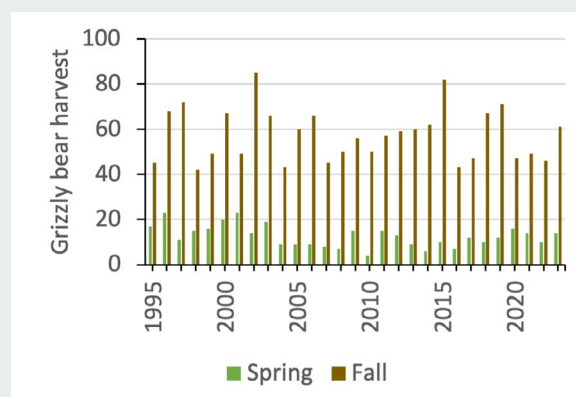
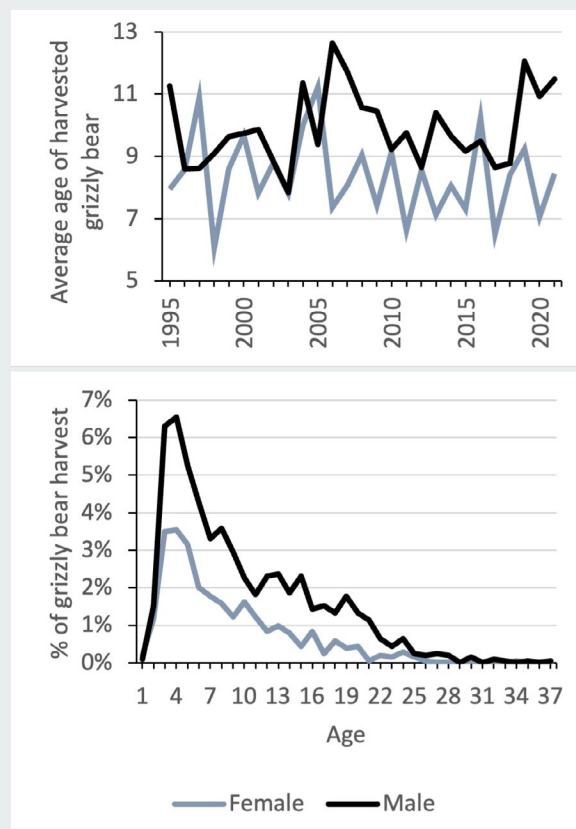


Figure 62.

Age and sex composition of harvested grizzly bears in the Yukon from 1995 to 2021. The oldest harvested grizzly bear reported was 37.



Harvest density and distribution

In recent years, we observed higher harvest densities near the Alaska Highway and Haines Road southwest of Haines Junction (Figure 63). The licensed harvest of grizzly bears occurred throughout the Yukon with few instances north of the Ogilvie Mountains (Figure 64).

We observed that resident hunters tended to harvest grizzly bears in GMSs near roads and communities (Figure 65). Grizzly bear harvest by non-resident outfitter guided hunters was dispersed, often in remote areas (Figure 66). Grizzly bear harvest by resident hunters and non-resident outfitter guided hunters had limited overlap (Figure 67).

Figure 63.

Average density of grizzly bears harvested by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 2019 to 2023. Density is defined as the number of grizzly bears harvested annually per 100 km².

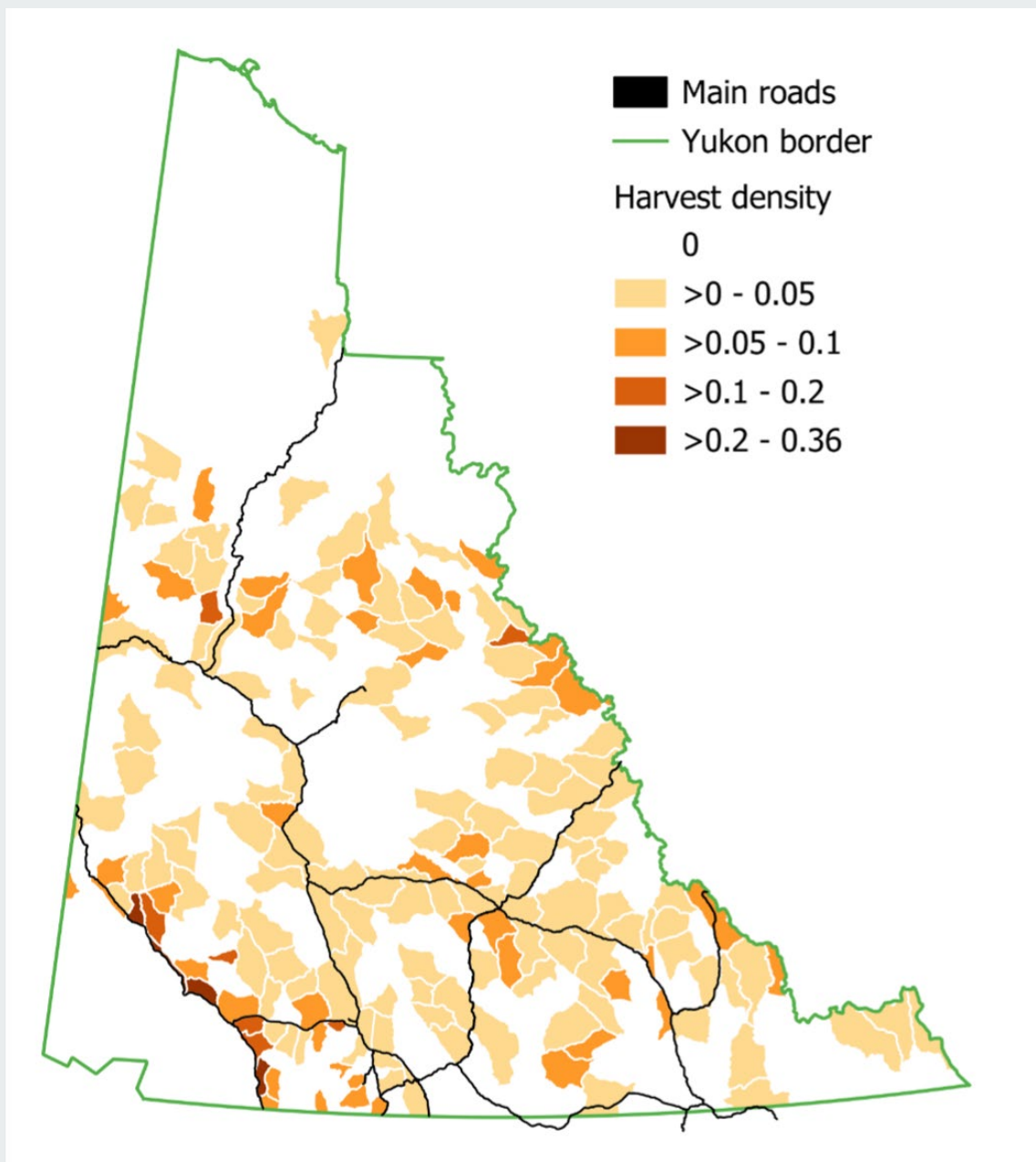


Figure 64.

Annual average number of grizzly bears harvested by licensed hunters by Game Management Subzone.

Legend

■ Main roads

Annual harvest by licensed hunters

■ >0 - 0.5

■ >0.5 - 1

■ >1 - 2

■ >2 - 3

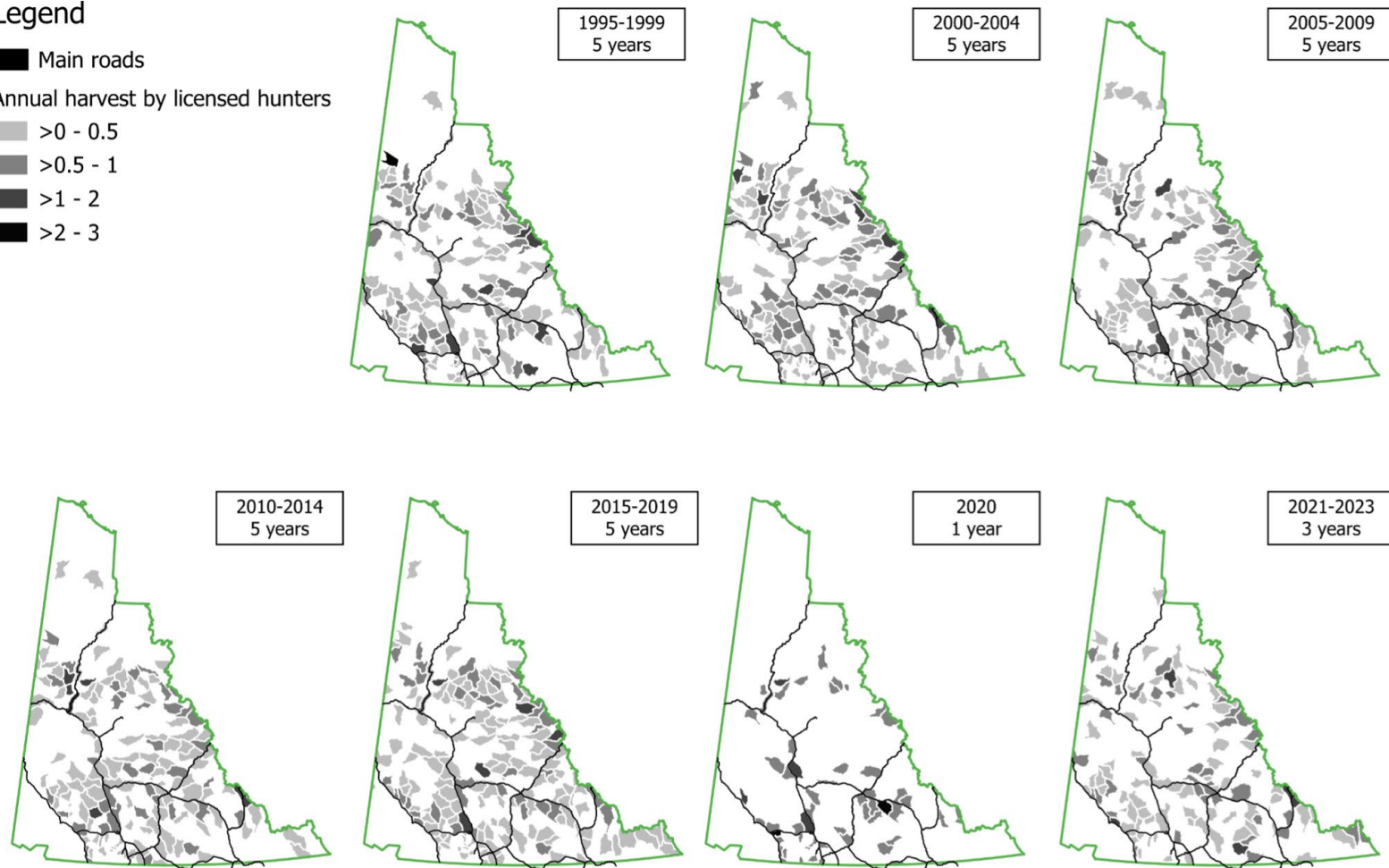


Figure 65.

Annual average number of grizzly bears harvested by licensed resident hunters by Game Management Subzone.

Legend

■ Main roads

Annual harvest by resident

■ >0 - 0.5

■ >0.5 - 1

■ >1 - 2

■ >2 - 3

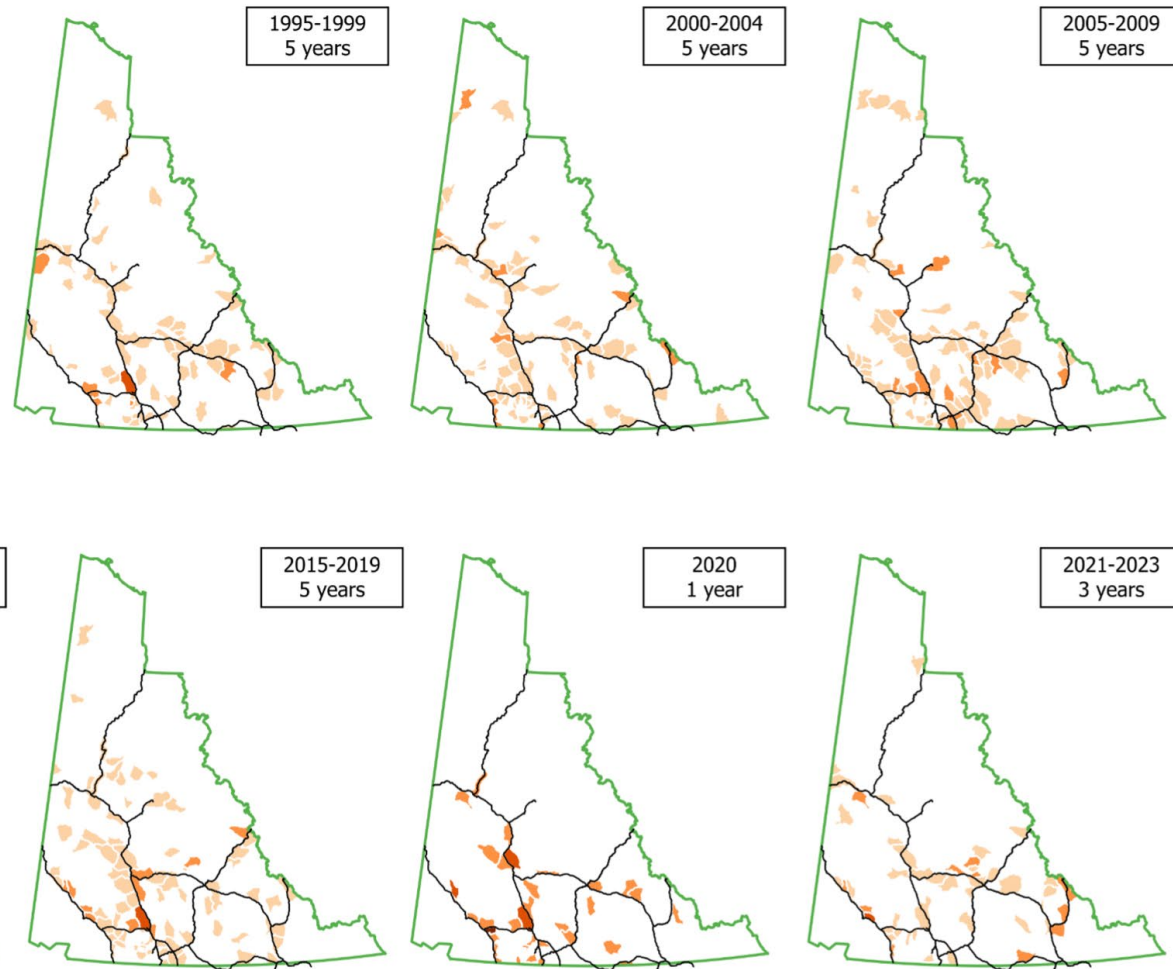


Figure 66.

Annual average number of grizzly bears harvested by non-resident outfitter guided hunters by Game Management Subzone.

Legend

- Main roads
- No outfitter concessions
- Annual harvest by non-resident outfitter guided
 - >0 - 0.5
 - >0.5 - 1
 - >1 - 2
 - >2 - 3

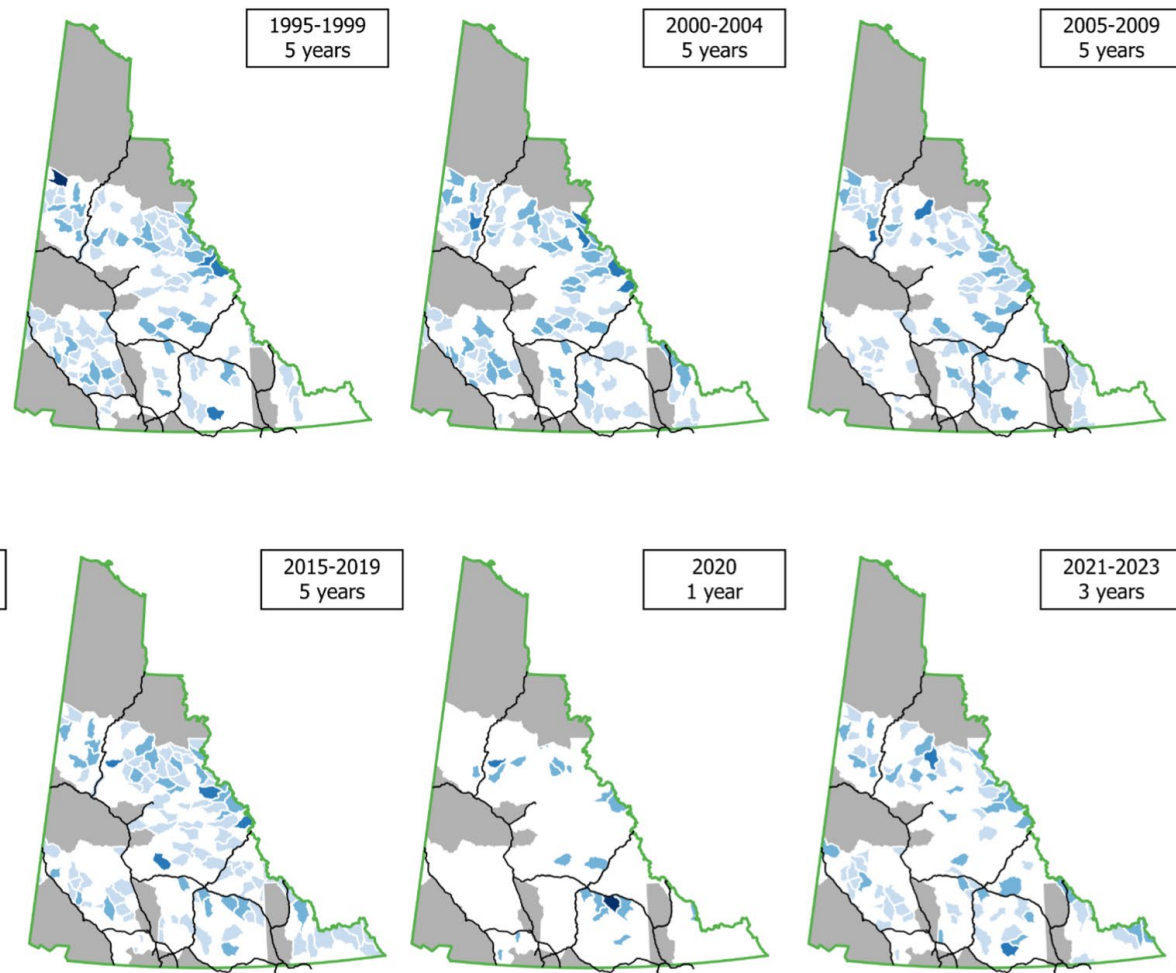


Figure 67.

Annual average percentage of grizzly bears harvested by licensed resident hunters by Game Management Subzone. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of grizzly bears harvested by resident hunters by the total number of grizzly bears harvested by resident hunters and non-resident outfitter guided hunters. Harvest by non-resident special guided hunters was not included in these maps.

Legend

■ Main roads

■ No outfitting concessions

Percent resident licensed harvest

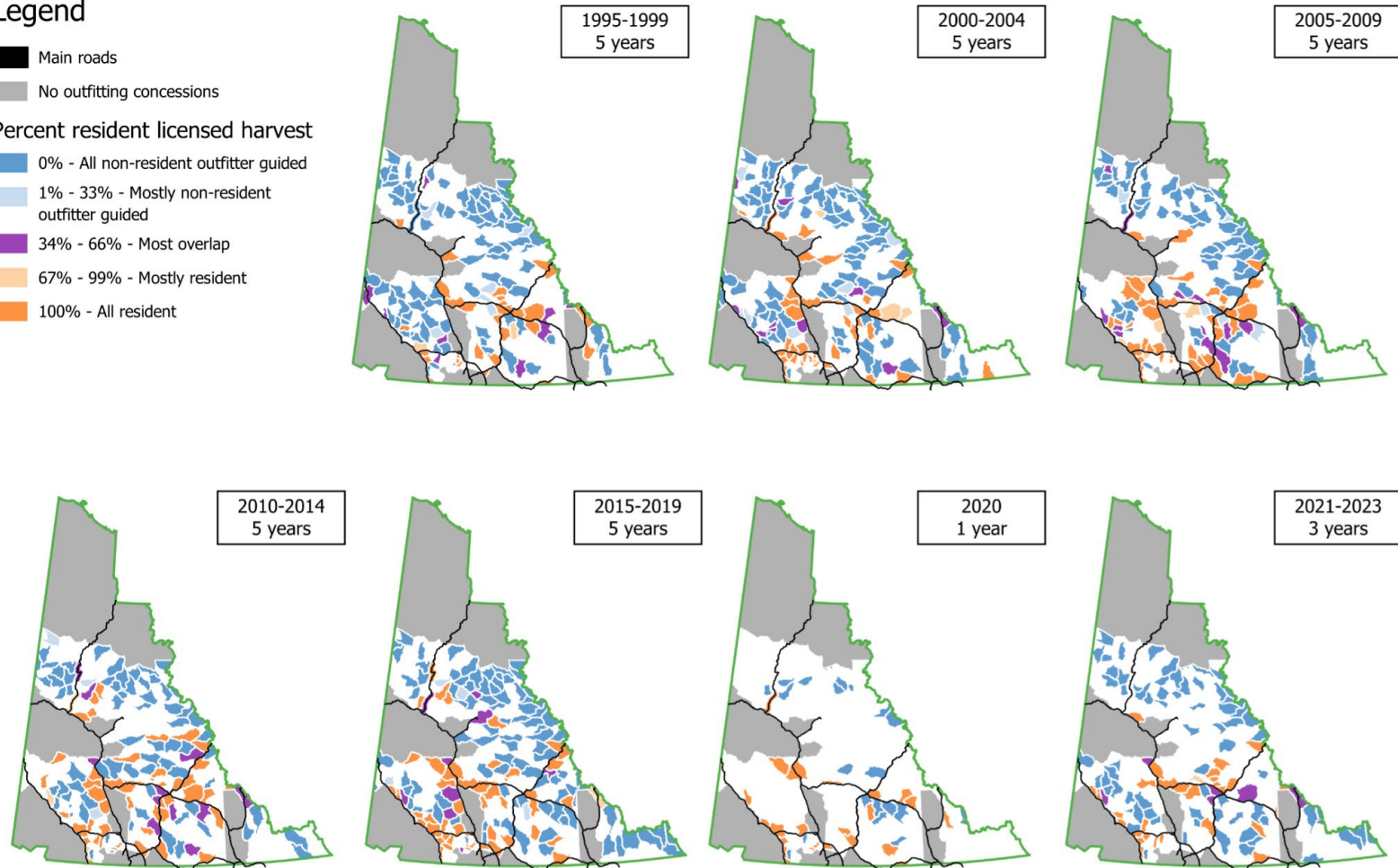
■ 0% - All non-resident outfitter guided

■ 1% - 33% - Mostly non-resident outfitter guided

■ 34% - 66% - Most overlap

■ 67% - 99% - Mostly resident

■ 100% - All resident



Mountain goat

There are an estimated 1,500 mountain goats in the Yukon at the northern extent of their distribution. Mountain goats live in specific mountain ranges in southern Yukon, such as the Coast and Cassiar Mountains as well as along the Yukon and Northwest Territories border. Mountain goats are found primarily in mountain alpine areas close to steep cliffs where they can easily escape predators.

Management and regulation

Licensed hunters can harvest one mountain goat per year. Female mountain goats with young are protected from hunting. Mountain goat harvest opportunities exist in two GMZs, 7 and 11. Since 1995, two regulation changes related to mountain goat harvest management were implemented. In 1998, GMSs 7-10, 7-11, 7-12 and 7-28 were placed under a PHA with six permits established. The PHA was then set at zero in 2001. In 2015, a PHA was established for the Itsi Mountain goat population near the North Canol Road (GMSs 11-01 to 11-03) and set at zero permits.

Since 1995, hunting opportunities for mountain goats for non-resident outfitter guided hunters were limited to three outfitting concession areas on quotas (see Appendix 1). Quotas were reduced to zero for the Southern Lakes in 2001 and Itsi Mountains in 2016.

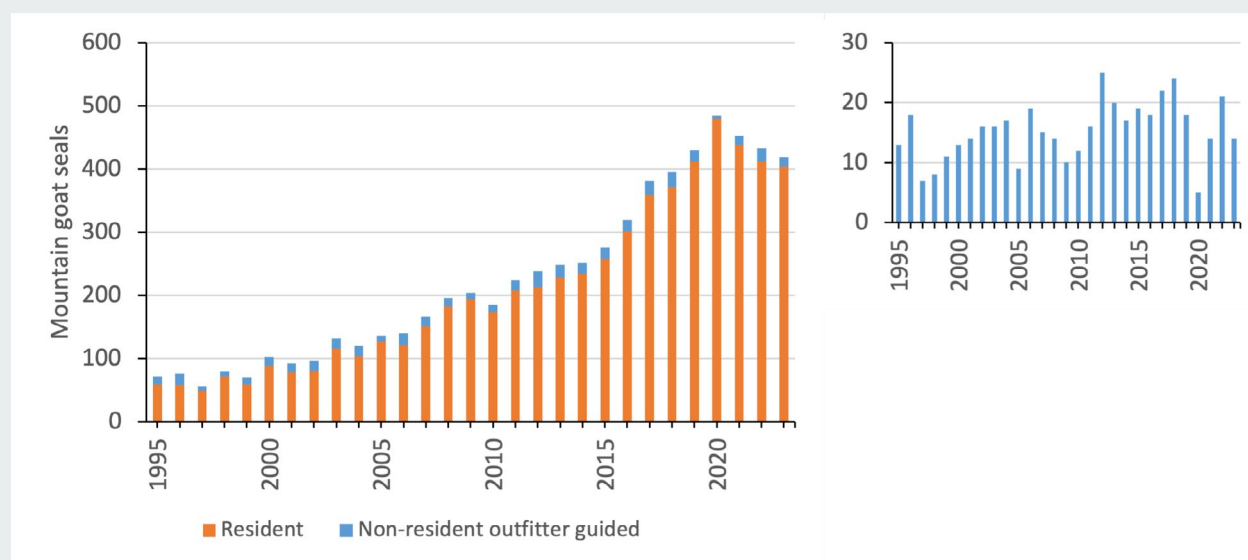
Seals

The number of licensed hunters that obtained mountain goat seals generally increased from 56 in 1997 to 484 in 2020 (Figure 68). Most mountain goat seals were obtained by resident hunters with limited opportunities for non-resident outfitter guided hunts. The number of resident hunters that obtained a mountain goat seal increased from 49 in 1997 to a high of 479 in 2020. The number of seals obtained by resident hunters decreased from 2020 to 2023 (Figure 68).

The number of non-resident outfitter guided hunters that obtained mountain goat seals ranged from five to 25 and averaged 15 seals per year (Figure 68).

Figure 68.

Number of mountain goat seals obtained by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.

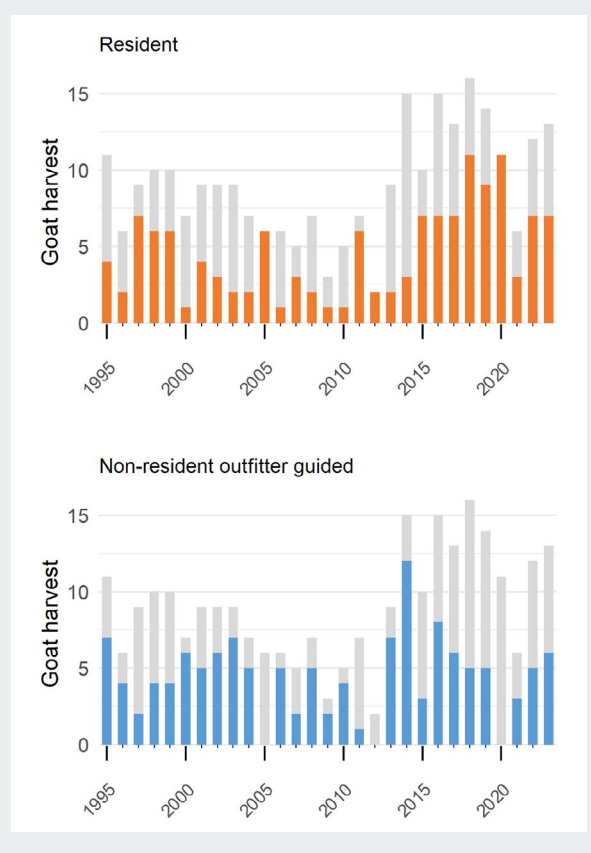


Harvest

The number of mountain goats harvested by licensed hunters decreased from 1995 to 2012, then increased (Figure 69). Before 2012, an average of seven mountain goats were harvested per year. From 2013 to 2023, an average of 12 mountain goats were harvested per year. Similarly, mountain goat harvest by resident hunters increased in 2015 (Figure 69). The average number of mountain goats harvested by resident hunters increased from three to eight per year before and after 2015. Mountain goat harvest by non-resident outfitter guided hunters ranged from a low of zero (2005, 2012 and 2020) to a high of 12 (2014) and an average of five mountain goats per year (Figure 69).

Figure 69.

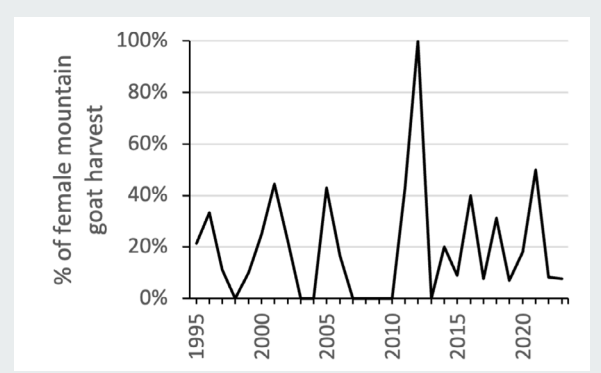
Number of mountain goats harvested by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023. Grey bars represent the total licensed harvest.



The number of female mountain goats harvested per year ranged from zero to six (representing 0% to 100% of the annual harvest). 17% of all mountain goats harvested from 1995 to 2023 were female (Figure 70). Resident hunters harvested a higher percentage of female mountain goats (27%) compared to non-resident outfitter guided hunters (7%).

Figure 70.

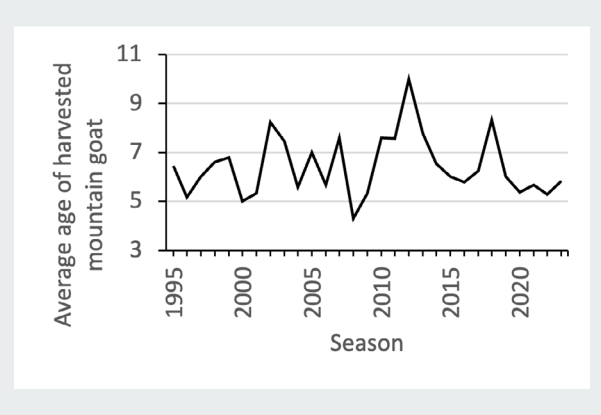
Percentage of female mountain goats harvested by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.



The average age of harvested mountain goats was 6.33 years old. On average, mountain goats harvested by resident hunters were 5.88 years old and those harvested by non-resident outfitter guided hunters were 6.79 years old (Figure 71).

Figure 71.

Average age of mountain goats harvested by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.



Harvest density and distribution

In recent years, we observed the highest density of mountain goats harvested in GMS 7-35 at 18.3 per 100 km² (Figure 72). From 2019 to 2023, a total of two mountain goats were harvested by resident hunters in GMS 7-35 and zero in GMS 7-34. The majority of mountain goats harvested by licensed hunters are harvested in the southeast Yukon (Figure 73). We observed an increase in mountain goat harvest by resident hunters starting in 2015 near the Nahanni Range Road and Frances Lake (Figure 74).

The majority of mountain goats harvested by non-resident outfitter guided hunters were east of the Nahanni Range Road near the Northwest Territories (Figure 75). We observed very little overlap in mountain goat harvest between resident and non-resident outfitter guided hunters (Figure 76).

Figure 72.

Average density of mountain goats harvested by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 2019 to 2023. Density is defined as the number of mountain goats harvested annually per 100 km².

Legend

• Communities

■ Main roads

— Yukon border

Harvest density (100km²)

>0 - 0.5

>0.5 - 1

>1 - 2

18.3

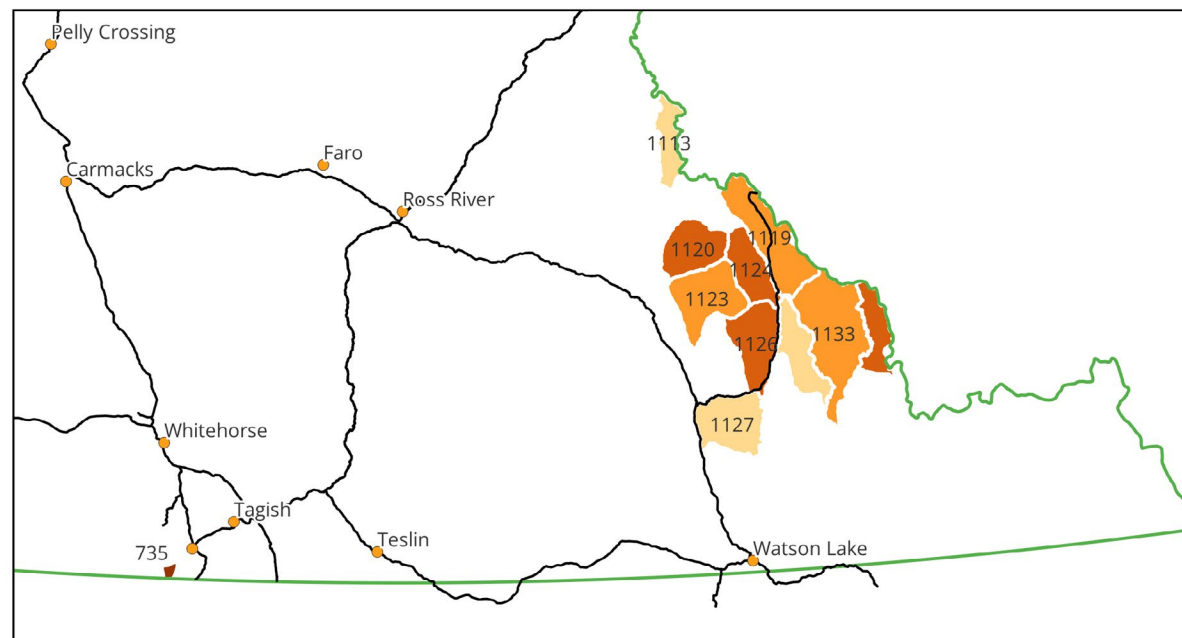


Figure 73.

Annual average number of mountain goats harvested by licensed hunters by Game Management Subzone.

Legend

■ Main roads

■ Water

Annual harvest by
licensed hunters

■ >0 - 0.5

■ >0.5 - 1

■ >1 - 2

■ >2 - 3

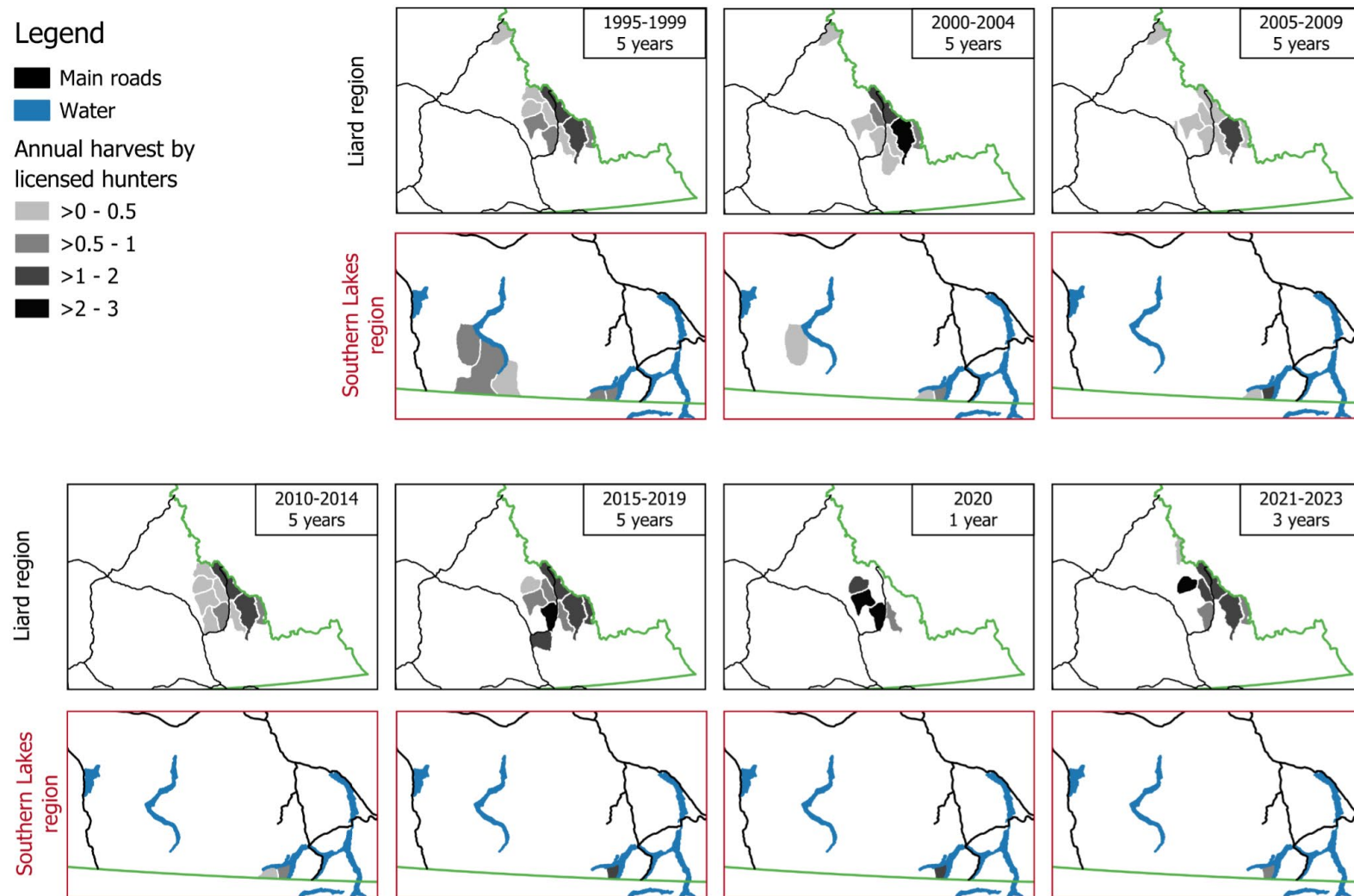


Figure 74.

Annual average number of mountain goats harvested by licensed resident hunters by Game Management Subzone.

Legend

■ Main roads

■ Water

Annual harvest by resident

■ >0 - 0.5

■ >0.5 - 1

■ >1 - 2

■ >2 - 3

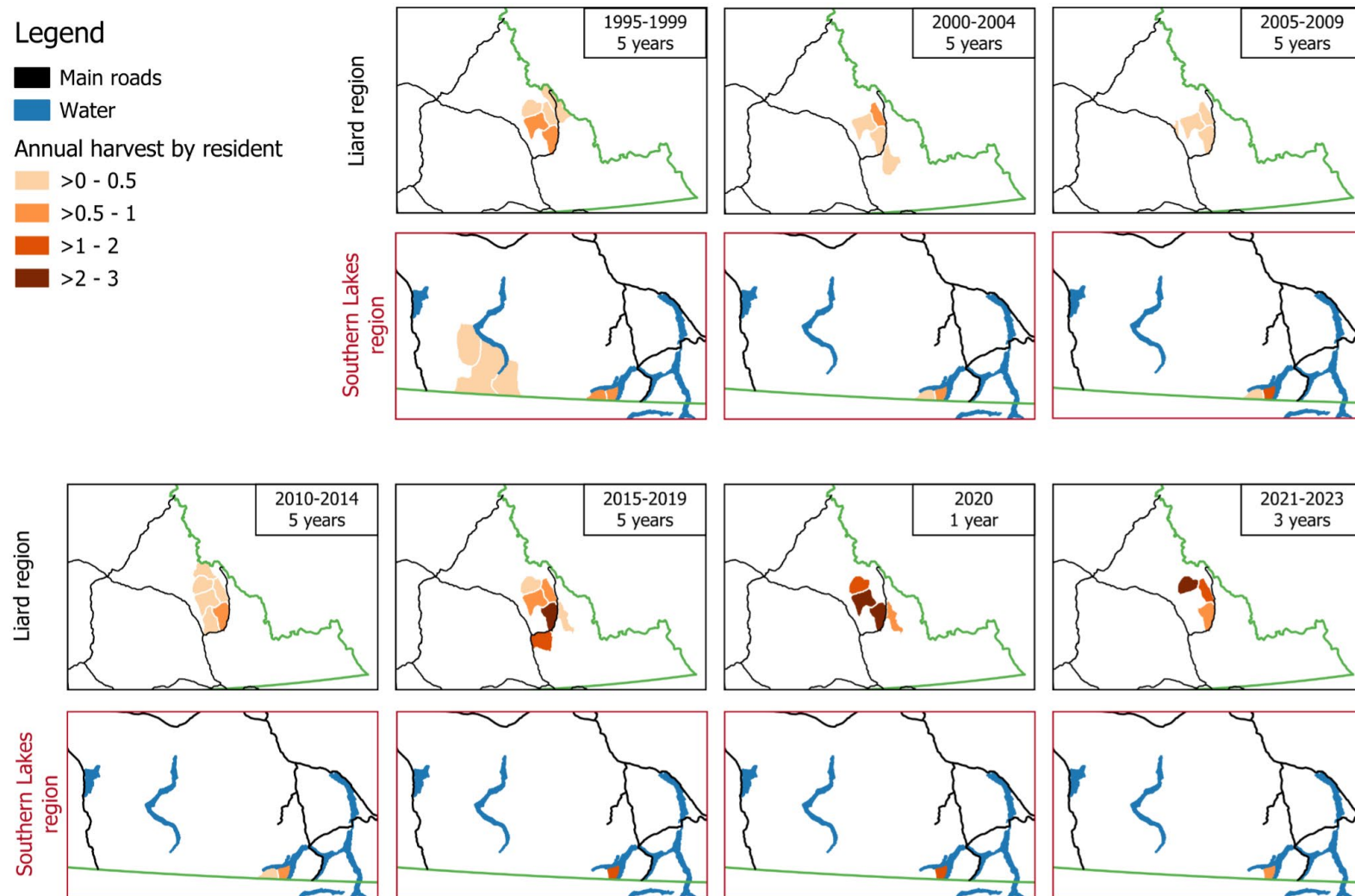


Figure 75.

Annual average number of mountain goats harvested by non-resident outfitter guided hunters by Game Management Subzone.

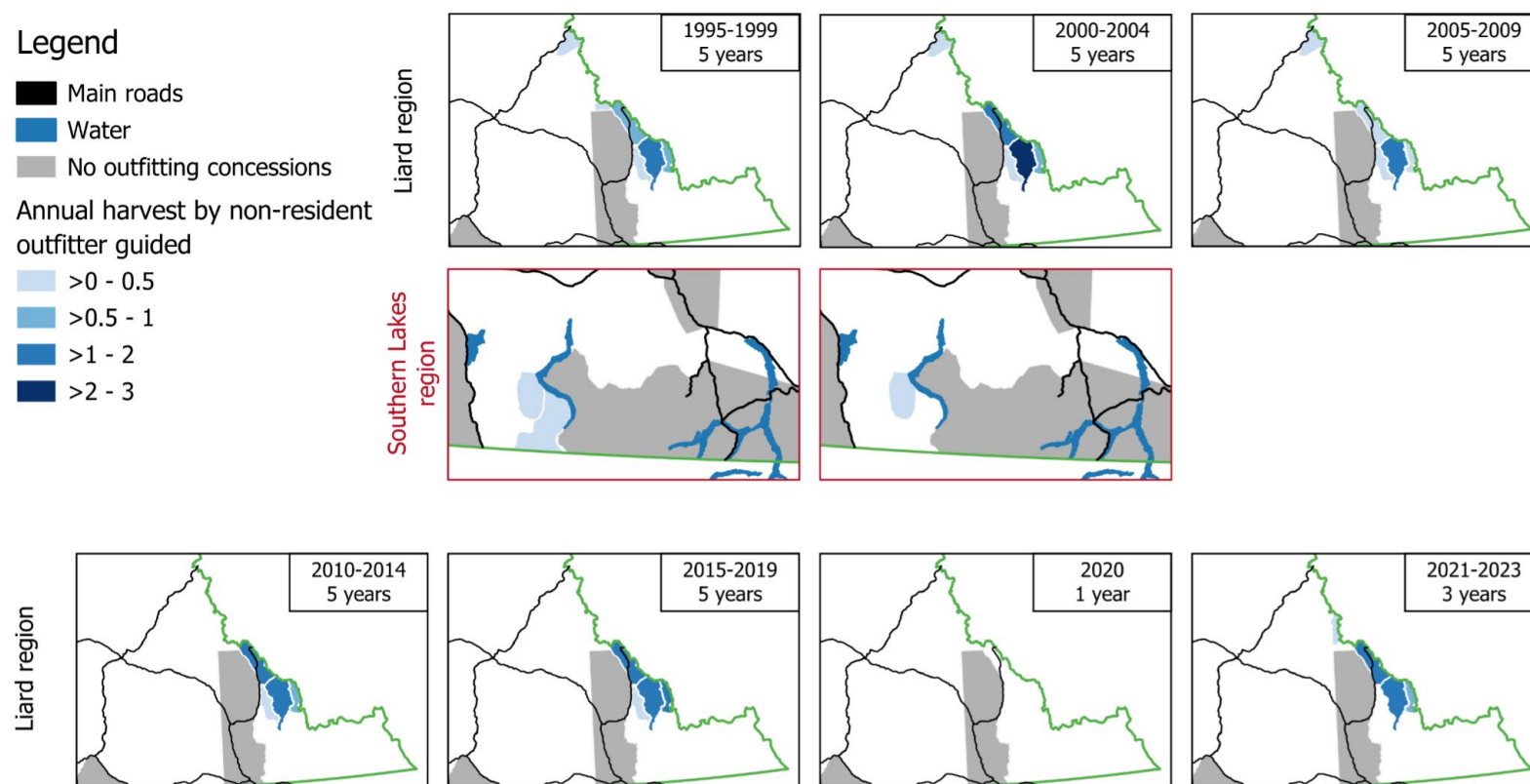
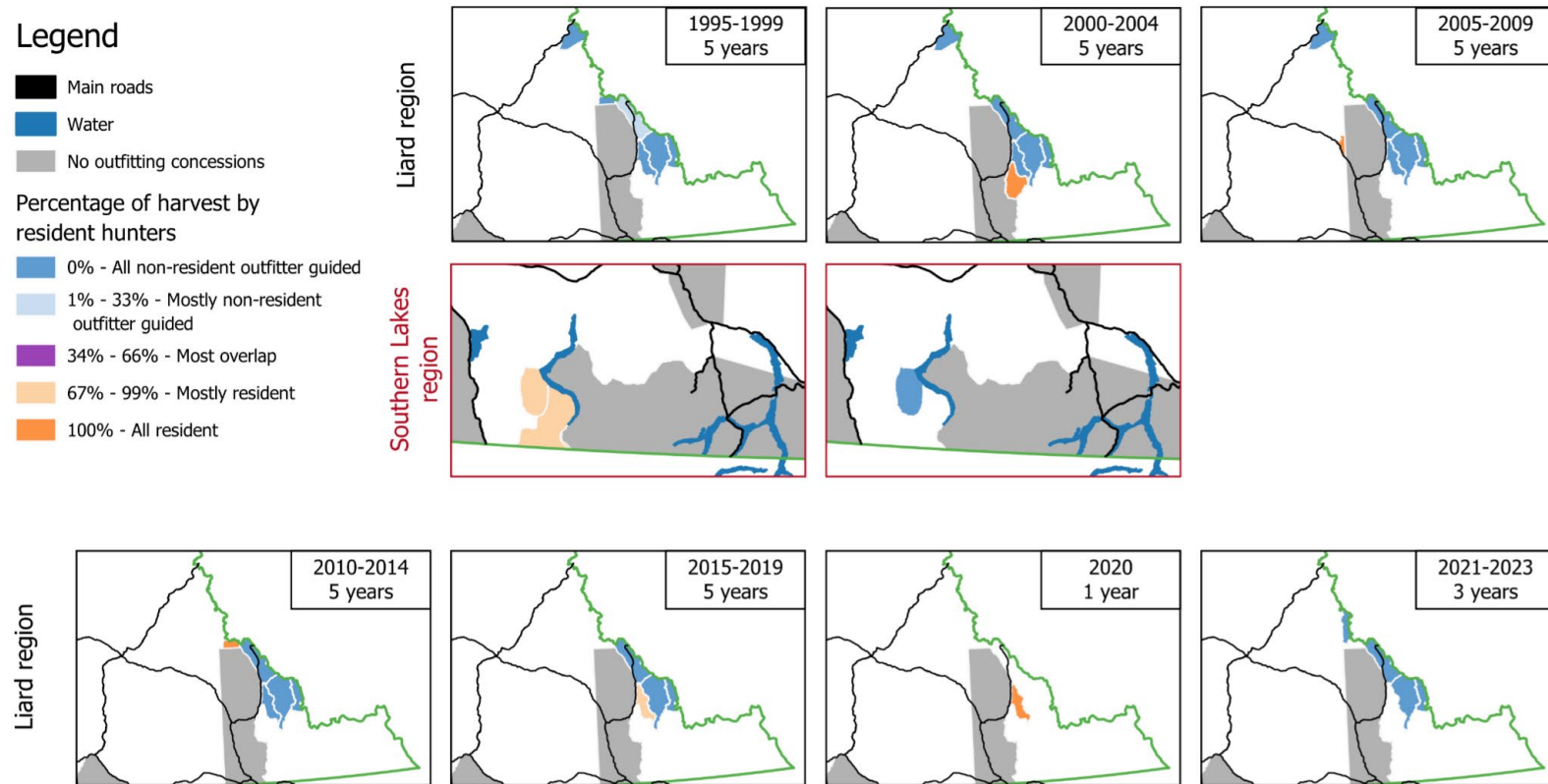


Figure 76.

Annual average percentage of mountain goats harvested by licensed resident hunters by Game Management Subzone. Percentages were calculated from dividing the number of mountain goats harvested by resident hunters by the total number of mountain goats harvested by resident hunters and non-resident outfitter guided hunters.



Elk

There are two elk herds in the Yukon with harvest opportunities, the Takhini Valley herd and the Braeburn herd. There are an estimated 250 to 300 elk distributed among these two distinct herds, based on available population estimates.

Management and regulation

Elk harvest in the Yukon is guided by the management plan for elk in the Yukon (Government of Yukon 2016c). Over the years, several regulation changes were implemented to support elk management. In 2008, elk were removed as specially protected wildlife under the Yukon's *Wildlife Act* and listed as a big game animal. This change allowed licensed harvest of elk by PHA in 2009.

In 2009, an elk exclusion area was defined outside the core and buffer areas of these herds whereby any resident could obtain a permit to harvest an elk of either sex between June 1 and March 31. Hunters with a PHA obtained through a lottery system had an opportunity to harvest in either the core or the buffer areas for a specific sex. In 2011, the elk exclusion area was opened year-round and the core area was closed to hunting in 2012.

Starting in 2012, PHAs were only available for male elk from the Braeburn herd and the same applied in 2015 for the Takhini Valley herd. In 2015, adaptive permits (originally called agricultural conflict permits) were introduced for the Takhini Valley herd to address agricultural conflict. These permits included specific conditions to harvest an elk, such as number of antler points or males only.

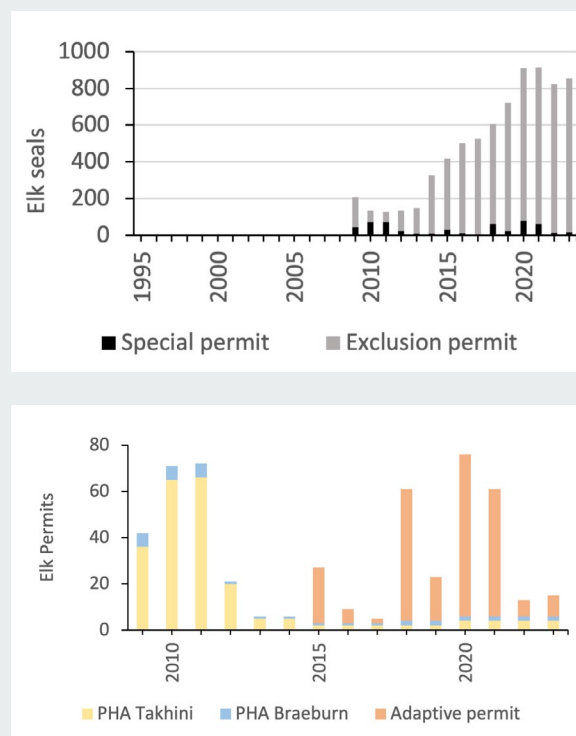
Indigenous hunters are required to obtain a hunting licence, permit and seal to hunt elk because they are listed as transplanted wildlife for which subsistence rights do not apply (Government of Yukon 2016c, 2021).

Seals

The number of licensed resident hunters that obtained a seal decreased from 251 in 2009 to 152 in 2013, then increased to over 800 in recent years (Figure 77). Most seals obtained were for the exclusion area. Other than the exclusion area, only Takhini Valley PHAs (hereafter Takhini PHA) and Braeburn PHAs were issued from 2009 to 2014 and the number of permits varied based on the management objectives. Since 2013, two to six PHAs were issued for the Takhini Valley herd and one to two PHAs were issued for the Braeburn herd. The number of adaptive permits varied from a low of two in 2017 to a high of 70 in 2020 based on management objectives (Figure 77).

Figure 77.

Number of elk seals obtained by licensed resident hunters in the Yukon under special permits (Permit Hunt Authorizations and Elk Adaptive Wildlife Act permits) and exclusion area permits from 1995 to 2023.



Harvest

The number of elk harvested varied along with changes in the number of PHAs and adaptive permits issued. In total, 255 elk were harvested in the Yukon since 2009. The lowest number of elk harvested per year was three in 2016 and 2022. The highest number of elk harvested was 44 elk in 2020. A total of 12 elk were harvested in the exclusion area since 2009 (Figure 78).

From 2009 to 2023, a total of 214 elk from the Takhini Valley herd were harvested. Half (49% or 104) of these elk were female. In 2011, elk harvest was all female (34 females). Differences in the sex ratio of harvested elk are explained in part by permit conditions (i.e., antlerless or antlered, number of points). Of the 12 elk harvested in the exclusion area, nine were from the Takhini Valley herd (Figure 78).

In total, 21 elk were harvested under Braeburn PHAs. Of these, 20 elk were male and one was female. Three male elk were harvested in the exclusion area from the Braeburn herd.

Harvest distribution

Elk were harvested near Haines Junction, Carmacks and Whitehorse. The majority of harvested elk were from the Takhini Valley herd from GMSs 5-50 and 7-15 (Figure 79). We observed that elk harvest often occurred near agricultural land.

Figure 78.

Number of elk harvested by permit type and sex composition in the Yukon from 2009 to 2023.

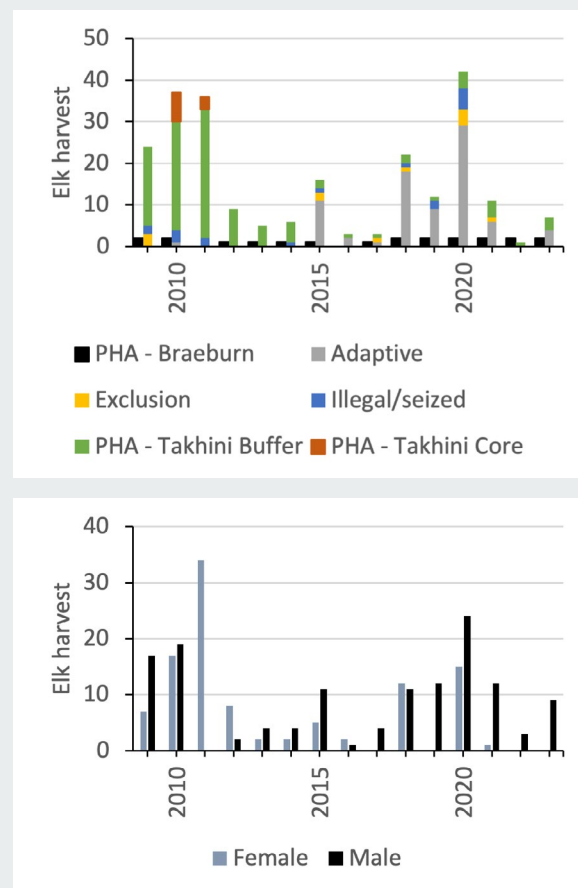


Figure 79.

Annual average number of elk harvested by licensed resident hunters by Game Management Subzone.

Legend

• Major places

■ Major roads

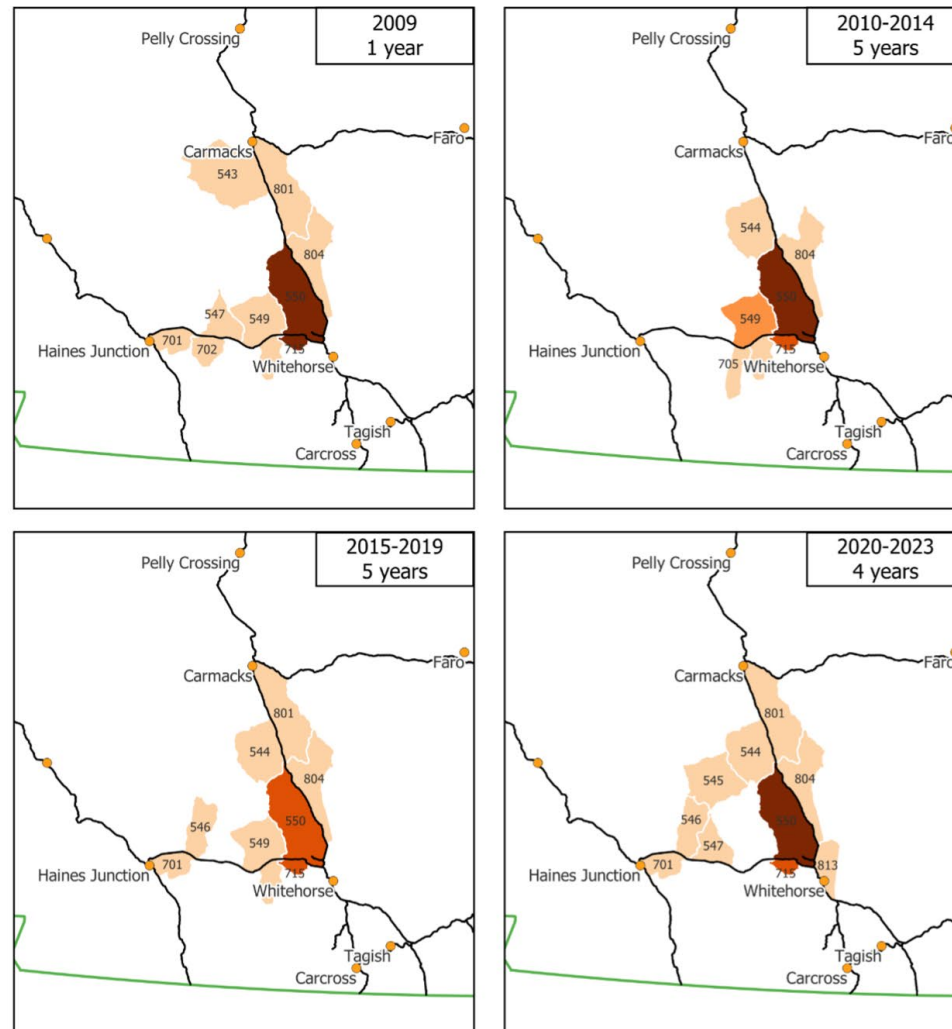
Annual harvest by resident

>0 - 2

>2 - 4

>4 - 6

>6 - 9



Deer

There are an estimated 500 to 1,000 deer in the Yukon. Public reports of deer sightings indicate that both mule (*Odocoileus hemionus*) and white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) are naturally occurring. White-tailed deer sightings are rare, while mule deer sightings are more common. Sightings and road-kill data suggest that the Yukon deer population has increased and that their distribution has broadened. The construction of the Alaska and Klondike highways, the increase in agricultural lands and climate change have likely been the greatest recent contributors to the growing population and wider distribution of deer in the Yukon (Hoefs 2001).

Management, regulation and permits

The first deer hunt was conducted on a trial basis in 2006. Ten PHAs were issued and hunters had access to almost every GMS open to hunting in the Yukon. In 2009, two additional PHAs began being issued per year to youth (ages 14 to 15). The cost of a deer seal was \$50. Licensed hunters can harvest either deer species on their seal. Harvested deer are assumed to be primarily mule deer because white-tail deer are less common in the Yukon.

Harvest

From 2006 to 2023, an average of seven deer were harvested per year by licensed hunters (range four to ten; Figure 80). We observed that deer harvest occurred in GMSs near highways around Haines Junction, Whitehorse and Carmacks. The highest concentration of harvest was near Whitehorse in GMSs 5-50 and 8-13, especially in recent years (Figure 81).

Figure 80.

Number of deer harvested by licensed hunters in the Yukon from 1995 to 2023.

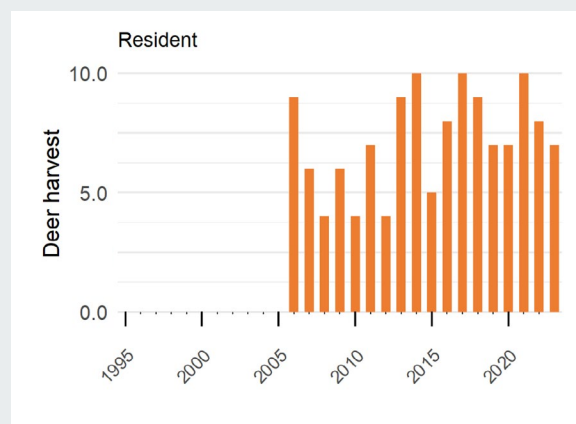


Figure 81.

Annual average number of deer harvested by licensed resident hunters by Game Management Subzone.

Legend

• Major places

■ Major roads

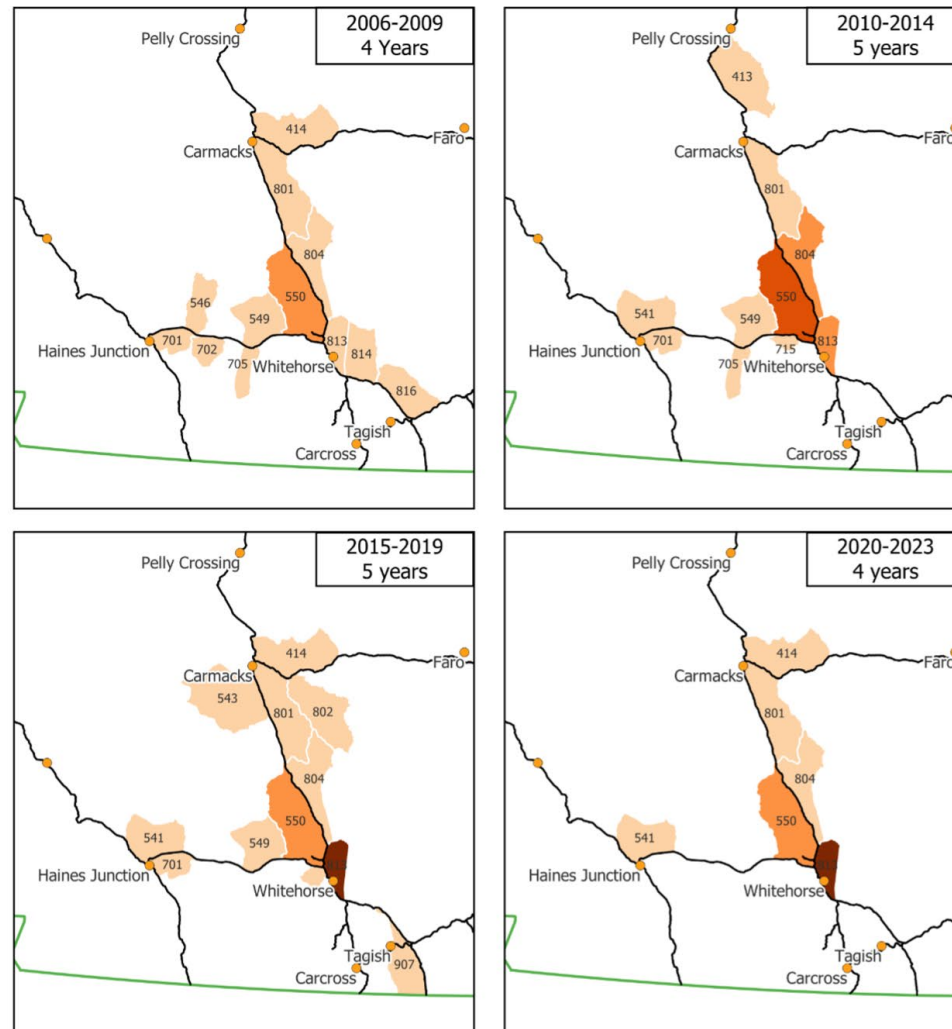
Annual harvest by resident

>0 - 1

>1 - 2

>2 - 3

>3 - 6



Conclusion

In this report, we presented harvest information from licensed hunters to ensure that Yukoners have an opportunity to engage in informed discussions about sustainable wildlife harvest management. Licensed harvest is only a part of the overall harvest for most big game species. Wildlife management is most effective when all hunters, agencies and Indigenous governments who share an interest in wildlife work together to steward this resource.

This report is a testament to the goodwill and responsible reporting by licensed hunters and their contribution to a consistent record of licensed wildlife harvest in the Yukon. We thank all of those hunters whose information is reflected in this report.

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Appendix 1. Quotas

There are 20 registered outfitting concessions in the Yukon that guide non-resident hunters. The following provides a summary of quotas for outfitting concessions by species.

Moose and caribou

In 1996, Cabinet approved a policy document called *Guidelines to establish outfitter quotas* that laid out a process to determine moose and caribou quotas for all outfitting concessions. The first moose and caribou quotas were established in 1996 and by 2022 all outfitting concessions were managed under moose and caribou quotas.

Wood bison

A bison quota was established in 1999 for one concession (Outfitting Concession 13) and in 2005, for three more (Outfitting Concessions 11, 12 and 16).

Grizzly bears

Outfitters are under a quota system for grizzly bears which used to be a point system with female bears counting for three points and male bears counting for one. In 2005, the system was modified to establish separate male and female quotas.

Mountain goats

Three outfitting concessions had goat quotas during all or a part of the 1995 to 2023 period. Currently only Outfitting Concession 22 has a mountain goat quota.

Sheep

Outfitters are placed on quotas under specific circumstances under the guidelines to establish outfitter quotas, including when a PHA is established for resident hunters. One outfitting concession overlaps with a PHA area and has a sheep quota (Outfitting Concession 17). Outfitting Concession 6 voluntarily requested to be placed under a sheep quota starting in the 2018 hunting season.

Other species

There are no quotas for black bears, coyotes, wolves or wolverines. There is an individual bag limit for these species, except for coyotes.

Appendix 2. Harvest distribution maps

Figure 1.

Annual average number of moose harvested by non-resident special guided hunters by Game Management Subzone.

Legend

■ Main roads

Annual harvest by non-resident special guided

■ >0 - 1

■ >1 - 2

■ >2 - 3

■ >3 - 4

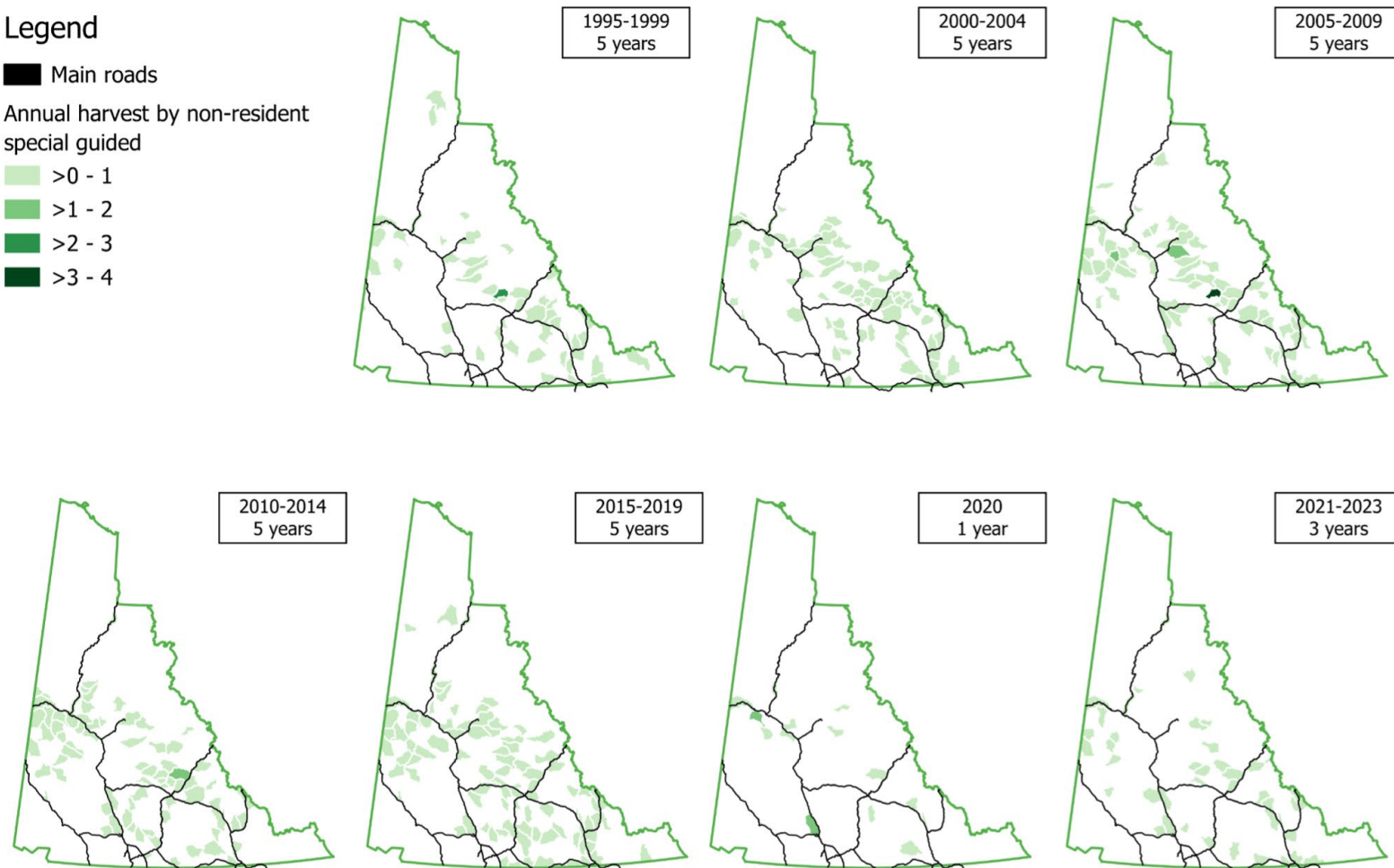


Figure 2.

Annual average number of migratory caribou harvested by licensed hunters by Game Management Subzone.

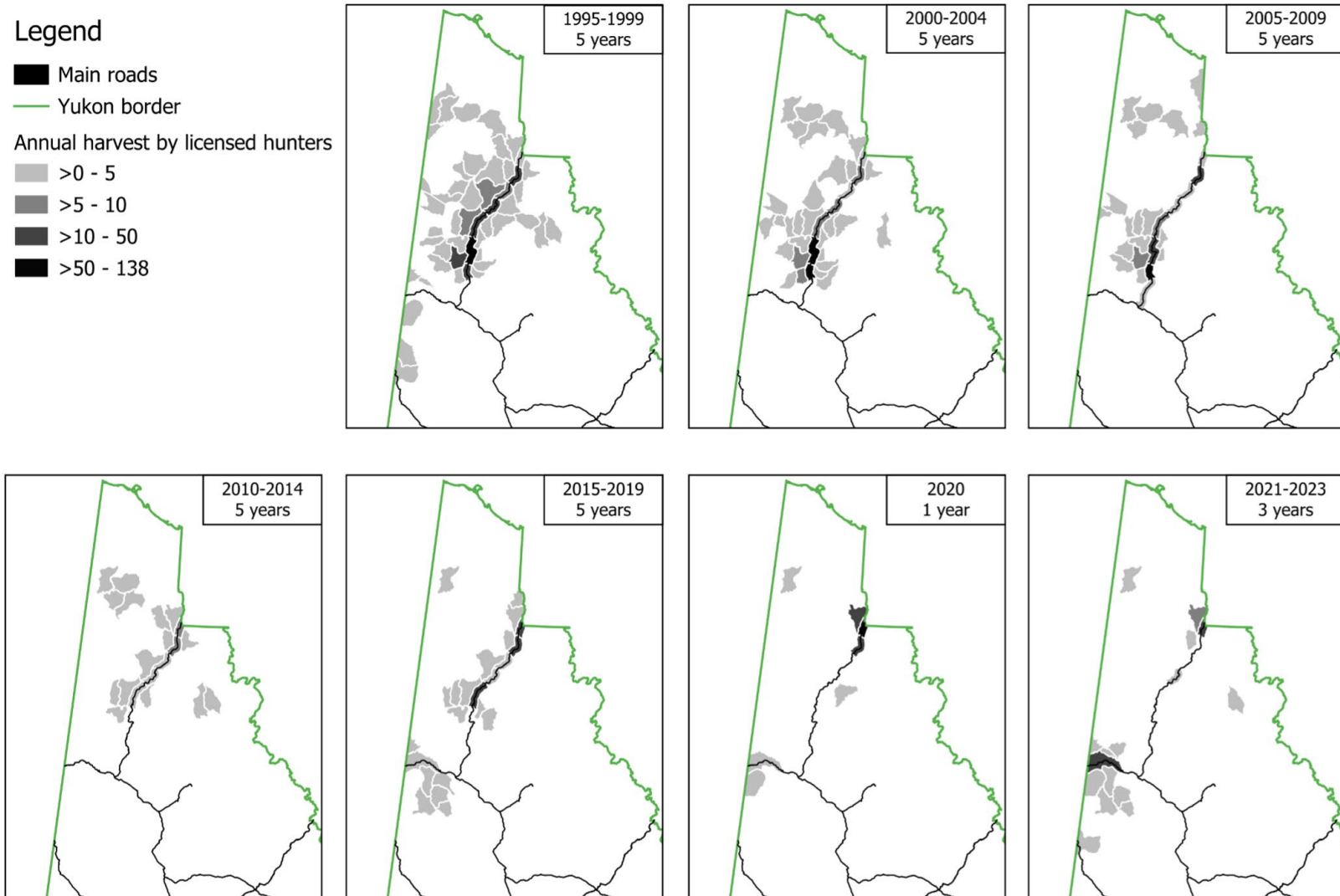


Figure 3.

Annual average number of migratory caribou harvested by licensed resident hunters by Game Management Subzone.

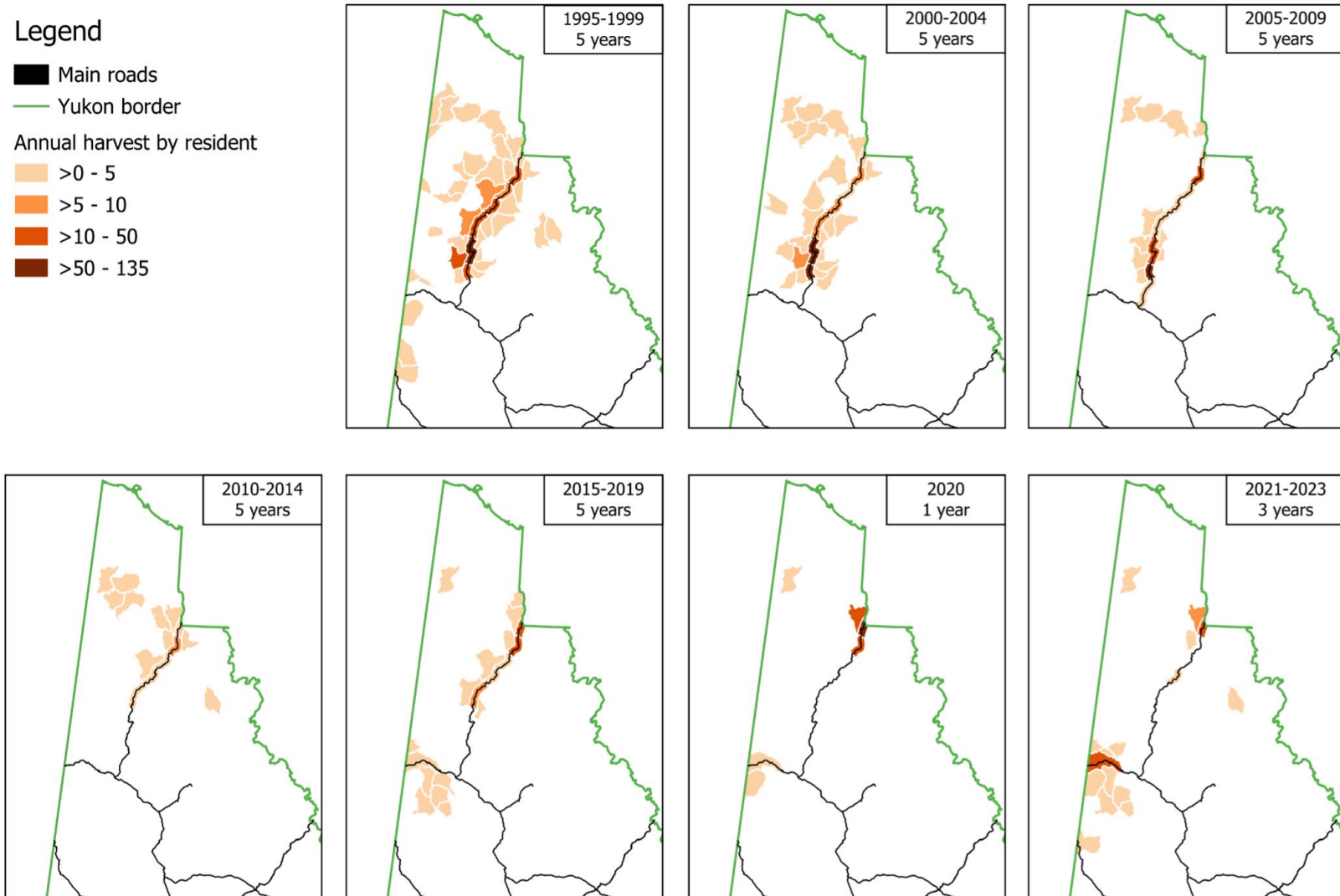


Figure 4.

Annual average number of migratory caribou harvested by non-resident outfitter guided hunters by Game Management Subzone.



Figure 5.

Annual average number of migratory caribou harvested by non-resident special guided hunters by Game Management Subzone.

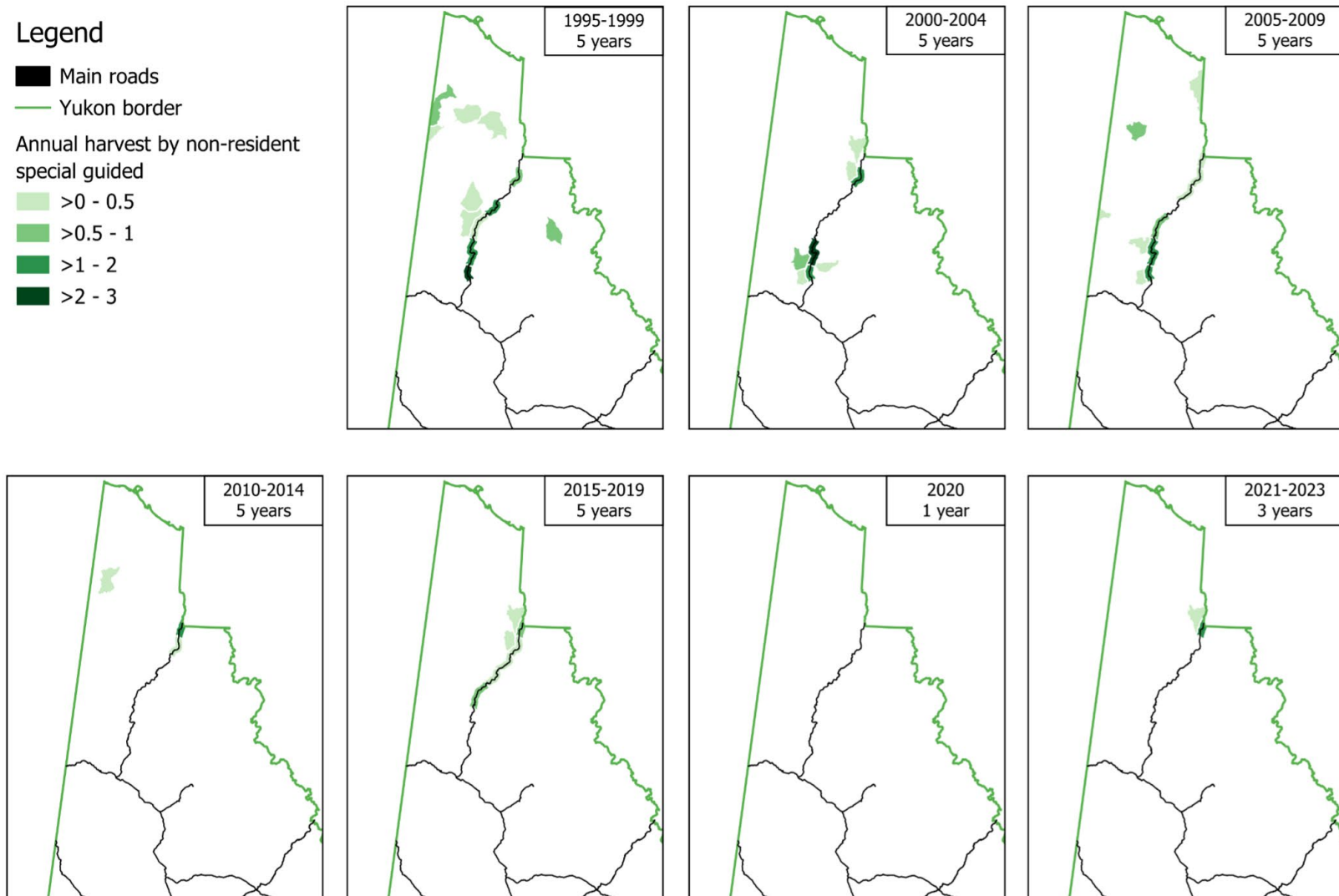


Figure 6.

Annual average number of wood bison harvested by licensed resident hunters by Game Management Subzone

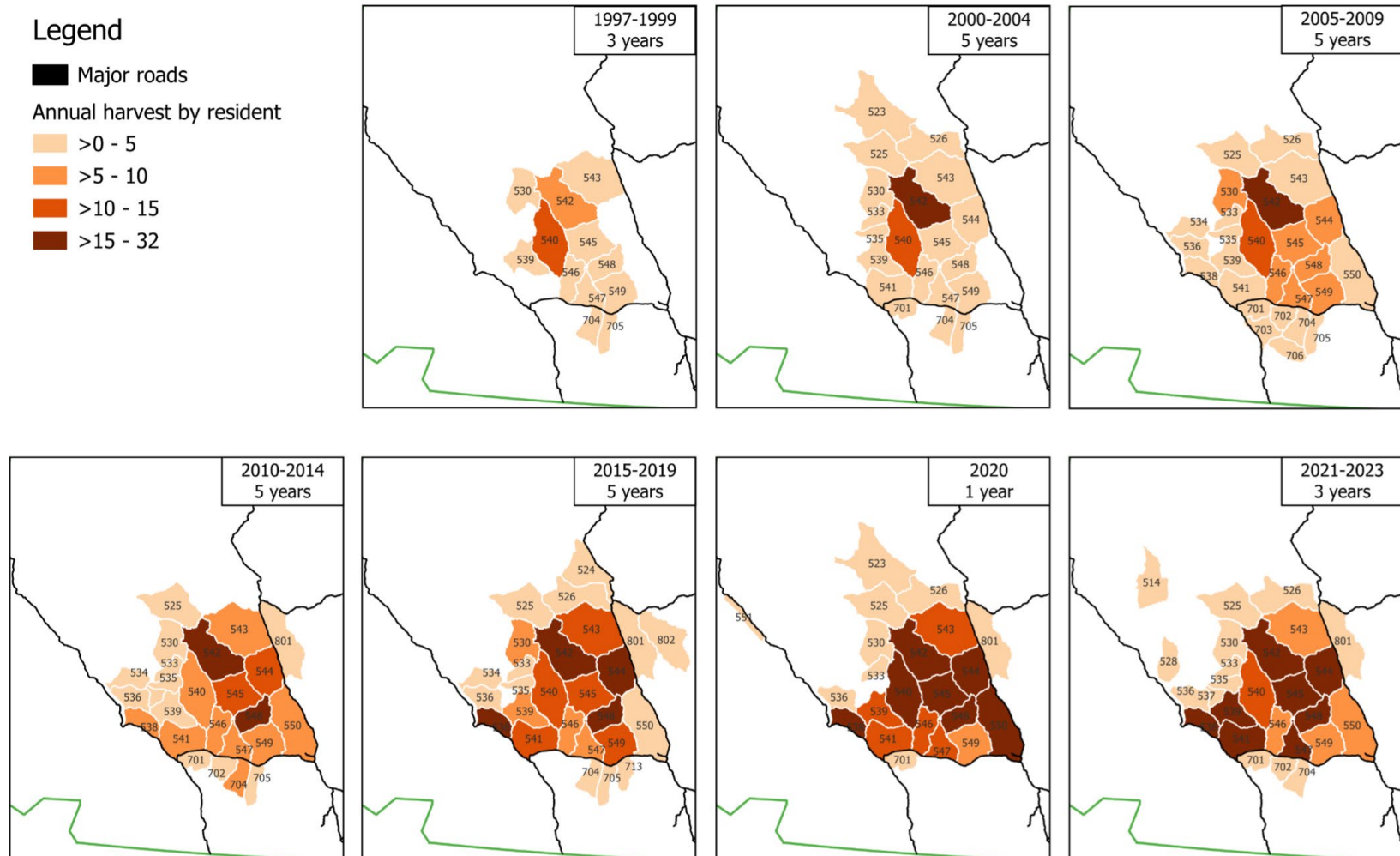


Figure 7.

Annual average number of wood bison harvested by non-resident outfitter guided hunters by Game Management Subzone.

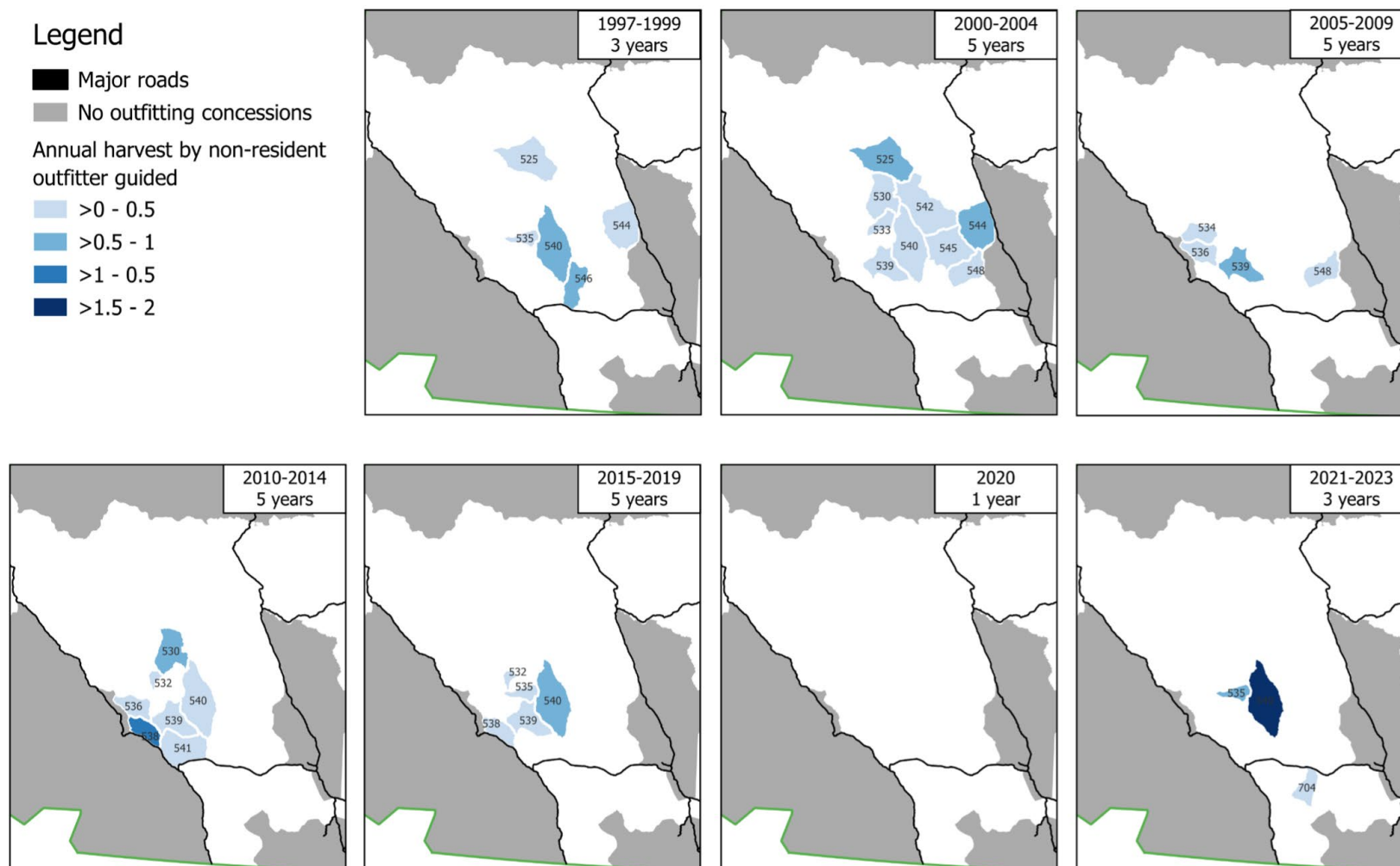


Figure 8.

Annual average number of wood bison harvested by non-resident special guided hunters by Game Management Subzone.

Legend

■ Major roads

Annual harvest by non-resident special guided

■ >0 - 0.5

■ >0.5 - 1

■ >1 - 1.5

■ >1.5 - 2

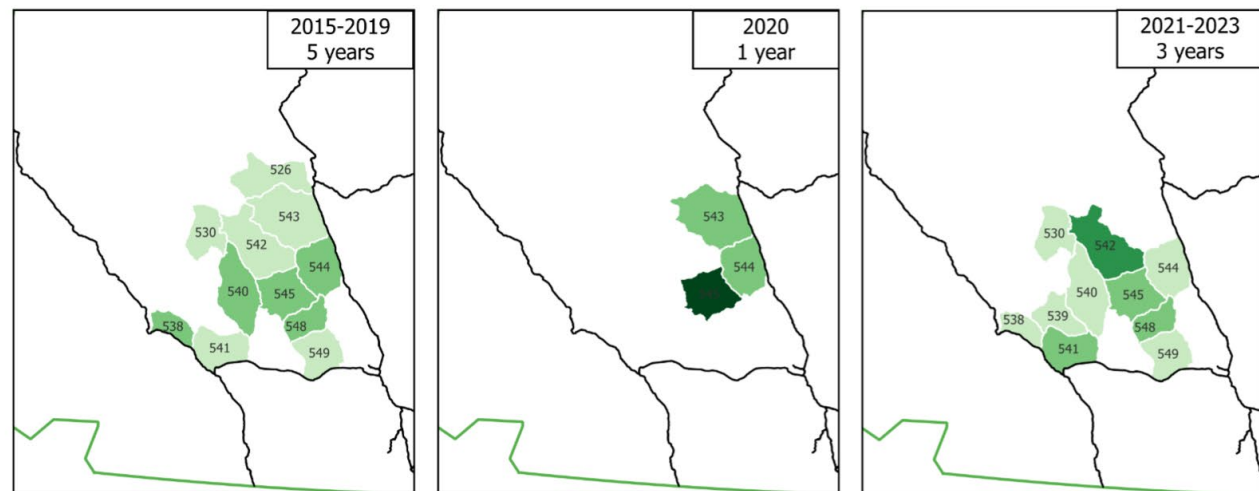


Figure 9.

Annual average number of black bears harvested by non-resident special guided hunters by Game Management Subzone.

