

**NWTF Technical Committee Representatives' Report - PA Chapter NWTF
Board of Directors Meeting, Pennfield, PA
March 4, 2007**

Harvest Management

Final fall turkey season report card figures currently are being tallied in Harrisburg and will be sent to me soon for analysis.

PANWTF Habitat Superfund Committee

Pennsylvania Game Commission technical committee member, Mary Jo Casalena, and Chief of Game Lands Planning and Development Division, Ben Jones, are members of this committee. Despite the smaller habitat budget again this year in order to set aside monies to be used as annual funding, the committee approved, during the February 4, 2007 meeting, funding 53 projects for a total of \$107,599.30 for wild turkey habitat throughout Pennsylvania plus \$10,000 for the seed subsidy program. Of these projects, the Pennsylvania Game Commission will receive funding of \$76,260.50 for 37 projects on State Game Lands and cooperator lands, for 2007. In light of the Game Commission's current budget shortfall, when dollars for planning and implementation of wildlife habitat work are so critical, it is through cooperators such as the PANWTF, that the Game Commission is able to continue its mission.

Wild Turkey Management Plan Revision

After reviewing public comments and making revisions, the Pennsylvania Game Commission has posted the updated wild turkey management plan for 2006-2015 on its website. The 71-page report can be viewed on the agency's website (www.pgc.state.pa.us), by selecting "Hunting" in the left-hand navigation column on the homepage, then clicking on the photograph of the wild turkey and choosing "Wild Turkey Management Plan."

This revision to the 5-year 1999 management plan identifies the strategic goal, objectives and strategies for guiding wild turkey management and research decisions through 2015. On Oct. 14, 2005, the Game Commission began accepting public comment on a draft revised wild turkey management plan. After reviewing the public comments, modifications were made to the plan, and public comment again was sought beginning Oct. 24, 2006. After considering the second round of public comments, the plan was finalized and approved by Carl G. Roe, Game Commission Executive Director.

Wild Turkey Spring Harvest Rates and Annual Survival Rates Study

Our second year of this 4-year study with New York and Ohio is underway. Each state is to leg band 300 gobblers each winter. To date Pennsylvania has leg banded 218 males, Ohio has banded more than 200 and New York has banded 300⁺. Each Region is to trap at least 50 male turkeys. Regional totals are: Northwest = 10; Southwest = 45; Northcentral = 20; Southcentral = 39; Northeast = 43; and Southeast = 61. Although PA got off to a slow start due to warm weather, trapping conditions improved with the cold weather. Leg banding will continue through the end of March, or until turkey flocks disperse for the spring breeding season.

Wildlife Protection Proposal for WMU 5A

Please give consideration to the attached proposal for funding two (2) non-mechanical turkey decoys for law enforcement use beginning this spring in WMU 5A and other areas with the PGC's Southcentral Region. This request is consistent with the turkey management plan (strategy 5.2), and is a product of the WMU 5A Wild Turkey Task Force.

Annual NWTF Convention and Sport Show, Nashville, TN

The Game Commission sincerely thanks the Pennsylvania Chapter NWTF for hosting the Wildlife Conservation Officer of the Year award recipient (WCO Brad Kreider, Northampton County), and Land Manager of the Year award recipient (Forester Dave Henry, Southeast Region) at the 2007 NWTF National Convention and Sports Show. They enjoyed this unique opportunity and learned a great deal more regarding all that the NWTF does for our wild turkey resource and hunting heritage.

Submitted by:

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From: D. J. David
WCO, Adams County

Subj: Turkey Decoys for Enforcement in the Michaux State Forest Region

Background: There are 6 WCO districts within and encompassing the Michaux State Forest in Adams, Cumberland, and Franklin Counties. Throughout these areas, it is estimated that there is significant turkey poaching, much of it through road hunting. Conventional enforcement strategies to curtail this unlawful activity are for the most part ineffective, due to the mobility and swiftness characteristic of road hunting, and compounded by the relative ease for criminals to conceal unlawfully taken birds (as compared to other big game).

A way to level the playing field in apprehending poachers, as well as to gain voluntary compliance through widespread news of poachers being prosecuted, would be in the employment of turkey decoys. Enforcement operations utilizing turkey decoys would entail setting them a few yards off a selected roadway and simply waiting for poachers or road hunters to come by and try to shoot at them. In essence, we are bringing the game to the poachers, vastly increasing the odds of successful enforcement. An added bonus is that a real turkey is then spared.

Proposal: A robotically moving turkey facsimile (decoy) from the nation's only known manufacturer of such items costs approximately \$1,200 plus shipping from Wisconsin. As this is an exceedingly high price for one decoy, it would be much more cost effective to obtain a static turkey mount. The effectiveness of a non-moving decoy may be less than a robotic one, but having up to three of them would present the image of a small flock and thereby increase its effectiveness to the equivalent or even the betterment of one robotic turkey. Furthermore, the maintenance of a static decoy would be much simpler and less expensive.

Here in Adams County, there is a taxidermist who would be willing to make turkey mounts for the Game Commission for only \$275 each. A total of three of these would cost 33% less than a single robotic decoy. Maintenance costs can be recovered by requesting the courts attach restitution as part of prosecutions involving the decoys.

In an area where decoys have not been used (at least not often or not for a long time), wildlife thieves will initially be less wary of decoys and it generally shouldn't take much to be fooled by them, even a single one that doesn't move. It is during this period when multiple decoys used concurrently in multiple locations would likely prove to be effective, resulting in an overall high success rate per hour spent using them. As the criminal element evolves in becoming more cautious and wary of decoys, then multiple decoys in one location could be employed to enhance believability and hence effectiveness.

Regarding game law charges against people who participate in road hunting / poaching of turkeys, an individual could be fined up to \$1,300 for a single incident, with the average penalty probably in the \$500 to \$1,000 range. At least one-year revocation of hunting privileges would be assessed in most cases. In effect, one prosecution could potentially make the entire initial investment pay off.