

**Georgia Department of Natural Resources Incident  
Action Plan**

*Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Detected in Georgia*



**Incident Name** Georgia Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)

**Operational Period #** 29

**Op Period Dates** 1-17-2026 to 1-31-2026

**Distributed To** Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
**(For Internal Use Only)**

**Incident Summary Statement**

On January 15, 2025, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) was notified of an initial reactor screening test for a Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) sample in a hunter-killed free-ranging white-tailed deer harvested on the Berrien-Lanier county line in South-Central Georgia. The sample was then sent to the National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL) for confirmation. DNR received confirmation of positive status on January 22, 2025. On January 23, DNR interviewed the hunter and confirmed the harvest location, and subsequently issued a press release confirming the first case of CWD in Georgia. On January 24, DNR held a press release to answer questions and give further details on the next steps that will be taken. A public meeting was held in the CMA on August 21, 2025. A two-county CWD Management Area (CMA) was established around the positive sample location, as well as a one-mile intensive sampling zone around the positive sample location. On 3/30, the CMA was expanded to include Lowndes County due to an initial reactor on a clinical buck within 5 miles of Lowndes County. On 12/3, DNR received notification of initial reactor test on a clinical doe in Atkinson County. The CMA was expanded to include Atkinson County. Cluster Sampling is underway. Twenty drop-off freezer locations were established in and around the CMA. Seventy processors or taxidermists were identified as sampling locations statewide. All WRD-GM region offices were established as sampling locations. Sampling for the 2025-26 hunting season is nearly complete. Since 7/1/2024, 593 samples have been collected in the CMA with 10 positives, 454 not detected, and 129 pending.

<b>Prepared by</b>	Kevin Rose
<b>Approved by</b>	

Organization Assignment List					
<b>Incident Name</b>	Georgia Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)				
<b>Operational Period #</b>	29				
<b>Op Period Dates</b>	1-17-2026 to 1-31-2026				
<b>Incident Commander and Command Staff</b>		<b>Operations Section</b>			
IC/UC's	Charlie Killmaster		Chief	Kevin Rose	
			Deputy	Alley Philson	
Technical Specialist	Dr. Jesse Maestas		Staging Area	Home Office	
Deputy	Kevin Rose		<b>Branch</b>		
Safety Officer			Branch Director		
Public Info. Officer	Kaitlin Goode		Deputy		
Liaison Officer			Division/Group		
<b>Agency/Org Representatives</b>		Division/Group			
Agency/Org			Division/Group		
			Branch		
			Branch Director		
			Deputy		
			Division/Group		
			Division/Group		
			Division/Group		
<b>Planning Section</b>		<b>Branch</b>			
Chief	Kevin Rose		Branch Director		
Deputy			Deputy		
Resources Unit			Division/Group		
Situation Unit			Division/Group		
Documentation Unit			<b>Branch</b>		
Demobilization Unit			Branch Director		
Technical Specialists			Deputy		
			Division/Group		
			Division/Group		
<b>Logistics Section</b>					
Chief	Greg Nelms				
Deputy	Drew Zellner				
<b>Support Branch</b>		<b>Air Operations Branch</b>			
Director			Director		
Supply Unit			Deputy		
Facilities Unit					
Ground Support Unit					
<b>Service Branch</b>		<b>Finance Administration Section</b>			
Director		Chief	Allison Colter		
Communications Unit		Deputy	Matt Goode		
Medical Unit		Time Unit			
Food Unit		Procurement Unit	Ciera Broadnax		
		Comp/Claims Unit			
		Cost Unit			

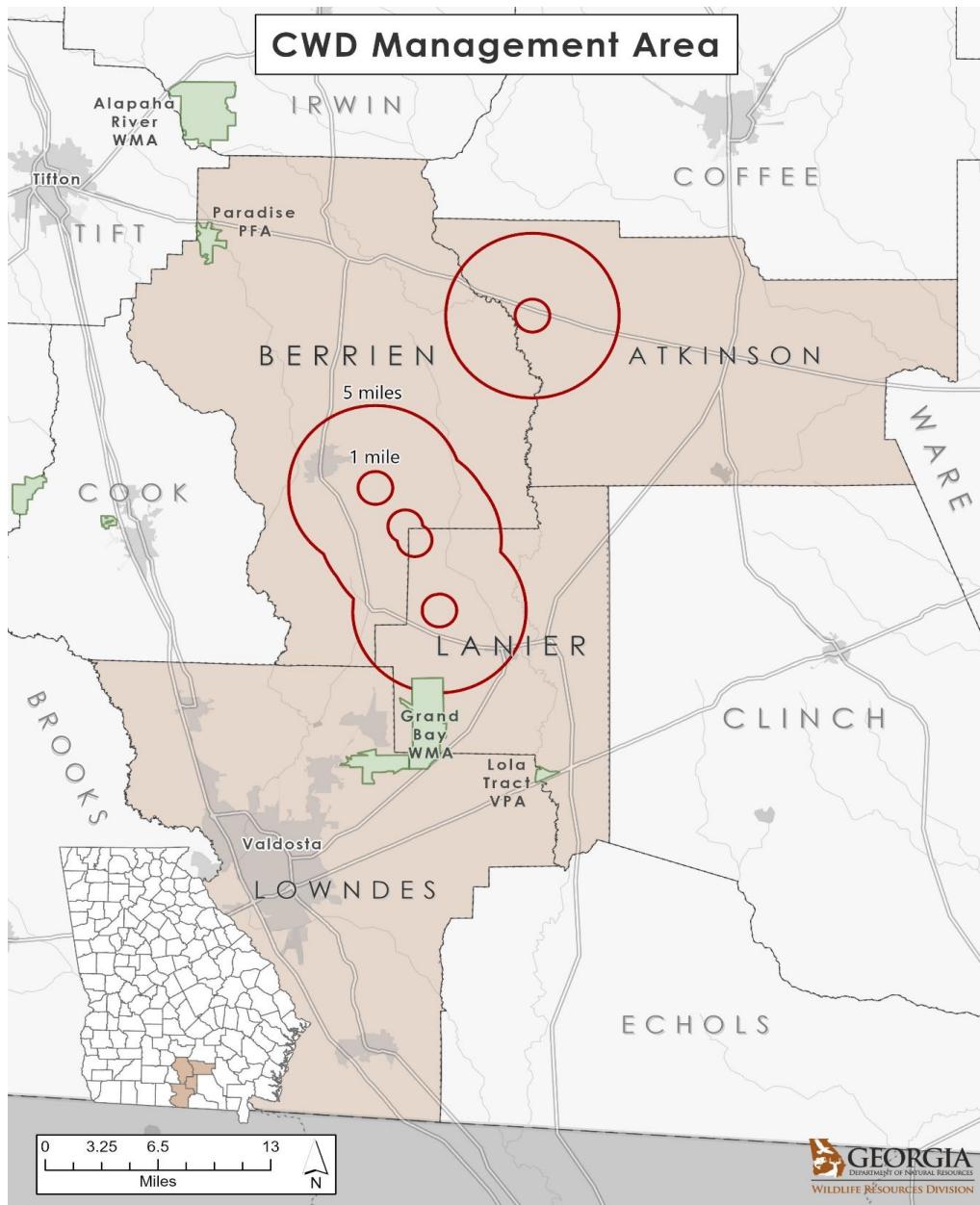
### Operational Period Objectives

Incident Name Georgia Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)

Operational Period 29

Operational Period Dates 1-17-2026 to 1-31-2026

CWD Management Zone Map



Operational Period Objectives	
Incident Name	Georgia Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)
Operational Period	29
Operational Period Dates	1-17-2026 to 1-31-2026
<p><b>Objective 1: Collect and process samples statewide</b></p> <p><b>Objective 2: Remove freezers and supplies from sampling locations, clean and store.</b></p> <p><b>Objective 3: Complete internal education for front line staff.</b></p> <p><b>Objective 4: Expand CWD testing capacity at the UGA Athens Veterinary Diagnostic Lab.</b></p> <p><b>Objective 5: Expand CWD monitoring through environmental surveillance.</b></p> <p><b>Objective 6: Assess human dimensions of risk factors in the CMA and identify mitigation recommendations.</b></p> <p><b>Objective 7: Implement cluster sampling to manage CWD prevalence</b></p> <p><b>Objective 8: Utilize DMAP to increase sampling, manage deer, and build positive relationships in the CMA</b></p> <p><b>Objective 9: Analyze results of 2025-26 deer hunting season and sampling efforts</b></p>	

Assignment List								
Incident Name	Georgia Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)							
Operational Period	29							
Operational Period Dates	1-17-2026 to 1-31-2026							
Operations Section Chief	Kevin Rose							
Branch Director								
Divison/Group Supervisor								
Resoures Assigned								
Resource Identifier	Leader	# of Persons	Contact	Reporting Location				
Work Assignments								
<u>Objective 1</u>								
Alley Philson/contractor	Continue to coordinate WRD staff and contractors to collect samples in and around CMA							
Region Staff	Collect, process, and submit all samples collected during 2025-26 hunting season							
Region Staff	Continue to implement statewide surveillance per protocol							
Charlie Killmaster/CEO	Coordinate raffle to incentivise sampling within the CMA for the remainder of the season							
<u>Objective 2</u>								
Alley Philson/	Remove freezers and supplies from CMA sampling locations, clean and securely store supplies and equipment for future use.							
Region Staff	Remove, clean, and securely store all freezers and supplies from region facilities.							
<u>Objective 3</u>								
Charlie Killmaster	Schedule virtual biologist CWD training							
<u>Objective 4</u>								
Charlie Killmaster	Update contract with UGA-AVDL to purchase additional lab equipment for ELISA and RT-QuIC and							
Dr. Maestas/ Rebecca Kresin	Continue working with VetView to create database API to automate CWD test notification system.							
Charlie Killmaster	Explore opportunities with Tifton AVDL to purchase ELISA equipment for 2026-27 season.							
<u>Objective 5</u>								
Charlie Killmaster/ Alley Philson	Continue to conduct environmental surveillance on deer facilities inside CMA.							
<u>Objective 6</u>								
Charlie Killmaster/ Matt Goode	Continue coordination with UGA to implement research project							
Charlie Killmaster/ Kaitlin Goode	Develop and implement educational campaign on CWD risk factors and management.							
<u>Objective 7</u>								
Alley Philson/ Dr. Maestas/Cole Corley	Cluster sample 5 deer around each known positive by authorizing landowner/hunter to collect deer with limited restrictions							
Cole Corley	Assess status of all cluster sampling actions and continue to encourage sampling							
<u>Objective 8</u>								
Cole Corley/Kevin Rose	Implement CWD DMAP in CMA							
<u>Objective 9</u>								
Charlie Killmaster/ Dr. Maestas/ Kevin Rose	Review 2025-26 sampling, determine prevalence rates, create after action report							
Charlie Killmaster/ Dr. Maestas/ Kevin Rose	Create 2026-27 CWD work plan for CWD monitoring and management.							
Special Instructions								
N/A								

Communications List			
Division/Section/Group	Position Assigned	Name	Method of Contact
N/A			

Incident Accomplishments																																						
Initial Field Response																																						
The Operations team has been contacting landowners within a 1-mile radius of the positive sample site to inform them of the CWD positive sample, and to work with them to gain additional samples to determine CWD prevalence via landowner permit. Field staff have also collected samples from processor and taxidermists, road-killed deer, and sick deer within the CMA.																																						
<i>Table 1. Summary of CWD samples within the CMA since 7/1/2024</i>																																						
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>County</th><th>Detected</th><th>Not Detected</th><th>Pending</th><th>Grand Total</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Atkinson</td><td>1</td><td>15</td><td>25</td><td>41</td></tr> <tr> <td>Berrien</td><td>4</td><td>132</td><td>51</td><td>287</td></tr> <tr> <td>Lanier</td><td>5</td><td>90</td><td>27</td><td>122</td></tr> <tr> <td>Lowndes</td><td></td><td>117</td><td>26</td><td>143</td></tr> <tr> <td><b>Grand Total</b></td><td><b>10</b></td><td><b>454</b></td><td><b>129</b></td><td><b>593</b></td></tr> </tbody> </table>									County	Detected	Not Detected	Pending	Grand Total	Atkinson	1	15	25	41	Berrien	4	132	51	287	Lanier	5	90	27	122	Lowndes		117	26	143	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>454</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>593</b>
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<i>Table 2. Summary of CWD positive detections and cluster sampling</i>																																						
Deer #	City/County	Landowner	Hunter Harvest or Disease Suspect	Collection Date	Date Confirmed	# Deer harvested in Cluster Sampling	NVSL Status	Notes																														
R6G1114	Lanier		Hunter Harvest	12/2/2024	1/22/2025	5	Confirmed	Index Case																														
R6G1385	Berrien		Cluster Sampling	3/12/2025	4/18/2025	4	Confirmed																															
DM1174	Lanier		Clinical	9/24/2025	10/9/2025	8	Confirmed	W/in 5 miles of Lowndes																														
253009	Lanier		Hunter Harvest	10/9/2025	10/30/2025	1	Confirmed	Adjacent to DM1174																														
253010	Lanier		Hunter Harvest	10/9/2025	10/30/2025	0	Confirmed	Adjacent to DM1174																														
253066	Berrien		Hunter Harvest	10/23/2025	11/10/2025	1	Confirmed	Contacted 12/9 to encourage sampling																														
253069	Berrien		Hunter Harvest	10/23/2025	11/10/2025	0	Confirmed																															
253590	Lanier		Hunter Harvest	11/10/2025	12/8/2025	0	Confirmed	Contacted 12/9 to encourage sampling																														
253651	Atkinson		Clinical	11/14/2025	12/29/2025	0	Confirmed	Working with USDA for cluster sampling																														
253906	Berrien		Cluster Sampling	12/17/2025	1/16/2026	0	Confirmed																															
CWD Freezer Locations																																						
Business Name			Address	City	County																																	
Banks Lake Outdoors			307 Ga-122	Lakeland	Lanier																																	
Lanier Forestry Commission			Next to 168 N Brantley St	Lakeland	Lanier																																	
Hunt's Deer Processing			79 Bolling Ln	Ray City	Lanier																																	
Berrien Forestry Commission			13836 Co Rd 129	Nashville	Berrien																																	
Ford's Taxidermy			520 Jn Ford Rd	Nashville	Berrien																																	
Owen Farm Deer Processing			366 Junebug Lane	Alapaha	Berrien																																	
Enigma Fire Department			324 S Main St	Enigma	Berrien																																	
Tattooed Butcher 'Wild Game Cuts' LLC			969 Fire Tower Road	Enigma	Berrien																																	
Henderson deer processing			256 Corbitt Rd	Homerville	Clinch																																	

Lowndes County Forestry Unit	3011 US-84	Valdosta	Lowndes
K&K Deer Processing	6749 Good Hope Rd	Naylor	Lowndes
Bullard Deer Processing	6980 Val Del Road	Adel	Cook
Anchor Outdoors	607 West Central Ave	Lenox	Cook
Kirk's Meats and Processing	329 Green Lantern Road	Nicholls	Coffee
Paradise PFA	539 Paradise Drive	Enigma	Berrien
From the Fields Meat and Processing	147 Ridge Ave South	Tifton	Tift
Echols County Forestry Commission	Forestry St	Statenville	Echols
Atkinson County Forestry Commission	39 Dan Spikes Rd	Pearson	Atkinson
Lees Meat Processing	461 Dove Lane	Axon	Atkinson
Langboard	548 Langboard Rd	Willacoochee	Atkinson

#### Completed Actions

Sampling contractor hired for collecting samples from crop permit holders.

Freezers, supplies, and decals for sampling sites received.

Statewide deer carcass disposal rule implemented.

Contracted with UGA to develop a research project to assess CWD risk factors before and after educational campaign.

Secured necessary funds to implement FY26 to fund disease management and monitoring.

Completed and distributed fawn rehabber guidance on handling fawns from CMA.

Scheduled in person (Aug 21) and virtual (Aug 26) meetings for taxidermists and processors.

Scheduled in person public meeting in CMA for Aug 21.

Scheduled virtual meeting for DNR staff for Aug 14.

Statewide CWD sampling progress dashboard for public created.

Developed talking points for Game Wardens and WRD staff.

Created online dashboard for public to look up CWD test results.

Deer Program staff attended Region LED meetings for CWD Q&A.

Created online interactive map of sampling locations for website

Created CWD website/QR code business cards and distribute to front line staff

Created informational handouts for taxidermists and processors.

Created informational placards for hunters that businesses can post.

In person public meeting for taxidermists and processors in and around CMA held on Aug 21.

In person meeting for general public in and around CMA held Aug 21

Created plan to monitor sampling sites, transport heads to Grand Bay, and transport samples to lab.

Statewide taxidermists and processors virtual meeting held Aug 26

Incinerator installed at Grand Bay

Conducted environmental surveillance on deer facilities in

USDA APHIS Wildlife Services identified as federal partner to assist with cluster sampling when required

Established Grand Bay WMA sample processing station

#### CMA Sampling Sites Schedule

Friday through Monday - Collect heads from freezers/taxidermists/processors and thaw

Monday - Thaw heads for sampling

Tuesday - Pull samples, incinerate heads

Wednesday - Data entry for Survey123, prepare samples for transport

Thursday - Transport samples to lab

## Communications Accomplishments

[Press Release outlining confirmation of first positive case of CWD in Georgia 01/23/2025](#)

[Wildlife Resources Division's Updated CWD Webpage](#)

Board of Natural Resources updated 01/24/2025

Press Conference 01/24/2025

Social Media Posts created & shared by DNR-WRD and GA DNR Accounts

Staff Guidance and FAQs created and shared with all DNR staff

CWD informational presentation & Q&A presented to DNR staff 1/24/2025

[Georgia House Game, Fish and Parks Committee Briefing 1/27/2025](#)

[Georgia Senate Natural Resources and the Environment Committee Briefing 1/27/2025](#)

Held 4 Public Information Sessions:

Adel, Ga 2/4/2025 - 45 attendees

[Virtual 2/6/2025 - approximately 10,000 views as of 2/11/25](#)

Lakeland, GA 2/8/2025 - 33 attendees

Valdosta, GA 2/8/2025 - 7 attendees

Press Release confirming 2nd CWD positive deer 4/22/25

Held processor and taxidermist meeting in CMA 8/21/2025 - 20 attendees

Held public information session in CMA 8/21/2025 - 33 attendees

Held virtual taxidermsit and processor meeting 8/26/25

Archery season press release 9/4/25

Push notification to hunters in CMA and surrounding counties leading up to peak harvest weekends

Staffed Q&A at deer processors in and around CMA during final weekend of season

#### **Executive Orders/Regulations**

Statewide deer carcass disposal rule implemented. No regulation changes required or proposed for CMA counties.

## Safety Message

### MAJOR HAZARDS AND RISKS COLLECTING CWD SAMPLES:

- **GENERAL HEALTH**
- **SITUATIONAL AWARENESS**
- **SAFETY BEFORE WORKING**
- **SAFETY WHILE WORKING**
- **SAFETY WHILE TRAVELING**

#### **GENERAL HEALTH**

Avoid accidental contamination

Always carry and use water, soap, and/or hand sanitizer to clean hands after collecting samples

Monitor your fatigue level—risk of mistakes and contamination increases with tiredness.

Clean area and tools with dilute bleach solution (40%) when finished

#### **SITUATIONAL AWARENESS**

Assume all deer are contaminated – deer carry multiple diseases harmful to humans

Do not cut into a heavily bloated or decomposed deer

Exercise caution when using sharp blades or tools.

Stay alert and cautious when working near roadways

Collect samples outside or in a well-ventilated room

#### **SAFETY BEFORE WORKING**

Confirm you have all necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) before starting

Check that all PPE is functional and in good condition

#### **SAFETY WHILE WORKING**

Carry appropriate PPE for all scenarios (roadside sampling, carcass handling, blade use)

Ensure safe visibility when collecting samples along roadways:

If the carcass is near a curve, park in a visible, straight section and walk to the location.

Use vehicle flashers when parked roadside

Wear high-visibility clothing when working near traffic.

Report any incidents or accidental exposure to your supervisor immediately.

#### **SAFETY WHILE TRAVELING**

Use extra caution at night—visibility is reduced, and sight distance is limited.

Inform someone of your destination and expected return time.

Verify your planned route is open, safe, and accessible.

Watch out for distracted drivers and moving traffic.

Park only in safe, visible locations—avoid curves or blind spots.

Always wear your seatbelt.

## **REQUIRED PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)**

**High-visibility gear:** Vest and/or shirt when near roadways.

**Eye protection:** Safety glasses or goggles during sample collection.

**Face Mask/shield:** Disposable surgical mask or face shield to protect from splash and aerosolized particles

**Gloves (Disposable):** Nitrile gloves for handling biological material – double glove. Remove outer glove to provide a clean hand to take notes/pictures and to reduce contamination of equipment

**Gloves (Utility):** Leather gloves for handling tools or around sharp broken bones

**Sharp Blade:** Dull blades are more likely to cut you, replace/sharpen often

**Blade removing tool:** Leatherman, pliers, needle holder

**Sharps Container:** For proper disposal of used or contaminated blades.

**Face Mask/shield:** Disposable surgical mask or face shield to protect from splash and aerosolized particles

**Forceps:** Grab samples with forceps and cut, holding with fingers increases risk of getting cut

**General**

N/A

<b>Prepared by</b>	Kevin Rose	Planning Section
<b>Approved by</b>		