

**NWTF Technical Committee Representatives' Report - PA Chapter NWTF
Board of Directors Meeting, January 7, 2008**

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Harvest Management

Current harvest report cards received from the fall 2007 wild turkey season are up approximately 5% from the same time last year, but down 10% from the same time in 2005. Final report card figures will be available in March.

Wild Turkey Season Recommendations

Fall season recommendations are based on trends in 2 independent population indices; spring harvest densities (harvest per square mile), and summer WCO turkey sightings (number of turkeys seen per 1,000 mi driven). We recommend maintaining season length changes for at least 3 consecutive years to track any changes in population trends. With this in mind, PGC staff recommended no changes for the fall 2008/spring 2009 turkey seasons to the Board of Commissioners. Specifically, Fall 2008:

WMU 1A - maintain 2 weeks – Spring harvest densities still below the level when we made the last season extension to 3 weeks in 2002.

1B – maintain 2 weeks - Spring harvest densities are similar to the long-term average, but summer sightings are still down slightly and substantially below levels when we made the last season extension to 2 weeks in 1999.

2A – maintain 2 weeks - The season was shortened in 2007, so we need at least 3 years of data.

2B - maintain 3 weeks – Due to limited hunting access in this WMU it is unlikely that fall season length impacts the population on a WMU basis.

2C – maintain 2 weeks – Although spring harvest densities are increasing, they are below the level when we made the last season extension to 3 weeks in 2000. It appears that this population is responding well to the shortened season as summer sightings have been steadily increasing since the season was shortened in 2004.

2D – maintain 3 weeks - However, as recommended last year, monitor closely because spring harvest densities are below average, when we made the last season extension to 3 weeks (2002), and summer sighting indices have trended downward since its peak prior to the 3-week season.

2E – maintain 2 weeks – Although spring harvest densities and summer sightings are increasing, spring harvest densities are below the level when we made the last season extension to 3 weeks in 2002. The 2-week season coupled with record high summer sightings this year may very well assist this population to rebound.

2F - maintain 2 weeks - The season was shortened in 2007, so we need at least 3 years of data.

2G - maintain 3 weeks – Although population indices are below levels from 2000-2003, the 2007 values are similar to the long-term trend. A 2-week fall season may allow the population to increase, but currently we lack fall harvest rate data to verify this. A 3-week season is traditional in this WMU and hunters seem to be satisfied with the low harvest densities.

3A, 3B, 3C & 4E - maintain 3 weeks – Spring harvest densities are stable and summer sightings are above record levels.

3D, 4C & 4D - maintain 3 weeks - Spring harvest densities and summer sightings are slightly above long-term trends.

4A - maintain 2 weeks for at least two more years – Population indices are showing increasing trends but the previous 3 years of indices are not yet above the population index values when the season length was reduced, as recommended in our turkey management plan. This WMU demonstrates a repeated pattern of adverse effects from a longer season.

4B - maintain 2 weeks – The last 3 years of spring harvest density indices have been above the values when the season length was reduced, but summer sighting indices are still well below these values, plus, this WMU demonstrates a repeated pattern of adverse effects from a longer season.

5A – maintain closed. Population trend indices from the Michaux State Forest are showing increasing trends, but the population is still quite low. If and when the fall season opens, I recommend a limited hunt (perhaps 3-days, mid-week) due to the hunting pressure this isolated population receives.

5B – maintain closed - Population indices are low, populations could be vulnerable to overharvest in this fragmented habitat, and the closed season will maximize the success of the population restoration efforts of wild turkey transfers (2001-2003) into the area.

5C – maintain 6-day season - However, continue to monitor closely because spring harvest densities continue to show a declining trend since decreasing the season by 1 day in 2005. Turkey populations may be vulnerable to overharvest in this WMU due to fragmented habitat.

5D - maintain 6-day season – Dataset is limited. Due to the high human population in this area this population level may be acceptable.

Spring 2009:

Spring Youth – statewide (bearded birds) – maintain ½ day, noon closure, April 18, 2009.

Spring – statewide (bearded birds) – maintain 26 days, noon closure, April 25-May 25, 2009.

PRELIMINARY 2007 Turkey Hunting-Related Shooting Incidents

The preliminary results for Spring 2007 Turkey HRSIs show 5 non fatal incidents. One was self-inflicted (unintentional discharge) and the other 4 victims were mistaken for game. All victims were hunting; 2 victims were standing, one was walking/running and two were sitting.

Preliminary results for the Fall 2007 turkey season show one incident (nonfatal), the lowest number of incidents ever recorded. The previous record was 2 incidents in both 2003 and 2005 (4 incidents in 2006). The one incident, from Sullivan County, involved a centerfire rifle at a distance of 151 – 300 ft. and the victim, who was wearing fluorescent orange and standing, was mistaken for game and was hunting. Summaries for spring and fall seasons are provided at the end of this report.

Wild Turkey Spring Harvest Rates and Annual Survival Rates Study

The third field season of this four-year study will begin in January. Thanks to the continued support of the PANWTF, most equipment has been purchased and legbands are being distributed for this winter's trapping efforts, except the bait and hay. At the end of November, all three states had closed their hunting seasons. Seven fall harvests were reported in New York. Ohio reported four birds, one of those was a spring harvest. Pennsylvania had nine fall harvests reported. One report was only a band located by a young man walking through the woods (Bedford Cty), and another was a bird banded as an adult in New York in 2006 and was harvested in Potter County.

Annual NWTF Convention and Sport Show, Atlanta, GA

Thanks to the generous support from the Pennsylvania State Chapter, the Game Commission will again have excellent representation at the National Convention. Attendees will include Commissioners, Executive Director Carl Roe, Wildlife Conservation Officer of the Year award recipient Beth Fife (Allegheny County), Joe Kurz award recipient Shayne Hoachlander (Land Manager, NW Region), and PGC-NWTF Technical Committee Representative Bob Boyd.