

PANWTF introduces Turkey Hunting Cooperators network

- *Committee looks to gather more in-the-field information on Wild Turkeys*

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The Pennsylvania State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation (PANWTF) is seeking turkey hunters to participate in a Pennsylvania Turkey Hunter Cooperator program to gather more in-the-field information throughout the state.

This ongoing data collection network is modeled after very successful programs that have been in place for many years for wild turkeys in West Virginia and Virginia as well as for ruffed grouse in Pennsylvania.

The Wild Turkey Management Committee of the PANWTF is looking for 20 volunteer participants from each of the six regions of the state -- northwest, southwest, northcentral, southcentral, northeast and southeast. The regions will coincide with the same geographic split that Pennsylvania Game Commission currently uses for wildlife management.

Cooperators are required to have e-mail capability. The exchange of information will be done via e-mail to save time and expense.

"We are also only looking for members that are willing to take this on for the long haul because we are looking for consistent and meaningful information," said Jim Panaro of the PANWTF Wild Turkey Committee. "West Virginia DNR just finished their 26th year of this program and the Pennsylvania Game Commission has been doing the same for grouse for over 40 years. Both state agencies have gained a wealth of knowledge on both species over that time."

Panaro said the program will evolve over time, but the initial plans start with this upcoming 2009 spring season and continue from pre-season scouting through the end of June. This will be a two-part survey with information received through a daily log that hunters will keep as well as a questionnaire that cooperators will fill out after the season has ended and poults are hatching.

All information will be e-mailed to volunteer participants asking for their input from personal observations during their time in the field. Questions will be in regards to in-the-field observations related to such things as gobbling activity, brood sightings, hunting pressure, hatch timing and predation. The Pennsylvania program is now finalized and ready to roll out. The information collected would be then be tabulated and tracked over a period of years to look at positive or negative trends, and to use as another vital management input to go along with information that is currently being collected by the PGC.

"I hope that the information collected will complement the PGC data, but even conflicting data could be helpful if it identifies something that may be occurring in a particular region versus another," Panaro said.

If you have a serious interest in being involved in this exciting new program or for more information, contact Panaro at jpanaro@panwtf.org. The first 20 members that respond from each of the six regions will be selected.

For more information about the Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Wild Turkey, please visit www.panwtf.org.

Press release information contributed by Jim Panaro on behalf of PANWTF Wild Turkey Management Committee.