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A Report to the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries & Wildlife



L.D. 256 -- Resolve, To Direct the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to Explore Opportunities and Issues Surrounding Wild Turkey Hunting

The working group's findings, recommendations, and
recommended legislation

Submitted by:
Roland D. Martin, Commissioner
January, 2010

INTRODUCTION

For anyone who has travelled along Maine's roads recently, it is hard to imagine that not so long ago turkeys were virtually non-existent in the state. Once common in southern Maine - York, Cumberland, and Oxford Counties, and perhaps in reduced densities eastward along the coast to Mt. Desert Island - the wild turkey was eliminated from the State in the early 1880s. This was likely the result of intensive land clearing and unrestricted hunting.



Attempts to reintroduce wild turkeys to Maine failed in the 1940s and 1960s; the turkeys were game farm or pen-reared birds and were ill-equipped to survive on their own. Responding to requests from fish and game clubs and Maine sportsmen, and encouraged by successful reintroduction programs in neighboring states, the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW or Department) began planning a wild turkey reintroduction program in earnest in the mid-1970s. The goals of the program were twofold: to establish wild turkeys in the coastal part of the state where they historically occurred, and to provide a new game bird for sportsmen.

As a result of the combined efforts of MDIFW, the Maine Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF), and sportsmen, more recent reintroduction attempts have been successful using wild-trapped birds from Vermont (1970s) and Connecticut in the late 1980's. A small number of trap-and-transfer efforts of resident birds occur annually in areas where the Department continues to try to increase the population.

Maine's wild turkey population continues to grow and expand into habitat beyond initial expectations; wild turkeys now occupy all of Maine's 16 counties. The current population may be as high as 50,000 birds. The population fluctuates based on spring weather and winter snows, which affect production, recruitment, and survival. The return of the wild turkey to Maine is a wildlife management success story.

Today, in areas where the Department has released wild turkeys and birds have expanded naturally, the wild turkey population provides both consumptive (hunting) and non-consumptive (bird feeding and bird watching) uses. There has been, and continues to be, demand for reintroductions of wild turkeys into additional areas of the state by sportsmen's groups and others. Decisions as to where trapped birds are to be released are generally left up to the Department with input from the Maine Chapter NWTF, landowners, and agricultural interests.

Interest in wild turkey hunting has grown significantly since the first spring gobbler season in 1986. Although interest in Maine's spring wild turkey hunt remains strong with the most recent season's permit sales at 16,600, there has been a steady decline from the 23,963 permits

issued in 2005. That year marked the first year that all spring wild turkey permit lottery applicants were issued a permit. With the elimination of the lottery system, permit sales decreased by 19% in 2006 and have been steadily declining since, with a 6.5% decrease in 2007, 3.0% in 2008, and a 5.6% decline in 2009. The initial decline of 19% in 2006 is thought to be related to the elimination of the lottery system where the excitement of a lottery was no longer a draw. When there was a lottery for the spring wild turkey hunting season, the cost to participate was \$5 (a nominal fee for a chance at being drawn for a permit). If drawn, a hunter could choose whether he or she wanted to purchase a permit. There were likely some hunters who applied for and were drawn to receive a permit, but for whatever reason decided not to purchase the permit. Currently, there is no lottery; the opportunity to hunt wild turkeys costs a Maine resident \$20.

The Department has adopted a conservative approach to harvest management to distribute hunting pressure, promote landowner relations, provide for hunter safety, and maintain a quality hunting experience. As a result of concerted Department efforts, Maine has become known for its high quality spring hunt, a hunt that biologists and sportsmen are proud of. As the turkey population has expanded, both numerically and geographically, so too has the opportunity to hunt them [Table 1]. Over the last several years, the Department has expanded turkey hunting opportunity by elimination of the spring turkey lottery and the A:B split spring season [Table 2]. In addition, the Department has expanded fall turkey hunting opportunity adding additional wildlife management districts, lengthening the season, and allowing the use of shotguns in selected areas [Table 3].

The spring 2010 wild turkey hunting season will include two significant changes adopted from proposed legislation initiated by the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine in the 124th legislature. The first change is a combined spring/fall permit available to residents for \$20.00 and nonresidents for \$54.00. Holders of these permits may obtain a second spring male turkey for an additional \$20.00. The second significant change allows resident junior hunters a spring/fall turkey permit and a second spring turkey permit at no cost. These are significant season changes that may expand participation in both the spring and fall hunts and were a compelling reason behind the working group's hunting recommendations discussed later in the report [see pages 32-33].



Table 1. Wild Turkey Management Accomplishments Highlighting Efforts to Increase Hunting Opportunity (1977 – present).

| Year | Accomplishments |
|---------|---|
| 1977 | Reintroduction of 41 wild turkeys from Vermont |
| 1982 | In-state trap and transfer activities began |
| 1985 | <i>Wild Turkey Assessment</i> written; goals and objectives established for 1985-2000 |
| 1985 | In-state trap and transfer protocol established |
| 1985-87 | Wild turkey reproductive ecology study conducted by B. Treiterer, U. of Maine |
| 1986 | First spring wild turkey hunting season established, 500 permits available |
| 1987 | 70 additional wild turkey transported from Connecticut to Maine |
| 1988 | Memorandum of Understanding between the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries (MDIFW) and the National Wild Turkey Federation signed |
| 1989 | U. of Maine survey of Maine turkey hunters conducted |
| 1991 | Began rule-making efforts to deal with pen-raised turkey issue |
| 1992 | Expanded spring hunting zone from York County to include Cumberland County |
| 1995 | Number of spring hunting permits increased from 500 to 750 |
| 1996 | Number of spring hunting permits increased from 750 to 1,250; north/south hunting zones established |
| 1997 | Number of spring hunting permits increased from 1,250 to 1,750 |
| 1998 | Number of spring hunting permits increased from 1,750 to 2,250 |
| 1999 | Number of spring hunting permits increased from 2,250 to 3,000; hunting by Wildlife Management Districts (WMDs), spring hunting zone expanded |
| 2000 | Number of spring hunting permits increased from 3,000 to 4,000 |
| 2000 | <i>Wild Turkey Assessment</i> updated |
| 2000-01 | Wild turkey management goals and objectives established by a public working group and adopted by the Commissioner's Fish and Wildlife Advisory Council for the period 2000-2015 |
| 2001 | Number of spring hunting permits increased from 4,000 to 7,000; A and B spring seasons established |
| 2002 | Number of spring hunting permits increased from 7,000 to 9,000; 2 week fall archery season established (taking males and females both legal) |

| Year | Accomplishments |
|---------|--|
| 2002 | MDIFW Nuisance Wildlife Policy adapted to specifically address wild turkeys |
| 2003 | Number of spring hunting permits increased from 9,000 to 12,000; electronic calls became legal; landowner permit program established |
| 2004 | Number of spring hunting permits increased from 12,000 to 15,600; 5-week spring season established; spring hunting zone expanded; Youth Hunt Day established |
| 2005 | Number of spring hunting permits = number of applicants (23,963) |
| 2006 | Unlimited spring hunt (lottery discontinued, permits available over-the-counter); spring hunting zone expanded; 4 week fall archery season in some WMDs |
| 2006 | Southern Aroostook County Wild Turkey Working Group established |
| 2007 | 6-day fall shotgun wild turkey hunting season conducted in specific WMDs |
| 2008-09 | Wild turkey / blueberry depredation study conducted by J. Huebner, U. of Maine |
| 2009 | A/B spring hunting season structure discontinued (full 5 weeks open to all hunters); fall archery zone expanded |
| 2010 | Bag limits changed: 1 bird in the spring and 1 bird in the fall, additional spring bird \$20 |

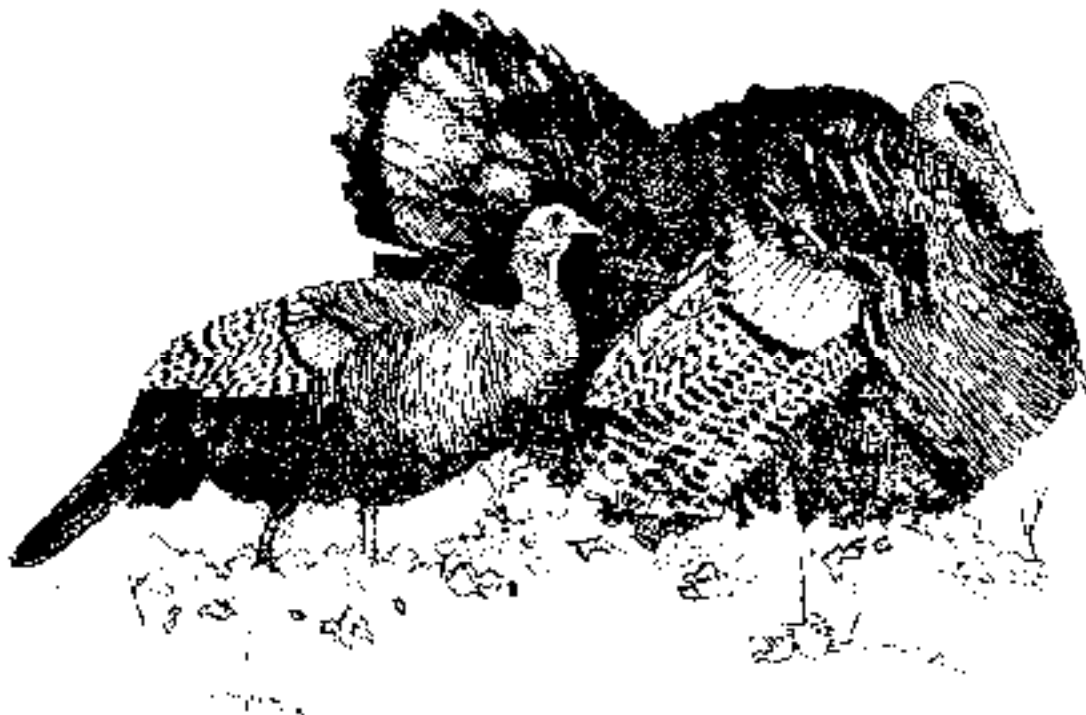


Table 2. Spring Wild Turkey Hunting Effort, Harvests, and Hunting Zones.

| Year | Number of Applicants | Number of Permits | Harvest | Status, Regulation, and Seasons |
|----------|----------------------|-------------------|---------|---|
| Pre 1955 | 0 | 0 | 0 | No regulations |
| 1955-59 | 0 | 0 | 0 | No open season |
| 1960 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Season provision repealed in 1959 |
| 1961-71 | 0 | 0 | 0 | No regulations |
| 1972-84 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Commissioner given regulatory authority – No open season |
| 1985 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Commissioner given authority to institute a spring hunting season |
| 1986 | 605 | 500 | 9 | 8 May to 24 May, York County |
| 1987 | 536 | 500 | 8 | 8 May to 23 May, York County |
| 1988 | 355 | 355 | 16 | 9 May to 28 May, York County |
| 1989 | 464 | 463 | 19 | 8 May to 27 May, York County |
| 1990 | 500 | 499 | 15 | 8 May to 28 May, York County |
| 1991 | 508 | 500 | 21 | 8 May to 28 May, York County |
| 1992 | 886 | 500 | 53 | 4 May to 30 May, York & Cumberland Counties |
| 1993 | 1,079 | 500 | 46 | 3 May to 31 May, York & Cumberland Counties |
| 1994 | 1,185 | 500 | 62 | 2 May to 30 May, York & Cumberland Counties |
| 1995 | 1,712 | 750 | 117 | 1 May to 29 May, York & Cumberland Counties |
| 1996 | 3,952 | 1,250 | 288 | 1 May to 31 May, North & South Hunting Zones |
| 1997 | 5,091 | 1,750 | 417 | 1 May to 31 May, North & South Hunting Zones |
| 1998 | 6,449 | 2,250 | 594 | 1 May to 30 May, North & South Hunting Zones |
| 1999 | 9,294 | 3,000 | 890 | 3 May to 31 May, 1 Zone: WMDs 15-17, 20-26 |
| 2000 | 14,909 | 4,000 | 1,559 | 1 May to 31 May, 1 Zone: WMDs 15-17, 20-26 |
| 2001 | 18,685 | 7,000 | 2,544 | Season A: May 1-5 and May 21-28 Season B: May 7-19 1 Zone: WMDs 12,15-17, 20-27 |

| Year | Number of Applicants | Number of Permits | Harvest | Status, Regulation, and Seasons |
|------|----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|--|
| 2002 | 25,954 | 9,000 | 3,391 | Season A: April 29-May 4 and May 20-June 1 Season B: May 6-18 and May 27-June 11 Zone: WMDs 12, 15-18, 20-27 2-week fall archery season established |
| 2003 | 26,505 | 12,000 | 3,994 | Season A: April 28-May 3 and May 19-31 Season B: May 5-17 and May 26-31 1 Zone: WMDs 12, 15-18, 20-27 |
| 2004 | 24,039 | 15,600 | 4,839 | Season A: May 3-8 and May 24-June 5 Season B: May 10-22 and May 31-June 5 Youth Hunt: May 1 1 Zone: WMDs 12,13,15-18, 20-27 |
| 2005 | 23,963 | 23,963 | 6,236 | Season A: May 2-7 and May 23-June 4 Season B: May 9-21 and May 30-June 4 Youth Hunt: April 30 1 Zone: WMDs 12-18, 20-27 All lottery participants given a permit |
| 2006 | N/A | 19,393 | 5,931 | Season A: May 1-6 and May 22-June 3 Season B: May 8-20 and May 29-June 3 Youth Hunt: April 29 1 Zone: WMDs 10-18, 20-26 Lottery discontinued, permits available over-the-counter |
| 2007 | N/A | 18,132 | 5,984 | Season A: April 30-May 5 and May 21-June 2 Season B: May 7-19 and May 28-June 2 Youth Hunt: April 28 1 Zone: WMDs 7, 10-18, 20-26 Permits available over-the-counter |
| 2008 | N/A | 17,587 | 6,348 | Season A: April 28-May 3 and May 19-May 31 Season B: May 5-17 and May 26-May 31 Youth Hunt: April 26 1 Zone: WMDs 7, 10-18, 20-26 Permits available over-the-counter |
| 2009 | N/A | 16,600 | 5,766 Preliminary | May 4-June 6 (5 weeks open to all hunters) Youth Hunt: May 2 1 Zone: WMDs 7, 10-18, 20-26 Permits available over-the-counter |

Table 3. Fall (Either Sex) Wild Turkey Hunting Effort, Harvests, and Hunting Zones.

| Year | Number of Permits | Harvest | Status, Regulation, and Seasons |
|------|-------------------|-------------------|---|
| 2002 | 2,022 | 151 | October 21 through November 1 Archery only 1 Zone: WMDs 15, 16, 20-26 |
| 2003 | 2,882 | 246 | October 20 through October 31 Archery only 1 Zone: WMDs 15, 16, 20-26 |
| 2004 | 2,923 | 204 | October 18 through October 29 Archery only 1 Zone: WMDs 15, 16, 20-26 |
| 2005 | 2,913 | 157 | October 17 through October 28 Archery only 1 Zone: WMDs 15, 16, 20-26 |
| 2006 | 2,639 | 198 | Zone 1: WMDs 15-17, 20, 24-26; Oct 7-Oct 21 Zone 2: WMDs 21-23; Sept 28-Oct 27 Archery only |
| 2007 | 5,357 | 1,843 | Zone 1 (archery only): WMDs 15-17, 20, 24-26; Oct 6-Oct 20 Zone 2 (archery only): WMDs 21-23; Sept 27-Oct 26 Zone 3 (archery and shotgun): WMDs 15-17, 20-25; October 13-Oct 19 |
| 2008 | 4,966 | 685 | Zone 1 (archery only): WMDs 15-17, 20, 24-26, Oct 11-Oct 25 Zone 2 (archery only): WMDs 21-23, Oct 2-Oct 31 Zone 3 (archery and shotgun): WMDs 15-17, 20-25, Oct 18-24 |
| 2009 | 3,300 | Not Available Yet | Zone 1 (archery only): WMDs 15-17, 20, 24-26, Oct 10-Oct 24 Zone 2 (archery only): WMDs 21-23, Oct 1-Oct 30 Zone 3 (archery and shotgun): WMDs 15-17, 20-25, Oct 17-23 |

While many consider the return of the wild turkey to Maine a resounding success, some in the agricultural community are experiencing economic losses and other effects of an existing and expanding turkey population. The desire to reduce nuisance turkey complaints was the impetus behind an amended version of LD 256, 'Resolve, To Direct the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to Explore Opportunities and Issues Surrounding Wild Turkey Hunting.'

BACKGROUND



Wild Turkey Management Planning: In 1985 MDIFW prepared its first *Wild Turkey Assessment*, an exhaustive review and analysis of all that was known about wild turkeys in Maine. The assessment outlined the history of wild turkey management in the state and the current status of the population, habitat, and biological knowledge. The assessment was used by a public stakeholder group having diverse interests in wild turkeys as a guide to develop a goal and objectives that would direct wild turkey management for

the period 1985-2000. The goal was a broad statement of management direction, but the objectives established timelines and were specific and measurable.

In 1999, the Department refined its *Wild Turkey Assessment* [Appendix 1A] and convened another Wild Turkey Working Group to develop goals and objectives that would guide wild turkey management for the period 2000–2015. Goals and objectives were developed within the following broad sideboards: wild turkey may not be put in jeopardy of extirpation, and they may not be managed in a manner that degrades habitat. The group considered wild turkey management issues for several months and recommended a management goal and a series of objectives that were adopted by the Department's Fish and Wildlife Advisory Council in May 2001. The following goal and five objectives have directed MDIFW's management actions since [Appendix 1D].

Goal: Increase the size and distribution of the wild turkey population within all suitable habitats in Maine.

Objective 1: By 2010, increase the size and distribution of the wild turkey population within all suitable habitats in Maine via trap and transfer activities and habitat improvements.

Objective 2: By 2010, provide unlimited spring hunting opportunity (everyone who applies for a permit receives a permit) as long as the wild turkey population can support it and 2001 hunt quality is maintained. (*The working group defined quality hunting as hearing, seeing, working, and hopefully harvesting a turkey without interference from others.*)

Objective 3: By 2002, develop a component to the Department's Nuisance Wildlife Policy that addresses wild turkeys.

Objective 4: By 2003, implement a limited fall hunting season in areas where the wild turkey population can support it, and without adversely affecting Objective 2.

Objective 5: Develop a cooperative habitat improvement program between landowners, the Maine Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation, and the Department.

Based on the wild turkey management goal and objectives established by the public working group, the Department prepared the *Wild Turkey Management System*, which outlines how it will determine if it is meeting management objectives and what management actions it will take if the objectives are not being met [Appendix 1G].

CREATION OF THE 2009 WILD TURKEY WORKING GROUP

In response to an increasing turkey population and concerns about the perceived increase in the number of nuisance turkey complaints particularly among agricultural interests, the 124th Legislature passed an amended version of LD 256 to read 'Resolve, To Direct the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to Explore Opportunities and Issues Surrounding Wild Turkey Hunting' [Appendices 2A and 2B].

Sec. 1 Study opportunities and issues regarding wild turkeys. Resolved: That the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife shall work with interested parties to explore the opportunities and issues surrounding the wild turkey hunt in the State and the problem of nuisance wild turkeys in farming areas, including, but not limited to, electronic tagging or registration, telephone registration and expanded hunting opportunities to reduce the agricultural damage caused by wild turkeys; and be it further

Sec. 2 Report. Resolved: That the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife shall report the findings and recommendations based on the study in section 1 to the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife by January 5, 2010. The Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife may submit legislation to the Second Regular Session of the 124th Legislature regarding matters presented in that report.

The 2009 Wild Turkey Working Group consisted of 17 members [Appendix 2D]:

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Brad Allen | MDIFW Bird Group Leader |
| Jeff Bellmore | Maine Professional Guides Association |
| Mark Caron | MDIFW Regional Wildlife Biologist, Region F |
| Mike Dann | Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine |
| Frank Dunbar | MDIFW's Fish and Wildlife Advisory Council |
| Chris Dyer | Maine Warden Service |
| Bob Humphrey | Outdoor Writer, Turkey Hunter |
| Patricia Kontur | Maine Wild Blueberry Commission |
| Galen Larrabee | Dairy Farmer |
| Doug Little | NWTF Regional Biologist (New York and New England) |
| Jon Olson | Maine Farm Bureau |
| Jerome Richard | Maine Bowhunters Association |

Kirk Shively
Brian Smith
George Smith
Kelsey Sullivan
Jim Wescott

Wildlife Disease Biologist, USDA APHIS, Wildlife Services
NWTF, Maine Chapter President
Executive Director, Sportsman's Alliance of Maine
MDIFW, Wildlife Biologist, Bird Group
NWTF State Chapter Board Member, turkey hunter

Maine Audubon was invited to participate but did not.

With the unanimous agreement of the Working Group, Sandy Ritchie, Habitat Conservation and Special Projects Biologist, Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, facilitated Working Group meetings and Mark Ostermann, Data Management Leader, Inland Fisheries & Wildlife provided technical support to the group during the electronic tagging discussions. A summary of each working group meeting and a list of those who attended can be found in Appendices 3-5.

The report that follows constitutes the working group's findings and recommendations [see pages 30-33].

SUMMARY OF WILD TURKEY WORKING GROUP MEETINGS

The working group met three times during August and September 2009, investing more than 15 hours in discussing wild turkey issues and opportunities and developing a series of recommended strategies to address human / wild turkey conflicts and expand hunting opportunity.

Prior to the first meeting the Department distributed a number of background materials for the Working Group to review. These were not discussed in any great detail; rather they were provided as background and reference material [Appendix 1].

- *Wild Turkey Assessment* prepared by Phillip Bozenhard in 1985 and updated by R. Bradford Allen in 2000.
- *Wild Turkey Management Issues and Concerns* raised by the 2000 Wild Turkey Working Group.
- *Wild Turkey Management Goal and Objectives 2000-2015* developed by the 2000 Wild Turkey Working Group and adopted by the MDIFW Commissioner and Fish and Wildlife Advisory Council in May 2001.
- *Feasibility Statements for the Wild Turkey Goals and Objectives* prepared by Andrew Weik, April 2001.
- *Problems and Strategies for Wild Turkey Management in Maine* prepared by Andrew Weik, April 2001.

To fully appreciate and understand the Working Group's recommended strategies, a brief overview of each meeting is presented below [see also Appendices 3-5].



Meeting #1 – August 5, 2009

The first meeting of the 2009 Wild Turkey Working Group was devoted to a discussion of the Department's Species Planning Process, status of wild turkeys in Maine, review of the legislative resolve, and identification of wild turkey issues associated with dairy farming and the blueberry industry.

1. Welcome / Introductions / Review Agenda

Sandy Ritchie had a family emergency and was unavailable to attend the first meeting. Mark Stadler, Wildlife Division Director, facilitated the meeting in Sandy's absence. Mark welcomed members of the Wild Turkey Working Group (Working Group) and thanked them for participating. Working Group members, Department staff, and guests introduced themselves.

Mark asked "Is the group a good cross section of interested parties?" The group indicated that it was although the Warden Service representative had a prior commitment.

2. Ground Rules

Mark led the group in developing the following ground rules:

- One conversation at a time / be as concise as possible
- Maximize participation / respect others' perspectives / seek to address all perspectives
- Decision making by consensus
- All have the responsibility to move the process forward

3. Background and Charge

Mark discussed the requirements of L.D. 256. He indicated that they appeared to revolve around three broad areas, which are:

A. Wild Turkey Hunting in Maine:

- 1) Issues
- 2) Opportunities

B. Agricultural Issues Concerning Wild Turkeys

- 1) The Problem of Nuisance Wild Turkeys in Farming Areas: Identification of the Problem. Once we have identified and described the problem, then consider the...
- 2) Expanded Hunting Opportunities to Reduce the Agricultural Damage Caused by Wild Turkeys

C. Electronic Tagging / Registration; Telephone Registration

The working group concurred with this categorization. It decided to begin its deliberations by undertaking a review and discussion of B 1) The Problem of Nuisance Wild Turkeys in Farming Areas: Identification of the problem.

4. Species Planning, the Status of Wild Turkeys in Maine, and Animal Damage Control

Mark Stadler presented an overview of the Department's Species Planning Process, including the development of: a Species Assessment, management goals and objectives for a 15 year planning period by a public working group, and Species Management Systems [Appendix 3B].

He reiterated the point that how the fall hunt affects the quality of the spring hunt is an important issue to remember and will be critical to future discussions. Doug Little (NWTF) indicated that the use of spring harvest data to increase or reduce fall hunting opportunity (as Maine does) is a widely accepted practice used in other states. He stated there are instances where some states are considering reducing fall hunting opportunity because of reduced spring hunt quality.

Kelsey Sullivan provided a presentation on the Status of Wild Turkeys in Maine and emphasized where we are in terms of populations status, goal and objectives, and harvests [Appendix 3C].

Mark described MDIFW's Animal Damage Control (ADC) policy and nuisance issues specific to wild turkeys and provided opportunity for discussion [Appendix 3D]. The question was asked of farmers in general "How long have the birds bothered them"? Mr. Larrabee indicated that it really depends on the winter (snow conditions). If you get one storm of 18 inches, they come around quickly. If snows are intermittent, the birds generally forage in the woods.

5. The Problem with Nuisance Wild Turkeys in Farming Areas: Identification of the Problem

Dairy Farming

Galen Larrabee, representing the Maine dairy industry, provided the working group with his assessment of the affect of turkeys on his dairy operation. He indicated that problems with turkeys on his farm began in the late 1990s, and he has had as many as 160 turkeys living on his farm during winters. He also noted that farmers using haylege bunkers face different problems than those using wrapped bales. Below is a summary of the problems Mr. Larrabee identified; in addition, he and other members of the working group provided comments and possible solutions to the problems listed.



Problem

Dairy farmers don't receive any of the economic benefits from wild turkey presence in Maine but must absorb costs associated with wild turkey conflicts.

Turkeys frequent dairy farms for food when wild food gets scarce. As long as turkeys

Potential Strategies / Comments

- Education and outreach to dairy farmers, the public, and IFW.
- IFW allowing farmers to address problems as conflicts arise.
- IFW outreach to dairy farmers w/ problems.
- Recognize the contribution of farmers.
- Carry excess food out back for turkeys to peck thru.

Problem

can scavenge in the woods they are not a problem.

Farmers don't like turkeys in corn or haylage bunkers because they eat a lot.

Turkey feces in feed: effect on palatability and milk productivity?

Destruction of wrapped bales; food spoiled; serious problem

Potential Strategies / Comments

- Leave several rows of silage corn.
- Place excess silage corn away from dairy operations.
- Keep turkeys out of feed bunkers non-lethal (preferred) and lethal means if necessary.
- Several hundred samples of turkey defecation in silage and barnyards were collected and tested in New Hampshire. No incidence of Salmonella was found.
- USDA-Wildlife Services Maine will be collecting samples and swabbing birds looking for Campylobacter and other fecal borne pathogens with regards to abortion in cattle and sheep.
- Study of starling feces in feed and declining milk production – starlings may be a bigger issue than turkeys.
- Better storage sites for wrapped bales away from depredation and damage.
- Some studies suggest other wildlife might be causing the damage rather than turkeys. Need camera evidence because mitigation will be different if we don't determine who is causing the problem.
- APHIS Wildlife Services recommends that studies be conducted to investigate the issue of damage to wrapped bales and silage bags to determine the role that turkeys may or may not play in the damage. Kirk Shively indicated Wildlife Services is well qualified to undertake a study.

Mr. Larrabee concluded his remarks stating he has worked with MDIFW since 2000 to prevent and resolve issues with wild turkeys on his farm. He indicated there is much better cooperation between the Department and dairy farmers today than in the past, but there is room for improvement and additional tools. He believes most farmers want to coexist with

wild turkeys, are learning to live with them, and prefer not to shoot them. When asked if turkeys were a huge problem and MDIFW's Animal Damage Control program ineffective, Mr. Larrabee stated that may have been the case 8-10 years ago, but it would be an overstatement today. He has a good relationship with the Department and encouraged MDIFW and dairy farmers to continue to work cooperatively and for the Department to direct assistance to farmers who request it.

Wild Turkeys and Wild Blueberry Agriculture

Wild blueberry growers have expressed concerns that wild turkeys commonly use their farms and may cause significant crop damage. The wild turkey's conspicuous and gregarious diurnal behavior makes them highly visible, which can result in farmers attributing crop damage from other wildlife species to wild turkeys.

Until now, impacts of wild turkeys on wild blueberry agriculture have not been studied. Janice Huebner, M.S. candidate at the University of Maine Department of Plant, Soil, and Environmental Sciences completed her study titled "**Wild Turkey Foraging Behavior and Crop Depredation on Wild Blueberry Farms in Maine**" in December 2009 in an effort to understand the impact of wild turkey foraging and activity on wild blueberry farms. Because Ms. Huebner's work is germane to the deliberations of the Wild Turkey Working Group, we provided a direct copy of the abstract of the thesis below as well as other results, annotated conclusions, and management recommendations (with literature citations removed) taken directly from the thesis. These points further highlight some of the more important findings in Janice Huebner's work.

Thesis Abstract

*A highly successful reintroduction program has restored wild turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo*) to Maine in large numbers and wild blueberry (low sweet blueberry [*Vaccinium angustifolium*]) growers have increasingly expressed concern about wild turkeys inhabiting their farms. The objectives of the present study were to determine the concerns and perceptions of wild blueberry growers about wild turkeys, describe wild turkey activity and diet while using blueberry fields, and estimate blueberry crop loss. In 2008 I sent a mail-in questionnaire about wild turkey and wildlife damage to all wild blueberry growers in Maine. I studied wild turkey activity on four wild blueberry farms in Knox County, ME from mid-May through July 2008 and 2009. I used an activity budget to describe behavior, and used fecal analysis and video recording to document food items consumed. To estimate crop loss from wildlife I compared proportion of blueberry loss rates between open or enclosed plots. I modeled blueberry crop loss by wild turkey using results from the present study and the literature. Forty-two percent of growers responded ($n = 225$) to the questionnaire, and most (76%) reported no or few benefits from wild turkeys on their farms. Most (60%) growers were concerned with damage from wild turkeys. Deer (66%) was the species most commonly indicated as causing damage. Growers were most concerned with wild turkeys eating blueberries (54%) and knocking blueberries off stems (44%). In general, concerns were shared by respondents in regions of the state both with and without high wild turkey densities. Wild turkeys were present on blueberry fields 29% of total survey time (820 hours). Wild turkeys used blueberry farms and spent greater proportions of survey time on fields during the pre-fruiting compared to the fruiting season (2008: $P = 0.01$, 2009: $P < 0.001$).*

Overall, wild turkeys spent approximately 50% of time in foraging behaviors. On two sites, feeding behaviors were not different between seasons (Marrs Hill: $P = 0.468$, Clarry Hill: $P = 0.861$) or field types (Marrs Hill: $P = 0.256$), but there were yearly differences (Marrs Hill: $P = 0.005$, Clarry Hill: $P < 0.001$). Before blueberries ripened, other foods such as weedy vegetation comprised most (90%) of the foods used while in blueberry fields. During the fruiting season, wild blueberries were 46% of the food items used. In both years the rate of blueberry loss on plants did not differ between open and enclosed plots (2008: $P = 0.693$, 2009: $P = 0.498$). Based on mean estimates for model inputs from the present study and the observed mean flock size ($n = 4$), the “average” scenario for our study sites resulted in a loss of 18.7 kg (\$33.39) of wild blueberries by wild turkeys. This loss represented 0.05% of the total crop for a 20 ha field. Experimental (enclosure) and modeling results were consistent. My results indicate that wild blueberry crop losses by wild turkeys are relatively low. Better information on actual crop loss will be helpful to both wild blueberry growers and wildlife managers.

Below are other results, annotated conclusions and management recommendations (with literature citations removed) taken directly from the thesis. These points further highlight some of the more important findings in Janice Huebner’s work.

Perceptions of Wild Blueberry Growers to Wild Turkey Damage in Maine: Many wild blueberry growers are concerned that wild turkeys cause damage to their crop and despite the difference in wild turkey numbers between the regions, these concerns were generally consistent in both the mid-coast counties and Washington County. Growers likely perceive wild turkeys as causing damage because they are highly visible on blueberry farms, and growers do not have reliable information on the amount of crop loss caused by wild turkeys and other wildlife. Crop losses to wild turkeys and wildlife needs to be quantified.

Additionally, many growers had other important concerns for which little information is available, such as wild turkeys eating blueberry buds in the autumn and depositing feces on plants. This information will also be beneficial to agencies outside Maine weighing the costs and benefits of wild turkey introductions where wild blueberry agriculture is regionally significant.

Wild Turkey Foraging Behavior and Crop Loss on Wild Blueberry Farms in Maine: Wild turkey activity on farms unexpectedly decreased from pre-fruiting season to the fruiting season in both 2008 and 2009, despite the high abundance of wild blueberries that came available. Wild turkeys also spent roughly equal proportions of time in prune fields and fruit fields during the fruit season [at one study site] in 2008 and 2009. Several factors may explain the lack of a positive relationship between fruit availability and wild turkey use of wild blueberry fields. Wild blueberry farms likely only comprise a portion of total wild turkey habitat [home ranges in spring and summer between 105 ha-833 ha], and wild turkeys exhibit seasonal preferences for habitats types. In the spring (pre-fruiting season), wild blueberry fields may have been used more for breeding activities. While hens with broods may prefer field habitats, my anecdotal observations suggest wild blueberry fields provided very little cover from predation and young poults had difficulty maneuvering through dense blueberry stems. I observed little use of fields by hens with broods. A second contributing factor is that preferred food sources may have been abundant in adjacent habitats during the fruiting seasons, which resulted in wild turkeys spending less time on blueberry fields. However, complicating factors include fruit field types that had greater amounts of weedy vegetation because herbicide 41 applications were only applied to prune fields. Also, fruit

fields often received early July insecticide applications which may have deterred wild turkeys from eating treated blueberries or decreased in insect abundance.

Management Implications: Most wild blueberry growers in Maine are concerned about damage from wild turkeys to their crop. These concerns are not unfounded because wild turkeys are active on farms and do eat blueberries. Yet, crop loss from wild turkey is relatively low for most growers. However, in rare cases, small blueberry farms (<5 ha) with high wild turkey populations may consider the amount and value of blueberry loss unacceptable. For growers using or considering the use of hazing and scare devices targeted specifically at wild turkeys, it is likely not worth the cost. An effort should be made to distribute information on crop loss estimates to wild blueberry growers. For the majority of wild blueberry growers, wild turkey damage is not a source of significant damage. Cumulative damage from other wildlife may be more of concern for Maine's blueberry growers. This information will be especially helpful to inform growers in eastern Maine where wild turkeys are expanding and increasing and to inform organizations that are weighing the costs and benefits of wild turkey introduction.

Patricia Kontur, representing the Maine blueberry industry, outlined the problems that blueberry growers contend with; in addition, she and other members of the working group provided comments and possible solutions regarding the problems discussed.

| Problem | Potential Strategies / Comments |
|--|---|
| Blueberry growers don't receive any of the economic benefits from wild turkey presence in Maine but must absorb costs associated with wild turkey conflicts. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Education and outreach to blueberry growers, the public, and IFW.• IFW allowing blueberry growers to address conflicts.• IFW outreach to blueberry growers with problems.• Recognize the contribution of blueberry growers. |
| Wild turkey foraging damages berries; feces in berries. From the grower's perspective as soon as turkeys walk into the field damage increases with each day. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wild turkeys eat bugs thereby providing a potential benefit of blueberry pest control.• What do blueberry growers use to scare off/get rid of wild turkeys? A discussion ensued about scare tactics, deterrents, limited utility, and that birds get conditioned to these. Consider rotating deterrents on the landscape and allowing periodic lethal take.• Need to seek a balance between the |

Problem

Wild turkey foraging damages berries; feces in berries. From the grower's perspective as soon as turkeys walk into the field damage increases with each day.

Potential Strategies / Comments

numbers of wild turkeys in blueberry fields and the financial loss associated with their presence.

- Like dairy farming, education and outreach to blueberry growers will be helpful to assess the problem and develop a better understanding of the complete picture (i.e. Janice Huebner, University of Maine graduate student studying wild turkey/blueberry interactions).
- Janice Huebner's study will hopefully shed light on the degree of turkey damage (direct and indirect) and what role other species play in damage to blueberry fields (bears, deer, raccoons)

Time expired before turkey damage to other berry crops, farm stand and back yard gardens, and apple orchards could be fully vetted. These topics were deferred to the next meeting.

The minutes of the first meeting and all of the documents provided to the working group are found in Appendix 3.



Meeting #2 – August 25, 2009

The second meeting of the 2009 Wild Turkey Working Group was devoted to a continued discussion of wild turkey conflicts in agricultural areas and identification of hunting issues and opportunities.

1. The Problem of Nuisance Wild Turkeys in Farming Areas: Identification of the Problem

Dairy and blueberry problems were discussed at the first meeting. Problems associated with other berry crops and farm stand produce were addressed at the second meeting.

Problem

Potential Strategies / Comments

Strawberries

To protect strawberry plants in the late fall farmers cover them with straw; in some cases after spreading the straw, wild turkeys scratch up the straw damaging the plants and agricultural cloth.

- Need to determine the number of wild turkeys being killed in relation to nuisance (whether by permit or not).
- Use fencing, repellants (mylar tape, cracker shells, fish scent sprays).
- A 3-D coyote goose repeller sold in Forestry Suppliers is very effective though it needs to be moved around in the fields.
- Timing of the hunting seasons is not effective to take out enough wild turkeys and to reduce the wild turkey numbers. Hunting generally doesn't occur when damage is occurring. MDIFW stated that hunting has never been used or promoted to control the wild turkey population.

Raspberries

During the fruiting cycle, wild turkeys are in the berry patches searching for insects and inadvertently knocking raspberries off the plants when they flap their wings. This damage can increase product loss and cost.

It's a numbers game. For example, 10 birds are tolerable but when you get higher

- Strategies for small fruits and vegetables are all similar (fencing, various repellants, education and outreach, etc.).
- Smaller operations may have a more difficult time financing nuisance control strategies than larger operations.

Problem

numbers (i.e. 100 birds) the problem becomes a major issue.

Potential Strategies / Comments

- Education and outreach is important for all nuisance categories (berries, dairy, orchards, etc.). Need to think “out of the box” about delivering the information.
- The Living with Wildlife link on IFW website will be available shortly. This site will describe methods for preventing or resolving conflicts with wildlife and who to turn to for help if needed.
- Websites are good but we also need to provide landowners with the opportunity to talk to a “real person” and not feel they are being put off.

Small Farms and Back Yard Gardens

Problems are similar to those of berry growers.

- Some strategies are similar – small operations may have a more difficult time financing control strategies.

Apple orchards

Wild turkeys eat apple drops and knock apples off the trees. They also cause limb damage and damage to buds in the spring.

- Some strategies are similar – small operations may have a more difficult time financing control strategies.

Turkey Problems in General

Trapping and transferring wild turkeys – growers would like to know where birds are relocated.

- MDIFW always seeks landowner permission when birds are released, but the regional offices should be encouraged to think beyond the actual release site as to where birds could move to.
- Post releases sites on IF&W’s website.
- IFW should be more proactive in distributing a “plan” for wild turkey releases.
- Need a landowner relations coordinator. Can we tap into Hunter Education instructors as an education

Problem

GAP – Good Agriculture Practices (Food Safety for agricultural fields) - GAP is a USDA certification program to allow growers to market food to the retail outlets while ensuring safety (i.e., home growers selling fresh pack to supermarkets).

Growers are looking to USDA to find out what is required to comply with the program. GAP identifies 200 items in total and 2 items speak to wildlife.

1. Monitor wildlife activities on the property.
2. Take measures to reduce the amount of wild animals entering the property.

It is an urban vs. rural problem.

A general discussion of nuisance wild turkey issues ensued. According to Warden Chris Dyer, 111 calls related to problem wild turkeys were reported between January 1 and August 24, 2009 and recorded in the Warden Service's Records Management System. The calls ran the gamut from wild turkeys bothering bird feeders, to a dead wild turkey in a driveway, to farming complaints. One grower commented that reports are probably under representative of the number of ongoing problems, citing most farmers don't report problems with wild turkeys, they simply deal with them.

Working Group members agreed it was important to compile USDA's reports with MDIFW's to get as accurate a picture of the problem as possible and to try to assess how many birds were being removed by lethal means.

2. Wild Turkey Hunting Issues and Opportunities

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to a brainstorming session of various hunting issues and opportunities. Sandy Ritchie told the working group the field was wide open and encouraged members to raise any issue, comment, or opportunity they wanted the broader working group to consider. The following is a summary of topics discussed.

Turkey demand could exceed supply in some areas of the state – some working group members expressed concern that a series of wet springs and poor poult production in

Potential Strategies / Comments

and outreach vehicle?

- Continue with trap and transfer efforts.
- Need to monitor GAP to ensure "reasonableness" in dealing with wildlife.
- Inform regional biologists about GAP.
- Need to coordinate where trapped wild turkeys are released especially if they are released near GAP areas.
- Need to determine how to get the message out in a better fashion - a compiled package covering all species and information and the steps to go through to resolve conflicts.

conjunction with hunters gaining experience and expertise during the fall hunt could result in an increased harvest of hens and begin affecting population growth.

Fall season triggers – the Department uses the metric of spring harvest of wild turkey gobblers/mi² of forested habitat as a means to assess the wild turkey population within a Wildlife Management District (WMD). The Wild Turkey Management System calls for specific values of gobblers harvested/mi² forested habitat to be met in the spring before opening a WMD to fall hunting. Three variations of a fall harvest, when met, can trigger a fall season opening. A WMD that realizes:

- 0.5 gobblers/square mile of forested would open up a 2 week bow hunt.
- 0.75 gobblers/square mile of forested habitat would open a 2 week bow season, as well as a 1 week shotgun season.
- 1.0 gobblers/square mile of forested habitat would open a 4 week bow season, as well as a 1 week shotgun season.

Season and weaponry changes – a list of suggested changes is presented below.

- Provide similar seasons for bow hunters and shotgun hunters. [Some members were concerned about the potential for an increased harvest of hens by lengthening the shotgun season.]
- Expand the youth hunt during the spring and fall seasons.
- Reduce the spring season from 5 weeks to 4 weeks.
- Allow the use of crossbows.
- Institute an early spring bow only season [mid April for 2 weeks] – Bob Humphrey thought an early spring bow season might increase nonresident participation in wild turkey hunting as it has in other states. Others believed an early season wouldn't attract hunters; they preferred to focus on a season where hunters could see success. Jerome Richard of the Maine Bowhunters Association did not support an early spring bow only season.
- May 1st vs. an earlier April spring season opening – Doug Little, Northeast Regional Biologist with NWTF reported that May 1st is the ideal start date. Based on radio telemetry studies, May 1st is the peak onset of incubation when hens are closely tied to the nests. An earlier season opening increases the mistaken identity and illegal



take of hens in the harvest and “educates” gobblers that won’t respond to calling anyway.

- Extend the spring noon closure to all day hunting - Brad Allen provided the group with a number of reasons why all day spring wild turkey hunting is not advised.
 - All day hunting diminishes the tradition of spring wild turkey hunting which is an early morning hunt.
 - All day hunting may diminish the current quality of the spring hunt, risking the high level of success and credibility our wild turkey program enjoys.
 - Extending hunting hours has the potential to decrease the acreage open to hunting as landowners may not welcome all day hunting on their land.
 - Research has shown that additional hunting pressure from all day hunting will depress turkey gobbling activity.
 - Further, the wild turkey is the only game bird that wildlife agencies allow to be hunted during the nesting phase of its reproductive cycle. Caution should be exercised to ensure that hunting is as benign as possible.
 - All day hunting increases the potential for disturbance to nesting hens and nest abandonment.
 - All day hunting would likely increase the male harvest and enhances the opportunity for illegal hen losses when nesting hens leave their nests and feed in the afternoon.
 - All day hunting might increase more “road hunting” and stalking turkey spotted in fields in the afternoon. This raises safety and ethical concerns.
 - No other state in the northeast has all day hunting. Conditions are likely very different in the southern states that do have all day spring hunts. The most obvious difference is that our turkeys experience severe winter conditions.
 - Lastly, the hunting community has not expressed a strong desire for all day hunting.

Making too many season changes too quickly makes it difficult to measure cause and effect in regards to hunt quality – it was suggested that once a major change is made to a season framework (increasing bag limits, providing additional weaponry opportunity), MDIFW should not make an additional change for a period of 3 years. This timeframe is intended to allow the Department to review and evaluate harvest and survey trend data to assess the effect of the change on the population or the quality of the hunt.

Need to preserve the quality of the spring hunt – MDIFW needs to monitor the effect of increased opportunity in the fall in relation to the quality of the hunt in the spring. Maine’s spring hunt is its premier hunt; preserving its quality is of utmost importance. A quality hunt

means more than harvesting a bird; it also includes seeing, hearing, and working a bird without interference from others.

How can we attract more people to the sport of turkey hunting – we don't seem to be attracting more residents to the sport despite expanded seasons, a greater area open to hunting, increased bag limits, and reasonable permit fees. The opportunity to attract residents is limited; the opportunity to attract nonresidents is better and should be promoted.

Landowner issues – the fall season occurs when farmers are harvesting their fall crops. Farmers are concerned about expanding shotgun opportunity in the fall. They want to ensure a safe and quality hunting experience while minimizing interference with their farming activities.

3. Proposed Spring Season Framework

The Working Group agreed to the following structure for the spring season:

- Season opening – maintain current opening (around May 1)
- Season length - 5 weeks, no split seasons
- Daily closure – noon time, though the group was divided on a ½ day vs. full day hunting (3 supported an all day season, 11 were opposed, Doug Little representing the NWTf abstained from voting).

Once major changes are made to a season framework (i.e., increasing bag limits, expanding weaponry), the group recommended not making additional changes for a period of 3 years to allow the Department to review and evaluate harvest and survey trend data.

The minutes of the second meeting and all of the documents provided to the working group are found in Appendix 4.



Meeting #3 – September 15, 2009

The third meeting of the 2009 Wild Turkey Working Group was devoted to a continued discussion of hunting issues and opportunities, including the use of crossbows; electronic tagging; identification of strategies to address conflicts with turkeys; and a review and affirmation of wild turkey goals and objectives developed by the 2000 Wild Turkey Working Group. A summary of items discussed is provided below.

1. Hunting Issues and Opportunities

At the previous meeting the Working Group discussed a spring season framework. A fall season structure and the use of crossbows were the focus of the third meeting.

An objective of the 2000 Wild Turkey Working Group was to implement a limited fall hunting season by 2003 in areas where the Wild Turkey population could support it and without adversely affecting the quality of the spring hunt. The Department implemented its first fall season (a two-week archery only season in selected WMDs) in 2002. Since the inaugural fall season, the Department has expanded fall turkey hunting opportunity adding additional wildlife management districts, lengthening the season, and allowing the use of shotguns. Hens comprise about 60% of Maine's fall turkey harvest.

When determining a fall season the Department considers:

- Season triggers - spring harvest of wild turkey gobblers/mi² of forested habitat (see page 22)
- Productivity estimates from August brood surveys
- MDIFW regional biologists' perspectives

Doug Little provided a regional and national perspective of fall turkey seasons. Most states use a 2-3 year spring harvest trend to determine fall opportunity; Maine uses 1 year data and is the only state to do so. When setting fall seasons, Maine has been liberal despite being at the northern limit of wild turkey range where year to year changes can be exacerbated. We are also one of the more recent states to implement a fall gun season. States with longer fall gun seasons have longer histories of fall hunting and are not on the northern limit of the range. Arkansas, a state with a long history of turkeys and turkey hunting, is proposing an emergency closure of their fall season after several years of poor production.

Most states manage their fall hunts to assure that even with the harshest of winters and the wettest of springs, the fall harvest will not negatively impact the population and the spring hunt. Given season timing and the need to publish hunting regulations in advance of a season, it is very difficult for states to respond to poor winters and wet springs by reducing the fall season framework. Hunters want to have some expectation as to what a season will be.

Working Group members urged caution when expanding and evaluating seasons to ensure we maintain the safety net of the fall season triggers. Some wondered whether a 2-bird take in the spring (allowable beginning in 2010 with an additional fee) will require a change to the

season triggers, and others expressed concern that as hunters continue to become more experienced we could achieve our fall season triggers quicker thereby expanding fall hunting opportunity sooner than biologically warranted. To date the Department has been conservative in its approach to harvest management and has not seen the need to limit the fall hen harvest because it is likely less than 8%-10% of the hen population.

The group briefly discussed using recreational turkey hunting to reduce the turkey population and, as a result, reduce the number of nuisance wild turkey complaints. They agreed that there are more direct and focused ways to address wild turkey conflicts rather than recreational hunting, particularly if that hunting might jeopardize the quality of Maine's spring turkey hunt and diminish hunter satisfaction. Provisions for dealing with nuisance wildlife exist in law, and the Department's Animal Damage Control Policy has provisions to address and remedy nuisance wild turkey complaints.

The Working Group agreed to the following structure for the fall season:

- Maintain the current [2009] fall season structure for 2010.
- Don't consider any changes until at least 2011. [Note: as a result of Working Group recommendations on pages 32-33, no season changes will be considered until 2013.]
- Use 3-year trend data when establishing future seasons to allow the Department adequate time to review and evaluate harvest trend data.
- Investigate the opportunity to expand the fall shotgun season beginning no earlier than 2011. [Note: as a result of Working Group recommendations on pages 32-33, no season changes will be considered until 2013.] If fall shotgun opportunity is expanded, we may need to reconsider fall season triggers, which by most states' standards are already very liberal.

2. Use of Crossbows

The group considered arguments for and against the use of crossbows while turkey hunting. [Appendices 5B-5D]. Doug Little surveyed all state wild turkey program leaders on the use of crossbows and received 32 responses. Crossbows are legal in 13 states and illegal in 19. Of the 6 New England states surveyed, crossbows are illegal for spring and fall wild turkey hunting in Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island [Connecticut and Vermont did not respond].

In states where crossbows are allowed, less than 2% – 9% of the harvest is attributable to crossbows. The Maine Chapter of the NWTf opposes the use of crossbows at this time because it would be another variable on top of other season changes. The Maine Bowhunters Association [MBA] opposes the use of crossbows, especially during the fall turkey season because it overlaps the archery season on deer and MBA fears it could lead to the illegal harvest of deer by crossbow users.

The Working Group agreed that MDIFW should investigate the use of crossbows beginning with the 2011 turkey seasons and suggested the Department use its 2010 Spring Turkey Hunter Questionnaire as one way to gauge hunter interest in the use of crossbows while turkey hunting. [Note: as a result of Working Group recommendations on pages 32-33, no

season changes will be considered until 2013.] Agricultural interests urged caution, expressing concern for lost arrows in farmers hay fields and the potential of ingestion of arrow heads by livestock. [Using crossbows to hunt wild turkey would require legislation.]

3. Strategies to Address Farmers' Conflicts with Wild Turkeys

The Working Group discussed a number of potential strategies to address farmers' conflicts with turkeys.

- Use of repellants – fencing, mylar tape, cracker shells, coyote decoys, etc.
- Directed efforts at lethal removal of offending turkeys.
- Trapping and relocating wild turkeys.
- Education and outreach efforts.
- Directing recreational hunters into problem areas – ultimately the group decided not to recommend this strategy because landowners are getting plenty of requests from hunters to hunt on their properties.
- Trap, euthanize, and donate turkeys to soup kitchens – ultimately the group decided not to recommend this strategy.
- Allow the use of depredation permits by “agents” of the busy farmer (friends, family, ADC agents) – this strategy was strongly discouraged by Warden Service because it makes a hunt out of a nuisance problem and opens up a “can of worms”.
- Payment to farmers for damage.

4. Electronic Tagging

The Sportsman Alliance of Maine continues to advocate for website and telephone options for tagging wild turkeys.

The group briefly discussed the advantages and disadvantages of moving forward with electronic registration of wild turkeys. The Department has met several times to discuss electronic tagging and has identified advantages and disadvantages of 1) maintaining the current registration process, 2) implementing self-registration where the hunter would register the animal online or by phone, or 3) implementing a tagging station online registration process [Appendix 5E].



The consensus of the Working Group was not to proceed with electronic tagging at this time. The group expressed concerns about non compliance and data reliability. They were also worried about adding another layer of change and responsibility to the tagging stations in light of the registration fee increase passed in the last legislative session and the dissension it has caused. [Registration fees for big game were increased from \$1 to \$5 with the additional \$4 earmarked to MDIFW to support two data entry positions]. A final concern expressed by Warden Chris Dyer was overburdening the Kennebec County court system. If the electronic server is located in Augusta, all tagging violations would potentially have to go through the Kennebec County court system.

5. Affirmation of 2000 Wild Turkey Working Group's Goal and Objectives

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to a review of the Wild Turkey Goal and Objectives for the period 2000-2015 developed by the 2000 Wild Turkey Working Group and adopted by the Department's Fish and Wildlife Advisory Council on May 1, 2001. They are as follows:

Goal: Increase the size and distribution of the Wild Turkey population within all suitable habitats in Maine.

The 2009 Wild Turkey Working Group affirmed this goal.

Objective 1: By 2010, increase the size and distribution of the Wild Turkey population within all suitable habitats in Maine via trap and transfer activities and habitat improvements.

The 2009 Wild Turkey Working Group affirmed this objective.

Objective 2: By 2010, provide unlimited spring hunting opportunity (everyone who applies for a permit receives a permit) as long as the Wild Turkey population can support it and 2001 hunt quality is maintained. (The working group defined quality hunting as hearing, seeing, working, and hopefully harvesting a turkey without interference from others.)

We achieved an unlimited spring hunt in 2005 when all applicants were given a permit. The 2009 Wild Turkey Working Group affirmed continuing to provide unlimited spring hunting opportunity as long as the turkey population can support it and spring hunt quality is maintained.

Objective 3: By 2002, develop a component to the Department's Nuisance Wildlife Policy that addresses Wild Turkeys.

A component to the Department's Nuisance Wildlife Policy that addresses wild turkeys is found in Title 12: Chapter 921; section 12401, pages 910-916 and in the Department's Administrative Policy Regarding Human/Wildlife Conflicts (Policy J1.6, last revised 7/31/2008).

Objective 4: By 2003, implement a limited fall hunting season in areas where the Wild Turkey population can support it, and without adversely affecting Objective 2.

The Department implemented Maine's first limited fall hunting season in 2002. The 2009 Wild Turkey Working Group affirmed continuing to provide a limited fall hunting season in areas where the population can support it and without adversely affecting spring hunt quality.

Objective 5: Develop a cooperative habitat improvement program between landowners, the Maine Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation, and the Department.

The 2009 Wild Turkey Working Group recommended modifying this objective to read as follows: Develop a cooperative turkey management program between landowners; the Maine Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation; sportsmen (i.e. SAM), landowner (i.e. SWOAM), and agricultural (Farm Bureau) groups; and the Department.

The group also proposed two additional recommendations that were not fully articulated into measurable objectives.

Objective 6: *Reduce landowner / turkey conflicts.*

Objective 7: *Evaluate all of the turkey seasons and bag limits and investigate options for additional hunting opportunity.*

The minutes of the third meeting and all of the documents provided to the working group are found in Appendix 5.

Following the meeting, MDIFW developed a draft report outlining the deliberations and recommendations of the Wild Turkey Working Group and forwarded the draft to Working Group members for review and the opportunity to provide any additional comments or thoughts. The Department requested that it receive these by December 9, 2009 but accepted all comments that came in, even after the deadline. Working Group comments are presented in Appendix 6.



WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations to the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife for Expanding Wild Turkey Hunting in Maine and Alleviating Farmers' Conflicts with Wild Turkeys.

Developed by the 2009 Wild Turkey Working Group



D. Toby Thompson / NWTF Photo

Recommended Strategies to Address Farmers' Conflicts with Turkeys

The Working Group unanimously makes the following recommendations to address farmers' conflicts with Wild Turkeys:

1. MDIFW should post *Living with Wildlife* on the Department's website informing landowners how to prevent and reduce problems caused by wild turkeys and where to turn for additional assistance if needed.
2. MDIFW and the Maine chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation should:
 - a. develop extension materials addressing how farmers can respond to conflicts with wild turkeys and
 - b. disseminate these through agricultural and landowner groups, publications, and trade shows (i.e., Maine Farm Bureau, Maine Organic Farmers and Growers Association, commodity groups, Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine, etc.).

3. As part of its efforts to respond to landowner / wild turkey conflicts and to augment the pool of Animal Damage Control agents currently registered in its ADC program, MDIFW should enroll qualified members of the Maine Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation and other sportsmen's groups, and other interested individuals, as Animal Damage Control agents, who will provide their services at no charge to the landowner. Response to landowner / wild turkey conflicts will follow the stepped-down approach (prevention and extension, regulation, non-lethal control, and lethal control) described in the Department's *Administrative Policy Regarding Human/Wildlife Conflicts (Policy J1.6, last revised 7/31/2008)*.

To be successful, participants must commit to:

- a. participate in the program and be available to farmers;
 - b. cooperate and coordinate with Department biologists and game wardens; and
 - c. comply with standards and protocols outlined in the Department's ADC policy.
4. MDIFW and the Maine Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation should pursue funding from the National Wild Turkey Federation's Superfund, and other sources, to purchase and maintain a supply of materials (fencing, mylar tape, cracker shells, coyote decoys, etc.) necessary for appropriate and timely response to landowner / wild turkey conflicts.
 5. Availability of volunteers [Maine Chapter NWTF members and other sportsmen's groups and interested individuals] to address issues a landowner may have will depend on the location and time of the complaint. MDIFW, the Maine Chapter NWTF, and other interested parties should develop a process that assures farmers that their complaints will be addressed as promptly as possible. [See 3 above.]
 6. MDIFW should:
 - a. emphasize, within the Department, the value and utility of wild turkey trapping and relocation;
 - b. continue its current wild turkey trapping and relocation efforts; and
 - c. publicize wild turkey release sites on the Department's website.

[Efforts beyond current levels will require additional staff and funding.]

7. MDIFW, with assistance from other interested stakeholders including, but not limited to the Maine Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation, Sportsman's Alliance of Maine, Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine, and the Maine Farm Bureau should develop and implement a cooperative turkey management program.

The Working Group discussed using recreational wild turkey hunting as a means to reduce the turkey population and, as a result, reduce the number of nuisance wild turkey complaints. They agreed that there are more direct and focused ways to address wild turkey conflicts rather than recreational hunting, particularly if that hunting might jeopardize the quality of Maine's spring wild turkey hunt and diminish hunter satisfaction.

Recommendations to Expand Wild Turkey Hunting Opportunity in Maine

Maine's spring hunt is its premier hunt; preserving its quality is of utmost importance.

The general wild turkey hunting recommendations are intended to protect and enhance spring gobbler hunting opportunities and, as appropriate, provide additional recreational hunting by allowing limited fall hunting. The emphasis is on quality spring gobbler hunting. Expanded fall hunting should be carefully considered because fall seasons, where the harvest of hens is legal, may negatively influence the population's growth rate more than spring hunting seasons.

The Working Group unanimously makes the following recommendations concerning wild turkey hunting opportunities in Maine.

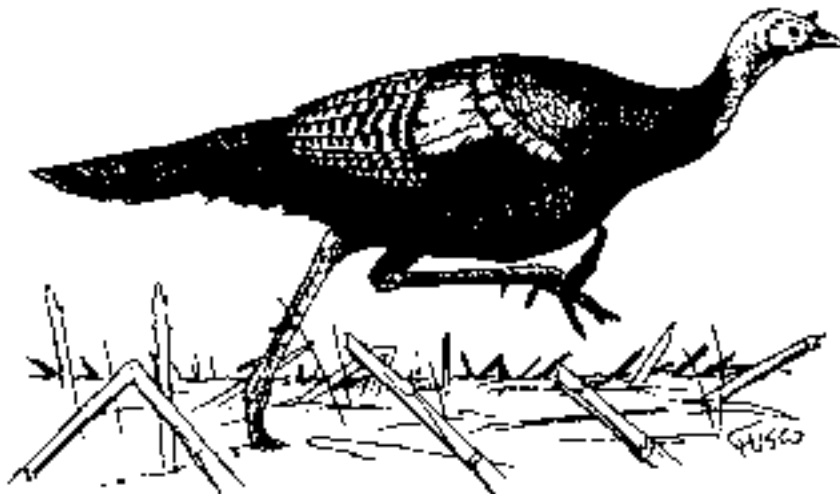
1. MDIFW should continue to provide unlimited spring hunting opportunity, as long as the turkey population can support it and spring hunt quality is maintained. A quality hunt means more than harvesting a bird; it also includes seeing, hearing, and working a bird without interference from others. Whether or not hunt quality is maintained is measured by the interference information collected with the Department's Spring Wild Turkey Hunter Questionnaire.
2. MDIFW should continue to evaluate population, harvest, and survey data to investigate providing additional hunting opportunity during the fall season, as long as the population is not negatively affected and spring hunt quality is maintained.
3. Once a major change is made to a season framework (increasing bag limits, providing additional weaponry opportunity), MDIFW should not make an additional change for a period of 3 years. This timeframe is intended to allow the Department to review and evaluate harvest and survey trend data to assess the effect of the change on the population or the quality of the hunt.
4. MDIFW should structure the spring wild turkey season as follows.
 - Maintain the current spring season opening (around May 1)
 - Season length - 5 weeks, no split seasons.
 - Daily closure – noon time.
5. MDIFW should structure the fall wild turkey season as follows.
 - Maintain the current (2009) fall season structure; only consider season changes after 2013.
 - Investigate the opportunity to expand the fall shotgun season beginning no earlier than 2013. If fall shotgun opportunity is expanded, MDIFW should review the metrics it uses for determining fall seasons.
6. MDIFW should investigate the use of crossbows beginning with the 2013 turkey seasons. [Using crossbows to hunt wild turkey would require legislation.]

7. MDIFW and the Maine Chapter NWTF should promote opportunities to attract more people to the sport of wild turkey hunting, especially among nonresidents. [Resident interest seems to have stabilized despite expanded seasons, greater areas open to hunting, increased bag limits, and reasonable permit fees.] [Efforts beyond current levels would require additional staff and funding.]

Recommendation Concerning Electronic Registration of Wild Turkeys

The consensus of the Working Group was not to proceed with electronic tagging for the following reasons:

- concerns about non-compliance and data reliability;
- apprehension about adding another layer of change and responsibility to the tagging stations in light of the big game registration fee increase passed in the last legislative session and the dissension it has caused¹; and
- concerns expressed by Warden Service about overburdening the Kennebec County Court system. If the electronic server is located in Augusta, all tagging violations would potentially have to go through the Kennebec County court system. [This will require Warden Service consultation with the Attorneys General Office and with district attorneys in Maine's 16 counties.]



¹ Registration fees for big game were increased from \$1 to \$5 with the additional \$4 earmarked to MDIFW to support two data entry positions.

L.D. 256 -- Resolve, To Direct the
Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
to Explore Opportunities and Issues
Surrounding Wild Turkey Hunting

Appendices

Appendix 1

Wild Turkey Management Planning Documents

- Appendix 1A Wild Turkey Assessment
- Appendix 1B 2000 Wild Turkey Working Group Membership List
- Appendix 1C Wild Turkey Management Issues and Concerns
- Appendix 1D Wild Turkey Management Goal and Objectives 2000-2015
- Appendix 1E Feasibility Statements for Wild Turkey Goal and Objectives
- Appendix 1F Problems and Strategies for Wild Turkey Management in Maine
- Appendix 1G Wild Turkey Management System

Appendix 1A

Wild Turkey Assessment

1985 Version By:
Philip Bozenhard

2000 Update By:
R. Bradford Allen

Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
Wildlife Division
Wildlife Resource Assessment Section
650 State Street
Bangor, Maine 04401

(View a copy of the assessment at
<http://www.maine.gov/ifw/wildlife/species/plans/birds/wildturkey/speciesassessment.pdf>)

Appendix 1B

2000 Wild Turkey Working Group

Invited Participants

| Name | Affiliation |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|
| Jeff Bellmore* | Maine Professional Guides Association |
| Debra Davidson* | Defenders of Wildlife |
| Bud Doughty* | National Wild Turkey Federation |
| Bob Humphrey* | Outdoors Writer and Turkey Hunter |
| Merle Leask* | Sportsman's Alliance of Maine |
| Jeffrey Romano | Small Woodlot Owners Association |
| David Simmons* | Dairy Farmer |
| Sally Stockwell | Maine Audubon Society |
| Jim Wescott * | National Wild Turkey Federation |

* Active participants

Appendix 1C

Wild Turkey Management Issues and Concerns

Raised by the Wild Turkey Working Group, April 10, 2000

Population

- Need to annually monitor population status, especially if the Department implements a fall season.

Habitat

- Identify suitable habitat and expand the population into all suitable habitat.
- Habitat improvement, increasing habitat suitability.

Hunting Opportunities

- Hunter interference - hunter questionnaire needs a better measure of interference and its effect on a quality turkey hunting experience (consult with Vermont)
- Hunter concentrations and landowner conflicts
- Increasing hunting opportunity.
- Eliminate the spring season lottery (or set the level of permits such that everyone who applies would receive one) while ensuring a sustained yield and minimizing interference.
- Concerns expressed by some landowners that they are feeding turkeys but never receive a permit to hunt them.
- Consider implementing a fall season (bow, firearm).
- Illegal hen harvest.
- Expand turkey hunter education (safety, hunter interference, quality hunting experience, landowner relations, etc.)

Nuisance Complaints

- Strawberries, other crops, apple orchards, manure piles, silage, hay bales.
- Provide greater assistance to landowners to resolve nuisance complaints

Pen Reared Birds

- Continue to monitor the presence of pen-reared birds and eliminate them when located.

Appendix 1D

Wild Turkey Management Goal and Objectives 2000-2015

*Adopted by MDIFW Commissioner and Advisory Council
May 1, 2001*

Goal

Increase the size and distribution of the Wild Turkey population within all suitable habitats in Maine.

- Objective 1: By 2010, increase the size and distribution of the Wild Turkey population within all suitable habitats in Maine via trap and transfer activities and habitat improvements.
- Objective 2: By 2010, provide unlimited spring hunting opportunity (everyone who applies for a permit receives a permit) as long as the Wild Turkey population can support it and 2001 hunt quality is maintained. *(The working group defined quality hunting as hearing, seeing, working, and hopefully harvesting a turkey without interference from others.)*
- Objective 3: By 2002, develop a component to the Department's Nuisance Wildlife Policy that addresses Wild Turkeys.
- Objective 4: By 2003, implement a limited fall hunting season in areas where the Wild Turkey population can support it, and without adversely affecting Objective 2.
- Objective 5: Develop a cooperative habitat improvement program between landowners, the Maine Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation, and the Department.

Appendix 1E

Feasibility Statements for Wild Turkey Goal and Objectives 2000-2015

Prepared by: Andrew Weik
April 2001

Goal: Increase the size and distribution of the Wild Turkey population within all suitable habitats in Maine.

Objective 1: By 2010, increase the size and distribution of the Wild Turkey population within all suitable habitats in Maine via trap and transfer activities and habitat improvements.

Desirability: An increase in the Wild Turkey population within all suitable Wild Turkey habitats in Maine would be desirable to both consumptive and non-consumptive users of the Wild Turkey resource.

Feasibility: Wild Turkey populations are characterized by both short term and long term fluctuations related to unpredictable variation in nesting success and poult survival and, in northern ranges, winter mortality. Other limiting factors include predation, loss of habitat, and hunter harvest. With this being said, it remains feasible to improve Wild Turkey populations and distribution with an aggressive trap and transfer program and through habitat improvements. Given existing Department staff time limitations, it is feasible to assume that, on average, two new sites per winter in suitable habitat could be stocked. Wild Turkey population expansion could be expedited with additional resources and staff.

Capability of Habitat: The availability of Wild Turkey habitat currently without turkeys varies considerably throughout the state. Wildlife Management Districts (WMDs) 1-11, 14, 19, and 28-30 are considered to have little or no potential Wild Turkey habitat due to low amounts of agriculture, low acreage's of mast-producing trees, and/or high annual snow depths. WMDs 12, 13, and portions of 17, 18 and 27 have potential Wild Turkey habitat based on association with favorable agricultural practices. Habitat in these WMDs is considered the best potential for increasing turkey populations beyond current populations through both natural population expansion and trap and transfer activities.

Possible Consequences: An increase in the Wild Turkey population in some areas will likely result in an increase in nuisance complaints and potential for some damage to agricultural crops.

Objective 2: By 2010, provide unlimited spring hunting opportunity (everyone who applies for a permit receives a permit) as long as the Wild Turkey population can support it and 2001 hunt quality is maintained. (The working group defined quality hunting as hearing, seeing, working, and hopefully harvesting a turkey without interference from others.)

Desirability: Because approximately 15,000 individuals applied for turkey hunting permit in 2000 and only 4,000 were available, it is logical to assume that unlimited entry into the spring hunt would be desirable to at least the hunting public. However, we also receive comments that suggest that the number of permits issued remain conservative to preserve the quality of the hunt.

Feasibility: Only bearded turkeys can legally be taken during the spring hunting season, thus most biologists agree that, when regulated properly, spring hunting is not detrimental to Wild Turkey populations. Therefore, biologically it is feasible to assume that more spring hunting opportunity and additional harvests are allowable. Further, while most hunters appear satisfied with current Wild Turkey hunting regulations (to date, the Department has no measure of this), an issue that wildlife managers face is how to best balance people's desire to hunt or view Wild Turkeys and maintain high quality hunting experiences and good landowner relations. Additional efforts in hunter education and landowner relations will be necessary before unlimited hunting opportunity is realized. Expanded hunting areas and additional hunters will create an added burden on Department staff during the administration of the annual hunt.

Capability of Habitat: Currently an estimated 5,300 square miles of habitat in Maine support Wild Turkeys, enough habitat to support this objective.

Possible Consequences: Unlimited spring hunting opportunity raises the issue of how to balance the hunting public's desire to hunt turkeys with the desire to maintain a high quality hunting experience. Based on data received in 2000, nearly 15,000 individuals desire to hunt turkeys in Maine. This increase in hunter numbers may result in more frequent instances of hunter interference, hunter dissatisfaction, increased potential for illegal harvest of hens, increased potential for hunting accidents, and landowner conflicts, including land posting. Expanded hunting areas and an increase in hunters will create an additional burden on Department staff during the administration of the annual hunt.

Objective 3: By 2002, develop a component to the Department's Nuisance Wildlife Policy that addresses Wild Turkeys.

Desirability and Feasibility: The development of nuisance policy statements and guidelines for Wild Turkeys, within the framework of the Department's Administrative Policy Regarding Nuisance Wildlife, is both feasible and desirable.

Capability of Habitat: Not applicable.

Possible Consequences: The development of nuisance policy statements and guidelines for Wild Turkeys, within the framework of the Department's Administrative Policy Regarding Nuisance Wildlife would facilitate Department response regarding nuisance turkey complaints.

Objective 4: By 2003, implement a limited fall hunting season in areas where the Wild Turkey population can support it, and without adversely affecting Objective 2.

Desirability: The original (1985) Wild Turkey Assessment and Management System included a harvest objective describing a fall archery hunt "as Wild Turkey populations expanded and demand increased". Wild Turkey populations have expanded and demand has increased, particularly in the late 1990s. The Department has been requested to consider a fall either-sex

archery hunt by the State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation. Increased Wild Turkey hunting opportunity may be desirable as limited fall hunts, where hens could legally be taken in areas where the Wild Turkey population can support it, and where it would most likely have little effect on the overall Wild Turkey population.

Feasibility: A limited fall, either-sex hunting season is feasible in areas where the Wild Turkey population can support it. Some northeastern states regulate fall hunter numbers with a permit system and others do not. Some states limit the fall harvest by limiting hunters to archery gear. More information as to what type of fall hunting opportunity (limited number of permits, restrictions in gear, "where population can support it", etc.) is needed to fully address this feasibility issue.

Capability of Habitat: The Wild Turkey population in the highest quality Wild Turkey habitat in Maine, where current populations are the highest and nuisance complaints are most frequent, can likely support additional hunting mortality in the fall.

Possible Consequences: Some criticism of expanded use-opportunity may result from concerns of excessive hunting pressure and potential for landowner conflicts in the fall.

Objective 5: Develop a cooperative habitat improvement program between landowners, the Maine Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, and the Department.

Desirability and Feasibility: A habitat improvement program between landowners, the Maine Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, {the National Wild Turkey Federation - Habitat Enhancement Land Program}, and the Department is both feasible and desirable. Planting appropriate species will improve habitat not only for Wild Turkeys but many other wildlife species as well. Currently, staffing levels and lack of funds are an impediment to additional work in this area.

Capability of Habitat: Habitat conditions for Wild Turkeys can be enhanced through a variety of herbaceous, shrub, and tree planting and land management activities (i.e., managing opening and spring seeps for Wild Turkeys).

Possible Consequences: Department staff time for additional responsibilities in this area is limited.

Appendix 1F

Problems and Strategies for Wild Turkey Management in Maine

*Prepared by: Andrew Weik
April 2001*

Problem 1: Wild Turkey populations may not naturally spread into all unoccupied suitable habitat in Maine.

Strategy 1.1: Improve the Department's Wild Turkey monitoring system and relocation activities in order to locate birds for capture and relocate them into unoccupied suitable habitat.

Strategy 1.2: Increase capture effort in order to move Wild Turkeys into remaining suitable habitat. Wild Turkey population expansion can be expedited with additional resources and staff time.

Problem 2: Habitats in Maine may not have the capacity to support a Wild Turkey population large enough to allow unlimited spring hunting opportunity of sufficient quality and safety.

Strategy 2.1: Identify maximum allowable harvest rate and hunter numbers that will maintain desired population demographics and monitor harvest rates.

Strategy 2.2: Adjust the numbers of hunters accordingly with the permit system.

Problem 3: There is a lack of accurate information on Wild Turkey populations, annual survival, recruitment, and distribution in Maine.

Strategy 3.1: The Department needs to obtain additional sources of funding and/or redistribute existing personnel time to acquire information on Wild Turkey populations, annual survival, recruitment, and distribution in Maine.

Strategy 3.2: Develop and implement a system to monitor Wild Turkey populations on a Wildlife Management District basis. These data are required before a fall hunting season can be implemented.

Problem 4: An increase in the Wild Turkey population in some areas will likely result in an increase in nuisance complaints and potential for damage to agricultural crops.

Strategy 4.1: Develop a component of the Department's Nuisance Wildlife Policy that addresses Wild Turkeys.

Strategy 4.2: Develop a protocol to monitor nuisance complaints.

Strategy 4.3: Conduct research to assess magnitude of agricultural depredation and develop and identify practices to mitigate problems.

Strategy 4.4: Develop a Landowner Relations Program to work with landowners to mitigate problems associated with nuisance Wild Turkeys and crop depredation.

Strategy 4.5: Increase public awareness of the Wild Turkey program for both consumptive and non-consumptive users.

Problem 5: An increase in hunter numbers will likely result in more frequent instances of hunter interference, leading to hunter dissatisfaction, increased potential for hunting accidents, conflicts with landowners, potential for illegal harvest of hens, and an additional burden on Department staff.

Strategy 5.1: Significantly expand the turkey hunter education program and emphasize safety, turkey hunting ethics, and landowner relations.

Strategy 5.2: Measure hunter interference and satisfaction by adding pertinent questions to annual Turkey Hunter Questionnaire.

Strategy 5.3: Increase enforcement effort during the hunting season.

Appendix 1G

Wild Turkey Management System and Database

December 13, 2002

Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
Wildlife Division – Bird Group
Wildlife Resource Assessment Section
650 State Street
Bangor, Maine 04401

(View a copy of the management system at
<http://www.maine.gov/ifw/wildlife/species/plans/birds/wildturkey/managementsystem.pdf>)

Appendix 2

Legislative Resolve

- Appendix 2A LD 256, Item 1: Resolve, Directing the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife To Recommend Measures To Increase the Number of Turkeys Taken by Hunters"
- Appendix 2B LD 256, Item 2: Resolve, To Direct the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife To Explore Opportunities and Issues Surrounding Wild Turkey Hunting
- Appendix 2C Commissioner Martin's Letter Inviting Stakeholder Representatives to Participate in a Wild Turkey Working Group
- Appendix 2D Wild Turkey Working Group Member List

Appendix 2A

LD 256, Item 1

Resolve, Directing the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife To Recommend Measures To Increase the Number of Turkeys Taken by Hunters

Sec. 1 Turkeys taken by hunters. Resolved: That the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife shall implement measures to increase the number of turkeys of either sex that may be taken by hunters. The department shall designate from which wildlife management areas the turkeys may be taken. The department shall submit a report with its recommendations to the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife by December 2, 2009; and be it further

Sec. 2 Rules. Resolved: That the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife shall establish rules to relieve the economic losses of farms and other businesses affected by the overpopulation of wild turkeys. Rules adopted pursuant to this section are routine technical rules as defined in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

Summary

This resolve directs the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to implement measures to increase the number of turkeys that may be taken by hunters. The department shall designate from which wildlife management areas the turkeys may be taken. The department shall submit a report to the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife by December 2, 2009. The department shall also establish rules to relieve the economic losses of farms and other businesses affected by the overpopulation of wild turkeys.

Appendix 2B

LD 256, Item 2

Amend the resolve by striking out the title and substituting the following:

Resolve, To Direct the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife To Explore Opportunities and Issues Surrounding Wild Turkey Hunting

Amend the resolve by striking out everything after the title and before the summary and inserting the following:

'Sec. 1 Study opportunities and issues regarding wild turkeys. Resolved: That the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife shall work with interested parties to explore the opportunities and issues surrounding the wild turkey hunt in the State and the problem of nuisance wild turkeys in farming areas, including, but not limited to, electronic tagging or registration, telephone registration and expanded hunting opportunities to reduce the agricultural damage caused by wild turkeys; and be it further

Sec. 2 Report. Resolved: That the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife shall report the findings and recommendations based on the study in section 1 to the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife by January 5, 2010. The Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife may submit legislation to the Second Regular Session of the 124th Legislature regarding matters presented in that report.'

Summary

This amendment replaces the resolve and directs the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to work with interested parties to explore the opportunities and issues surrounding the wild turkey hunt and the problem of nuisance turkeys in farming areas and to report the findings and recommendations to the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife by January 5, 2010.

Appendix 2C

**Commissioner Martin's Letter Inviting Stakeholder Representatives to
Participate in a Wild Turkey Working Group**



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF
INLAND FISHERIES & WILDLIFE
284 STATE STREET
41 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0041

JOHN ELIAS BALDACCI
GOVERNOR

ROLAND D. MARTIN
COMMISSIONER

July 7, 2009

NAME
AFFILIATION
ADDRESS 1
ADDRESS 2

Dear:

During the 124th Regular Session of the Maine legislature, the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife passed an amended version of LD 256 to read "*Resolve, To Direct the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to Explore Opportunities and Issues Surrounding Wild Turkey Hunting.*" Specifically LD 256 directs the following:

Sec. 1 Study opportunities and issues regarding wild turkeys. Resolved: That the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife shall work with interested parties to explore the opportunities and issues surrounding the wild turkey hunt in the State and the problem of nuisance wild turkeys in farming areas, including, but not limited to, electronic tagging or registration, telephone registration and expanded hunting opportunities to reduce the agricultural damage caused by wild turkeys; and be it further

Sec. 2 Report. Resolved: That the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife shall report the findings and recommendations based on the study in section 1 to the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife by January 5, 2010. The Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife may submit legislation to the Second Regular Session of the 124th Legislature regarding matters presented in that report.

I would like to invite you, or a representative of YOUR ORGANIZATION, to participate on a Wild Turkey Working Group to explore the opportunities and issues regarding wild turkeys in Maine and develop recommendations as set forth in the resolve.

Our first meeting will occur on **Wednesday, August 5, 2009** from 10:00 am-2:00 pm (lunch will be provided) in the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife's second floor conference room, 284 State Street, Augusta. I know summers are a difficult time for meetings with vacation plans and field seasons, but your input is important to this process, and I hope you can take time out from your busy schedule to participate. At this point, we anticipate needing 2-3 meetings, but that will depend on the working group's progress. The timing and location of future meetings will be at the discretion of the group.

In preparation for the first meeting, please find enclosed a number of background materials for you to review and bring to the first meeting. A meeting agenda will follow in a couple of weeks.

VOICE: (207) 287-8000



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FAX: (207) 287-8094

Wild Turkey Working Group Invitation Letter
July 7, 2009
Page 2

- *Wild Turkey Assessment* –prepared by Philip Bozenhard in 1985 and updated by R. Bradford Allen, January 2000
- *Wild Turkey Management Issues and Concerns* raised by the 2000 Wild Turkey Working Group
- *Wild Turkey Management Goals and Objectives 2000-2015* developed by the 2000 Wild Turkey Working Group and adopted by the MDIFW Commissioner and Fish and Wildlife Advisory Council in May 2001
- *Feasibility Statements for the Wild Turkey Goals and Objectives* prepared by Andrew Weik, April 2001
- *Problems and Strategies for Wild Turkey Management in Maine* prepared by Andrew Weik, April 2001

Attached is a list of individuals and groups invited to participate. I have asked Sandy Ritchie, Habitat Conservation and Special Projects Biologist, to facilitate the working group meetings and Mark Ostermann to provide technical assistance during the electronic tagging discussions. **Please contact Sandy at sandy.ritchie@maine.gov or 287-5265 to let her know if you or a designee will be available to participate.**

Thank you in advance for your interest in turkey management in Maine.

Sincerely,

Paul Jacques
Deputy Commissioner

pc: Ken Elowe, Director Bureau of Resource Management
Mark Stadler, Director, Wildlife Division
Sandy Ritchie, Wildlife Biologist, Habitat Conservation and Special Projects
Brad Allen, Bird Group Leader
Kelsey Sullivan, Wildlife Biologist, Bird Group
Mark Caron, Regional Wildlife Biologist, Region F
Major Gregg Sanborn, Maine Warden Service

Appendix 2D

Wild Turkey Working Group Members

| Name | Mailing Address | Phone | Email | Affiliation |
|-----------------|---|--|--|--|
| Mike Dann | P.O. Box 836, 153 Hospital Street, Augusta, ME 04332-0836 | 207-626-0005 | mike@swoam.org | Small Woodland Owners of Maine |
| George Smith | 205 Church Hill Road, Augusta, ME 04330 | 207-622-5503 (W) | george@samcef.org | Sportsman's Alliance of Maine |
| Doug Little | 405 Moores Road, Cornwallville, NY 12418 | 518-239-4427 (W) 518-817-1161 (Cell) | dlittle@nwtf.net | National Wild Turkey Federation Regional Biologist (NY & New England) |
| Jon Olson | 4 Gabriel Drive, Suite 1, Augusta, ME 04330 | 207-622-4111 | jolson@mainefarmbureau.com | Maine Farm Bureau |
| Patricia Kontur | 5784 York Village, Suite 52, Orono, ME 04469-5784 | 207-581-1475 | pkontu71@maine.edu | Maine Wild Blueberry Commission |
| Brian Smith | P.O. Box 444, East Machias, ME 04630 | 207-255-4508 | bowhunter@mgemaine.com | NWTF, State President |
| Jeff Bellmore | 1384 Atlantic Highway, Warren, ME 04864 | 207-273-3818 | grtrips@adelphia.net | Maine Professional Guides Association |
| Frank Dunbar | 409 Milvale Road, Bucksport, ME 04416 | 207-469-1054 (W) 207-469-2667 (H) | Robertsnorland@verizon.net | Fish and Wildlife Advisory Council |
| Brad Allen | MDIFW, 650 State Street, Bangor, ME 04401 | 207-941-4469 | brad.allen@maine.gov | Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife |
| Kelsey Sullivan | MDIFW, 650 State Street, Bangor, ME 04401 | 207-941-4474 | kelsey.m.sullivan@maine.gov | Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife |
| Sally Stockwell | 20 Gilsland Farm Road, Falmouth, ME 04105-6009 | 207-781-6180 | sstockwell@maineaudubon.org | Maine Audubon |
| Jerome Richard | P.O. Box 5026, Augusta, ME 04332 | 207-426-2082 (H) 207-314-2885 (Cell) | jerome.richard@sappi.com | Maine Bowhunter's Association |
| Kirk Shively | USDA-APHIS, 81 Leighton Road, Suite 12, Augusta, ME 04330 | 207-622-8263 | kirk.i.shively@aphis.usda.gov | USDA APHIS |

Wild Turkey Working Group Members

| Name | Mailing Address | Phone | Email | Affiliation |
|----------------|---|------------------|--|---|
| Jim Wescott | 15 Down Home Road, Windham, ME 04062 | 207-892-6230 (H) | james.a.wescott@usps.gov | Turkey Hunter |
| Chris Dyer | P.O. Box 27, Morrill, ME 04952 | 207-557-0611 | chris.dyer@maine.gov | Maine Warden Service |
| Galen Larrabee | | | gdlarab@uninets.net | Dairy Farming |
| Bob Humphrey | 727 Poland Range Road, Pownal, ME 04069 | 207-688-4966 | bhhunt@maine.rr.com | Turkey Hunter / Outdoor Writer |
| Mark Caron | MDIFW, 73 Cobb Road, Enfield, ME 04493 | 207-732-4132 | mark.caron@maine.gov | Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife |
| Sandy Ritchie | 41 SHS, 284 State Street, Augusta, ME 04333 | 207-287-5265 | sandy.ritchie@maine.gov | MDIFW - Facilitator |
| Mark Ostermann | 41 SHS, 284 State Street, Augusta, ME 04333 | 207-287-5255 | mark.ostermann@maine.gov | MDIFW - Data Management |

Appendix 3

Meeting #1 – August 5, 2009

- Appendix 3A Summary of Meeting #1
- Appendix 3B Strategic Planning for Wildlife: The Maine Experience
- Appendix 3C Status of Wild Turkeys in Maine, a powerpoint presentation by Kelsey Sullivan
- Appendix 3D MDIFW's Administrative Policy Regarding Human / Wildlife Conflicts

Appendix 3A

Wild Turkey Working Group

Meeting #1

August 5, 2009

MDIFW Headquarters, Augusta

10:00 am – 2:00 pm

| | | | |
|---------------------|--------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Facilitator: | Mark Stadler | Meeting Summary: | Stadler, Allen, Sullivan |
|---------------------|--------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|

Next Meeting: August 25, 2009 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. , MDIFW Bangor office

Participants:

Working Group Members: [bold indicates present at meeting]

Jeff Bellmore, Maine Professional Guides Association; **Mike Dann**, Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine; **Frank Dunbar**, Fish and Wildlife Advisory Council; **Bob Humphrey**, Turkey Hunter / Outdoor Writer; **Doug Little**, National Wild Turkey Federation; **Jon Olson**, Maine Farm Bureau; **Jerome Richard**, Maine Bowhunter's Association; **Kirk Shively**, USDA APHIS; **Brian Smith**; state president, National Wild Turkey Federation; George Smith, Sportsman's Alliance of Maine; Sally Stockwell, Maine Audubon; **Jim Wescott**, Turkey Hunter;

MDIFW:

Brad Allen, Bird Group Leader; **Mark Caron**, Regional Wildlife Biologist; Chris Dyer, Maine Warden Service; Mark Ostermann, Data Management; Sandy Ritchie, Habitat Conservation and Special Projects; **Mark Stadler**, Director, Wildlife Division; **Kelsey Sullivan**, Bird Biologist

Guests:

Patricia Kontur, Wild Blueberry Commission; **Galen Larrabee**, Maine Dairy Industry

Action Items:

Agenda – Summary of Meeting Highlights

The intent of this summary is to capture meeting highlights not to provide a detailed transcript.

1. Welcome / Introductions / Review Agenda – Mark welcomed members of the Wild Turkey Working Group (Working Group) and thanked them for participating. Working Group members, Department staff, and guests introduced themselves.

Mark indicated that with the Working Group's support he would be facilitating meetings and Brad Allen and Kelsey Sullivan would provide technical assistance. The group agreed with this process.

Mark asked "Is the group a good cross section of interested parties?" YES, although the warden Service representative had a prior commitment.

2. Ground Rules – Mark led the group in developing the following ground rules:

- One conversation at a time / be as concise as possible
- Maximize participation / respect others' perspectives / seek to address all perspectives
- Decision making by consensus
- All have the responsibility to move the process forward

3. Why Are You Here / Background on L.D. 256, Resolve, To Direct the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to Explore Opportunities and Issues Surrounding Wild Turkey Hunting

Mark provided a summary of L.D. 256. The text of the Resolve as amended is:

“Resolve, To Direct the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to Explore Opportunities and Issues Surrounding Wild Turkey Hunting”

Sec. 1 Study opportunities and issues regarding wild turkeys. Resolved: That the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife shall work with interested parties to explore the opportunities and issues surrounding the wild turkey hunt in the State and the problem of nuisance wild turkeys in farming areas, including, but not limited to, electronic tagging or registration, telephone registration and expanded hunting opportunities to reduce the agricultural damage caused by wild turkeys; and be it further

Sec. 2 Report. Resolved: That the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife shall report the findings and recommendations based on the study in section 1 to the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife by January 5, 2010. The Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife may submit legislation to the Second Regular Session of the 124th Legislature regarding matters presented in that report.

4. What is your charge?

Mark discussed the requirements of the L.D. 256. He indicated that they appeared to revolve around three broad areas, which are:

A.] Wild Turkey Hunting in Maine:

Issues:

Opportunities:

B.1.] The Problem of Nuisance Wild Turkeys in Farming Areas: Identification of the problem.

Once we have identified and described the problem, then consider the...

B.2.] Expanded Hunting Opportunities to Reduce the Agricultural Damage Caused by Wild Turkeys

C.] Electronic Tagging / Registration; Telephone Registration

The working group concurred with this categorization. It decided to begin its deliberations by undertaking a review and discussion of B.2.] The Problem of Nuisance Wild Turkeys in Farming Areas: Identification of the problem.

5. Species Planning, the Status of Wild Turkeys in Maine, and Animal Damage Control

Mark described our “Reason for Being Here”, and indicated that interested parties are (1) passionate

about turkeys, (2) oft-discussed at Fish and Wildlife Committee Meetings, and (3) LD 256 Resolve directing the Commissioner to explore opportunities and issues around wild turkeys, prepare recommendations and report back to the Legislature in January, 2010.

Mark gave an overview of the Species Planning Process; Assessment, Goals and Objectives for 15 year planning period, Species Management Systems. Should the current Management System be tweaked or overhauled?

Group had a brief discussion of harvests and population status and mentioned that we also have a week long season for handicapped individuals. Mr. Galen Larrabee indicated that "education goes a long way and hunters have become educated too, and that a little courtesy helps as well"

Mark indicated that he would provide the Nuisance Wildlife Policy to the Working Group and that we would discuss that a bit later in today's meeting.

Mark reiterated the point that how the fall hunt affects the quality of the spring hunt is an important point to remember and will be critical to discussions. Doug Little (NWTF) indicated that the use of spring harvest data to increase or reduce fall hunting opportunity (as Maine does) is a widely accepted practice other states. He can think of instances where some states are considering reducing fall hunting opportunity because of reduced spring hunt quality.

The question was asked of farmers in general "How long have the birds bothered them"? Mr. Larrabee indicated that it really depends on the winter (snow conditions). If you get one storm of 18 inches, the come around quickly. If snows are intermittent, the birds generally pick around in the woods"

Kelsey Sullivan provided a presentation on the Status of Wild Turkeys in Maine and emphasized where we are in terms of populations status, and goals and objectives, and harvests. Reiteration of why we are here...the Legislative Resolve: (1) Explore hunting issues and opportunities (2) Nuisance birds in farming areas (identify the problems) (3) Electronic tagging and registration of wild turkeys

Mark described MDIFW ADC policy and nuisance issues (specific to wild turkeys)

The following is an annotation of points of discussion:

- Mark envisions that trap and transfer activities will be diminished in the future due to mileage restrictions and budget constraints.
- Lethal removal. Depredation permit and landowner has the right to kill without a permit but needs to notify a warden of the take.
- Question was asked: "Who is in charge of ADC?" Mark indicated that Buster Carter, John Pratt, and he share this task.
- Bob Humphrey asked "Why cut back on trap and transfer when it is an excellent way to alleviate a nuisance situation? Are we that close to all suitable habitat filled with birds?" Some discussion ensued that we still have holes in unoccupied habitat, esp. after a series of bad winters.
- Bob Humphrey made a comment that it would be wise to have the public remove (lethally) the nuisance, not the landowner. Perhaps a certified bow hunter, similar to a depredation-type hunt.
- When birds are relocated, do landowners know about this? Discussion involving Aroostook agricultural community. Seek permission first.

6. The Problem of Nuisance Wild Turkeys in Farming Areas: Identification of the problem.

A.] Dairy

Stadler Notes

Galen Larrabee, representing the Maine dairy industry, said that problems with turkeys began in the late 1990s. He has had as many as 160 turkeys living on his farm all winter. Mr. Larrabee provided the working group with his assessment of the affect of turkeys on his dairy operation. He also noted that farmers using bunkers face different problems that those using wrapped bales. Below is a summary of the problems he identified; in addition, he and other members of the working group provided possible solutions and other information regarding the problem statements.

| Problem | Possible Solution(s) / Comments |
|--|--|
| Dairy farmers don't receive benefits from economic aspects of turkey; but must absorb costs associated w/ nuisance conflicts | 1) Education: farmer / public / IFW 2) IFW allowing farmers to address problems 3) IFW outreach to dairy farmers w/ problems |
| Turkeys at dairy farms for food; when wild food gets scarce, number of groups come to the farm; as long as can scavenge in woods not a problem; | 1) lug excess food out back for turkeys to peck thru; 2) Leave several rows of silage corn; 3) put out some silage corn out away from operations |
| Don't like turkeys in corn or haylege bunks; eat a lot; | Keep turkeys out of feed bunkers; Cracker shells, depredation permit / lethal control |
| Turkey feces in feed: affect on palatability and milk productivity? May reduce palatability of feed. Turkey feces the highest concern in the cattle feed | Turkey defecation in silage / barnyard; several hundred samples, no instance of Salmonella. USDA-WS, ME will be checking for Campylobacter re: abortion in cattle / sheep. Study re: starling feces in feed and declining milk production. |
| Destruction of wrapped bales; food spoiled; serious problem | Better storage sites for wrapped bales away from depredation, damage. Are turkeys the cause of damage to AG bags? Some studies show deer and raccoon after dark, but turkey blamed because seen out during the day. Must ID source to effectively prevent. Another showed coyotes after mice. NWTF conduct AG bag study in ME? |

Mr. Larrabee finished by stating that overall things are working better regarding cooperation between

MDIFW and dairy farmers to prevent and resolver problems with wild turkey, but that there are still some problems.

Allen Notes

Issues (Discussion led by Mr. Galen Larrabee):

- Education is the key! (Farmer, Public, and MDIFW)
- Turkeys scavenge for food, problems began in the late 1990s when 150-160 lived on his farm
- He doesn't get too excited now, has worked very successfully with MDIFW, and has been given permits to take a few, only real problems during deep snow events.
- Doesn't like them in corn or haylage; they eat a lot and feces is an issue
- Generally they overfeed heifers and carry out what's left and let the birds eat that
- They don't feed off the farmers all of the time, they spend a good deal of time in the woods.
- Today: 5 or so groups of 25 birds
- Since 2000, he has worked with IFW; believes IFW is going in the right direction which allows farmers to address specific problems.
- Each farm is different
- Bunks away from barn; turkeys likely come and go all day long
- Mr. Larrabee is not here to complain...he believes there is still room for improvement and has developed a good working relationship with local warden Chris Dyer. Further stated that the turkeys are just trying to find something to eat.
- NWTF people are attempting to help out
- MS asked "what's the specific problem?" Answer: they sneak into the bunker silo and eat a lot
- Mr. Larrabee stated: population is down 60% this summer, cracker shells, Depredation permits, Warden Service, etc. keep things in check
- Birds are not as obtrusive as he originally thought, still believes education is the key!
- MS asked "I've heard of hundreds of turkeys are being shot and tossed. Is this true? Mr. Larrabee has not heard of this specifically, suggests it may be done once in a while. He strongly believes that most farmers don't like to take (kill) something unless it will be utilized.
- Question: Any trapping and moving birds from your farm last winter? No, fired 2-3 times the year before. Birds got used to the set up. Brian Smith suggested the drop net for future attempts.
- MS...based on conversations in the Legislature, he thought there was a HUGE problem, that IFW's ADC program was a joke, and that farmers are mad. Mr. Larrabee replied that "that may have been the case 8 years ago" but thinks the comments in the Legislature are overstated, and suggest IFW direct help to those farmers who request assistance.
- MS asked "Are the tools in place to address the concerns of the dairy industry?" Mr. Larrabee thought "that may be a stretch to say they all where".
- Wrapped bales may be a significant problem and as Mr. Larrabee reiterated "All dairy farmers, and their issues, are not alike". He believes IFW should work with farmers who rely on these practices (wrapped bales) because feed is being lost. Can bales be located closer to the barn? Reply "Farmers don't have the time for additional chores".
- Kirk Shively (USDA) believes farmers in other parts of the country have learned to live with these issues, the tools are the same, we will all learn and adapt.
- Emphasis added: All the expense is borne by the farmers and they resent this. IFW gets all the money, farmers get nothing. No benefit but farmers are expected to bear the cost. Suggestions: (1) recognize their contribution (2) help out where IFW can because most farmers don't mind seeing a few in their fields.
- Doug Little (NWTF) specific to the wrapped bale issue. Be careful, make sure turkeys are doing

the damage opening up the bales. We should try to get camera evidence because "mitigation will be different if we don't figure out who is causing the problem". Brian Smith asked if we can do that in Maine; Doug indicated he is working on the study design.

- The study from NH was discussed where turkey scats were collected and analyzed for disease. No salmonella was found. USDA will be looking into future disease studies as well by collecting scat and swabbing birds...looking for Campylobacteria and other fecal borne pathogens.
- Feces in feed: Mr. Larrabee does not believe there's a problem here. May cut down on palatability. "The farmer is trying to get every spoonful of feed into an animal to get every ounce of milk in return". Starlings may be a bigger issue.

B.] Blueberries

Stadler / Sullivan Notes

Patricia Kontur, representing the Maine blueberry industry, outlined the problems that the growers contend with; in addition, she and other members of the working group provided possible solutions and other information regarding the problem statements.

| Problem | Possible Solution(s) / Comments |
|---|---|
| Growers share none of the economic benefits of turkeys. | |
| Turkey foraging damages berries; feces in berries; Grower perspective: As soon as turkeys walk into the field damage increases with each day. | Turkeys eat bugs, hence pest control for blueberries |
| The problem is "wildlife" eat blueberries, not just turkey. Geese have also increased in areas of blueberry fields. | <p>What do blueberry growers use to scare off/get rid of turkeys? = noise deterrents. After a few days turkeys become educated. Response: Rotate deterrents on the landscape, and allow periodic lethal take.</p> |
| | Seek a balance with turkeys in blueberry fields and the financial loss associated with their presence. |
| | Like dairy farming nuisance issue, education to blueberry growers will be helpful to assess the problem and develop a better understanding of the complete picture. |
| | J. Huebner's study will hopefully shed light on the degree of turkey damage (direct and indirect) and what role other species play on damage in blue berry fields. (bears, deer, raccoons, seagulls, crows...) |

Transferring birds, growers would like to

know where. Please not one more thing to deal with.

GAP – Good Agricultural Practices (Food Safety for agricultural fields). One aspect addresses wildlife in fields and a level of strictness that restrict sale of the product if wildlife scat is found on the product field.

GAP -- best to keep wildlife out of agricultural fields.

Allen Notes

- UMO study in progress funded in part by the Blueberry Commission. This is a different problem as the turkeys are coming for the berries.
- Trish has concerns IFW is moving the birds beyond their former historical range into downeast berry land.
- All wildlife should be kept out of the fields, can't be fencing all fields.
- Potential that turkeys have some benefits...eating bugs as pest control.
- Some growers do not know birds are being released in their areas where someone is growing a crop
- Again: "None of the benefits but costs borne by the landowner"
- What is the total loss attributed to wildlife? Anecdotally, about 10%, but this is likely conservation
- A discussion ensued about scare tactics, deterrents, limited utility, and that birds get conditioned to these tactics.
- Good Agricultural Practices (GAP); crops will be inspected, attempts must be made to keep wildlife out of your fields. At what level will this be enforced? Certain level of "reasonable-ness"
- Getting hunters (safely) onto farmers land could use some coordination from IFW..getting the 2 parties together.

C.] Strawberries / Raspberries / Roadside farmer/farm stand and back yard garden / Apple Orchards

Sullivan Notes

Problem

Possible Solution(s) / Comments

Strawberries

To protect strawberry plants in the late fall, farmers cover them with straw; in some cases after spreading straw, turkeys scratch up the straw; this damages to plants and Ag cloth

Raspberries

During the fruiting cycle, turkeys knock the berries off the plants; this occurs when the turkeys flap their wings; Turkeys are in berry patches for insects and other

reasons.

This damage can increase cost of product due to limit fruit.

A numbers game. For example; 10 birds are tolerable, when you get up to high numbers (i.e. 100 birds) the problem becomes a major issue.

Roadside farmer (farm stand) and back yard garden

Apple Orchards

Eating apple drops and then learning to knock other apples off the tree. Also, limb damage. Damage to buds in the spring.

Allen Notes

- Jeff Bellmore. We need a **BALANCE** between the number of birds an area can support...and competing interests (that is growing strawberries or raspberries).
- Jeff believes his losses may be 20-30%...a bit of lethal control to support nonlethal efforts.
- A discussion ensued about scare tactics, deterrents, limited utility, and that birds get conditioned to these tactics.
- With strawberries...the biggest issue is with birds removing the straw, not eating berries. Again...landowners don't mind some...just don't want too many birds around.
- Getting hunters (safely) onto farmers land could use some coordination from IFW..getting the 2 parties together

7. Next Meeting: August 25, 2009; 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Agenda:

- Continue and complete the identification of the problems of nuisance wild turkeys in farming areas.
- Once the agricultural problems have been identified, explore the several methods available to address the problems. These may include expanded hunting opportunities, animal damage control, education and outreach, and other approaches identified by the working group.
- When the working group feels comfortable that it has fully addressed the above, I would propose that it begin its review and discussion of 4.A., Wild Turkey Hunting in Maine: Issues and Opportunities.

Appendix 3B

Strategic Planning for Wildlife: The Maine Experience

.... managing Maine's wildlife populations to meet society's expectations

History of Maine Experience - The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) initiated comprehensive planning in 1968 and has refined and expanded the process with each planning update. Initial plans were quite rudimentary; department biologists crafted species management goals and objectives that were reviewed by a 9-member public steering committee and a citizen's Advisory Council. In 1985, the department embarked on a major effort to entrust the public with establishing long term, species management objectives, and required the public to entrust the department with developing management actions to meet the objectives.

Species Driven – Maine's planning process is species driven. Strategic plans are developed for individual species (deer, moose, ruffed grouse, spotted turtle, Tomah mayfly) or groups of species (migratory shorebirds, passerines, island nesting seabirds). Ultimately, MDIFW intends to develop plans for all game and endangered and threatened species, as well as other species of special management concern (more than 90 individual species and groups of species). To date, we are more than half way there. The process is the same, regardless of species status.

For nongame species with no immediate management concern, Maine has initiated a broad-based approach to habitat conservation called *Beginning with Habitat*. This project is a collaborative effort of private and public organizations including MDIFW, Maine Natural Areas Program, Maine State Planning Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Maine Audubon Society, Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission, and the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve. *Beginning with Habitat* is based on a landscape, or regional, model developed with the assistance of the University of Maine Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit and is focused on conservation of wildlife habitats in southern and central Maine. The foundation of this approach is to encourage towns to:

- conserve riparian habitats through effective implementation of the current Shoreland Zoning regulations,
- conserve identified special wildlife and plant habitats through resource protection zoning and other conservation tools, and
- maintain large blocks of forest and grassland habitats by maintaining rural areas and encouraging concentration of development.

Public Working Groups Set Management Direction – A meaningful evolution in Maine's planning process has been an expansion of public involvement in the development of management goals and objectives within the biological sideboards of a species assessment prepared by department biologists¹. The species assessment develops informed stakeholders and establishes common ground.

¹ The assessment, a compilation of everything that we know about a particular species, critically reviews current and past management, goals and objectives, habitat, population size, and use and demand for hunting, trapping, and other wildlife-associated recreation. A final element of the assessment is a discussion of future projections for habitat, population size, and use and demand for the resource.

The composition of working groups is structured to ensure representation of a variety of interests (sportsmen's groups, NGOs, landowners, tourism groups, concerned citizens, outspoken critics, etc.) as well as a geographical mix. Every effort is made to keep the group balanced. Members of working groups give freely of their time and advice and provide an essential element to the development of species management plans.

The department conducts working group meetings in a manner designed to encourage active participation by group members while minimizing participation by department staff. Ground rules, agreed to by participants, seek to understand and respect others' perspectives, maximize participation, and move the process forward. A facilitator, often the department's planner, conducts each meeting, although occasionally a facilitator from outside the agency is hired.

Meetings are opened with a department overview of the assessment for each species, followed by a discussion of the issues and concerns the working group believes are important to the management of that species or species group. Questions, issues and concerns, and the resulting goals and objectives are recorded and displayed during the course of the meeting. Subsequently, the Department distributes a meeting summary and related material to all working group members.

After the working group develops goals and objectives, the Department evaluates them based on 1) desirability, 2) feasibility, 3) capability of the habitat, and 4) possible consequences, and identifies a number of associated problems and potential strategies of managing toward the goals and objectives. These reports are shared with the working group, and if warranted, the working group modifies the goals and objectives before the Department presents them to a 10-member citizen's Advisory Council for adoption. Once adopted, the goals and objectives become the Wildlife Division's "marching orders".

Management systems, developed by department biologists, document how the department will reach the goals and objectives by clearly defining data collection protocol, analyses, and interpretation. They also establish rules-of-thumb that drive management actions. These systems undergo regular evaluation and peer review allowing them to be dynamic and adaptive. In summary, Maine's strategic planning process recognizes the department's legal mandates, public expectations, and the department's ability to meet those mandates and expectations. Public involvement occurs during all stages of the process:

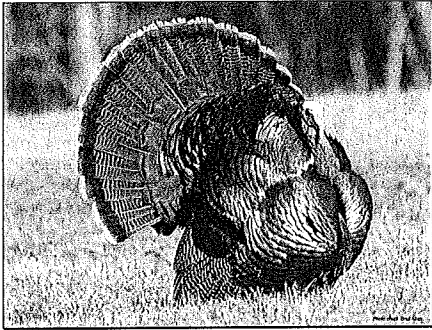
- species experts from outside the agency review the species assessment;
- a public working group develops management goals and objectives;
- goals and objectives are presented to a 10-member citizen's Advisory Council for approval;
- publicly-derived goals and objectives are the foundation of management systems which are reviewed by technical experts from outside the agency;
- management actions may necessitate public informational meetings; and
- rulemaking proceedings require public hearings and input from a citizen's Advisory Council.

Although not perfect, the process has proven to be exceedingly beneficial to the department and to the public it serves over the 18 years the process has been in effect.

Appendix 3C

Status of Wild Turkeys in Maine

By: Kelsey Sullivan



Wild Turkey Management

Where we are and where we are going

Goals and Objectives are established by a public working group.

Goals set every 15 years

LD 256 – Legislative resolve charging IFW with the task of responding to nuisance issues and requests for additional hunting opportunity options.

**Wild Turkey Goal and Objectives
(2000 – 2015)**

Found in the Wild Turkey Management System and Database, pages 3 – 5

Goal: Increase the size and distribution of the wild turkey population within all suitable habitat in Maine.

Objective 1: By 2010, increase the size and distribution of the wild turkey population within all suitable habitat in Maine via trap and transfer activities and habitat improvements.
Suitable wild turkey habitat in Maine is described in the Wild Turkey Assessment (2000), pages 15-18.

Maine's Wild Turkey Population

- May be as high as 50,000 birds
- This number fluctuates based on spring weather and winter snow, which affect production, recruitment and survival.
- Found in every county in Maine

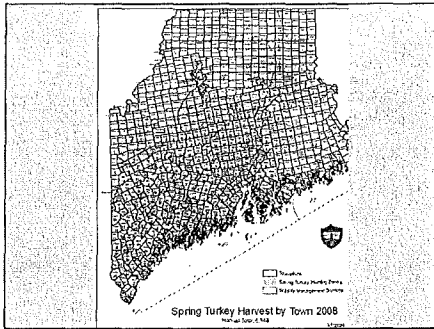
Objective 2: By 2010, provide unlimited spring hunting opportunity as long as the wild turkey population can support it and current (2000) hunt quality is maintained. The Working Group defined "Quality" as hearing, seeing, working, and hopefully harvesting a turkey without interference from others.

Spring Hunting Season

- 5 Weeks + Youth Day before regular season
- Spring season 2009, full 5 weeks open to all hunters
- Bag Limit: 1 bearded bird, second tag available for spring 2010

Spring Harvest

| Spring Wild Turkey Harvest, Permits and Success rate (Harvest/Permits) | | | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|--------------------|---|
| Year | Harvest (H) | Permits (P) | Success Rate (H/P) | Notes |
| 2009 | 5,766* | | | *Preliminary... |
| 2008 | 6,348 | 19,445 | 33% | Open to all |
| 2007 | 5,984 | 19,079 | 31% | Open to all |
| 2006 | 5,931 | 19,393 | 31% | Open to all |
| 2005 | 6,236 | 23,951 | 26% | All lottery participants given a permit |
| 2004 | 4,839 | 15,600 | 31% | Lottery |
| 2003 | 3,994 | 12,000 | 33% | Lottery |
| 2002 | 3,391 | 9,000 | 38% | Lottery |
| 2001 | 2,544 | 7,000 | 36% | Lottery |
| 2000 | 1,589 | 4,000 | 39% | Lottery |
| 1999 | 890 | 3,000 | 30% | Lottery |

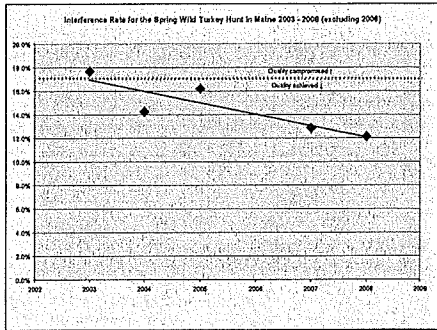


Hunter Satisfaction (Quality of the Hunt)

Criterion B (Wild Turkey Management System, page 12.)

Quality is based on results of the interference variable of the Turkey Hunter Questionnaire. If interference is 17% or less, (or exhibited an annual change of less than 10%), then "Hunt Quality Maintained?" equals "yes".

This addresses Objective 2 ... hunt quality is maintained... defined as hearing, seeing, working, and hopefully harvesting a turkey without interference from others.



Objective 3: By 2002, develop a component to the Department's Nuisance Wildlife Policy that addresses wild turkeys.

Non-lethal means are initiated and tried prior to any lethal take.

If all other means fail, or an immediate threat to property (crops) then

Title 12: Chapter 821; section 12401, pages 910 - 916.

12 §12401. ATTACKING DOMESTIC ANIMALS OR DESTROYING PROPERTY allows for take the of "any wild animal or wild turkey found in the act of attacking, worrying or wounding that person's domestic animals or domestic birds or destroying that person's property."

Objective 4: By 2003, implement a limited fall hunting season in areas where the wild turkey population can support it without adversely affecting Objective 2.

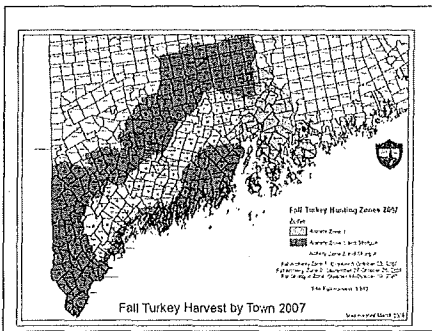
Result: 2 week bow, 4 week bow or 6 day shotgun

Fall Hunting Season

- 2-4 weeks of archery hunting depending on population status
- Either sex hunt (male and female legal)
- Shotguns legal for 1 week in certain Wildlife Management Districts – beginning in 2007

Fall Harvest

| Fall Wild Turkey Harvest, Permits, Success Rate (harvest/permits) and weapon types | | | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| Year | Harvest (H) | Permits (P) | Success Rate (H/P) | Weapon Types |
| 2008 | 685 | 5000* | 14% | Bow and Shotgun (certain WMDs) |
| 2007 | 1,843 | 5,357 | 34% | Bow and Shotgun (certain WMDs) |
| 2006 | 198 | 2,639 | 8% | Bow |
| 2005 | 157 | 2,913 | 5% | Bow |
| 2004 | 104 | 1,923 | 5% | Bow |
| 2003 | 246 | 2,882 | 9% | Bow |
| 2002 | 151 | 2,022 | 7% | Bow |



Objective 5: Develop a cooperative (on-going) habitat improvement program between landowners, the Maine Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, and the Department.

Planning
 IFW technical representation on state NWTF board
 IFW Farm Bill Coordinator

Outreach
 State Chapters and landowners coordinate with IFW regional biologists

Implementation
 NRCS cost share programs like WHIP
 Workshop/training days for landowners working with NWTF and IFW

Summary:

- **Allow continued population growth**
- **Protect and enhance spring gobbler hunting opportunities**
 Measured by high harvests, high success rates and low interference
- **Provide additional recreation by allowing limited fall hunting opportunity**
 IFW is able to increase hunting opportunity through reliable game registration data.
- **Address nuisance issues (with room for improvement)**

Summary continued:

- **The emphasis is on quality spring gobbler hunting (Objective 2).**
- **Expanded fall hunting (for shot gunning especially) should not be entertained without population data and fall harvest information (beginning fall 2002).**
- **Fall seasons, where the harvest of hens is legal, have a much greater potential to negatively influence the growth rate of a population than do spring hunting seasons.**

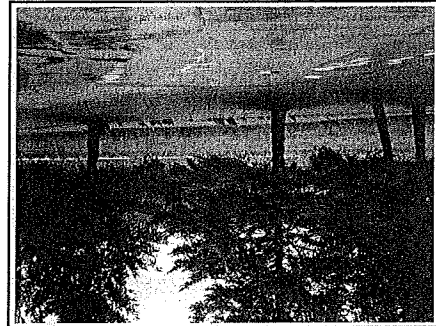
Wild Turkey Management System and Database, page 6

| Year | Number of Applicants | Number of Positions | Number of Vacancies | Number of Applicants per Position | Number of Applicants per Vacancy | Number of Applicants per Vacancy (per 1000) | Number of Applicants per Vacancy (per 1000) |
|------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|---|
| 1974 | 200 | 100 | 100 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 1975 | 250 | 125 | 125 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 1976 | 300 | 150 | 150 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 1977 | 350 | 175 | 175 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 1978 | 400 | 200 | 200 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 1979 | 450 | 225 | 225 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 1980 | 500 | 250 | 250 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 1981 | 550 | 275 | 275 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 1982 | 600 | 300 | 300 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 1983 | 650 | 325 | 325 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 1984 | 700 | 350 | 350 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 1985 | 750 | 375 | 375 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 1986 | 800 | 400 | 400 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 1987 | 850 | 425 | 425 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 1988 | 900 | 450 | 450 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 1989 | 950 | 475 | 475 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 1990 | 1000 | 500 | 500 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 1991 | 1050 | 525 | 525 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 1992 | 1100 | 550 | 550 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 1993 | 1150 | 575 | 575 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 1994 | 1200 | 600 | 600 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 1995 | 1250 | 625 | 625 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 1996 | 1300 | 650 | 650 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 1997 | 1350 | 675 | 675 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 1998 | 1400 | 700 | 700 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 1999 | 1450 | 725 | 725 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 2000 | 1500 | 750 | 750 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 2001 | 1550 | 775 | 775 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 2002 | 1600 | 800 | 800 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 2003 | 1650 | 825 | 825 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 2004 | 1700 | 850 | 850 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 2005 | 1750 | 875 | 875 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 2006 | 1800 | 900 | 900 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 2007 | 1850 | 925 | 925 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 2008 | 1900 | 950 | 950 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 2009 | 1950 | 975 | 975 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 2010 | 2000 | 1000 | 1000 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 2011 | 2050 | 1025 | 1025 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 2012 | 2100 | 1050 | 1050 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 2013 | 2150 | 1075 | 1075 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 2014 | 2200 | 1100 | 1100 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 2015 | 2250 | 1125 | 1125 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 2016 | 2300 | 1150 | 1150 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 2017 | 2350 | 1175 | 1175 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 2018 | 2400 | 1200 | 1200 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 2019 | 2450 | 1225 | 1225 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 2020 | 2500 | 1250 | 1250 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |

Accomplishments Time Line

1974 - First year of service for the Department of Corrections
 1975 - First year of service for the Department of Corrections
 1976 - First year of service for the Department of Corrections
 1977 - First year of service for the Department of Corrections
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 2015 - First year of service for the Department of Corrections
 2016 - First year of service for the Department of Corrections
 2017 - First year of service for the Department of Corrections
 2018 - First year of service for the Department of Corrections
 2019 - First year of service for the Department of Corrections
 2020 - First year of service for the Department of Corrections





What's the next step

January 5th: Deadline for report to
Legislature on nuisance turkey strategies
and increasing hunting opportunity.

Appendix 3D

MDIFW's Administrative Policy Regarding Human/Wildlife Conflicts (Policy J1.6)

Maine was built upon the strength of its natural resources, including wildlife, which continues to be the foundation of our states economy. The Department has developed an overall objective to manage wildlife populations for the use, benefit and enjoyment of Maine's citizens and visitors. We live in an environment constantly altered by human activities and natural factors causing wildlife populations to fluctuate and as these changes occur, human/wildlife conflicts develop. It will be the policy of this Department to provide assistance in resolving human/wildlife conflicts following the procedures outlined in this policy. The Department will encourage the use of preventive measures to reduce the occurrence of human/wildlife conflicts and, when necessary, provide for the selective removal of wildlife that pose a significant threat to other wildlife, fisheries, human health, safety, or property.

Summary of Statutes and Regulations That Pertain to Human/Wildlife Conflicts

Title 12 MRSA §10053.8. Animal Damage Control. Establishes the function of animal damage control coordination and administration within the Bureau of Resource Management.

Title 12 MRSA §10105.1. (Commissioner's Powers). Describes the Commissioner's powers and responsibilities relating to the destruction of wildlife, the implementation of an animal damage control program and the employment of outside (non-department) agents. §10108.11 further specifies the use of snares and requires reimbursement from the Maine Department of Agriculture for service provided for agricultural interests.

Title 12 MRSA Chapter 921 / Animals Causing Damage or Nuisance. (See Attachment A) Specifies and limits an individual's right to kill wild animals to protect his property and his responsibility to report same to a game warden. Further specifies the Commissioner's authority (through his agents) in dealing with specific animals.

Title 12 MRSA §10104 – Rule-Making Power. Regulations are established by the Commissioner through the Administrative Procedures Act to establish season dates and other procedures relating to Title 12 MRSA.

Administrative and Operational Unit Responsibilities

Warden Service: Warden Service will assess nuisance wildlife complaints and resolve bona fide nuisance wildlife problems using standard procedures set forth in this policy

Wildlife Management Section (WMS): Wildlife Management Section personnel will provide coordination of operational activities and technical assistance to Warden Service, ADC agents and landowners in resolving human/wildlife conflicts. This will include coordination with the district wardens and other parties as necessary and through technical/educational materials via the Department's website and brochures. Site visits by regional wildlife biologists are warranted when available information indicates significant waterfowl habitat is at risk.

Wildlife Resource Assessment Section (WRAS): Wildlife Resource Assessment personnel will monitor ADC activities as they relate to the species management goals and to the guidelines set forth in the species management systems; and they will provide technical assistance when by Department staff.

Fisheries Division: Fisheries Division personnel will provide technical assistance to the Warden Service and WMS by identifying high-value fishery resources that may be affected by beaver activity. There will also be a cooperative effort to identify drainages throughout each region that can be reasonably utilized for beaver releases.

Wildlife Management Section Supervisor: This position will have principal responsibility to oversee and facilitate animal damage control operations statewide by providing liaison between all parties to coordinate operational activities, training and development of instructional and educational materials. This position will administer the ADC service contracts and maintain the Department's ADC operational objectives.

USDA Wildlife Services: The Department may enter into an agreement with USDA Wildlife Services to carry out nuisance wildlife control operations in Maine. This work is coordinated through the regional Wildlife Division offices. USDA Wildlife Services employs wildlife biologists and biological technicians to carry out wildlife damage management in respective wildlife regions. See current agreement at the Augusta office for details.

Animal Damage Control Agents: Qualified persons must hold a valid trapping license and be proficient in the use of traps relevant to their activity. Once the district warden and regional wildlife biologist are satisfied with a person's competency and understanding of the program, that person can register as an independent ADC agent for the activities in which he is proficient. Additional activities can be added upon approval of WMS supervisor.

ADC licenses must be renewed every two-years, during which time an agent must attend one regional training session and submit monthly ADC activity reports. Registered ADC agents are considered "Agents of the Commissioner" and can perform ADC work under the direction of a Department official.

Agents may request compensation for human/wildlife conflict work from landowners or complainants. ADC agents are NOT covered by State insurance because they are considered independent contractors (Per communication from Division of Risk Management, 5/20/03).

Rangers and park staff designated as ADC agents by director of the Baxter State Park Authority and the Allagash Wilderness Waterway must abide by the procedures set forth in this policy.

Permits and Reports

Depredation Permit: This form must be issued by a warden or regional wildlife biologist to any individual who is not an ADC agent (such as a land owner) before any nuisance wildlife may be killed (except as provided by §12401 and §12402). Depredation permits will be issued for individual instances only and not for re-occurring conflicts or multiple instances and they will be valid for up to 30 days.

Warden Service Record Management System database: This is the standard reporting system for Wardens to log all incidents and will continue to be used to document human/wildlife conflicts.

ADC Activity Report: This report is the standard reporting form for ADC agents. ADC agents are required to submit the activity report every month to the Wildlife Management Section Supervisor in Augusta or via the ADC activity report posted on the Department's website.

The ADC activity reports will be compiled into a database that will be made available to the regional wildlife biologist, the district warden and the appropriate species specialist in WRAS.

Fur (fur tags) Registration: With the exception of Home and Garden Species, regional wildlife biologists or district wardens must give verbal or written permission to kill any wildlife under this policy. Agents may not keep any part of an animal killed under this policy, including castor and scent glands, unless possession is a condition of that permission. Wildlife taken that is subject to the tagging regulations, but is taken outside the regular season and is to be traded or possessed must be tagged within 10 days using the ADC code.

The Department recognizes that agents will occasionally "possess" wildlife taken during operational activities while en route to disposal sites.

State or federally threatened or endangered species may not be possessed unless appropriate state and federal permits have been acquired.

General Operating Procedures

Human/wildlife conflicts will be assessed by Department staff, ADC agents, or USDA Wildlife Services to determine if there is a bona fide problem, the nature of the problem and the appropriate solution. Consideration will be given to human health and safety, protection of domestic animals and property, significant habitats and applicable species management systems that may apply. Whenever possible, the complainant will be encouraged to resolve the problem with information and technical assistance developed by the Department and provided to the complainant by Department staff, ADC agents or USDA Wildlife Services.

Except as otherwise provided in Section §12401 and §12402 (see attachment A), human/wildlife conflicts will be addressed in the following order of descending priority. A person who violates a condition or restriction placed on an authorization granted under this policy invalidates that authorization and is subject to applicable laws.

1. Prevention and Extension - Landowners will be encouraged to take reasonable precautions to prevent human/wildlife conflicts, and when necessary, appropriate directions or information will be provided which will enable the property owner to both alleviate the problem and to avoid it in the future. If the complainant is not taking, or has not been willing to take, the recommended preventive measures, he will be advised of the possible consequences which may include:
 - a. withholding of further assistance by the Department,
 - b. denial of permits to kill potential problem animals, and
 - c. possible civil or criminal action for actions undertaken without approval.

Information or technical guidance will be provided and will include handouts, pamphlets and information on the Department's website to alleviate nuisance wildlife problems and to promote the positive aspects of wildlife.

2. Regulations - Many wildlife species are managed through regulation of harvests to maintain healthy individuals and population levels within a range that provides appropriate public use, while minimizing conflicts. Therefore, the extent of human/wildlife conflicts will be regularly (at least annually) discussed between the Wildlife Division and Warden Service so that those problems will be considered in relationship to harvest regulations and management system goals.

3. Non-Lethal Control - When animals cause a problem and must be removed (except as provided in Sections §12401 and §12402), non-lethal measures must be considered first, except as noted with specific species. The feasibility and the biological and social consequences of non-lethal vs. lethal removal will be considered. It may be possible to alter the site conditions in such a way that the animal no longer poses a problem.

Relocation activities should avoid utilizing the same site for numerous releases of the same species. These situations could lead to locally high population levels that add stress and create conditions for disease transmission and/or added mortality.

4. Lethal Control - Lethal control is justified when the above procedures are not applicable, practical, or are prohibitively costly (except as otherwise provided by Sections §12401 and §12402).

Specific Human/Wildlife Conflict Procedures

- I. Home and Garden Species (H&G) - These animals include chipmunks, skunks, raccoons, foxes, weasel, woodchucks, porcupines, squirrels, bats, English sparrows, European sparrows, pigeons (rock doves) and European starlings that are causing damage to property, gardens and homes.
Species under federal jurisdiction, such as most birds are not H&G species and require a permit from federal authorities (see Migratory Bird Section).

1. Prevention and Extension - Most H&G species problems can be and should be resolved by the landowner or complainant with technical assistance provided by Department staff, ADC agents, or USDA Wildlife Services. Problems generally involve social aversions (people don't like a particular animal around), health hazards and minor garden/crop damage. Many problems can be resolved by dispelling unfounded fears, "proofing" of buildings, fencing property, improving sanitation, or use of repellents.

In addition to the Department's website and brochures, a variety of bulletins are available through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Service (County Office).

2. Regulation - The degree of nuisance problems will be considered in annual recommendations to the Commissioner for trapping regulations and season dates.
3. Non-lethal Removal - Homeowners may address the problem themselves, or they may employ the services of an ADC agent.

The Department limits the relocation of raccoons and skunks to a 5 mile radius around the capture site to minimize the artificial spread of rabies and recommends the same for fox. Because of the distance restrictions which may move the problem animal and risk of rabies to a neighbor, the Department further recommends lethal removal. Ideally, preventative measures will be taken and the animal released on site.

4. Lethal Removal - Sections §12401 and §12402 provide the conditions under which a landowner may take or kill wild animals. H&G complaints may be directly referred to USDA Wildlife Services or ADC agents by regional dispatchers with no direct involvement of regional wildlife biologists or Warden Service and the

monthly ADC activity report satisfies any permit requirements. **Two exceptions:** lethal removal of bats or foxes requires specific permission from a warden or regional wildlife biologist.

Bat complaints can generally be resolved by providing a means to exclude them from buildings. Any potential human exposures to bats should be immediately referred to the Maine Center for Disease Control. A leaflet is available from the USDA Wildlife Services office and from regional wildlife biologists.

Agents may keep H&G animals killed under this policy, for their use. Species that normally require tagging such as fox, must be tagged within 10 days to be kept or sold.

- II. Beaver – Beaver are an important fur resource and they provide habitat benefits for many wildlife species. However, beaver can cause economic problems including flooding of structures and roads as well as impacts to important fisheries. Beaver populations and the wetland habitat associated with them, are protected and managed in an environmentally sound and responsible manner by the Department.

The priority for deciding on control measures as outlined below will depend on each situation related to long-term effectiveness, costs, significant waterfowl habitat values, native brook trout fisheries, important smelt spawning streams and Atlantic salmon habitat.

Department staff, ADC agents and USDA Wildlife Services will advise landowners that neither lethal removal nor relocation of beaver resolve chronic beaver problems if site modifications are not also undertaken and landowners should consider one-time cost vs. repeated future actions.

1. Prevention and Extension - In many cases, if an adequate flow of water can be maintained, beaver do not pose a problem. By modifying the drainage to control an acceptable water level, beaver may continue to occupy an area. Fencing and/or installation of pipes to provide adequate flows through the dam will be encouraged by the Department, USDA Wildlife Services and ADC agents by demonstrating or educating landowners how to prevent beaver from causing a flooding problem (managing water levels). With annual maintenance this is the most effective, long-term means of reducing most nuisance complaints. Providing adequate water flow may not resolve fish passage problems and these problems may require additional solutions.

Modification or removal of beaver dams as authorized by a regional wildlife biologist or game warden, as long as (Natural Resources Protection Act, 38 MRSA §480-Q.21):

- a. Efforts are made to minimize erosion of soil and fill material from disturbed areas into a protected natural resource;
- b. Efforts are made to minimize alteration of undisturbed portions of a wetland or water body; and
- c. Wheeled or tracked equipment is operated in the water only for the purpose of crossing a water body to facilitate removal of the beaver dam. Where practicable, wheeled or tracked equipment may cross a water body only on a rock, gravel or ledge bottom. This exemption includes the draining of a freshwater wetland resulting from removal of a beaver dam. It does not include removal of a beaver house.

Beaver flooded woodlands or other timberland may be drained by the removal of a dam after consultation with the regional wildlife biologist or warden. Approval will be given when timber is at imminent risk of loss, after waterfowl young-of-the-year have fledged and when the flowage is less than two years old.

Regional wildlife biologists may (at the expense of regional budgets) deploy ADC agents or USDA Wildlife Services agents for site modifications as needed for the management of significant waterfowl and wading bird habitats.

2. Regulation - Regulation of the length and timing of beaver trapping seasons can be used to encourage beaver removals. The WRAS will incorporate this data into the beaver management system for future management decisions.
3. Non-Lethal Removal - ADC agents or USDA Wildlife Services must obtain specific permission from a regional wildlife biologist or warden to relocate beaver. To make this determination the regional wildlife biologist will consider circumstances, existing beaver densities, relocation distances and other significant resource impacts, including impacts to waterfowl habitat, native brook trout fisheries, important smelt spawning streams and Atlantic salmon habitat.

Relocation of beaver prior to July 1st may be lethal for young-of-the-year and should be avoided. Relocation of beaver just prior to ice-up is considered lethal and is also to be avoided. Except in emergency situations, no nuisance beaver will be removed within 30 days of the opening of the beaver trapping season in that area. A list of locations where beaver have been removed within 30 days of the opening of the beaver-trapping season will be maintained at appropriate regional office. (This provision is intended to maintain a greater level of beaver trapping opportunity.)

4. Lethal Removal - ADC agents or USDA Wildlife Services must obtain specific permission from a warden or regional wildlife biologist for lethal removal of beaver. Lethal removal of beaver should be justified by circumstances, existing beaver densities and other significant resource impacts, including impacts to waterfowl habitat, native brook trout fisheries, important smelt spawning streams and Atlantic salmon habitat.

Title 12 MRSA §12404.2 states:

*A person may not take or kill beaver under sections §12401 and §12402. The Commissioner may cause **agents of the Department** to take nuisance beaver at any time. (A landowner, forester, etc., can not take or kill beaver without a depredation permit.)*

If a nuisance beaver activity is deemed to pose an **imminent public health or safety** threat, then Department staff, a deployed ADC agent or a deployed USDA Wildlife Services agent will resolve the problem via trap and transfer or lethal removal at regional expense. Water quality impacts at public water supplies ARE NOT an imminent health issue and those problems should be referred to ADC agents or USDA Wildlife Services for a Cooperative Service Agreement at the water company's or municipalities expense.

- III. Bear - Bears are an important wildlife resource and big-game species with a high public profile. The Department manages bear populations for hunting and viewing; bear are protected for much of the year.

1. Prevention and Extension - Department staff, ADC agents and USDA Wildlife Services, will advise landowners to take preventative measures. The following list includes examples of preventive measures that may apply;
 - a. Install an electric fence to protect vulnerable property,
 - b. Locate beehives in the immediate vicinity of crops and away from prime bear habitat (forest edges) or travel ways,
 - c. Secure garbage dumpsters and remove attractants such as open trash barrels,
 - e. Regularly remove and properly dispose of household garbage, clean-up bird feeding areas in the spring and regularly clean grills,
 - f. Use deterrents such as spraying trash containers with ammonia or cayenne pepper, and
 - g. Do not feed bears.

(NOTE: USDA Wildlife Services makes electric fencing available to landowners with bear problems. The program leases the fencing to the landowner for 5 years with an annual cost 1/5 the cost of materials. After 5 payments, the landowner owns the fence.)

2. Regulation – The degree of nuisance bear problems will be considered in annual recommendations to the Commissioner for hunting regulations and season dates.
3. Non-Lethal Removal – If a problem still exists and if appropriate, the regional wildlife biologist or district warden may deploy an ADC agent to run or chase the bear(s) with hounds at no cost to the landowner or the Department.

ADC agents or USDA Wildlife Services must obtain specific permission from a warden or regional wildlife biologist for relocation of a bear. Relocation will be at the landowner's expense and the following conditions will apply;

- a. Bears shall be relocated to predetermined locations, consistent with species management objectives, representing the least chance for further problems. Each regional wildlife biologist will maintain a list of potential sites. Adult bears must be relocated no less than 60 air miles; cubs and yearlings no less than 40 air miles,
 - b. Every effort should be made to minimize moving sows with cubs. In those cases where relocation is the only alternative, every effort should be taken to move them together,
 - c. USDA Wildlife Services may utilize Aldrich foot snares and must be set no more than 300 feet from a beehive or other damaged site,
 - d. Foothold traps are not permitted, and
 - e. Immobilization will not be permitted within 30 days of the start of the hunting or trapping season. Refer to policies J1.4 and J1.5.
4. Lethal Removal – Sections §12401 and §12402 provide the conditions under which a landowner may take or kill wild animals. If a problem still exists, the regional biologist or warden will refer the landowner to USDA Wildlife Services or an ADC agent at the landowner's expense, or issue a depredation permit to the landowner. ADC agents or USDA Wildlife Services must obtain specific permission from a warden or regional

wildlife biologist for lethal removal of bear. Shooting is the only permitted method of lethal removal.

- a. Except as provided by Sections §12401 and §12402, the property owner or permittee may legally possess the bear when properly reported.
- b. Disposal of a dispatched bear will be agreed upon in advance, which may include: carcass disposal, possession by landowner, possession by agent, or donation to food pantry.
- c. The ADC agent or USDA Wildlife Services will notify the regional wildlife biologist once a bear has been killed and complete the appropriate reporting form. A depredation permit is not necessary for an ADC agent or USDA Wildlife Services, but the Activity Report is required.
- d. Title 12 MRSA §12404.B provides for the issuance of a permit to beekeepers to protect their hives from bears (for the use of Aldrich foot snares an ADC agent or USDA Wildlife Services must be utilized);
 - i. The bee hives must be located in the immediate vicinity of a cultivated crop, commercial blueberry land, or orchard,
 - ii. The provisions of the permit will apply only during the time of year when the involved crops are subject to pollination,
 - iii. Each permit must be obtained in writing from a regional wildlife biologist,
 - iv. Each permit will designate the town(s) where the bee keeper will have Aldrich foot snares set,
 - v. If the beekeeper employs another person to set Aldrich foot snares, the person setting the traps must be named in the permit, and
 - vi. Any bear taken must be reported to a warden as required by law.

If a nuisance bear is deemed to pose an **imminent public health or safety** threat, then Department staff, a deployed ADC agent, or a deployed USDA Wildlife Services agent will resolve the problem via trap and transfer or lethal control at the Department's expense.

IV. Deer and Moose – Deer and moose are part of the Maine landscape and should be accepted as a necessary factor in any agricultural or forestry endeavor. When deer and moose become locally abundant, browsing of garden crops, orchards and ornamentals may cause substantial losses.

1. Prevention and Extension – Department staff, ADC agents and USDA Wildlife Services will advise landowners to take preventative measures such as deterrents, repellents, or fencing as appropriate. Information concerning the prevention of damage will be available at Regional Headquarters, the Department's website and provided upon request to landowners. Electric fencing will be the method of choice to be encouraged by the Department for all situations requiring substantial reduction of deer browse losses.

Vegetable crop farmers, nurseries, fruit growers and others should be referred to the USDA Wildlife Services for information and assistance with fencing. USDA Wildlife Services makes electric fencing available to landowners with deer problems. The

program leases the fencing to the landowner for 5 years with an annual payment 1/5 the cost of materials. After 5 payments, the landowner owns the fence.

2. Regulation – The degree of nuisance deer and moose problems will be considered in developing annual recommendations to the Commissioner for harvest regulations.
3. Non-Lethal Removal – Live trapping and removal of deer is generally not an effective means of resolving deer depredation problems. Refer to prevention and extension. Title 12 MRSA §12404.5 applies. Immobilization will not be utilized 30 days prior to the start of that species hunting season. Refer to Department policies J1.4 and J1.5
4. Lethal removal – Sections §12401 and §12402 provide the conditions under which a landowner may take or kill wild animals.
 - a. If a problem still exists and **the WMD is AT OR ABOVE population goals**, the regional biologist or warden will refer the landowner to USDA Wildlife Services or an ADC agent at the landowner's expense, or issue a depredation permit to the landowner.
 - b. If a problem still exists and **the WMD is BELOW the population goals and objectives**, (if warranted and at the discretion of the regional wildlife biologist), provide additional on-site technical assistance in an attempt to resolve the problem and avoid lethal removal. If this is not warranted, or if the problem still exists, refer the landowner to USDA Wildlife Services or to an ADC agent for lethal control at the landowner's expense, or issue a depredation permit to the landowner.

If a nuisance deer or moose is deemed to pose an **imminent public health or safety** threat, then Department staff, a deployed ADC agent or a deployed USDA Wildlife Services agent will resolve the problem via lethal removal at regional expense.

Section §10401 describes enforcement officials with full powers of game wardens which allows them to dispatch moose that frequent high traffic highways (Turnpike, I-95, etc.) deemed to pose a safety hazard and are considered an imminent safety hazard.

- V. Wild Turkey – Turkeys are an important wildlife resource and big-game species managed for hunting and viewing. Landowner conflicts have been most prevalent among dairy farms. These include turkeys feeding and defecating on exposed bunker-stored corn silage, and to a lesser extent, direct crop damage. There is no scientific evidence to suggest that soiled silage causes any risk to cows, nor are any known wildlife diseases linked to wild turkeys and trenched-stored silage.

1. Prevention and Extension – Wild turkeys, which are highly visible due to their large size and diurnal behavior, are often blamed for damage actually caused by raccoons, rodents, deer, or crows. It is important that crop depredation be verified before measures to control turkeys are implemented.

Presence of wild turkeys should not be tolerated at sites where they pose a problem and early deterrence is most effective. The following list includes examples of preventative measures that may apply:

- a. Chase turkeys away from problem sites, such as a bunker silo, barn, strawberry patch, etc. Hazing with dogs may also be an effective deterrent.

The longer wild turkeys are allowed to feed on silage or visit barns, the more difficult it will be to prevent it in the future.

- b. Keep bunker silos covered (tarps, plastic), out of view of turkeys.
 - c. Place waste silage (spillage) at a location away from bunker.
 - d. Locate spoiled silage dumpsites away from silos and barns so as to attract turkeys away from these food sources
 - e. Establish manure storage piles early in the winter at sites away from silage silos.
 - f. Use electric fencing, regular fencing, such as plastic snow fencing and/or mylar strips around silos, gardens, row crops and fruit trees.
 - g. Use deterrents, such as screamers, scare-a-ways, cracker shells, predator silhouettes, etc.
 - h. Encourage local National Wildlife Turkey Federation chapters or other volunteers to work with farmers to plant winter food plots.
2. Regulations – Spring hunting (toms only) will not appreciably reduce turkey populations or solve nuisance turkey problems. Turkey mortality resulting from fall hunting (either sex) has the potential to reduce turkey populations on a larger scale (e.g., Wildlife Management District) -- if management goals dictate a population reduction. However, a reduced wild turkey population would not necessarily reduce or eliminate turkey nuisance concerns, as they tend to be local in nature.
3. Non-Lethal Removal by Live Capture and Relocation – If a problem still exists, at the discretion of the regional wildlife biologist, provide additional on-site technical assistance, including trap and transfer, to the landowner in an attempt to resolve the problem and avoid killing wild turkeys.

This method serves a dual purpose in both removing problem birds and frightening remaining members of the flock from returning for a while. This method has limited application as a widespread solution and will be used only if it helps the Department meet population enhancement/distribution objectives.

4. Lethal Removal – Sections §12401 and §12402 provide the conditions under which a landowner may take or kill wild animals.

Limited use of lethal removal with a depredation permit may be very effective in discouraging turkey flocks from returning to silos or barns especially in conjunction with the use of deterrents.

If prior options are not successful and at the direction of the regional wildlife biologist, refer the landowner to USDA\Wildlife Services or an ADC agent for lethal control at the landowner's expense or issue a depredation permit to the landowner.

If a nuisance wild turkey is deemed to pose an imminent public health or safety threat, then Department staff, an ADC agent or an USDA\Wildlife Services agent will resolve the problem via lethal control at the Department's expense.

- VI. Coyotes – Sections §12401 and §12402 provide the conditions under which a landowner may take or kill wild animals. Department wardens and regional wildlife biologists will investigate reports of coyote depredation and make a reasonable effort to prevent agricultural losses by deploying USDA\Wildlife Services or ADC agents to remove

specific coyotes known or suspected of causing the damage. **Coyote snaring to minimize impacts to deer is addressed in the Coyote Snaring Policy, J1.7**

1. Prevention and Extension – Landowners will first be advised about the advantages of implementing preventative measures, such as those below; however, the landowners will be authorized to implement lethal removal without first implementing preventative measures if he or she so chooses.
 - a. Maintain fencing and/or install an electric fence around pastures.
 - b. Use guard dogs, llamas or donkeys to protect flocks. USDA Wildlife Services can provide information on the use of guard animals.
 - c. Provide lighted night security.
 - d. Take special precautions during lambing or calving.
 - e. Remove and bury deeply any farm carcasses per Department of Agriculture guidelines.
2. Regulation – The degree of nuisance coyote problems will be considered in developing annual recommendations to the Commissioner for harvest regulations.
3. Non-Lethal Removal – Live trapping and removal of coyotes is generally not an effective means of resolving coyote problems.
4. Lethal Removal – The regional wildlife biologist or district warden will refer the landowner to USDA Wildlife Services or ADC agent for lethal removal at the landowner's expense, or issue a depredation permit. The following methods and procedures apply.
 - a. Trapping, using foothold traps and hunting using predator calls or over baits are the methods to be used for coyote removal.
 - b. The use of cable restraints is restricted to ADC agents, USDA Wildlife Services, or Department officials with specific certification and knowledge in their use.

If a nuisance coyote is deemed to pose an **imminent public health or safety** threat, then Department staff, a deployed ADC agent or a deployed USDA Wildlife Services agent will resolve the problem via lethal removal at Department expense.

See also: Snaring Policy, J1.7.

VII. Migratory Birds, Non-Game and Other Wildlife under Federal Jurisdiction - Migratory waterfowl, cormorants, woodpeckers, most other birds including black birds, song birds, eagles and other threatened and endangered species are among those under federal jurisdiction. No permit is necessary to harass migratory birds, with the exception of bald and golden eagles and threatened and endangered species. Migratory bird nests that contain no eggs or chicks are not protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Two different federal agencies are involved:

USDA, APHIS USDA Wildlife Services is administered by the USDA Wildlife Services State Director, 79 Leighton Road, Suite 12, Augusta, ME. 04330; phone (207) 622-8263. Damage relative to geese and other migratory birds **will** be directed to USDA Wildlife Services.

The USFWS is responsible for federal laws regarding wildlife, including their trade, protection, endangered species status and law enforcement. Direct contact with

USFWS is through: Division of Law Enforcement, Craig Brook Hatchery, 306 Hatchery Road, E. Orland, ME 04431; phone (207) 469-6701x211.

Waterfowl and Geese

1. Prevention and Extension – Through contacts with individuals, lake associations and municipalities, work to eliminate or discourage feeding of waterfowl. This can be done with pamphlets, signs, posters, timely newspaper articles and ordinances. Eliminate human-provided food sources. Grass is a strong attraction for geese and complainants should reduce or eliminate the amount of grass near the shoreline by minimizing or eliminating mowing and fertilizing.
 - a. Hazing – Dogs, shell-crackers, pistol-fired screamers, etc can be effective if used regularly throughout the spring and summer months.
 - b. Mylar tape – inexpensive and effective for small areas during molt and young-rearing.
 - c. Planting shrubs in staggered rows near the shoreline.
 - d. Deterrence sprays for grass – effective for small areas.
 - e. Dead goose decoys.
2. Regulation – The degree of nuisance waterfowl problems will be considered in developing annual recommendations to the Commissioner for harvest regulations. Potentially repeal laws that closed nearby water bodies to waterfowl hunting or liberalize September goose season.
3. Non-Lethal Removal – Limited effectiveness. Damage relative to geese and other migratory birds **will** be directed to USDA Wildlife Services.
4. Lethal Removal – Damage relative to geese and other migratory birds **will** be directed to USDA Wildlife Services.

Migratory Birds

The USDA Wildlife Services State Director should be contacted for completion of a Wildlife Services Form 37 (Migratory Bird Damage Project Report). With his recommendation a permit can then be obtained from the Regional Director for the USFWS through the migratory bird office in Hadley, MA. Note: all permits involving federally protected species are issued by USFWS. English sparrows, European starlings and other non-native birds are not protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (50 CFR §10.13). Blackbirds and crows may be taken under USFWS Depredation Order (50 CFR §21.43). Most of these species also require state permits.

Gulls, woodpeckers, blackbirds, crows and many other birds may cause agricultural, safety and health problems. The USDA Wildlife Services-State Director should be notified and requires state sign-off for lethal removal.

When questions arise pertaining to migratory birds that are not contained in this policy, they should be referred to the USDA Wildlife Services-Director and/or the WMS supervisor.

- VIII. Diseased or Injured Animals. Singular incidents of sick or injured wildlife usually do not warrant extraordinary measures by the Department. However, indications of disease epidemics will be brought to the attention of the regional wildlife biologists who will then contact the Wildlife Management Section Supervisor. Based upon discussions among

the WMS Supervisor, the Wildlife Resource Assessment Section Supervisor and the Wildlife Division Director, the Department may, if necessary, contact the National Wildlife Disease Laboratory or Maine Center for Disease Control for advice.

Rabies is one of the most virulent forms of wildlife diseases in Maine. Rabies may be contracted by any mammal but is especially prevalent in raccoons, fox, skunks and bats. The Public Health Laboratory of the Maine Center for Disease Control is responsible for testing and monitoring the occurrence of rabies contacts with humans in Maine. Regional offices have procedures to transport specimens for testing.

When humans or domestic animals have had contact with a wild mammal whose behavior or appearance suggests that it is rabid, any affected person should be referred to a doctor, a veterinarian should be contacted regarding an exposed domestic animal and the wild animal should be:

1. Killed, if not already dead, in such a way that the skull (brain tissue) is not damaged.
2. Handled with plastic or rubber gloves.
3. Decapitate head and place the head in a plastic bag.
4. Refrigerated or cooled (NOT FROZEN) by packing in ice.
5. Delivered to the Public Health Laboratory, 221 State Street, Augusta, ME. 04333; telephone 287-2727.

Injured or orphaned wildlife may be taken to a licensed wildlife rehabilitator by citizens after contacting a warden or wildlife biologist. A list of currently licensed rehabilitators will be maintained on the Department's website.

ATTACHMENT A

Title 12: CONSERVATION

Part 13: INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE HEADING: PL 2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (new); Pt. D, §7 (aff); c. 614, §9 (aff)

Subpart 4: FISH AND WILDLIFE HEADING: PL 2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (new); Pt. D, §7 (aff); c. 614, §9 (aff)

Chapter 921: WILDLIFE CAUSING DAMAGE OR NUISANCE HEADING: PL 2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (new); Pt. D, §7 (aff); c. 614, §9 (aff)

§12401. Attacking domestic animals or destroying property

Except as provided in sections 12402 and 12404, a person may lawfully kill, or cause to be killed, any wild animal or wild turkey, night or day, found in the act of attacking, worrying or wounding that person's domestic animals or domestic birds or destroying that person's property. A person who kills a wild animal or wild turkey by authority of this section shall report the incident to the Maine Warden Service as provided in section 12402, subsections 3 and 4. [2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]

SECTION HISTORY

2003, c. 414, §A2 (NEW). 2003, c. 414, §D7 (AFF). 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).

§12402. Damage to crops or orchards

- 1. Permission to kill nuisance animals or wild turkeys.** Except as provided in section 12404, the cultivator, owner, mortgagee or keeper of any orchard or growing crop, except all types of grasses, clover and grain fields, may take or kill wild animals or wild turkeys night or day when the wild animals or wild turkeys are located within the orchard or crop where substantial damage caused by the wild animal or wild turkey to the orchard or crop is occurring. For purposes of this section, corn is not considered grain. [2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]
- 2. Employment of agents.** When a person wants to employ someone outside of that person's immediate family to take or kill wild animals or wild turkeys, that person shall contact a game warden. If the warden is satisfied that substantial damage is occurring, the warden may arrange for a department agent to alleviate the damage; when an agent is not available, the warden may authorize a person who is knowledgeable and can perform the work in a reasonable, safe and proficient manner. Permission to take or kill wild animals or wild turkeys may not be granted to a person whose license to hunt has been revoked or suspended, who is an habitual violator as defined in section 10605, subsection 1 or who has been convicted of night hunting within the past 5 years. [2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]
- 3. Report to Maine Warden Service; dressing of carcass.** The person by whom or under whose direction the wild animal or wild turkey is wounded, taken or killed under this section shall:
 - A.** Within 12 hours, report all the facts relative to the act to the Maine Warden Service, stating the time and place of the wounding, taking or killing; and [2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]

B. In all cases of deer, bear, moose or wild turkey, immediately and properly dress the carcass or carcasses and care for the meat. When the meat is being distributed to recipients authorized under the Hunters for the Hungry Program established in section 10108, subsection 8, the person shall inform the department within 24 hours that the meat is ready to be picked up. [2007, c. 198, §1 (AMD).]

4. Warden's certificate. A game warden shall investigate an incident under this section as soon as possible and, if the game warden is satisfied that the wild animal or wild turkey was taken as provided in this section, give the person who killed the wild animal or wild turkey a certificate that entitles the cultivator, owner, mortgagee or keeper of the orchard or growing crop to own the carcass or carcasses, which may be possessed and consumed only within the immediate family of the cultivator, owner, mortgagee or keeper of the orchard or growing crop, or, in accordance with the labeling requirements for possession of deer, bear, moose or wild turkey, to transfer possession of those wild animals or wild turkeys to another person. Any excess carcasses after the first 2 carcasses of bear, moose or wild turkey or after the first 3 carcasses of deer killed or taken under subsection 1 or 2 must be distributed to recipients authorized through the Hunters for the Hungry Program established in section 10108, subsection 8 or as otherwise authorized by the game warden. [2007, c. 198, §2 (AMD).]

5. Failure to report wounding, taking or killing of nuisance wild animal or to properly care for carcass. A person may not:

A. Wound, take or kill a wild animal under section 12401 or this section unless the person reports all the facts relative to the incident to the Maine Warden Service within 12 hours; or [2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]

B. Kill a deer, bear or moose pursuant to section 12401 or this section unless the person immediately and properly dresses the carcass and cares for the meat to prevent spoilage. [2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]

A person who violates this subsection commits a Class E crime.

[2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §239 (AMD); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF); 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

SECTION HISTORY

2003, c. 414, §A2 (NEW). 2003, c. 655, §B239 (AMD). 2003, c. 414, §D7 (AFF). 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF). 2003, c. 655, §B422 (AFF). 2007, c. 198, §§1, 2 (AMD).

§12403. Damage to motor vehicles by wild animals or wild birds

1. Claims. The State is not liable for any claims for damages to a motor vehicle by a wild animal or wild bird. [2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §240 (AMD); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF); 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

2. Accidental collisions involving deer, moose, bear or wild turkey. This subsection applies to accidental collisions involving deer, moose, bear or wild turkey.

A. The operator or owner having knowledge of a motor vehicle that has been involved in an accidental collision with a deer, moose, bear or wild turkey shall, by the quickest means, report the accident to a law enforcement officer. [2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]

B. The officer shall investigate an accident reported under paragraph A and, if the officer finds that the motor vehicle has sustained apparent damage as the result of the collision, shall give a certificate that entitles the person to the ownership of the carcass. The person may then take possession and immediately remove the entire carcass from the scene of the collision. [2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]

C. A person entitled to ownership of a deer, moose or bear carcass under paragraph B may not take possession of or remove any portion of the carcass without taking possession of or removing the entire carcass from the scene of the collision. [2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]

3. Penalties. The following penalties apply to violations of this section.

A. A person who fails to report an accident in accordance with subsection 2, paragraph A or who removes a portion of a carcass in violation of subsection 2, paragraph C commits a civil violation for which a fine of not less than \$100 nor more than \$500 may be adjudged. [2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §241 (AMD); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF); 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

A-1. A person who fails to report an accident in accordance with subsection 2, paragraph A or removes a portion of a carcass in violation of subsection 2, paragraph C after having been adjudicated as having committed 3 or more civil violations under this Part within the previous 5-year period commits a Class E crime. [2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §241 (NEW); 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

B. [2003, c. 552, §15 (AFF); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF); 2003, c. 655, Pt. C, §§2, 6 (AFF); 2003, c. 552, §13 (RP).]

[2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §241 (AMD); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF); 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF) .]

SECTION HISTORY

2003, c. 414, §A2 (NEW). 2003, c. 552, §13 (AMD). 2003, c. 655, §§B240,241 (AMD).

2003, c. 414, §D7 (AFF). 2003, c. 552, §15 (AFF). 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF). 2003, c. 655, §§B422,C2,6 (AFF).

§12404. Specific animals

1. Bear. This subsection applies to the taking or killing of bear found doing damage.

A. Section 12402 does not prohibit the taking or killing of bear found doing damage to blueberry land. [2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]

B. The commissioner may issue a permit to any licensed beekeeper, or to a person entrusted with the custody of the beehives of a licensed beekeeper, authorizing that person to protect beehives from damage by bear. [2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]

C. The commissioner may suspend the game laws relating to bears in such restricted localities and for such periods of time as the commissioner finds it advisable to relieve excessive damage being done by bears to sweet corn or other crops. [2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]

D. The commissioner may suspend subsection 6 for the purpose of allowing dogs to be used in hunting and killing bears, providing the dogs are under the personal supervision of the owner at all times, for such periods of time as the commissioner finds it advisable. [2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]

2. Beaver. A person may not take or kill beaver under sections 12401 and 12402. The commissioner may cause agents of the department to take nuisance beaver at any time.

A person who violates this subsection commits a Class E crime.

[2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §242 (AMD); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF); 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF) .]

3. Birds. A person may not take or kill wild birds, with the exception of rock doves and wild turkeys under sections 12401 and 12402.

A person who violates this subsection commits a Class E crime. [2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §242 (AMD); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF); 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF) .]

- 4. Coyotes.** The commissioner may cause department personnel to take coyotes at any time and in any manner that the commissioner may prescribe. [2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]
- 5. Deer.** This subsection applies to the control of nuisance deer in orchards and crops.
- A. Whenever deer are doing damage to orchards and crops, including legumes, but excepting grass, the department shall furnish to the owner or agent of the orchards and crops suitable repellants without cost to the owner or agent. The commissioner may follow other good conservation practices to alleviate the damage. [2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]
- B. Whenever the commissioner determines it impossible to keep deer from doing damage to young orchards, the commissioner may enter into an agreement with the owner of a young orchard in which the department assumes 1/2 the cost of fencing the orchard. [2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]
[2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §242 (AMD); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF); 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]
- 6. Dogs.** This subsection applies to nuisance dogs.
- A. A game warden may kill a dog outside the enclosure or immediate care of its owner or keeper when the game warden finds that dog:
- (1) Chasing, killing, wounding or pursuing a moose or deer at any time;
 - (2) Chasing, killing, wounding or pursuing any other wild animal in closed season; or
 - (3) Worrying, wounding or killing a domestic animal, livestock or poultry. [2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §243 (AMD); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF); 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]
- B. An owner of domestic animals, livestock or poultry, a member of the owner's family or a person to whom is entrusted the custody of domestic livestock or poultry may kill any dog killing or attacking the domestic animals, livestock or poultry. [2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]
- C. A person having evidence of a dog chasing, killing, wounding or pursuing moose or deer or any other wild animal in closed season may present that evidence to the commissioner or any game warden.
- (1) The commissioner or game warden shall give notice in writing to the owner or keeper of the dog, stating the acts committed by the dog.
 - (2) After the owner or keeper of the dog has received written notice that the dog has committed any act prohibited by paragraphs E-1, E-2, F and G, anyone may kill the dog when it is found committing any of those prohibited acts. [2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §243 (AMD); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF); 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]
- D. [2003, c. 552, §15 (AFF); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF); 2003, c. 655, Pt. C, §§2, 6 (AFF); 2003, c. 552, §14 (RP).]
- E. [2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF); 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF); 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §243 (RP).]
- E-1. Except as provided in paragraphs F and G, the owner or keeper of a dog is in violation of this paragraph if that owner's or keeper's bird dog, retrieving dog or hound dog is found killing or wounding a moose, deer or wild turkey during a period in which it is lawful to train dogs, as provided for in section 12051, subsection 1, while the dog is at a licensed dog training area or at a licensed trial for retrieving dogs.
- (1) A person who violates this paragraph commits a civil violation for which a fine of not less than \$100 nor more than \$500 may be adjudged.
 - (2) A person who violates this paragraph after having been adjudicated as having committed 3 or more civil violations under this Part within the previous 5-year period commits a Class E crime. [2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §243 (NEW); 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]
- E-2. Except as provided in paragraphs F and G, the owner or keeper of a dog is in violation of this paragraph if that owner or keeper has been notified under paragraph C and that

owner or keeper permits any dog mentioned in the notice to leave the owner's or keeper's immediate control.

(1) A person who violates this paragraph commits a civil violation for which a fine of not less than \$100 nor more than \$500 may be adjudged.

(2) A person who violates this paragraph after having been adjudicated as having committed 3 or more civil violations under this Part within the previous 5-year period commits a Class E crime. [2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §243 (NEW); 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

F. The owner or keeper of a dog is in violation of this paragraph if that owner's or keeper's dog is found chasing or pursuing a moose, deer or wild turkey at any time or any other wild animal in closed season.

(1) A person who violates this paragraph commits a civil violation for which a fine of not less than \$100 nor more than \$500 may be adjudged.

(2) A person who violates this paragraph after having been adjudicated as having committed 3 or more civil violations under this Part within the previous 5-year period commits a Class E crime. [2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §243 (AMD); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF); 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

G. The owner or keeper of a dog is in violation of this paragraph if that owner's or keeper's dog is found killing or wounding a moose, deer or wild turkey at any time or any other wild animal in closed season.

(1) A person who violates this paragraph commits a civil violation for which a fine of not less than \$500 nor more than \$1,000 may be adjudged.

(2) A person who violates this paragraph after having been adjudicated as having committed 3 or more civil violations under this Part within the previous 5-year period commits a Class E crime. [2005, c. 477, §14 (AMD).]

7. Muskrat. The commissioner may declare an open season on muskrats that are polluting water supplies or damaging property if the owner makes a written complaint to that effect to the commissioner. [2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]

8. Raccoons. The commissioner may suspend the game laws relating to raccoons in such restricted localities and for such periods of time as the commissioner finds it advisable to relieve excessive damage being done by raccoons to sweet corn or other crops. The commissioner may suspend subsection 6 for the purpose of allowing dogs to be used in hunting and killing raccoons, providing the dogs are under the personal supervision of the owner at all times, for such periods of time as the commissioner finds it advisable. [2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]

SECTION HISTORY

2003, c. 414, §A2 (NEW). 2003, c. 552, §14 (AMD). 2003, c. 655, §§B242,243 (AMD). 2003, c. 414, §D7 (AFF). 2003, c. 552, §15 (AFF). 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF). 2003, c. 655, §§B422,C2,6 (AFF). 2005, c. 477, §14 (AMD).

Appendix 4

Meeting #2 – August 25, 2009

- Appendix 4A Summary of Meeting #2
- Appendix 4B All Day Spring Turkey Hunting? – an Article by Brad Allen, MDIFW Bird Group Leader, for the Northwoods Sporting Journal, March 2009
- Appendix 4C New Hampshire's Salmonella Study Press Release, July 2005
- Appendix 4D New Hampshire's Salmonella Study Press Release, July 2006
- Appendix 4E Setting the Spring Season – an Article by Doug Little, NWTF Regional Biologist

Appendix 4A

Wild Turkey Working Group

Meeting #2

August 25, 2009

MDIFW Bangor Office

10:00 am – 2:00 pm

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| Facilitator: | Sandy Ritchie | Meeting Summary: | Ritchie, Allen, Sullivan |
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Next Meeting: September 15, 2009, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. , SAM's Conference Center, Augusta

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| Participants: | <p>Working Group Members: [bold indicates present at meeting]</p> <p>Jeff Bellmore, Maine Professional Guides Association; Mike Dann, Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine; Frank Dunbar, Fish and Wildlife Advisory Council; Bob Humphrey, Turkey Hunter / Outdoor Writer; Patricia Kontur, Wild Blueberry Commission; Doug Little, National Wild Turkey Federation; Jon Olson, Maine Farm Bureau; Jerome Richard, Maine Bowhunter's Association; Kirk Shively, USDA APHIS; Brian Smith; state president, National Wild Turkey Federation; George Smith, Sportsman's Alliance of Maine; Sally Stockwell, Maine Audubon; Jim Wescott, Turkey Hunter;</p> <p>MDIFW:</p> <p>Brad Allen, Bird Group Leader; Chris Dyer, Maine Warden Service; Mark Ostermann, Data Management; Sandy Ritchie, Habitat Conservation and Special Projects Biologist; Kelsey Sullivan, Wildlife Biologist, Bird Group.</p> |
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| Action Items: | |
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Agenda – Summary of Meeting Highlights

The intent of this summary is to capture meeting highlights not to provide a detailed transcript.

1. **Welcome / Introductions / Review Agenda** – Sandy thanked members of the Wild Turkey Working Group (Working Group) for coming. Working Group members and Department staff introduced themselves. Sandy reviewed the agenda and outlined the purpose of the meeting.
2. **The Problem of Nuisance Wild Turkeys in Farming Areas** - The Working Group continued identifying the problems associated with wild turkeys in farming areas. Dairy and blueberry problems were discussed at the first meeting. Problems associated with other berry crops and farm stand produce were discussed at today's meeting.

| Problems | Potential Strategies / Comments |
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| Transferring Birds – growers would like to know where birds are transferred | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IFW always seeks landowner permission when birds are released, but the regional offices should be |

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| | <p>encouraged to think beyond the actual release site as to where birds could move to.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post releases sites on IF&W's website. • IFW should be more proactive in distributing a "plan" for turkey releases (the WMS priority release document?) • Need a landowner relations coordinator. Can we tap into Hunter Education instructors as an education and outreach vehicle? • Internal conversation within IFW re future of trap/transfer – Working group sees additional opportunity to continue with trap and transfer. | |
| <p>GAP – Good Agriculture Practices (Food Safety for agricultural fields) - One aspect addresses wildlife in fields and a level of strictness that restricts sale of the product if wildlife feces are found on the product field.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor GAP to ensure "reasonableness" in dealing with wildlife. • Inform regional biologists about GAP field. | |
| <p>Strawberries - to protect strawberry plants in the late fall, farmers cover them with straw; in some cases after spreading the straw, turkeys scratch up the straw, damaging the plants and Ag cloth.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need to determine the number of turkeys being killed in relation to nuisance (permit or not). • Fencing, repellants (milar tape, cracker shells, fish scent sprays). • 3-D coyote goose repeller sold in Forestry Suppliers is very effective though it needs to be moved around in the fields (Chris Dyer). • Hunting seasons do not generally coincide when damage occurs. | |
| <p>Raspberries - during the fruiting cycle, turkeys knock the berries off the plants; this occurs when the turkeys flap their wings. Turkeys are in berry patches for insects and other reasons.</p> <p>This damage can increase product.</p> <p>A numbers game. For example; 10 birds are tolerable, when you get up to high numbers (i.e. 100 birds) the problem becomes a major issue.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for small fruits and vegetables are all similar (fencing, various repellants, education and outreach, etc.). • Smaller operations may have a more difficult time financing nuisance control strategies than larger ones. • Education/Outreach is important for all nuisance categories (berries, dairy, orchards, etc.). Need to think "out of | |

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| | <p>the box” about delivering the information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living with Wildlife link on IFW website will be available shortly. This site will describe several methods for preventing or resolving conflicts with wildlife and who to turn to for help if needed. • Websites are good but we also need to provide landowners with the opportunity to talk to a “real person” and not feel they are being put off. |
| Roadside farm - small farms and back yard gardens | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some strategies are similar – small operations may have a more difficult time coming up with money to finance control strategies. |
| Apple orchards – Turkeys eat apple drops and learn to knock other apples off the tree. They also cause limb damage and damage to buds in the spring. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some strategies are similar – small operations may have a more difficult time coming up with money to finance control strategies. |
| Nuisance in General | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is very much an urban vs. rural problem. • Need to determine how to get the message out in a better fashion (I&E) - a compiled package covering all species and information on the channels to go through to resolve conflicts. |

General discussion regarding nuisance turkey problems associated with small fruits and vegetables – Sandy Ritchie, Brad Allen, and Kelsey Sullivan’s combined notes:

- **What is the turkey range?**

Doug Little: It varies quite a bit, depending on the season, food availability and experience of the foraging turkeys.

- **Trap and transfer program**

Bob Humphrey: Interested in prior knowledge of release site publication. Can we post the priority release site document on the web?

Chris Dyer: Concern about moving birds that are a nuisance to places where they are going to be dispatched anyway.

- **GAP Program**

GAP is a USDA certification program to allow people to market food to the retail outlets while ensuring safety (i.e., home growers selling fresh pack to supermarkets). Growers are looking to USDA to find out what is required to comply with the program.

Doug Little: GAP identifies 200 items in total with only 2 wildlife items that speak to wildlife.

1. Monitor wildlife activities on the property
2. Take measures to reduce the amount of wild animals entering the property.

Sounds like the general day to day farm activities and are not requiring anything outside of what is already done.

Bob Humphrey: Is this a State level issue or is it something that should be visited through the feds (USFWS and USDA)?

Doug Little: It is good to monitor and look for language about wildlife and changes to the items listed in GAP for compliance in relation to wildlife.

George Smith: Wondered if the GAP program had a lot to do with the controlled moose hunt in Aroostook County.

Trish: Need to coordinate where trapped turkeys are released especially if they are released near GAP areas.

- **Strawberries**

Jeff Bellmore: Lost 2 acres of plants to strawberries in one week amounting to about \$5,000 in lost revenue.

Chris Dyer: Coyote decoys sold by Forestry Supply are proving to be effective. He had a landowner use the coyote decoy to keep nuisance geese away.

- **Nuisance data collection**

Chris Dyer: Ran the RMS (Records Management System) for warden service Jan. 1 to August 24, 2009 and recorded 111 calls (USDA had 22) in relation to turkey nuisance (although not broken down by specifics). It runs the gamut from birds bothering bird feeders, to a dead bird in a driveway, to farming complaints.

Jeff Bellmore: Commented that reports are probably under representative of the number of complaints coming in. Most farmers don't report complaints, they just deal with it.

Brad Allen: Suggested compiling the USDA reports with Warden Service reports.

Chris Dyer: Stated the RMS system does not require the outcome of the complaint to be logged into the RMS reporting system. Number of birds taken by depredation permit/or land owner right is filed with the Warden in their office file cabinet, not in the database necessarily.

- **General nuisance comments**

The turkey problem at the farms is not so much a loss of productivity (although Galen Larrabee referenced a relationship to starlings and dairy productivity) but a concern about turkeys' feces and pecking through packages and causing rotting.

Jeff Bellmore: Hunting season timing is not effective to take out enough turkeys and to reduce the turkey numbers. Brad Allen stated that spring hunting has never been used or promoted to control the turkey population.

Doug Little: The 200 birds that are grouped up in the winter at silage piles are the same ones that are populating the large surrounding area in the spring.

Chris Dyer: Mentioned that Galen Larrabee has established a protocol for managing nuisance turkeys without the need to kill them.

- **Fruit crop damage summary**

Blueberries – plants are damaged as well as fruit; strawberries – plants are damaged in the fall and early spring, not really fruit damage; raspberries - fruit is damaged

All these fruit crops will likely require similar strategies to deal with nuisance turkey.

Chris Dyer: People management is the key to what the warden service and WMS are doing.

George Smith: Do wardens operate as if Land Owner Relations is the top priority? Chris Dyer responded that yes, he operates that way, but some may not operate that way depending on the assignment for the day (i.e. boat duty on Sebago).

3. Hunting Issues and Opportunities – Following lunch, the remainder of the meeting was devoted to a brainstorming session concerning various hunting issues and opportunities. Sandy indicated that the field was wide open and encouraged folks to put forth any issue, comment, or hunting opportunity they wanted the group to consider.

- Bob Humphrey: Feels that we are heading in a direction which is too far in terms of take and harvest. Bob expressed concerns that a number of factors outlined below could result in demand exceeding supply.
 - successive wet springs
 - poor poult production
 - population in his area is not expanding
 - hunter experience/expertise will increase w/fall hunt
 - experience has shown that fall harvest can effect population
- Fall season triggers – IF&W uses the metric of spring harvest of wild turkey gobblers/mi² of forested habitat as a means to assess the wild turkey population within a Wildlife Management District (WMD). The Wild Turkey Management System calls for specific values of gobblers harvested/mi² forested habitat to be met in the spring before opening a WMD to fall hunting. Three variations of a fall harvest, when met, can trigger a fall season opening. A WMD that realizes:
 - 0.5 gobblers/square mile of forested habitat would open up a 2 week bow hunt.

- 0.75 gobblers/square mile of forested habitat would open a 2 week bow season, as well as a 1 week shotgun season.
- 1.0 gobblers/square mile of forested habitat would open a 4 week bow season, as well as a 1 week shotgun season.

Jim Wescott: Will 2 birds in the spring require a change to season triggers?

Doug Little: More experienced hunters will result in season triggers being achieved sooner (i.e. we could be expanding fall opportunity when we may not want to).

Jim Wescott: We need to ensure the safety net of the season triggers.

- Jeff Bellmore: Seasons for bow hunters and shotgun hunters should be the same.
- Chris Dyer: Fall hunting occurs during fall crop harvests – land owners have issues with expanded gunning opportunity. Landowners want to ensure safety, quality hunting, and do chores without interference.
- Making multiple season changes too quickly makes it difficult to measure cause and effect re hunt quality.
- Jim Westcott: Mentioned that Massachusetts, VT, and CT have similar number of turkeys, but do not have as much hunting interest. Maine has the interest and we need to monitor the effect of increased opportunity in the fall in relation to quality of hunt in the spring. We need to preserve the quality of the spring hunt. Quality of hunt does not mean just harvesting a bird.
- New York is looking at various aspects of local weather, quality of hunt, harvest, and population in an effort to assess the need to set finer scale seasons and bag limits.
- Most states manage their fall hunts to assure that even with the nastiest of winters and the wettest of springs, the fall harvest will not negatively impact the population and the spring hunt.
- Given season timing and the need to publish hunting regulations in advance of a season, it is very difficult for states to respond to poor winters and wet springs by reducing the fall season framework. Hunters want to have some expectation as to what a season will be.
- Brad Allen: Maine has not seen the need at this point to limit the fall hen harvest because we have been conservative in our approach.
- Doug Little: Noted that in Pennsylvania in a 3 year study looking at a specific area in the state where the population is suppressed, they found through a radio-telemetry project that they were taking too many hens out of the population supply.
- How can we attract more people to the support?
 - George Smith: Hunting opportunity needs expansion through promotion of non-resident turkey hunters. We are likely not going to tap into the resident hunters much more.
 - Chris Dyer: Once hunters actually have to “hunt” turkeys they tend to hunt less

- frequently and for shorter duration.
 - The opportunity to attract residents is limited; the opportunity to attract nonresidents is better and should be promoted.
 - Why can't we attract more residents? There are reasonable fees, and we've expanded the season, area open to hunting, and bag limit.
- Kelsey Sullivan: Suggested that we maintain the hunting season for a period of 3 years in order to assess the affects season changes have on hunt quality, population, harvest, etc.
- Need to expand the youth opportunity in the spring and fall hunts.
- Group: Can we do away with the 5 weeks and go to 4 in the spring?
- George Smith: Would like to have the opportunity to hunt past noon.
- Brad Allen: Provided the group with a number of reasons why all day spring turkey hunting is not advised.
 - All day hunting diminishes the tradition of spring turkey hunting which is an early morning
 - All day hunting may diminish the current quality of the spring hunt, risking the high level of success and credibility our wild turkey program enjoys.
 - Extending hunting hours has the potential to decrease the acreage open to hunting as landowners may not welcome all day hunting on their land.
 - Research has shown that additional hunting pressure from all day hunting will depress turkey gobbling activity.
 - Further, the wild turkey is the only game bird that wildlife agencies allow to be hunted during the nesting phase of its reproductive cycle. Caution should be exercised to insure that hunting is as benign as possible.
 - All day hunting increases the potential for disturbance to nesting hens and nest abandonment.
 - All day hunting would likely increase the male harvest and enhances the opportunity for illegal hen losses when nesting hens leave their nests and feed in the afternoon.
 - All day hunting might increase more "road hunting" and stalking turkey spotted infields in the afternoon. This raises safety and ethical concerns.
 - No other state in the northeast has all day hunting. Conditions are likely very different in the southern states that do have all day spring hunts. The most obvious difference is that our turkeys experience severe winter conditions.
 - Lastly, the hunting community has not expressed a strong desire for all day hunting.

- Spring season timing: May 1 vs. earlier in April

Doug Little: Expressed that May 1st is the ideal start date because this is peak onset of hens on incubation (based on radio telemetry studies). Starting earlier increases the illegal take/mistaken identity of hens in the harvest. To start earlier you also end up educating gobblers that won't come in anyway.

- Bob Humphrey: Can we consider an early spring (mid-April for 2 weeks) bow only season like

they have in Kansas?

Some were concerned that if we had a season that wasn't attracting hunters we would lose hunters. They preferred to focus on a season where hunters could see success.

- Bob Humphrey: If I can hunt with a 10 gauge shotgun and 3 inch shells, why can't I hunt with a cross bow. (To be revisited at the next meeting)
- Recommended Spring Season Structure
 - Opening – leave it the way it is (around May 1)
 - 5 weeks
 - Noon closure – though the group was divided on ½ day vs. full day hunting (3 supported an all day season)
 - Group wanted to include a general statement to review trend data before making seasons changes.

4. Next Meeting - September 15, 2009; 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. @ SAM's Conference Center, Church Hill Road, Augusta (pizza provided)

Proposed Agenda:

- Develop a proposed framework for the fall season.
- Discuss the use of crossbows.
- Explore opportunities to utilize recreational hunting to help address nuisance issues.
- Discuss electronic tagging.

Direction's to SAM's Conference Center (long building with log siding)

- If coming from the north or south and using the Interstate, take Exit 113 off I-95. Head east on Rt.3 and go straight through 3 lights. At the fourth light, take a left. It is on the right a couple of hundred yards from that fourth light.
- Access from the coastal regions of the state is easy on Routes 3/202, 17 or 27. Coming from the east on Route 3 brings you to their doorstep. Just watch for the cross-roads of Bolton Hill Rd. on your left and Cross Hill Road on your right. That will alert you that you are approaching the intersection where you need to turn. Continue on Rt. 3/202 for another 2.3 miles at which point you will be at the intersection of Rts. 3/202 and Church Hill Road. Turn right at this intersection. They are one-tenth of a mile on the right on Church Hill Road.
- If you are approaching from the west, you will probably come right into Augusta on Rt. 202. Once in the city, proceed on Rt. 202 toward Memorial Circle. At Memorial Circle, take the second exit off the circle, staying on US Rts. 201 and US Rt. 202. At Cony Circle, take the third exit onto Bangor Street/US 201/US 202/Me Rt. 9. Turn right at N. Belfast Ave./ME Rt. 9/US Rt. 202. Go one mile to a set of lights. Turn right onto ME. Rt.3 and proceed 0.7 miles to another set of lights. Turn left at these lights onto Church Hill Road. Continue for 0.1 miles. SAM is on your right.

Appendix 4B

All Day Spring Turkey Hunting?

Brad Allen

Northwoods Sporting Journal

March 2009

Spring 2008 marked the fourth year in Maine without a lottery limiting the number of wild turkey hunting permits. Somewhat ironically, IFW abolished the lottery and the number of people interested in spring hunting dropped from a high of 26,505 applicants in 2003 (when there was a lottery) to 18,195 last spring. Hunters in Maine shot 6,348 wild turkeys this past spring, a figure lower than the previous three years. But, hunter success for the last four years remains high, at around 30%. These data indicate that Maine still supports one of the finest spring turkey hunts in the east.

Wild turkey hunting in Maine, despite a relatively short "tradition" as Maine hunting traditions go, continues to elicit strong opinions from hunters, biologists, wildlife administrators and Legislators. Suggestions to improve our turkey hunt plan resemble a long Christmas list. These ideas reach my desk from a wide variety of sources. Regulatory changes are debated within the halls of IFW throughout the year. All these recommendations for change come somewhat as a surprise to me given how good (and safe) our current spring wild turkey hunt already is. "Don't fix it if it aint broke" doesn't seem to apply to wild turkey management. That said, I still have no problem with continuous improvement.

This past summer we at IFW discussed ways to expand spring wild turkey hunting opportunity. The underlying tenant is that we would propose this in a fashion that did not compromise the overarching principle that we continually strive for; an unlimited participation high quality spring hunt. Our goal is to protect and enhance the quality of the spring hunt, not compromise it. This past year we proposed two regulatory changes. The first change was to remove the constraints of the A/B split season. Historically this was in place to limit the number of hunters in the field at any given time. The reason behind this was to preserve a quality hunt, with limited interference. This proposed change alone will allow each turkey hunter in Maine to hunt on opening day, regardless of their birth year. Further, this change creates two additional weeks of hunting opportunity for whoever wishes to take advantage of our long 5-week season. As a matter or course, official comments on proposed rulemaking are directed to our Augusta office. I fielded a few comments from hunters who did not want any change, believe that too many people will be in the woods on opening day, and that this condition had the potential to compromise the safety and quality of the days hunt. Lastly, I received a call from a game registration station agent who believed he and his staff would be overwhelmed on opening day registering turkeys, taking away from his ability to run his business. In general, most people supported this proposal. Lastly, the "open hunt" scenario, rather than the A/B split, was a goal of the public working group and favored by many hunters.

We also proposed all day spring turkey hunting. Or put another way, extending hunting hours during the spring season beyond the existing noon closure to ½ hour after sunset. Support for this regulatory change within the Wildlife Division was not unanimous. The Department received many letters in opposition to opening the season to "all-day" hunting, preferring to keep it at the

current restriction of ending at 12:00 noon. Agree or not, there are several arguments for keeping the noon closure on the books. I will describe the most salient points, borrowing heavily from documents written by biologists in other states in the northeast.

Arguments against all day hunting follow. All day hunting may diminish the current quality of the spring hunt. All day hunting could risk the high level of success and credibility that our wild turkey program currently enjoys. All day hunting diminishes the tradition of spring turkey hunting which is generally an early morning activity. Extending hunting hours has the potential to decrease the acreage open to hunting as landowners may not welcome all day hunting on their land.

In addition, research has shown that additional hunting pressure from all day hunting will depress turkey gobbling activity. Most hunters would not embrace this. Further, the wild turkey is the only game bird that wildlife agencies allow to be hunted during the nesting phase of its reproductive cycle. Caution should be exercised to insure that hunting is as benign as possible. All day hunting increases the potential for disturbance to nesting hens and nest abandonment.

All day hunting would likely increase the male harvest and enhances the opportunity for illegal hen losses when nesting hens leave their nests and feed in the afternoon. All day hunting might increase more "road hunting" and stalking turkey spotted infields in the afternoon. This raises safety and ethical concerns.

No other state in the northeast has all day hunting. Conditions are likely very different in the southern states that do have all day spring hunts. The most obvious difference is that our turkeys experience severe winter conditions.

Lastly, the hunting community has not expressed a strong desire for all day hunting.

Appendix 4C

New Hampshire's Salmonella Study Press Release, July 2005

News from the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department

July 20, 2005

Phone: (603) 271-3211

Email: info@wildlife.state.nh.us

For information and online licenses, visit <http://www.wildlife.state.nh.us>

* * * * *

CONTACT:

Jane Vachon: (603) 271-3211

Mark Ellingwood: (603) 271-2461

July 20, 2005

NO SALMONELLA IN N.H. WILD TURKEY DROPPINGS

CONCORD, N.H. -- A total of 417 wild turkey droppings (fecal samples) collected on New Hampshire dairy farms during the winter of 2005 have all tested negative for salmonella. That's good news for wildlife managers and farmers in New Hampshire, who are concerned about possible transmission of salmonella from wild turkeys to dairy livestock. The screening was part of a collaborative effort between USDA Wildlife Services, the University of New Hampshire and the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, to better understand the impacts of winter turkey congregations on dairy farms in New Hampshire.

During the summer of 2004, 22 New Hampshire dairy farms known to experience annual winter turkey congregations were surveyed and certain farm features were mapped, in order to assess farmer observations and opinions about turkeys and identify physical features of farms that might facilitate large flocks of turkeys during winter months.

SURVEY RESULTS: Survey results indicated that 82% of farmers had a positive or neutral attitude toward turkeys. Regionally, 25% of northern farmers and 10% of southern farmers had a negative attitude toward turkeys, with the two main concerns being disease transmission and fecal contamination of silage intended for livestock feed. Farmers identified increased hunting opportunities and bag limits as the most effective method to control winter congregations. Only 14% of farmers responding to the survey identified turkeys as posing a threat to their property. Blackbirds and starlings (55%), pigeons (41%) and black bears (41%) were the wildlife species most often identified as being a threat to farm property.

MAPPING RESULTS: Results relating physical features of farms to winter congregations of turkeys were inconclusive. Turkeys did appear to prefer to feed closer to roosts and cover, and farther from roads, barns, homes and other buildings. Roost quality, quantity and proximity to silage or other food, seems to play a role in determining a farm's likelihood of hosting winter turkey congregations. At the same time, local complexities relating to turkey habitat, alternative feeding opportunities and general human activity and presence are likely final determinants in turkey behavior.

TURKEY DROPPINGS AS DISEASE RISK: To assess disease threats, turkey droppings were collected from a total of 12 dairy farms from January through March 2005 -- 6 in the northern Connecticut River Valley, 5 in the southern Connecticut River Valley and one in southeast New Hampshire. Most farms were sampled monthly, with each "sample" consisting of 3 droppings (from 3 different birds). An effort was made to collect 5 samples (droppings from 15 different birds) per farm per month. Biologists are confident that at least 130 different birds per month were sampled, and that more than 300 different birds were sampled across the winter. All of the samples tested negative for salmonella.

"Dairy farms play a critical role in the ecology of wild turkeys in Northern New England. We're very pleased with the positive attitudes of dairy farmers reflected in the survey and with the results of our first year of disease screening," said Mark Ellingwood, a wildlife supervisor with the Fish and Game Department. "The willingness of dairy farmers to accommodate turkeys is important to the well-being of turkeys and to the interests of turkey enthusiasts throughout the Connecticut River Valley. In that regard, we all owe dairy farmers a debt of gratitude." He noted that over the past 30 years since wild turkeys were reintroduced to New Hampshire, the population has increased to about 25,000 birds.

Ellingwood is hopeful that a second year of disease screening will take place in 2006 in order to increase overall sample sizes and to strengthen the study results.

The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department is the guardian of the state's fish, wildlife and marine resources and their habitats. Visit <http://www.wildlife.state.nh.us>.

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Appendix 4D

New Hampshire's Salmonella Study Press Release, August 2006

News from the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department
August 8, 2006
Phone: (603) 271-3211
Email: info@wildlife.state.nh.us
For information and online licenses, visit <http://www.wildlife.state.nh.us>

* * * * *

CONTACT:

Jane Vachon: (603) 271-3211
Mark Ellingwood: (603) 271-2461
August 8, 2006

NO SALMONELLA IN N.H. WILD TURKEY DROPPINGS

CONCORD, N.H. -- Specimens from a second year of monitoring wild turkey droppings collected on New Hampshire dairy farms have once again all tested negative for the presence of Salmonella bacteria. That's good news for wildlife managers and farmers in New Hampshire, who are concerned about possible transmission of Salmonella from wild turkeys to dairy livestock. The screening was part of a continuing collaborative effort between New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services and the University of New Hampshire to better understand the impacts of winter turkey congregations on dairy farms in New Hampshire.

In 2005, 139 samples of turkey droppings, systematically collected from 12 New Hampshire dairy farms, all tested negative for Salmonella. In 2006, 16 dairy farms located in the Connecticut River Valley were included in the study. An effort was made to collect 5 samples per month per farm for the period January-March, 2006. The lack of snow during 2006 discouraged turkey activity at some farms, with the result being that only 5 northern farms and 7 southern farms were sampled. A total of 131 samples, representing 393 turkeys, were collected. All samples tested negative for Salmonella.

"Dairy farms play a critical role in the ecology of wild turkeys in northern New England. We're delighted to be able to report that based on two years of intensive sampling, there is no evidence to indicate that wild turkeys are a source of Salmonella on New Hampshire dairy farms, even in those locations where large winter congregations of turkeys gather," said Mark Ellingwood, a wildlife biologist with the Fish and Game Department. "Because dairy farms are so important to the distribution and abundance of turkeys in northern New England, all turkey enthusiasts owe dairy farmers our gratitude for their willingness to accommodate turkeys in and around their farms. We had an obligation to address their concerns."

Ellingwood noted that over the past 30 years (since they were successfully reintroduced into New Hampshire by the Fish and Game Department), the wild turkey population has grown from 25 birds transplanted from New York in 1975, to approximately 30,000 birds today.

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marine resources and their habitats. Visit <http://www.wildlife.state.nh.us>.

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Appendix 4E

Setting The Spring Season

Doug Little, NWTF Regional Biologist

Among the many things I can count on each spring are, receiving emails and phone calls from hunters believing that because they are hearing gobbling and seeing strutters in late March and April, the spring hunting season starts too late. However, I will explain why the spring turkey season start dates are set just right on the calendar for NY and the New England states.



Strutting behavior can be observed during just about any time of the year. Gobblers use this behavior not only to attract hens during the breeding season but also to maintain the pecking order. The pecking order is fluid and unstable, and birds within flocks are always trying to up their rank. In fact, the last fall gobbler I harvested near my house was in strut right before I pulled the trigger. Hens also exhibit strutting behavior at times and I witnessed it on two occasions. The behavior is not just about gobblers attracting hens and we should not assume that the breeding season has started just because a flock at a winter food source includes a couple of gobbling strutters.

We have learned through extensive research on wild turkeys in New York State that the peak onset of incubation is during the first week of May. That finding has great influence on the timing of our spring hunting season. Radio transmitters on wild turkey hens have allowed biologists to track movements, nesting ecology and mortality causes within NY and other northeastern states. Some hens may begin nest incubation in late April, others in early to mid May but on average the peak onset of incubation is the first week of May. Since hens lay an average of 12 eggs prior to incubation, we can date the breeding of those hens to early-mid April.

During the egg laying stage, hens will breed each day, typically shortly after fly-down. Hens then travel on their own to the nest site to lay the egg, cover the nest up with leaves, pine needles or other material and travel back to the flock. Since hens travel quite a bit during egg laying, it is important to set the spring season at a time that will minimize the potential for mistake kills of them. Studies show that illegal spring harvest of hens accounted for 34 percent of all hen mortality in the spring in Virginia and 13 percent in West Virginia. The West Virginia season opens later. Seasons need to be set to provide a measure of protection for hens.

On the 200 acre parcel you hunt you may have hens in any stage of nesting; from an adult hen in mid-incubation, a hen having just lost a nest to predation, a juvenile hen still laying eggs, and you could even observe hens with poults. All of those scenarios can be happening at your favorite property. That's the nature of the nesting season.

Research has taught us that everything a juvenile does is less and later than adults. Fewer juveniles attempt to nest; they begin egg laying and incubation later, lay fewer eggs, successfully incubate a smaller percent of nests, re-nest at a lesser rate if the nest is lost and have a smaller percentage of poults survive. A season after a very good hatch, hunters should be prepared for running into henned-up gobblers all month because there are so many juveniles.

I hear hunters tell me each year that the breeding is done by early May. While it is true that most hens have been bred by that time, it does not mean that gobblers have quit looking. Again, predation rates on nests can be high and hens are not all simultaneously at the same stage of nesting. Second nest attempts can begin well into June or even July, so by no means have gobblers quit by late May. For the past few years, the last week has been very good hunting.

Published scientific literature suggests two peaks in gobbling activity. The first peak is associated with the break-up of winter flocks and the second with the onset of peak incubation among hens. The first peak associated with winter flock break-up occurs before much of the breeding happens and when weather could change dramatically. The second peak occurs because many hens are on the nest 24/7, incubating. At this point, the remaining hens are not

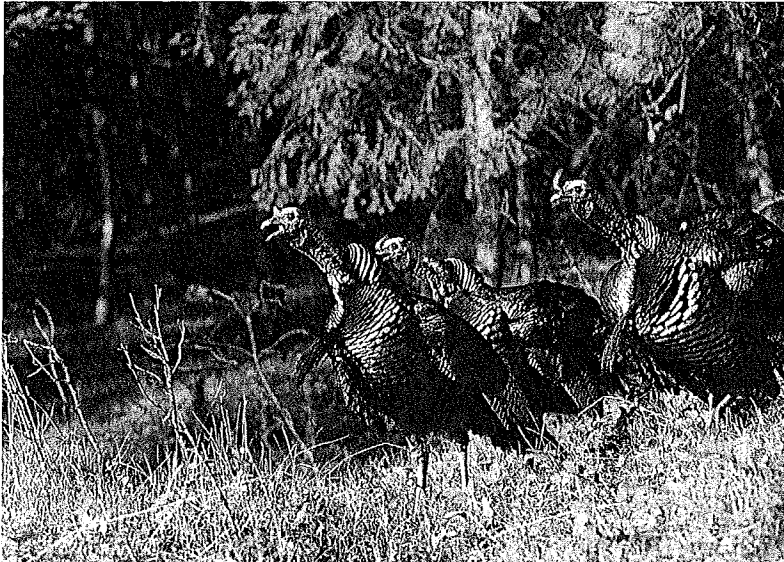


Photo Courtesy of D. Toby Thompson/ National Wild Turkey Federation

as easy for gobblers to find so they become more vocal. The more hunting pressure gobblers receive prior to this second peak, the less dramatic the increase in gobbling activity will be.

As with breeding and nesting behavior, the second gobbling peak can vary from year to year depending on weather and other factors. In any year the peak can move one earlier week or later than the average. Gobbling surveys from New Jersey, New York, Virginia and West Virginia indicated the second peak occurred from late-April through mid-May.

Very few of us begin the season without running into henned-up gobblers. If the season started any sooner we would only have more hen competition to deal with. Hunters would be pressuring and educating gobblers before they were going to be susceptible. The last thing we need to do is give those birds another leg up on us. Starting the season sooner would likely be to the gobblers' benefit, not ours, while being a detriment to the hen population.

The determination of our spring season opener in northeastern states based on a combination of factors that all point to starting the last week of April or first week of May. NY's season always begins on May 1st but some states start the season on a particular day which results in a varied date from year to year. But during that window of time most hens are incubating 24/7, the second gobbling peak has begun and the season is very easy for hunters to plan on. Starting earlier than what is currently established can have significant negative implications to hunt quality and may result in increased illegal or accidental hen harvest.

So whom can you thank for your state's spring season being set just right? The members and volunteers of our chapter system can be thanked for helping to raise funds that paid for much of the research that taught us what we know, the researchers at several major Universities across the country involved in wild turkey research can be thanked for conducting sound research and publishing the findings for all of us to benefit from, and state wildlife agency staff should be thanked for a job well done interpreting the research information and setting the spring turkey seasons just right.

Appendix 5

Meeting #3 – September 15, 2009

- Appendix 5A Summary of Meeting #3
- Appendix 5B *Background Information on the Crossbow* by Bob
Humphrey
- Appendix 5C *The Crossbow Dilemma* by Jerome Richard
- Appendix 5D *Rebuttal to Background Information on the Crossbow* by
Jerome Richard
- Appendix 5E MDIFW Analysis of Electronic Registration

Appendix 5A

Wild Turkey Working Group

Meeting #3

September 15, 2009

Sportsman's Alliance of Maine Conference Center

Augusta

10:00 am – 2:00 pm

| | | | |
|---------------------|---------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Facilitator: | Sandy Ritchie | Meeting Summary: | Sandy Ritchie, Kelsey Sullivan |
|---------------------|---------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|

Next Meeting: None planned

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Participants: | <p>Working Group Members: [bold indicates present at meeting] Jeff Bellmore, Maine Professional Guides Association; Mike Dann, Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine; Frank Dunbar, Fish and Wildlife Advisory Council; Bob Humphrey, Turkey Hunter / Outdoor Writer; Patricia Kontur, Wild Blueberry Commission; Doug Little, National Wild Turkey Federation; Jon Olson, Maine Farm Bureau; Jerome Richard, Maine Bowhunter's Association; Kirk Shively, USDA APHIS; Brian Smith; state president, National Wild Turkey Federation; George Smith, Sportsman's Alliance of Maine; Sally Stockwell, Maine Audubon; Jim Wescott, Turkey Hunter;</p> <p>MDIFW: Chris Dyer, Maine Warden Service; Mark Ostermann, Data Management; Sandy Ritchie, Habitat Conservation and Special Projects Biologist; Kelsey Sullivan, Wildlife Biologist, Bird Group.</p> |
|----------------------|---|

Action Items:

Agenda – Summary of Meeting Highlights

The intent of this summary is to capture meeting highlights not to provide a detailed transcript.

4. Welcome / Introductions / Review Agenda – Sandy thanked members of the Wild Turkey Working Group (Working Group) for coming. Working Group members and Department staff introduced themselves. Sandy reviewed the agenda and outlined the purpose of the meeting.

5. Hunting Issues and Opportunities – At the previous meeting, the working group identified and discussed a number of hunting issues and opportunities and developed a recommended proposal for a spring gobbler season. This discussion was carried over to the third meeting. A summary of items discussed is provided below.

Fall Turkey Season

- Decision making inputs for determining the fall season:
 - Season triggers - spring harvest of wild turkey gobblers/mi² of forested habitat (see

Meeting #2 summary, page 5)

- Productivity estimates from the August brood surveys
- Regional biologists' perspectives
- Doug Little: provided a regional and national perspective regards fall turkey seasons – most states use a 2-3 year spring harvest trend to determine fall opportunity; Maine uses 1 year data and is the only state to do so. Maine is about as liberal as you find despite being at the northern limit of wild turkey range where year to year changes can be exacerbated. We are also one of the youngest states to implement a fall gun season. States with longer fall gun seasons have longer histories of fall hunting and are not on the northern limit of the range. Arkansas, a state with a long history of turkeys and turkey hunting, is proposing an emergency closure of their fall season after several years of poor production.
- Brian Smith: preferred to keep the fall season as is and to address nuisance turkey complaints at specific sites.
- Bob Humphrey: cautioned that with the opportunity to harvest 2 gobblers in the spring beginning in 2010 we have the potential to achieve fall season triggers more quickly which could lead to an expansion of fall opportunity earlier than desired.
- When asked by George Smith what percentage of the harvest was comprised by hens, Kelsey Sullivan reported about 60%.
- Jeff Bellmore: supported additional gun opportunity in the fall.
- Doug Little: believed adding additional Saturdays to the fall season could increase the harvest significantly.

Fall Hunting as a Tool to Resolve Nuisance Turkey Issues

- Bob Humphrey: suggested in terms of establishing seasons and limits that we should treat the fall season separately from addressing nuisance issues.
- Jon Olson: stated farmers need help addressing nuisance issues. To date, MDIFW has had little funds to address nuisance issues via its Animal Damage Control (ADC) program. Maybe we should look at how fall season structure may be able to help.
- Bob Humphrey: turkeys are a public resource. He would like to see the larger public (not simply ADC agents) have the opportunity to harvest turkeys (both recreationally and damage) something similar to the BLIP program.
- Jeff Bellmore: currently a landowner experiencing damage can shoot any of the offending turkeys, but he/she doesn't have the time. Can friends, family, NWTF members, etc. be authorized by the landowner to take birds instead?
- Brian Smith: the Maine Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation would like to get involved in BLIP-like program.

- Bob Humphrey: we need to come up with ways to fund an ADC program.

Recommended Fall Season Structure

- Maintain the current (2009) fall season structure for 2010 as well.
- Don't consider any changes until at least 2011.
- Use 3-year trend data when establishing future seasons.
- Investigate the opportunity to expand the fall shotgun season beginning no earlier than 2011. By doing this we will need to reconsider our fall season triggers, which by most states' standards are already very liberal.

6. Possible Strategies to Address Conflicts with Turkeys – the working group discussed strategies to address farmers' conflicts with turkeys.

- Use of repellants – milar tape, cracker shells, coyote decoys
- Directed efforts at lethal removal of offending turkeys (ADC and/or BLIP programs)
- Trap and transfer efforts
- Education and outreach
- Directing recreational hunters into problem areas – the group decided not to recommend this strategy because landowners are getting plenty of requests from hunters to hunt on their properties.
- Trap, euthanize, and donate turkeys to soup kitchens – the group decided not to recommend this strategy.
- Allow the use of depredation permits by "agents" of the busy farmer (friends, family, ADC agents) – this strategy was strongly discouraged by Warden Service because it makes a hunt out of a nuisance problem and opens up a "can of worms".
- Payment to farmers for damage.

Recommended Strategies to Address Farmers' Conflicts with Turkeys

- Put prevention and extension information on MDIFW's website informing landowners how to prevent and remedy problems and where to turn if needed.
- Develop and coordinate dissemination of education and outreach materials through agricultural and landowner groups, publications, and trade shows (Farm Bureau, MOFGA, all commodity groups, SWOAM Newsletter, etc.).
- Utilize members of the National Wild Turkey Federation and other interested sportsmen's groups to serve as "agents of the commissioner" in MDIFW's Animal Damage Control Program. NWTF members and other participants would follow the stepped down approach

described in the Department's *Administrative Policy Regarding Human/Wildlife Conflicts (Policy J1.6, last revised 7/31/2008)* and would provide their services at no charge to the landowner.

We would need to assure: commitment from NWTF and sportsmen's groups to participate in the program and to be available to farmers; cooperation and coordination with Department biologists and game wardens; and compliance with standards and protocols outlined in the Department's ADC policy.

- Maintain a supply of assorted repellants to discourage turkey presence in unwanted areas (milar tape, cracker shells, coyote decoys, etc.). The NWTF Superfund may be a source of funds for supplies.
- MDIFW will respond promptly to landowner complaints. The group recognized that MDIFW is short staffed and biologists and wardens have large geographic areas of responsibility, but the group wanted to provide assurance to farmers that if MDIFW couldn't respond to their complaint, there would be an agent of the Commissioner who would (NWTF or sportsmen's group member).
- Ensure adequate funding and staffing to address complaints.
- Continue current trap and transfer efforts – publicize release sites on the Department's website and encourage regional biologists to think more broadly beyond the actual release site to where birds may move to.

4. Use of Crossbows – arguments for and against the use of crossbows while turkey hunting were aired. Handouts prepared by Bob Humphrey and Jerome Richard are appended to this summary

- Bob Humphrey: supports the use of crossbows (for turkey hunting not during the archery season on deer) citing the harvest from crossbows would be compensatory not additive and would not have an impact on the turkey population. Crossbow hunters would likely be less effective than gun hunters.
- Brian Smith: the Maine Chapter NWTF voted to oppose the use of crossbows in light of changes that have already been made to the spring season.
- Doug Little: surveyed all state turkey program leaders on the use of crossbows and received 32 responses. Crossbows are legal in 13 states and illegal in 19. In states where crossbows are allowed, less than 2% – 9% of the harvest is attributable to crossbows. The Maine Chapter of the NWTF is opposed to the use of crossbows because it would be another variable on top of other season changes.
- Jerome Richard opposes the use of crossbows citing the dangers crossbows present. He believes the real goal of many crossbow supporters is to get crossbow use for the archery season on deer.

Working Group Recommendation on the Use of Crossbows for Turkey Hunting

- Investigate the use of crossbows beginning in 2011
- Agricultural community expressed concerns for the loss of arrows in farmers' fields
- Include a question on the 2010 spring turkey hunter questionnaire to gauge hunter interest

5. Electronic Tagging – the group briefly discussed some of the advantages and disadvantages of moving forward with electronic tagging of turkeys. Sandy mentioned the Department has met several times to discuss the subject and has identified a number of advantages and disadvantages of various methods of electronic tagging (attached).

The Working Group recommended not proceeding with electronic tagging at this time, though many agreed that turkeys would probably be a good species to start with if electronic tagging were ever implemented. The group expressed concerns about non compliance and data reliability. They were also worried about adding another layer of change to the tagging stations in light of the registration fee increase passed in the last legislative session and the dissension it has caused. [Registration fees for big game were increased from \$1 to \$5 with the additional \$4 earmarked to MDIFW to support two data entry positions]. A final concern expressed by Warden Chris Dyer was overburdening the Augusta Court system. If the electronic server is located in Augusta, any electronic tagging violation would have to go through the Augusta court system.

6. Affirmation of 2000 Wild Turkey Working Group's Goals and Objectives – the remainder of the meeting was devoted to a review of the Wild Turkey Goals and Objectives for the period 2000-2015 developed by the 2000 Wild Turkey Working Group and adopted by the Department's Fish and Wildlife Advisory Council on May 1, 2001. They are as follows:

Goal: Increase the size and distribution of the Wild Turkey population within all suitable habitats in Maine. The 2009 Wild Turkey Working Group affirmed this goal.

Objective 1: By 2010, increase the size and distribution of the Wild Turkey population within all suitable habitats in Maine via trap and transfer activities and habitat improvements. The 2009 Wild Turkey Working Group affirmed this objective.

Objective 2: By 2010, provide unlimited spring hunting opportunity (everyone who applies for a permit receives a permit) as long as the Wild Turkey population can support it and 2001 hunt quality is maintained. (*The working group defined quality hunting as hearing, seeing, working, and hopefully harvesting a turkey without interference from others.*) Accomplished an unlimited spring hunt in 2006. The 2009 Wild Turkey Working Group affirmed continuing to provide unlimited spring hunting opportunity as long as the population can support it and hunt quality is maintained.

Objective 3: By 2002, develop a component to the Department's Nuisance Wildlife Policy that addresses Wild Turkeys. Accomplished. Title 12: Chapter 921; section 12401, pages 910-916.

Objective 4: By 2003, implement a limited fall hunting season in areas where the Wild Turkey population can support it, and without adversely affecting Objective 2. Accomplished the objective in 2002. The 2009 Wild Turkey Working Group affirmed continuing to provide a limited fall hunting season in areas where the population can support it and without adversely affecting spring hunt quality.

Objective 5: Develop a cooperative habitat improvement program between landowners, the Maine Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation, and the Department. The 2009 Wild Turkey Working Group recommended modifying this objective to read as follows: Develop a cooperative turkey management program between landowners; the Maine Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation; sportsmen (i.e. SAM), landowner (i.e. SWOAM), and agricultural (Farm Bureau) groups; and the Department.

The group also proposed two additional recommendations that were not fully articulated into

measurable objectives.

Objective 6: Reduce landowner / turkey conflicts.

Objective 7: Evaluate all of the turkey seasons and bag limits and investigate options for additional hunting opportunity.

7. **Next steps** – This meeting tentatively concludes the Working Group's deliberations. Sandy and staff will develop a draft report to the legislature later this fall and forward to working group members for their review and comment prior to finalizing the document by the end of December.

Sandy thanked members for their efforts and input and asked members to refrain from discussing their recommendations publicly until after the report was presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife in early 2010.

Appendix 5B

Background Information on the Crossbow

Is it a Bow?

Bow: A bow is a weapon that projects arrows powered by the elasticity of the bow as a form of spring. As the bow is drawn, energy is stored in the limbs of the bow and transformed into rapid motion when the string is released, with the string transferring this force to the arrow.

Firearm: A firearm is a device that projects either single or multiple projectiles at high velocity through a controlled explosion. The firing is achieved by the gases produced through rapid, confined burning of a propellant.

How Crossbows and Compound Bows Differ

1. The crossbow string is mechanically held at full draw for the shooter. (Compound bows can be fitted with devices called Draw-locks, which perform exactly the same function.)
2. The crossbow is fired by pulling a trigger mechanism. (Most compound shooters use a trigger mechanism called a release aid).
3. The crossbow's bow assembly is positioned horizontally. (A compound bow can be fired when held horizontally).
4. The crossbow uses sights more similar to those of a firearm. (Most compound shooters use sight systems that are not significantly different from open or peep-style rifle sight; some use tubed scopes and magnified lenses).
5. The crossbow limb assembly is mounted on a stock. Compound limbs are mounted on a riser.

Physical Functions

Both bows fire an arrow equipped with a broadhead designed to penetrate an animal, causing it to hemorrhage to death. The arrow coming from both weapons travels approximately the same distance, at approximately the same speed and energy, with approximately the same trajectory.

The amount of PE a bow can store is a function of draw weight (F) and draw length (x), and is calculated as follows: $PE = Fx/2$ ("2" because there are two limbs).

Because the average draw length (power stroke) of a crossbow is roughly half that of the average compound, the draw weight must be doubled to achieve the same PE, and ultimately, similar KE.

Trajectory: Out to 40 yards, the trajectory of a 350-grain arrow shot from a compound bow at 340 fps and a crossbow at 357 fps is virtually identical. Assuming the archer is standing on level ground and the arrows are fired parallel to the ground, both will land somewhere between 50 and 60 yards away. Even if your aim is elevated, both will have dropped around 80 inches at 70 yards.

Table 1. Comparison of draw weights and average speed for top-end bows.

| | range <u>lbs.</u> | average <u>lbs.</u> | speed <u>fps</u> |
|---------------|----------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| crossbows | 175 - 225 | 194 | 360 |
| compound bows | 65 - 80 | 70 | 340 |

Table 2. Comparison of energy and speed between common crossbow and compound bow configurations.

| Bow type/ <u>peak draw wt.</u> | <u>arrow Wt.</u> in grains | At the Bow | | at 18 yds. | | at 30 yds. | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| | | <u>velocity</u> feet p/s | <u>energy</u> ft. lbs. | <u>velocity</u> feet p/s | <u>energy</u> ft. lbs. | <u>velocity</u> feet p/s | <u>energy</u> ft. lbs. |
| Compound 70 lbs. | 525.93 | 248 | 71.84 | 239 | 66.73 | 232 | 62.87 |
| Compound 70 lbs. | 557.68 | 205 | 52.05 | 197 | 48.07 | 195 | 47 |
| Crossbow 150 lbs. | 497.88 | 228 | 57.48 | 218 | 52.55 | 212 | 49.70 |
| Crossbow | 473.58 | 242 | 61.70 | 230 | 55.64 | unable to produce a reading at this distance | |

Common Arguments Against the Crossbow

1. Crossbow hunters are less ethical, dedicated and proficient than conventional bowhunters.

This statement implies the unsubstantiated assumption that all conventional bowhunters are skilled experts who share a common passion and fervor, and are inherently ethical hunters. It also necessarily implies that all hunters who don't use conventional archery tackle are somehow less ethical, dedicate and proficient. This would include all firearms hunters.

2. Crossbow hunters are less ethical because their weapons are more efficient.

This argument is counterintuitive. Because the overriding goal of every ethical hunter is a quick, clean kill, it could be argued that crossbow hunters are actually more ethical - if, in fact, crossbows are more "efficient."

3. The crossbow is a preferred poaching weapon, or will lead to more poaching.

There are no statistics to support this contention. According to Michael J. Budzik, former Director of the Ohio Division of Wildlife, "From a law enforcement standpoint, violation statistics are just about equal between crossbows and vertical bows, and the total of both is an extremely small portion of the overall enforcement effort."

4. Crossbows are unsafe.

There are no statistics to support this contention. According to Michael J. Budzik, former Director of the Ohio Division of Wildlife, "Likewise, our statistics regarding hunter incidents (accidents) show very little difference between the two bow types. Since 1976 we have had

only 21 archery-related hunting incidents; 10 caused by longbow and 11 by crossbow. Harvest data suggest that more people hunt with crossbows than with longbows in Ohio.”

Current Legal Methods for Taking Wild Turkey in Maine

“...shotgun gauges 10 through 20 using shot sizes 4 through 6, or bow and arrow... may be used to hunt Wild Turkeys during the Spring Wild Turkey Hunting Season.”

Current Crossbow Regulations

Alabama - Legal for all hunters hunting game animals with open season dates from October 15 through January 31.

Alaska - are illegal in bow-only areas but can be used where guns and bows are legal weapons.

Arizona - May be used for big game or small game during general seasons and during H.A.M. (Handgun, Archery, Muzzleloader) seasons.

Arkansas - Legal during archery seasons. Only shotguns (10 gauge and smaller) and archery equipment (including crossbows) are legal for turkey hunting.

California - Legal only during general firearms seasons; valid for archery use for disabled hunters with Department issued permit.

Colorado - Legal only during general firearms seasons.

Connecticut - Legal only for physically challenged hunters by permit.

Delaware - Legal Monday through Saturday of November shotgun season and during any gun season in December or January.

Florida - May be used for big game only during the general gun season or by permit from the FWC. Spring Turkey: All legal firearms including bows and arrows, muzzleloading guns, crossbows and handguns.

Georgia - Legal in all seasons

Hawaii - Permitted for big game and small game on private lands, or by Special disabled permit.

Idaho - Permitted during the general firearms season for big game or by permit for physically disable persons.

Illinois - Legal only for physically challenged hunters by permit, and hunters 62 years of age and older without a special permit.

Indiana - Legal only in late archery season and only for antlerless deer, or for use by the physically challenged in the early archery season.

Iowa - Permitted for use by the physically challenged during archery season.

Kansas - Legal only for permanently disabled hunters by permit. Crossbows of at least 125 pounds draw weight will be allowed during the regular firearms deer and turkey seasons.

Kentucky - Permitted for small and big game during archery/crossbow season and general firearms season.

Louisiana - Permitted for use by the physically challenged during archery season by permit and for hunters 60 and older.

Maine - Crossbows legal during firearms deer season, bear season.

Maryland - Crossbows legal during the entire bow season in the Suburban Deer Archery Zone (Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Howard, Montgomery and Prince George's counties). Legal for all hunters October 1-15, 2004 and Jan. 15-31, and spring turkey season.

Massachusetts - Illegal, except for permanently handicapped persons who obtain permit.

Michigan - Crossbows may be used: By anyone 50 years of age or older during the Oct. 1-Nov. 14 bow hunting deer season statewide; By any hunter age 12 and older during any hunting season in Zone 3 of southern Michigan, including the bow hunting season; During any season in which a firearm may be used, for both big and small game statewide.

Minnesota - Permitted for use by the physically challenged during archery season.

Missouri - Permitted during regular firearms season and small game seasons, and for use by the physically challenged in archery season. Prohibited for turkey hunting.

Mississippi - Permitted for use by the physically challenged during archery season.

Montana - Permitted for regular firearms season; prohibited during the archery season.

Nebraska - Legal during deer and pronghorn firearms season and for the physically challenged during archery and regular firearms seasons.

Nevada - Permitted for use by the physically challenged during archery season.

New Hampshire - Legal for physically challenged hunters by permit, or with regular hunting license and crossbow permit during regular firearm deer season.

New Jersey - Permitted for use by the physically challenged only.

New Mexico - Not recognized as a legal hunting weapon.

New York - Illegal

North Carolina - Legal only for handicapped hunters by permit.

North Dakota - Legal for handicapped hunters by permit.

Ohio - Legal during archery season; draw weight must not be less than 75 pounds and no more than 200 pounds. Longbows and crossbows may be used to take legal game.

Oklahoma - Permitted for use by the physically challenged during archery season. Hunters 60 years of age and older are now permitted to use a crossbow.

Oregon - Illegal.

Pennsylvania - Permitted during deer, bear and turkey seasons.

Rhode Island - Legal for physically handicapped.

South Carolina - Archery equipment is now defined as " a bow and arrow, a long bow, a recurve bow, a compound bow, or a cross bow."

South Dakota - Illegal.

Tennessee - Legal during all seasons.

Texas - Permitted in all archery seasons; legal for turkey.

Utah - Legal only for physically challenged hunters by permit.

Vermont - Legal only for handicapped hunters by permit.

Virginia - Archery tackle (includes longbow, recurve, compound, and crossbows) may be used for hunting wild birds and animals.

Washington - Illegal.

West Virginia - Permitted for disabled persons.

Wisconsin - Permitted for use by the physically challenged and Wisconsin residents age 65 or older during archery season.

Wyoming - Legal during archery seasons. There are no restrictions on the type of archery equipment that may be used to hunt turkeys.

Appendix 5C

The Crossbow Dilemma

By: Jerome Richard

The debate over crossbows has been very controversial in Maine especially as it relates to the Special October Archery Season and other hunting opportunities for other game. The Maine Bowhunters Association has never been against the crossbow when it concerns the use by a handicapped hunter who is unable to use a bow.

The debate of the crossbow should be focused on good deer and wildlife management. I could care less if the crossbow had a scope, trigger, or the crossbow is cocked and held, etc. The hunter only gets to harvest one deer annually at the present time. But what would happen if the crossbow is introduced into the archery season? Would there really be an impact to archery hunters or to all other hunters combined? How would the crossbow impact new hunter recruitment and retention for Maine?

Maine is not like some of the other states when it comes to the size of the deer herd or the number of deer per number of available hunters. Most of the southeast is subject to leased hunting land which has limited the number of people willing to pay to hunt which in turn has cause deer population to soar to incredible numbers. When I lived in Alabama from 1980 to 1988, the deer season was 90 days long and you could harvest one deer a day! The bad news is that the deer in Alabama are smaller compared to the deer in Maine. Several years ago the state legislature changed the limit to two deer a day and the season is well over 90 days depending on the method because of the lose of hunters and the continued growth in deer population. Most southern states harvest more deer in one season than the entire deer population of Maine!

When you have a state such as Alabama, Pennsylvania, and Ohio that has a deer management problem most people would not have a problem with what method that you used to harvest as many deer as possible. But what would happen if you are limited to only one deer per year and in most cases you were limited to bucks only?

Some people in Maine have suggested that crossbow should be allowed in the Special October Archery Season. If George Smith from the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine is correct that would mean IF&W would collect an additional 30,000 crossbow licenses sales. A vast majority of these additional license sells would be "cross-over" hunters which are established firearms hunters, not new hunters. That sounds great for generating revenues for IF&W, the crossbow manufactures, and the retail stores that sell the crossbows and accessories, right? But what is the long term effect to deer management in Maine and your hunting opportunities? Will it really generate new hunter recruitment and retention of new and current hunters in Maine?

Most people in Maine would love to harvest more than one deer per year, but the number of deer are not available to supply that kind of harvest. Now if you increase the number of hunters in October from about 14,000 licensed archery hunter to 44,000 licensed archery and crossbow hunters and allow them the either-sex tag than the harvest will probably be quite high. Currently the archery season does not impact the determination of the number of any-deer permits issued, but if there is a huge impact by the crossbow then that might change. To compensate for the higher number of does that possibly would be taken in October, IF&W would have to

reduce the overall number of any-deer permits issues to the firearms hunters in November. That would be a sore subject to some people especially the youth hunter! Then add a severe winter like the one Maine just had in 2007 and that impacts the total number of buck and does available and further reduces the any-deer permits.

Since the regular archery equipment and the crossbow equipment have the same effective range, the hunter is limited to about 20 to 30 yards. A firearms hunter in the right conditions has a lot more effective range than a bow or crossbow. So after the initial infusion of quick cash to IF&W, the manufactures, and the retailers, than the slide into an economic nightmare starts. Once everyone loses the any-deer permit system for archery, crossbows, firearms, and youth day because of over harvest and/or one bad winter it will not take a rocket scientist long to figure out with less opportunities to harvest a deer you probably have two options. One, forget archery and crossbow hunting, and increase your potential to harvest a buck with a firearms since the range is great than the other methods. Two, skip the whole season and save your money for something else or go out-of-state. That does not sound good for hunter recruitment or retention! It's simple supply and demand. Now with the total harvest reduced, deer population declining, and success rates declining, what will happen to the total number of licenses sold and all hunting equipment sales especially archery and crossbows? If less licenses are sold, IF&W is going to make up the lose by increasing license fees, right? More than likely everybody will be in worse shape than when the whole issue started.

Deer harvest success rates must be in balance with the deer population. When the success rate starts to climb and the deer population declines than controls will have to be applied. When the hunting opportunities diminish than chances are the youth hunter especially will find something else to do, then our hunting heritage is in jeopardy.

If what I described above were to happen and the Maine hunting opportunities decrease, will the average Maine hunter be able to afford to look to other states to go hunting? Can they afford to travel, pay for a possible guide or lease to hunt, and a non-resident hunting license? We need to be careful about our decisions here in Maine.

Personally I think the whole crossbow issue needs to be settled on good, sound deer management practices by our state deer biologists and not on pressure from manufactures, retailers, hunting groups, outdoor writers with a financial incentive, and the political winds in Augusta to make some quick cash at the expensive of the wildlife. It is true that the crossbow has worked in other states and is another form of method hunt, but this is Maine, not the southeast with out-of-control deer management and lack of hunters. What works in other places could very well backfire here and take all of us a long time to recover from that decision. If hunters want more opportunities we need to manage our deer herds successfully and have zero tolerance for poaching.

Appendix 5D

Rebuttal to Bob Humphreys' Article

By: Jerome Richard

Bob Humphreys article was derived from data provided by the crossbow manufacturers and does not reflect the views of the Maine Bowhunters Association. The MBA has always supported crossbow use by handicapped-only hunters during any season.

The crossbow decision should be based on sound, science-based Wildlife Management Principles that reflect the conditions similar to Maine. The wrong decision could lead to lost hunting opportunities, loss of hunters, buck-only season for all hunters, and even shorter hunting seasons due to over harvest.

Please note in Bob Humphreys' article that every state in the northern climates considered the crossbow illegal or limited to handicapped hunters during the archery season on deer. This includes Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Colorado, Utah, Idaho, Washington, Oregon and Alaska. That is 22 northern states! Why is that?

Because all these states have extremely sensitive deer herd issues when compared to out-of-control deer management situations like the Southeast which extends from South Carolina, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kentucky, Arkansas and Texas, but excluding Mississippi, North Carolina, and West Virginia. It should be noted that more deer are harvested in each one of these southern states than the entire deer population for the state of Maine.

Please note only 12 of 50 states (24%) (SC, TN, VA, TX, WY, OH, MD, PA, KY, AR, AZ, and AL) allow crossbows with no exceptions. Also, note that these are states that have a tremendous deer herd population many times larger than most northern states. Why so many deer? Are there fewer deer hunters? Is it really hunter recruitment issues, land access issues, or "Leased Hunting" that contributed to the lack of proper deer management and the false belief that crossbows create an opportunity that really does not apply to resolving the issues surrounding the "Leasing Hunting Land" that is so prevalent in the southern states.

Do not be fooled by Bob Humphreys' article as this is an attempt by the crossbow manufacturers to use the turkey hunting season as a way to get the crossbow into the regular archery season for deer. As I have noted before in my article titled "The Crossbow Dilemma" the crossbow could destroy deer hunting opportunities and recruitment in Maine which will also lead to huge funding issues for IF&W. We are struggling to maintain the level of service with the current number of game wardens and wildlife biologist. All our northern neighbor states have already discovered the danger of the crossbow dilemma. Bob makes some of his living writing articles to promote crossbows for the manufacturers basically as an unregistered lobbyist. Please be careful and study all the facts.

The crossbow manufacturers and their representatives would like everyone to believe that a one-size fits all will work for all 50 states regardless of Wildlife Management conditions.

Appendix 5E

MDIFW Analysis of Electronic Registration

MDIFW staff has identified the advantages and disadvantages of several options for the electronic registration of big game animals. The following is an inhouse discussion document and does not imply a Department position on electronic tagging.

MAINTAIN CURRENT REGISTRATION PROCESS

ADVANTAGES

DATA

- Enhances biological data collections in the field
- Enhances field biologist access to hunter and harvested specimen
- Maintains current inputs to big game management systems
- Maintains current system of checks and correction factors
- Provides efficiencies in allowing biological data collections (age, reproductive status, antler characteristics) as part of registration

ENFORCEMENT

- Maintains independent party registration process
- Discourages non-reporting violations
- Enhances law enforcement in the field
- Hardcopy forms allow for field inspection by Department officials and immediate corrections or re-directing of agents

COST

GENERAL

- Registration procedures are established and accepted by stations
- Hardcopy forms allow for temporary interruptions during registration process

DISADVANTAGES

DATA

- Requires manual entry of registration data
- Requires manual entry of biological data
- Return rate of hard copy registration books vary and sometimes are overdue

ENFORCEMENT

COST

- Requires additional fee to cover cost of data entry
- Printing
- Postage

GENERAL

- Requires administration of registration stations
- Requires administration of hardcopy registration forms

MAINTAIN CURRENT REGISTRATION PROCESS (continued)

ADVANTAGES (continued)

- Registration process enhances support of local businesses and economy
- Provides good geographic distribution of stations across the state
- Department can implement improvements to current registration system that will allow for more efficient collection and entry of required data

ADVANTAGES (continued)

IMPLEMENT A SELF-REGISTRATION PROCESS

ADVANTAGES

- Highly convenient for the hunter

DISADVANTAGES

DATA

- Will likely result in reduced hunting opportunity of big game species, especially deer (e.g. fewer any-deer permits). Given low overall harvest numbers of big game species compared to other states, Maine requires high reporting rates of kill in order to have an accurate count of the annual harvest and therefore operate and implement current management systems.
- Radical changes to registration that directly affect current mgt systems should not be implemented unless staff have the time and resources to re-write and design new management systems, i.e., loss of accurate deer kill would create a domino effect in the deer mgt system preventing the biological/scientifically based implementation of any deer permit allocations.
- For deer, Maine is trying to limit harvest through an antlerless permit system, the overwhelming majority of states are trying to increase harvest, this is a fundamental difference between Maine and all other states that drives the management of deer.
- For moose, Maine also limits harvest of a premier resource unique in its population size and distribution among all lower 48 states; already limited by resources and the lack of important data, harvest data and the collection of a high proportion of biological moose data and known harvest is critical to continued management of moose as a bottom line.
- Will likely increase the non-reporting rate of harvested animals, which will have *SIGNIFICANT* impacts to the ability to use the species Management Systems, to guide the sound management of these species.

IMPLEMENT A SELF-REGISTRATION PROCESS (continued)

ADVANTAGES (continued)

DISADVANTAGES (continued)

- Will create problems with getting accurate estimate of big game kill.
- Make it difficult to determine if IFW is meeting publicly derived goals and objectives for each of the species by Wildlife Management District.
- Likelihood of detailed inputs entered incorrectly by required use of phone.
- Anticipated frustrations and errors in using phone pad interface with required confirmations for detailed data, resulting in increased levels of non-reporting and flawed data.
- Maine still retains much of its rural character and while computer technology has advanced rapidly, radical and short time frame changes to the current registration station will be wrought with challenges and problems. It is clear that biological/and enforcement staff support 1) physical registration of big game by a 3rd party and 2) any electronic changes introduced in a controlled and gradual manner and piloted in such a way as to work out registration problems and not mandate changes to stations that are not and/or cannot be fully prepared at this time.
- Require development of system to allow biologists and wardens to have easy and timely access to registration information for biological data collection, CWD sampling and law enforcement.

ENFORCEMENT

- Requires law changes for transporting and legal possession.
- Require development of system to allow biologists and wardens to have easy and timely access to registration information for biological data collection, CWD sampling and law enforcement.

COST

- Anticipated high costs associated with development, implementation and maintenance of phone-in system (based on other state's experiences).
- Additional Department staff time required to provide technical assistance in design and testing an alternative registration system with vendor developers.
- Additional staff time and resources to assess changes in reporting rates and/or input errors that would negatively impact current management system for big game species.

IMPLEMENT A SELF-REGISTRATION PROCESS (continued)

ADVANTAGES (continued)

DISADVANTAGES (continued)

- Additional staff time and resources to implement and test modifications to current models and management systems to compensate for identified changes in data inputs.

IMPLEMENT TAGGING STATION ON-LINE REGISTRATION PROCESS **

ADVANTAGES

DISADVANTAGES

DATA

- Maintains current inputs to big game management system.
- Data is available immediately.
 - Enhances biological data collections in the field.
 - Enhances field biologist access to hunter and harvested specimen.
- Data entry forms can be designed for quality control at time of data entry.
- Allows for continued efficiencies in allowing certain data to be collected as part of registration.
- Avoids lost books or books returned after data has been analyzed.
- May decrease data collection errors.

DATA

- Anticipated issues and potential data loss with power and internet outages.
- If stores are not able or willing to use this system there may be problems with having enough stations geographically across the state to serve all Mainers, and therefore it will be difficult to collect data that represents the whole state; this disadvantage can be overcome by allowing tagging stations that do not have internet or computers to continue to use tagging books.
- Require development of system to allow biologists and wardens to have easy and timely access to registration information for biological data collection, CWD sampling and law enforcement.
- Loss of paper copies of original registration data may be crucial in tracing errors and retaining documents.

Appendix 6

Comments from the Wild Turkey Working Group

- Appendix 6A Bob Humphrey, outdoor writer and turkey hunter
- Appendix 6B Maine Bowhunters Association
- Appendix 6C Maine Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation
- Appendix 6D Maine Farm Bureau
- Appendix 6E National Wild Turkey Federation – Doug Little
- Appendix 6F Sportsman's Alliance of Maine
- Appendix 6G USDA APHIS – Wildlife Services

Appendix 6A

Bob Humphrey Comments

Bob Humphrey
727 Poland Range Road
Pownal, Maine 04069
(207) 688-4966
bob@bobhumphrey.com

Sandy Ritchie
Wildlife Biologist
Habitat Conservation and Special Projects
Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
41 SHS, 284 State Street
Augusta, ME 04333-0041

Re: L.D. 256 Report to the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

Sandy:

Let me begin by complimenting you on a fine job. The final report really came out nicely; and my comments are mostly minor.

- 1) Page 2, end of second pp. Did you leave off the last word? I believe it should read: "Resolve, To Direct the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to Explore Opportunities and Issues Surrounding Wild Turkey Hunting."
- 2) Page 3, under Creation of the 2009..., first sentence. This is a very important point to state "... the perceived increase in the number of nuisance." Make sure the word *perceived* remains in this sentence.
- 3) Page 14, comment about early bow season under Season and weaponry changes, fifth sentence. The parenthetical note provides only one side of the discussion, and could give the reader the mistaken impression that this was a majority opinion, or that this concept is not worthy of pursuing, when in fact it could be a very viable means of increasing non-resident participation (at least it has been in other states).
- 4) Page 15, Brad's list of reasons why all-day hunting is not advised. I seem to recall him reading something but I don't recall it was this extensive or detailed – perhaps it was. Was this list provided to working group in written form? Also, eighth one should read: "spotted in fields" not "spotted infields."
- 5) Page 18, Use of Crossbows, last sentence should read: "The Maine Chapter of the NWTF opposes the use of crossbows at this time because it would be another variable on top of other season changes." That was their reason for opposing.
- 6) Page 23, first paragraph (3.), This wording is far too exclusionary. As is, it limits turkey ADC agents to being members of NWTF or "... other interested sportsmen's groups,..." There needs to be opportunity for any qualified individual that wishes to participate, e.g., current ADC agents that are not NWTF members.
- 7) Page 23, #7. Somewhat the same comment here. The only sportsmen-oriented NGOs mentioned are NWTF and SAM. Perhaps re-word to say something like "MDIFW, with assistance from other stakeholders including, but not limited to NWTF, SAM, SWOAM,

MFB...”

- 8) Page 25. While I do recall we discussed using the 2010 questionnaire as one means to investigate the use of crossbows, I don't believe the group recommended that it be the only means. Furthermore, we did not apply the condition that only "...If an appropriate level of interest is expressed..." should MIDFW investigate crossbow use. I think this should be simplified to say: "MDIFW should investigate allowing the use of crossbows while turkey hunting beginning with the 2013 seasons." Furthermore, the parenthetical comment about agricultural interests and lost arrows is not appropriate in this section. It is already expressed on page 18. Reiterating it in the formal recommendations seems to suggest a subjective bias.

Appendix 6B

Maine Bowhunters Association Comments Jerome Richard, President

Hi Sandy,

Here are my comments listed below.

- On page 4 just a small change. The MBA uses Bowhunters as one word instead of two. Probably doesn't fit the Queen's English, but it works for us.
- On page 14, I would like to note under **Season and weaponry changes** that "Jerome Richard of the MBA was against instituting an early spring bow only season". I believe it was only Bob Humphreys who made this recommendation. I don't want people reading the final document to think that the MBA made this recommendation.
- On page 18, Section 2. Use of Crossbows, I e-mailed Doug Little about his data on crossbows during turkey season in other states and asked specifically which states allowed the crossbows. I will forward his e-mail to you on this question. According to his e-mail I don't see one New England state that allows crossbows during any turkey season spring or fall. I would like to include a statement in this report that says, "According to Doug Little currently there are no New England states that allow turkey hunting in the spring or fall with a crossbow".
- On page 18, Section 2. Use of Crossbows, in the first paragraph at the end I would like to place a statement, "The Maine Bowhunters Association is against the use of crossbows especially during the fall turkey season because it overlaps the archery season on deer which could lead to illegal harvest of deer by crossbow users".
- On page 24 the MBA agrees to the change from 2011 to 2013.
- On page 25, recommendation #6, I disagree with Bob Humphreys and believe you need to keep the concern of the agricultural interest on lost arrows. I would like to also place a statement that "Crossbow use in the fall turkey season would conflict with the current archery season on deer which could lead to illegal deer harvest by crossbow users".

Thanks Sandy for your efforts. It was good to see you again yesterday. Mark Stadler must have you on every working group going, but that good.

Jerome Richard, P.E.

Sr. Project Engineer/Facilities Engineer
Sappi Fine Paper - North America
1329 Waterville Road
Skowhegan, ME 04976
(207) 238-7838
(207) 238-3359 (Fax)

Hi Sandy,

Here is some of the supporting data that I received from Doug Little on which states currently allow crossbows in the spring and fall turkey season. I really believe we need to keep this information available somewhere so people can look back at this again in 2013 when they re-

evaluate the turkey season and weaponry. I think we don't want to make a decision in a vacuum without seeing what our other New England neighbors are doing and find out why they support or do not support things like crossbows during the turkey seasons. Thanks Sandy.

Jerome Richard, P.E.

Sr. Project Engineer/Facilities Engineer
Sappi Fine Paper - North America
1329 Waterville Road
Skowhegan, ME 04976
(207) 238-7838
(207) 238-3359 (Fax)

From: Douglas Little [mailto:dlittle@nwtf.net]
Sent: Friday, December 04, 2009 7:24 AM
To: Richard, Jerome
Subject: RE: Wild Turkey Working Group

Jerome, I copy and pasted the information by state below. I considered the state a Yes for the 13/19 split if they allowed the use of crossbow in either the spring or fall season. Kansas and Kentucky allow it in spring but not fall. A couple of states, South Carolina and Delaware, indicate N/A if they do not allow fall turkey hunting.

Not all states replied to the survey.

I hope this is the data you were looking for.

Doug Little
Certified Wildlife Biologist
NWTF Regional Biologist (NY, MA, RI, CT)
405 Moores Rd
Cornwallville, NY 12418
518-239-4427 (Office/Fax)
518-817-1161 (Cell)

PLEASE NOTE: My new email address is dlittle@nwtf.net

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| STATE | SPRING | FALL |
|--------------|---------------|-------------|
| AL | No | No |
| DE | No | N/A |
| HI | No | No |
| IA | No | No |
| MA | No | No |
| ME | No | No |
| MO | No | No |

| | | |
|----|-----|-----|
| MS | No | No |
| MT | No | No |
| ND | No | No |
| NH | No | No |
| NJ | No | No |
| NM | No | No |
| NY | No | No |
| OK | No | No |
| OR | No | No |
| RI | No | No |
| SD | No | No |
| WV | No | No |
| AR | Yes | Yes |
| AZ | Yes | Yes |
| FL | Yes | Yes |
| IN | Yes | Yes |
| KS | Yes | No |
| KY | Yes | No |
| MD | Yes | Yes |
| MI | Yes | Yes |
| OH | Yes | Yes |
| SC | Yes | N/A |
| TX | Yes | Yes |
| VA | Yes | Yes |
| WY | Yes | Yes |

From: Richard, Jerome [mailto:Jerome.Richard@sappi.com]
Sent: Thursday, December 03, 2009 7:03 PM
To: Douglas Little
Subject: Wild Turkey Working Group

Hi Doug,

I'm reviewing the draft of the Wild Turkey Working Group and I was wondering if you could provide me with some data. On page 18 you mentioned "crossbows are legal in 13 states and illegal in 19". Can you provide me with the states so we can determine are all 19 illegal states located in the northern half of the United States. Thanks.

Jerome Richard, P.E.
Sr. Project Engineer/Facilities Engineer
Sappi Fine Paper - North America
1329 Waterville Road
Skowhegan, ME 04976
(207) 238-7838
(207) 238-3359 (Fax)

Appendix 6C

Maine Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation Comments
Brian Smith, President

Hi Sandy,

Thanks for the great work preparing the Draft Report. It looks great to me and I concur with no changes until 2013. I have my NWTF Board meeting on Dec. 2nd at 7:00pm at the Sydney Office. Can I share any of this report with the board, or perhaps have Kelsey do it?

Brian

Appendix 6D

Maine Farm Bureau Comments
Jon Olson, Executive Secretary

Hi Sandy,

Thanks for the report. Excellent description of the summaries of our discussions and recommendations.

I support not increasing crossbows or shotgun opportunities until 2013. This is to acknowledge our recommendation to the MDIFW of not making additional changes for a period of three years.

Jon

Appendix 6E

National Wild Turkey Federation Comments Doug Little, Regional Biologist (New York and New England)

Sandy, I reviewed the DRAFT report and have the following comments....

- Excellent job putting the report together. Lots of information put on the table so it was a difficult task to keep track of everything and you did a great job!
- Page 8: Under Potential Strategies/Comments. The last sentence in the last bullet indicates that "NWTF is working on a study". NWTF does not currently have a study with any partners for the issue of wrapped bales. I commented during the discussion that the issue is one I have been trying to think of an adequate way to study. But as this point we do not have a formal research project to look into this issue.
- Page 9: In my opinion the entire section on blueberry crop issues should be preceded by a statement recognizing the current research project undertaken by UMaine to study the wild turkey impacts on the blueberry crop. The problems identified on page 9 assume that crops are being damaged. The study is acknowledged on page 10. But a statement at the beginning of the blueberry section could help temper any assumptions that could be drawn from the problem statements identified on page 9.
- Page 12 under Apple Orchards. The problem description needs editing to clean up first sentence.
- On page 16 there is a reference to a vote on the daily closure in the spring season that indicates 3 support all day and 11 were opposed. I would not have been in position to vote on the issue as a representative of NWTF at the national level so I am hoping I am not on record of voting on the issue one way or the other. I would have left that to Brian Smith as the representative of the state chapter.
- Page 23. With respect to Maine Chapter NWTF members assisting MDIF&W and landowners with nuisance issues (either under item 3, 5 or both). I recommend including a statement in the report that Maine Chapter NWTF members are volunteers. The availability of volunteers to address issues a landowner may have will depend on location of property and timing. Volunteers may not always be available near a specific location or at a specific time. I think it is important to make it clear in the report that the volunteers are volunteers.
- Page 24. Good catch regarding the conflicting recommendations. I am OK with changing the recommendations from 2011 to 2013 as suggested in the document.

Thanks again for putting all of this information together. Let me know if you have any questions about any of my comments.

Doug Little
Certified Wildlife Biologist
NWTF Regional Biologist (NY, MA, RI, CT)
405 Moores Rd
Cornwallville, NY 12418

Appendix 6F

Sportsman's Alliance of Maine Comments George Smith, Executive Director

Response to Turkey Working Group's Report
From George Smith
To Sandy Ritchie
November 25, 2009

Sandy – Thanks for doing a splendid job pulling all of this together in a report. Here are my comments and requests.

Introduction

- 1) Should include an accounting of the changes enacted by the legislature this year, in response to SAM's turkey bill. Emphasize that these are significant changes that may expand participation in both the spring and fall hunts and these changes drove the group's decision not to seek any additional changes for 3 years. If you can give SAM some credit for proposing the changes and successfully lobbying at the legislature for them, that would be appreciated.
- 2) Should include real numbers of lottery applicants and license sales for the history of the program, and offer a bit of analysis of what appears to me to be a decrease in participation and interest in the spring hunt.

Electronic Tagging

SAM continues to advocate for website and telephone options for tagging turkeys. I would like the report to note this fact.

Your Note to Working Group: I agree with the changes you made in dates.

Thanks!

Appendix 6G

USDA, APHIS, Wildlife Services Comments Kirk Shively, Wildlife Disease Biologist

Hi Sandy,

Like the other commentators, I too would like to thank you for your hard work in facilitating the working group and in putting these recommendations together, and also for including Wildlife Services in the process.

A thought about Bob's comment on page 3: Although you may choose to leave the word 'perceived' in there, the increase in complaints does appear to be real. I'm not sure what IFW's data shows, but Wildlife Services' records indicate that since 2005 complaint calls have steadily gone up, starting with 4 in 2005 and 2006, to 5 in 2007, 6 in 2008, and 16 as of our first working group meeting in August 2009.

In reference to Doug's comment about the bottom of page 8, Wildlife Services is well qualified to undertake studies such as mentioned. We recommend that studies be conducted to investigate the issue of damage to wrapped bales and silage bags, to determine the role that turkeys may or may not play in the damage.

When I read the parenthetical note that Bob referred to on page 14, I didn't really get the impression at all that the majority felt that way. On the contrary, the way it reads to me is that it was a minority that didn't support an earlier bow season.

I agree with Doug's comments on page 23. However, is this restricting turkey conflict management to *only* that group of volunteers or are authorized ADC agents able to continue providing abatement services? Why would we treat the management of turkey damage differently than damage by other ubiquitous game animals? In other words, what are the landowner's options if the volunteers aren't available or if/when IFW no longer wishes to trap and relocate (if we run out of spots in the future)? Perhaps we need a clarifying point in the document.

Pg 23, #5, last line: should read "...addressed promptly."

In response to Bob's comment on #7, page 23, if you include IFW, 3 out of the 5 organizations listed are sportsmen-oriented, and even without IFW, 50% of the listed groups are sportsmen's groups. If any additional groups were to be added, it should be from another type of stakeholder.

The change to 2013 suggested on page 24 seems appropriate.

Thanks again for your hard work and also for allowing us to chime in on the draft. I hope the comments were helpful rather than muddying up the water.

-Kirk