AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 49-7-41, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO ALLOW ANTLERED DEER WITH LESS THAN FOUR POINTS TO BE TAKEN IF NECESSARY TO MANAGE DEER ON DEER MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM LANDS AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS; TO REQUIRE A PERMIT TO TAKE SUCH DEER; TO REQUIRE AN ANNUAL REPORT ON THE PROGRAM; TO REQUIRE THE DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES AND PARKS TO CONDUCT STUDIES OF THE FEASIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING A PROCEDURE REQUIRING PERSONS WHO HARVEST ANY DEER TO IDENTIFY EACH DEER AND THE EFFECTS OF EXTENDING THE DEER SEASON TO JANUARY 31; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

SECTION 1. Section 49-7-41, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

49-7-41. (1) The commission may set the bag limits for game animals, birds and fish, unless the bag limits are established by the Legislature by statute. * * *

(2) (a) The bag limit on antlered * * * deer is one (1) * * * per day, not to exceed three (3) per license year. An antlered * * * deer must have antlers of four (4) points or greater to be taken except as provided in paragraph (b) of this subsection.

(b) An antlered deer with less than four (4) points may be taken by permit if it is necessary to manage deer on lands under the deer management assistance program or wildlife management areas. A written management justification issued by the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks must accompany any request for such a permit. Any antlered deer with less than four (4) points harvested under this permit must be identified with a tag immediately upon possession. Antlered deer taken by permit shall be subject to the daily bag limit but shall not be subject to the annual bag limit on antlered deer. The department shall...
include a report on permits issued, to whom issued and deer harvested in the department's annual deer program report.

(3) (a) The bag limit on antlerless deer is one (1) per day, not to exceed three (3) per license year; except that two (2) additional antlerless deer per license year may be taken with a bow and arrow. Antlerless deer may be taken only in the areas prescribed by order of the commission. It is illegal to take a spotted fawn in any season.

(b) It is unlawful for a nonresident to kill an antlerless deer except: (i) a nonresident may take antlerless deer on lands that the title is vested in the nonresident or on lands that the nonresident has leased the hunting and fishing rights; or (ii) a nonresident who has a native son or daughter nonresident lifetime sportsman license or a resident lifetime sportsman license may take antlerless deer on private lands, wildlife management areas or national wildlife refuges.

(4) The bag limit on antlerless deer set by this section shall not apply to private lands under the deer management assistance program or the fee-based antlerless program as approved by the department.

(5) This section shall stand repealed on July 1, 2005.

SECTION 2. (1) The Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks shall conduct a study of the feasibility of establishing a procedure which requires any person who takes or harvests any deer to physically mark or identify each deer taken by means of a tag or similar method. The department shall complete its study and file a report of its findings and recommendations with the Chairman of the House Game and Fish Committee and the Chairman of the Senate Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks Committee not later than January 15, 2004.

(2) The Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks shall conduct a study on the effects of extending the deer hunting season to January 31. The report shall not be limited to reducing
the number of days at the beginning of the season for the purpose
of adding days at the end of January, nor shall the report
prohibit the establishment of zones for deer season opening and
closing dates. The department shall complete its study and file a
report of its findings and recommendations with the Secretary of
the Senate and the Clerk of the House no later than January 1,
2004.

SECTION 3. This act shall take effect and be in force from
and after July 1, 2003.