

Grapevine Lake 2025-2026 Deer Season

United States Corps of Engineers Grapevine Lake

Purpose

Deer Permits for United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Wildlife Management Area (WMA) on the west side of Grapevine Lake are issued through a fair application process with no preference points, to which each hunter has an equal chance to be drawn. The requirement to have a permit helps protect wildlife populations from being over harvested and preserves it for future generations to come.

Hunter surveys are issued to all permit holders to get a better understanding of how the hunting season went as far as hunter satisfaction and harvest numbers. These surveys help shape the future of the Grapevine Lake hunting seasons. Hunters who fail to submit a survey by the established deadline are disqualified for the next season.

Deer Permit Background

In the 2025-2026 season, 250 hunters were issued permits to deer hunt in the WMA managed by the USACE on Grapevine Lake. At the end of deer season all the deer hunting permit holders are required to fill out and return a survey that helps guide the decisions we make for future hunting seasons. If a permit holder fails to return a survey at the end of the season, they become ineligible to be drawn for the following season. If a group application includes one ineligible hunter the entire application is ineligible and thrown out. This past season, there were 936 total applicants. 30 of these applications included ineligible hunters, hunters were disqualified due to offenses such as submitting multiple applications or failure to submit a survey if drawn in a past season. The total number of disqualified hunters was 39. This left a total of 897 eligible hunters, which made the probability to get drawn 28% for the 2025-2026 season.

The survey was 11 questions long and included a variety of questions ranging from the number of times going hunting to asking if the hunters had any suggestions for future hunting seasons.

Survey Data Results

Of the 250 permit holders, 125 returned surveys. 17.6% of these 125 permit holders did not hunt, which left us with 103 surveys from people who hunted. The success rate of these hunters was 7%. The rough estimate of doe to buck ratio based on these hunters' responses was 1.80 does per buck. There was a total of 23 deer killed, 8 bucks and 15 does, by 17 different hunters.

Question 1: How many times did you go hunting this season?

Question 1 includes responses from every permit holder who submitted a survey (125). The answer that was recorded the most was 10+ times with 39 responses. The response that was chosen the least amount was 0 times with 22 responses. (Figure 1)

Question 2: How many hours did you spend hunting on a typical day?

Question 2 only includes responses from the permit holders who hunted for at least one day (103 hunters). This question shows us that 79.61% of the time hunters hunt between 3 and 5 hours. The responses from three to five hours and going longer than that includes 94.17% of responses. It can also be assumed that most hunters who chose the 6+ hours response hunted all day. This leaves only 5.83% of hunters who hunt for less than 3 hours on a typical day. (Figure 2)

Question 3: Which days of the week did you hunt the most?

Question 3 included responses from 102 hunters. It was answered by the hunters choosing one of the seven days of the week, a combination of weekends and weekdays, combination of weekend days, or a combination of weekdays. This question showed us that 77.45% of hunters hunted a combination of days. The combination of weekends and weekdays being the most selected option with a total of 43.14%. Saturday was chosen the most out of any singular day with 8.82% of hunters choosing Saturday as the day which they hunted the most. The data from the surveys that were submitted shows that Saturdays and the weekends received the most hunting pressure. (Figure 3)

Question 4: What time of day did you go hunting the most?

Question 4 had 5 response options which included Mornings, Middle of the Day, Evenings, Mornings and Evenings, and All times of the Day. Mornings was the option chosen the most by hunters, being chosen by 35.29% of hunters (36), followed closely with another 34.31% (35) choosing the mornings and evenings response. 78.09% of hunters chose a response that included hunting in the mornings, and 47.68% of hunters chose a response that included evenings. Only 1.96% of hunters (2) chose middle of the day as their response. (Figure 4)

Question 5: How many other hunters do you typically see while hunting?

Question 5 had 4 response options which included 0-1 hunters, 2-3 hunters, 4-6 hunters, and 7+ hunters. The most common response was 0-1 hunters; this response was recorded 61 times (59.22%). The second most common response was 2-3 other hunters; this response was recorded 39 times (37.86%). 2.91% responses stated they saw 4-6 hunters. No hunters recorded typically seeing 7+ other hunters while hunting. (Figure 5)

Question 6: How many deer did you harvest this season?

Roughly 15.53% of the hunters found success in the 2025-2026 Grapevine Lake Deer Season. 12 hunters harvested one deer, 4 hunters harvested two deer, and 1 hunter harvested 3 deer. 86 hunters (83.50%) did not harvest a deer. This information also tells us that 23 deer were killed throughout the season, by 17 different hunters. (Figure 6)

Question 7: If you killed deer, what was/were the sex(es)?

Question 7 only contains answers from the hunters who found success during the season (17 hunters). There were 23 deer harvested during the season. 8 of these deer were bucks and 15 were does. (Figure 7)

Question 8: How many bucks did you see while hunting?

The most common response to question 8 was 2 bucks seen, with 21 hunters (20.59%) reporting this. 87.25% of hunters reported seeing at least 1 buck, this is up about 12% from last year. 3 and 1 bucks seen were the second most common responses respectively, with 3 bucks seen (18 responses) coming out to 17.65% and 1 bucks seen (17 responses) coming out to 16.67%. 0-4 bucks seen make up for 75.49% of the hunters' responses. Another response that stands out is 10 hunters reported seeing 10+ bucks while hunting (9.80%). The total amount of bucks spotted this season from the submitted surveys (125) was 336. (Figure 8)

Question 9: How many does did you see while hunting?

The most common response to question 9 was 10+ does seen, with 31 hunters (30.10%) reporting this. The second most common response was 3 does seen, with 16 hunters (15.53%) reporting this. 7,8, and 9 tied for the least number of does seen, with 4 hunters each (3.88%). The total amount of does spotted this season from the submitted surveys (125) was 609. (Figure 9)

Question 10: Please rate, on a scale of 1 to 5, your overall satisfaction with your hunting experience this season. 1 = horrible, 5 = spectacular.

The most common response to question 10 was 4 with 38 responses (37.25%). 5 was the next highest satisfaction level chosen, with 37 responses (36.27%). The Least common response was 1, the lowest satisfaction level. Hunters recorded this response 1 time. The top two satisfaction levels (4 and 5) accounted for 73.52% of the hunters whereas the lowest two satisfaction levels (1 and 2) accounted for 5.88% of the hunters. (Figure 10).

Question 11: How can the Corps of Engineers improve your overall hunting experience at Grapevine Lake?

Only 58 of the 103 hunters left suggestions on their survey. With these suggestions being open-ended answers, they were categorized or summarized to fit them in alike categories so we could attempt to see if there were any trends of people thinking along the same lines as one another. There are 19 categories. Once this was done, it was clear there were 2 common answers that stood out more than the others. The two most common general responses were that the hunters suggested to improve/add places to access the hunting area more effectively and better maps/ access description. 12 and 11 respectively of the responses were able to be fit in these two categories which is 39.66% of those who left responses. A couple of the other more common suggestions turned out to be limit/ ban hog/ squirrel hunting and non-hunting during deer season (7 votes) and mow trails/ knock down brush/ prescribed burns (7 votes). (Figure 10)

Key Take-aways

49% of permit holders returned surveys (125). Ideally, we would like many more surveys come the end of each season. Of these permit holders, the harvest success rate was roughly 7%.

Weekends, specifically Saturdays, appeared to be the day when the Grapevine Lake WMA was visited the most, so if you are looking to stay away from other hunters you would either need to try to get to a more remote area of our WMA or try to hunt during the week if possible. Based on question 5, there does not appear to be too many hunters in the WMA, as 97.08% of hunters that returned a survey typically saw 3 or less other hunters while hunting (Figure 5).

Question 8 showed the number of bucks seen by hunters and this showed more of a decreasing trend with more hunters seeing 1-4 bucks and less hunters seeing 5-9 bucks. (Figure 8)

Question 9 of the survey shows us a trend that most hunters (31.07%) saw 10+ does (Figure 9). With the answers to these two questions, we were able to get a rough estimate of the buck to doe Ratio which was 1:1.80. This is an extremely rough estimate due to the different factors that play into the numbers we received. According to Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), the ideal buck to doe ratio is around 1:1.

Question 10 shows us that over 73.78% of the hunters were satisfied (4-5) with their experience, and another 20.39% that were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (3), leaving 5.82% dissatisfied (1-2) with their experience.

Question 11 showed us that the most common suggestion to improve satisfaction is to add more and/or different access points or parking areas to the property. There are no current plans to add these areas due to a lack of resources including funding and proper location although there are possible opportunities for this in the future.

Upcoming Season

As of now the upcoming season is planned to be ran very similar to this pervious season. We plan to run the application process in July for a period of 1 month, the drawing will take place in August. The current plan for the dispersal of permits will be that hunters who are drawn will be emailed their permits. Those that are not drawn will NOT get an email. There will be updates on the website stating whether the permits have all been handed out or if the Rangers are still working on them.

Lastly, not everyone who gets a permit is able to hunt. However, the returned survey is still valuable information to us. Remember, if a permit holder fails to submit a survey by the deadline, they will be ineligible for our future drawings.

Data Charts and Graphs

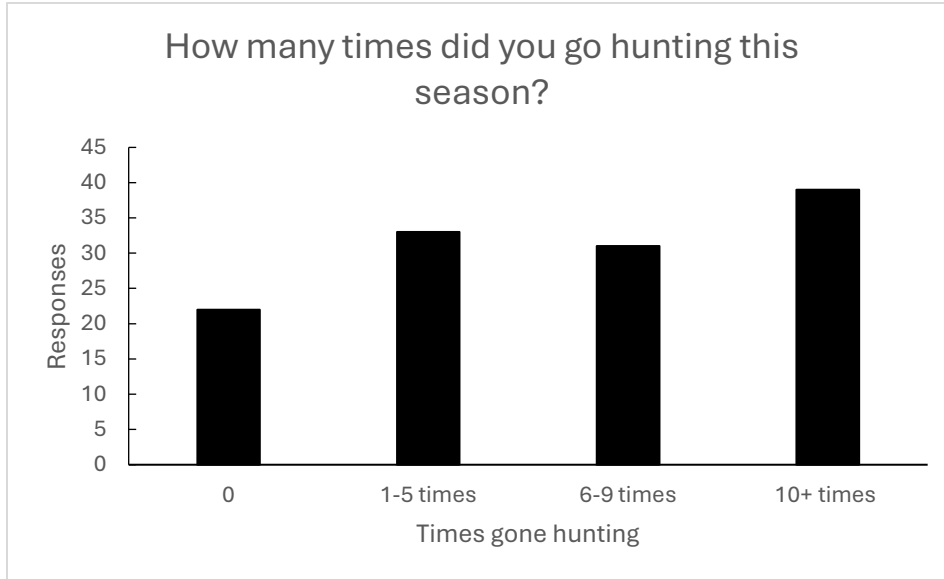


Figure 1: Data chart from Question 1 of the 2025-2026 deer hunter survey.



Figure 2: Data chart from Question 2 of the 2025-2026 deer hunter survey.

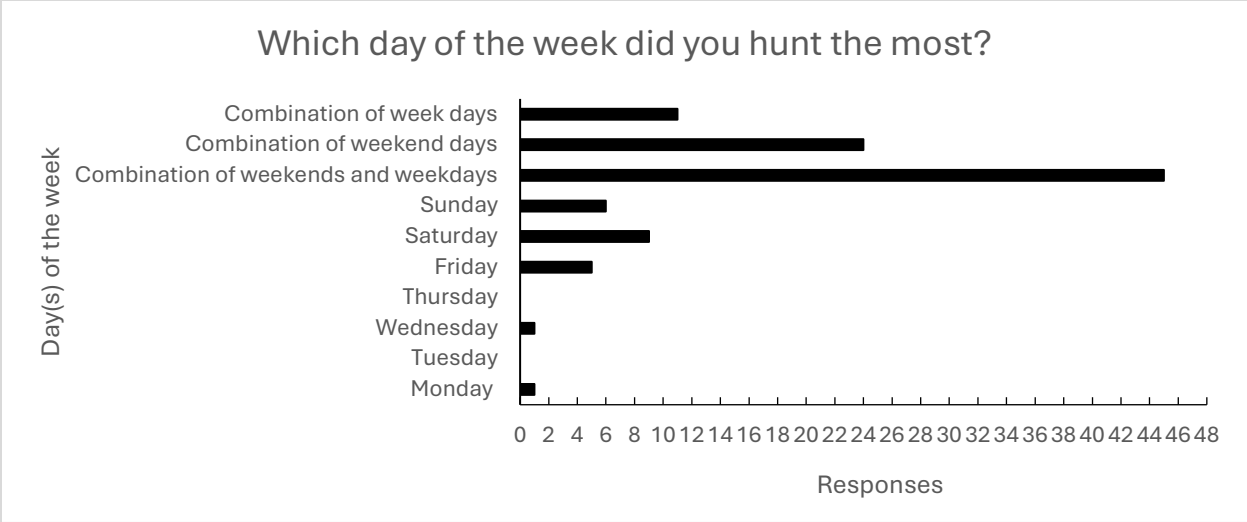


Figure 3: Data from Question 3 of the 2025-2026 deer hunter survey.

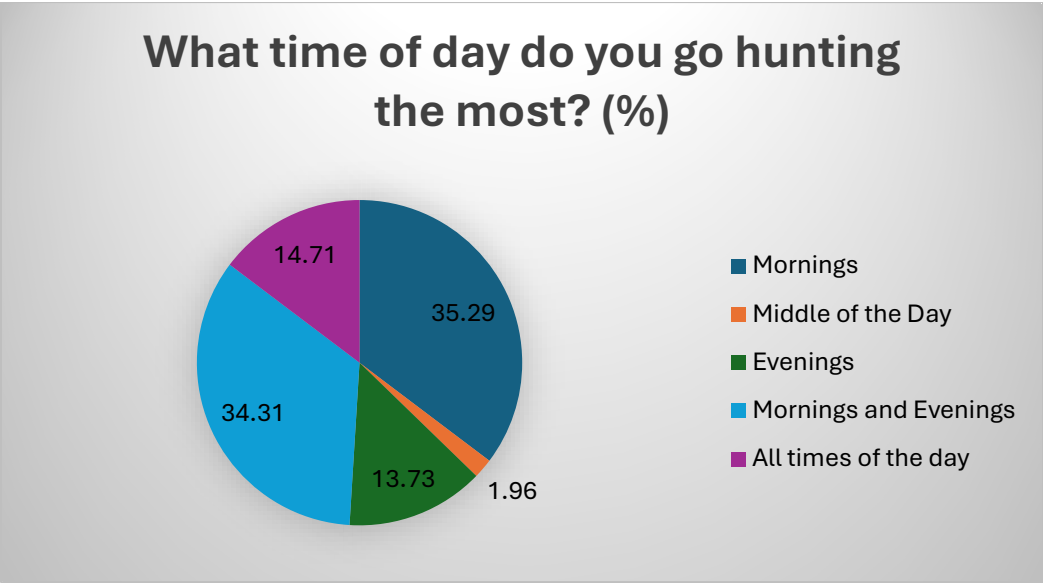


Figure 4: Data chart from Question 4 of the 2025-2026 deer hunter survey.

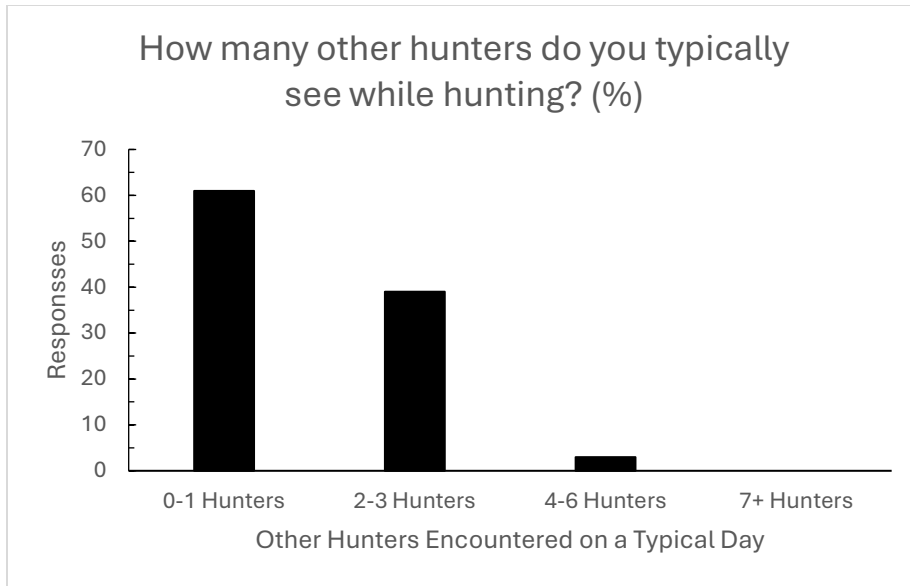


Figure 5: Data chart from Question 5 of the 2025-2026 deer hunter survey.

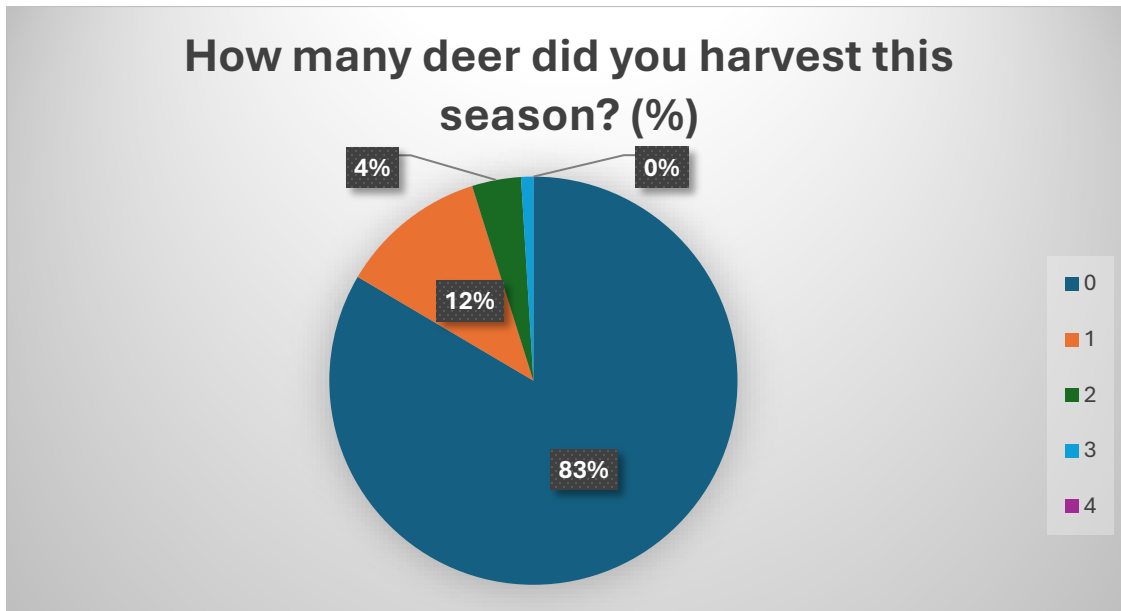


Figure 6: Pie chart from Question 6 of the 2025-2026 deer hunter survey.

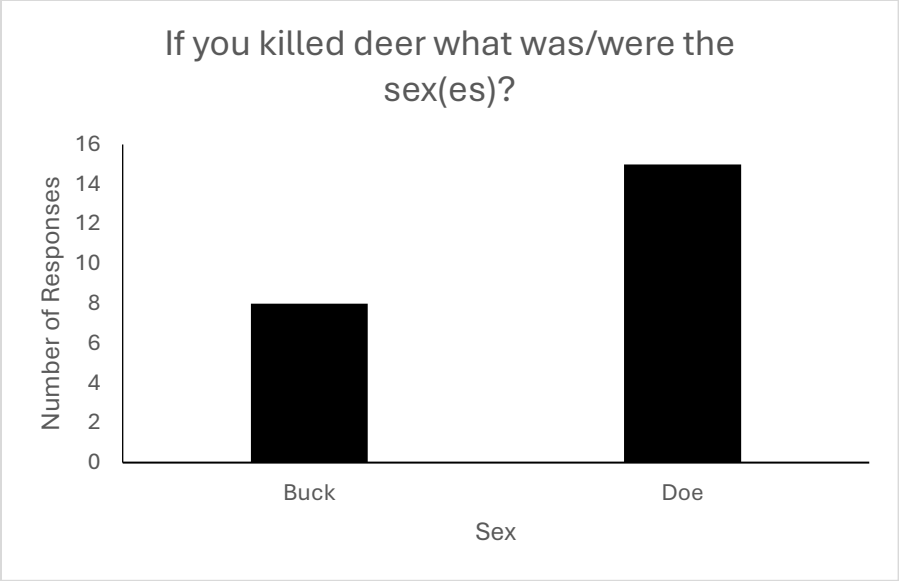


Figure 7: Data chart from Question 7 of the 2025-2026 deer hunter survey.

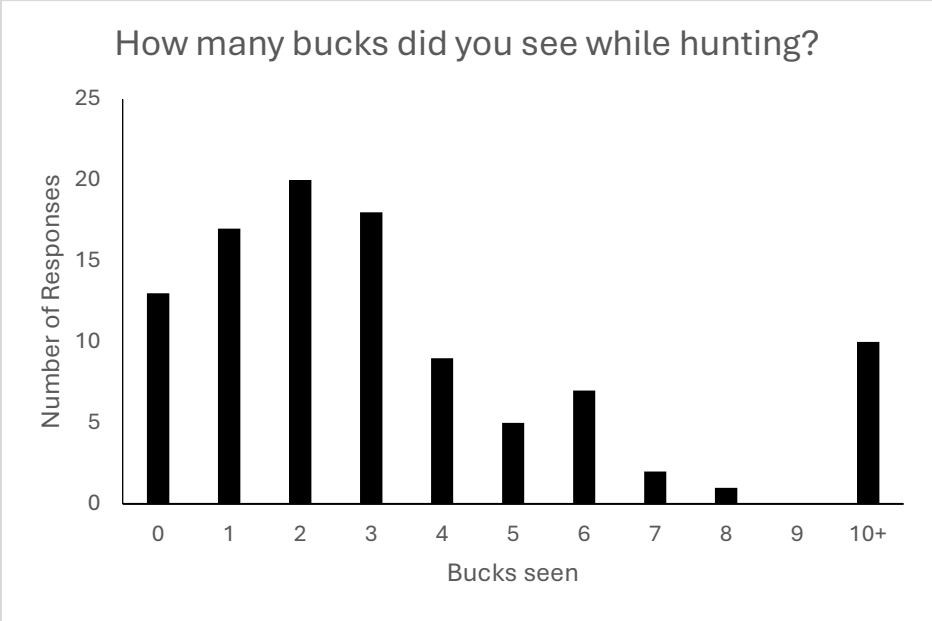


Figure 8: Data chart from Question 8 of the 2025-2026 deer hunter survey.

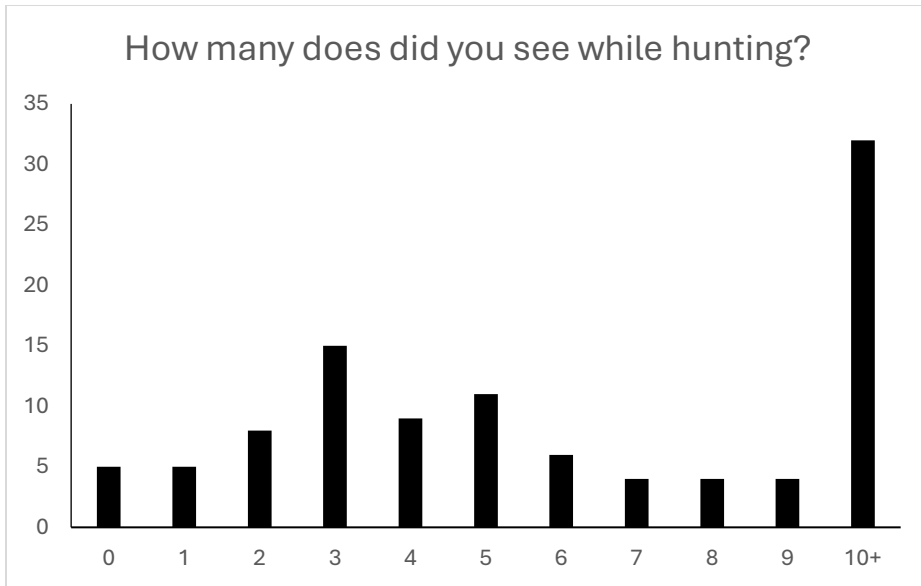


Figure 9: Data chart from Question 9 of the 2025-2026 deer hunter survey.

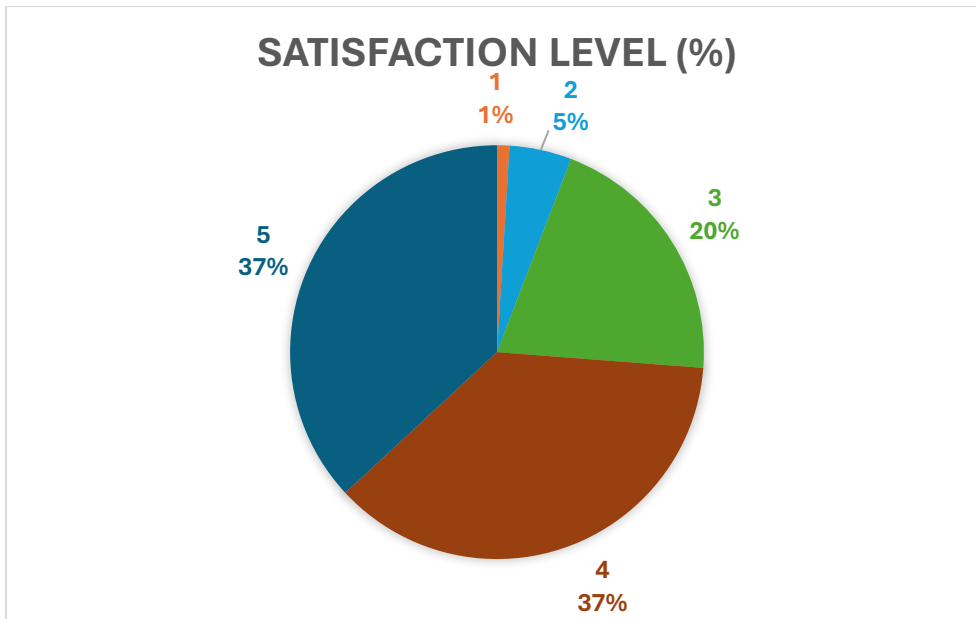


Figure 10: Pie chart from Question 10 of the 2025-2026 deer hunter survey. Satisfaction Levels with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest.

How can the Corps of Engineers improve your overall hunting experience at Grapevine Lake?		
	Suggestions	Percent of respondents
limit/ban hog/squirrel hunting and non-hunting during deer season	8	7.77
Better maps, access description	11	10.68
Eliminate Personal non-hunting recreation from hunting lands	5	4.85
Open more areas around the lake to hunting	2	1.94
More/different means to access the property more effectively	12	11.65
More Hunters	0	0.00
No Suggestions	44	42.72
Less hunters	1	0.97
Mow some trails/Knock down Brush/Prescribed Burns	7	6.80
Mark Corps property with signs better	0	0.00
Move the draw earlier in the year	0	0.00
Allow personal firearms carry	0	0.00
Organize a trash clean up	0	0.00
Upgrade Permit System	3	2.91
Food plots	1	0.97
Enforcing Rules and regulations more	2	1.94
Archer proficiency test	2	1.94
Allow trail cams for permitted hunters during the season	4	3.88
Allow Baiting for hogs outside deer season	1	0.97
	Total	103
		100.00

Figure 11: Data chart from Question 11 of the 2025-2026 deer hunter survey