

PA Chapter NWTF Wild Turkey Management Committee will be working on these issues and topics in 2008-2009

PGC and PANWTF Wild Turkey Management, Turkey Hunting Accomplishments, 1958-2008

Presented by Past WTM Committee Chairman Don Heckman [this is my last official Wild Turkey Management Committee report as a member of the PA Chapter NWTF Board of Directors after serving 33 years on the Board, my heart, soul, commitment, actions, passions, sweat, tears, hopes and dreams are embedded throughout this report.]

Wild Turkey Management changes require PGC Staff and Commissioner overview.

1) Support revising PGC Management Plan For Wild Turkeys In Pennsylvania - final adoption February 21, 2007 by PGC Executive Staff, COMPLETE;

2) Support revised PGC Management Plan For Wild Turkeys In Pennsylvania, 2006-2015, operational with 47 strategies documented, measuring strategies as outlined, and the plan fully funded for 10 years;

3) Northeast Wild Turkey Population Model - implement in wild turkey management plan - PA NWTF has \$15,000 invested in development; model data and modeling results are requirements for future wild turkey management decisions;

4) Recommendation to extend last day of spring gobbler season to May 31 --- Commissioner's approved Memorial Day, May 26, 2008 as last day of 2008 spring gobbler season under final rule making on April 18, 2007 Commissioner meeting; Commissioner's approved Memorial Day, May 25, 2009 as last day of 2009 spring gobbler season;

5) Recommendation for Mentored Youth Hunting to including fall turkey hunting season in regulation;

6) Recommendation to expanding youth spring gobbler hunting to all day;

7) Recommendation to expanding youth spring gobbler to more than one day;

8) Recommendation to expanding regular spring gobbler season to all day hunting starting 2011, after 4 year gobbler leg band research project is completed in 2009 and project evaluation is completed by 2010;

9) Continue recommendations to reduce WMU fall season lengths as management plan setting fall season guidelines are determined; 2007 recommendation WMU 2A, 2F, 2G be reduced to 2 weeks based on current field data, harvest

densities information, population densities and hunter densities, as charted measurements outlined in the wild turkey management plan; to increase fall season lengths when management data supports regulation change; Commissioner's approved 2A, 2F for 2 week fall season, 2G remains 3 weeks due to social and political issues, 4D increased to 3 weeks as final rule making at April 18, 2007 Commissioner meeting; [what will Fall 2009 WMU recommendations be?]

10) Additional second spring gobbler regulation - continue review and recommend additional changes if/as needed;

11) State-wide gobbler leg band research - first year 2006 completed, second year 2007 completed, third year 2008 completed, fourth year for project Winter 2009; first three years of research project funding support from NWTF and PANWTF is \$145,870 from NWTF Grant In Aid and PA Chapter NWTF Hunting Heritage Super Fund for research project equipment and materials; PGC funded administrative, staff and transportation requirements, other agency project expenses; [on-going - on schedule]

12) Four year state-wide gobbler leg band study will be completed in 2009 - final project results and recommendations will be compiled by 2010; submit next wild turkey research proposal in 2008/2009 and request funding for state-wide hen telemetry study for 4 years - 2010-2013. [telemetry is Wild Turkey Management Committee and PANWTF Board recommendation]

Legislation changes require Governor signature.

1) PGC hunting license increase legislation - supporting need for PGC additional revenue, and supporting alternative funding option recommendations; [hunting license back tag and antlerless deer increase as proposed in SB 1527 will be reviewed at August Board meeting; and alternative funding bill HB 1676 has already been reviewed by PANWTF Board and approved for support, with our recommended for non game non fish species, infrastructure, spending allocations]

2) Turkey Hunting License - continue with our position statement, articles and news release supporting need for combined spring and fall turkey hunting license, [old 2006 - HB 2601]; support fully funded wild turkey management plan to complete yearly objectives and strategies; [on-going recommendation; need to get further PGC and Legislative verbal and/or written support for a legislative bill or amendment]

3) Turkey dogs for fall hunting season, providing support material to PA Turkey Dogs Association, SB 580 Signed - Complete; [can be removed]

4) Support Sunday hunting as regulated by PGC [HB 904], required legislation to change Title 34 Game Law; another legislative bill HB 779 is being

suggested for our support; [need to review this legislation at August Board meeting]

5) Do not support legislation [Title 34 Game Code] through legislative wording that changes PGC seasons and bag limits; seasons and bag limits are PGC Regulation [Title 58 Regulation Code]. [on-going policy statement]

Other PA NWTF Board Committee actions requiring PGC Staff and Commissioner Overview.

1) Spring gobbler season Orange regulation, recommendation to remove wording "must be worn at all times while moving", replace with hunter choice wording; agenda item for October 2, 2007 PGC Commissioner meeting; January 2008 PGC Commissioner's voted to eliminate mandatory spring season orange while moving regulation, COMPLETE; [can be removed]

2) Comprehensive PGC wild turkey hunter safety module - NWTF Turkey Hunter Safety DVD provided to PGC HTE classes and availability to general hunting public; helping PGC reach out to 300,000+- turkey hunters with additional turkey hunter safety and ethics information and material; Turkey Hunter Safety education tri-fold pamphlet; NWTF Turkey Hunter Safety Task Force material; [on-going; NWTF, Pennsylvania edition, Turkey Hunting Success and Safety brochure has been completed prior to 2008 Spring Gobbler season; sent to all Local Chapter President's, published in Turkey Talk summer issue, added to panwtf.org web site along with PGC/PANWTF IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET poster, used for PANWTF spring turkey hunting safety news release, PGC inserted in their 2008-2009 Hunting and Trapping Digest, pages 74-75, further recommending PGC use as insert for 2009 second spring gobbler tag mailing; looking for further turkey hunter and media outreach suggestions for Fall 2008 and Spring 2009 turkey hunting seasons]

3) Turkey hunter safety and ethics - HRSI 5 year trends are declining, work with turkey hunters and PGC to continue HRSI trending -- PGC Staff report due at June 2007 Commissioner meeting; [on-going review of HRSI information and need to be able to reach out to 300,000+- turkey hunters with safety and ethics information; PGC Hunting and Trapping digest has been an excellent source for distribution information and PANWTF continues to thank and work with PGC on these important hunting safety and ethics information and materials]

4) Annually review of meeting minutes from PGC Executive Staff and PA NWTF June meeting as provided by PGC Wild Turkey Biologist Mary Jo Casalena; 2008 meeting minutes have been forwarded for final review and update; copy of meeting minutes for PA NWTF Board of Directors and NWTF Staff are available; important wild turkey management criteria and decision making foundations have been accomplished since these joint partnership yearly meetings started back in the mid 1980's. [on-going meetings fully supported by PANWTF for

information and support of wild turkey management and increased turkey hunting opportunities]

5) NWTF wild turkey management outreach programs - Wild Turkey Woodlands, fund HHSF Habitat, Safety Education, Land Acquisition, Habitat programs, Conservation seed programs, Project HELP, Operation Appleseed, Operation Oak, Get In The Game - Hunting Heritage Club, other budgeted HHSF Super Fund expenditures, support funding for NWTF Pennsylvania Wild Turkey Management Plan, continue with PANWTF articles and news releases to Tell The Story; [on-going with requirements in Pennsylvania to improve communications and marketing, create and use media advertising, increase grass roots turkey hunter memberships, banquet and outreach events memberships, and upper level sponsor memberships]

NWTF Pennsylvania Comprehensive Wild Turkey Management Plan.

1) NWTF Wild Turkey Management Plan - support management plan objectives and recommendations, provide for fully funded management plan criteria as directed by NWTF Wild Turkey Biologist and NWTF Conservation Programs. [Bob Eriksen will continue to provide NWTF updates, oversight, and recommendations]

As of April 18, 2008 wild turkey management and turkey hunting accomplishments in Pennsylvania since 1958:

PANWTF supports a fully funded PGC Management Plan For Wild Turkeys In Pennsylvania and partners with PGC to accomplish these 47 strategies in the revised management plan. As of April 18, 2008 these are key wild turkey management accomplishments and turkey hunting regulations made since 1958. These 46 accomplishments, current PANWTF regulation recommendations, and revised wild turkey management plan objectives and strategies will drive PA Chapter NWTF's wild turkey management and turkey hunting recommendations for future decades.

1950's - 1960's:

1) PGC begins full-scale wild turkey trap and transfer to expand and repopulate wild turkeys throughout Pennsylvania in suitable, but unoccupied wild turkey habitat.

2) PGC stopped winter-feeding of wildlife due to research results on lack of benefits.

3) PGC wild turkey biologists Jerry Wunz and Arnie Hayden doing several wild turkey population, habitat, regional research projects, and PGC Game News articles on wild turkey management.

4) Spring gobbler season started in 1968 with one-week season.

1970's - 1980's:

5) Spring gobbler season start date moved to later in April from management data recommendations.

6) Spring gobbler season is expanded to two weeks in 1972, three weeks in 1975, four weeks in 1984.

7) Pennsylvania State Chapter NWTF formed in June 1975 in State College.

8) Escalating and improving trap and transfer both in state and out-of-state in the 1970's, 1980's, 1990's.

9) Closing PGC game farm production of turkeys in 1980-1981.

10) Established turkey management areas - TMA's - in 1985 to effectively manage wild turkey populations at more local levels.

11) NWTF and PA Chapter begin state Super Fund in 1985 to support habitat management, safety and education, land acquisition, other wild turkey management requests, state and local chapter wild turkey projects.

12) Continued use of wild turkey in-state trap and transfer in suitable but unoccupied habitat to expand wild turkey populations.

13) Last regional wild turkey research project completed by Arnie Hayden in 1988, until 1999.

1990's:

14) Expanded or reduced fall season lengths since 1990 to manage and improve wild turkey populations due to bad recruitment, bad spring hatch, bad winters.

15) New mandatory PGC turkey hunting fluorescent orange regulation changes begin in 1992-1993, without PANWTF support.

16) Reduced mandatory PGC fluorescent orange regulation changes to today's regulations in 1995, with PANWTF support.

17) PGC Wild Turkey Biologists Bill Drake completes first 5-year PGC Management Plan For Wild Turkeys In Pennsylvania and is adopted in April 1999.

18) TMA 7B Wild Turkey Task Force started in 1996-1997 to determine dramatic decline of wild turkey population on Michaux State Forest, PGC and DCNR staff participated in task force meetings with PANWTF coordinating and facilitating wild turkey task force.

19) TMA 7B wild turkey hen radio telemetry research study in 1999-2001 on Michaux State Forest to determine causes of a suppressed wild turkey population, partially funded by \$82,000 contribution from PANWTF.

2000's:

20) PGC signed MOU with NWTF to partially fund NWTF Regional Biologist to assist the agency with all forms of wild turkey management and research.

21) PGC creates wild turkey web page on web site to provide accurate public information and education on wild turkey management and research in 2000.

22) Wild turkey in-state trap and transfer in southeast used to expand population into further suitable habitat in 2000-2003. This completed the agency's wild turkey restoration program with over 3,500 wild turkeys transferred within Pennsylvania and to 8 other states.

23) Closing fall turkey hunting seasons in TMA 9A [now WMU 5A] in 2001, TMA 9B [now WMU 5B] in 2003.

24) Record number of wild turkey in Pennsylvania in 2001, 410,000 estimated statewide wild turkey population.

25) Prescribed burn policy approved for use as habitat management tool on State Game Lands in 2001.

26) PGC completes turkey hunter survey to determine hunter attitudes, characteristics, and satisfaction in 2001.

27) Improving turkey hunting safety portion of PGC HTE course, adding turkey hunting safety section and questions to HTE test in 2001.

28) Northeastern states commissioned development of regional wild turkey population model in 2001, partially funding by \$15,000 PANWTF contribution.

29) Use of manmade blinds to hunt turkeys is legal, legislation signed in 2002, and regulation completed for 2003 hunting season.

30) PANWTF, NWTF, and other state conservation organizations oppose PGC proposed regulation to increase mandatory fluorescent orange for fall hunting seasons, proposed regulation was not adopted.

31) PGC permit required prior to releasing farm-pen raised turkeys, to help eliminate release of game-farm turkeys.

32) Wild turkey management now accomplished using 22 Wildlife Management Units starting in 2003.

- 33) Closed WMU 5A [old TMA 7B] to fall turkey hunting in 2003, recommendation from TMA 7B Wild Turkey Task Force.
- 34) Research continued on Michaux State Forest [WMU 5A] to determine turkey usage of herbaceous openings.
- 35) Established 6 Game Commission regional Wildlife Management Supervisors, to provide among other tasks, direct technical assistance to private landowners and agency staff.
- 36) Special Saturday youth spring gobbler hunting day established by regulation one week before regular spring gobbler season starts.
- 37) NWTF Wild Turkey Biologists Bob Eriksen and PGC Wild Turkey Biologist Mary Jo Casalena begin series of informational, educational articles for PGC Hunting and Trapping Digest, PGC Game News, and PANWTF Turkey Talk.
- 38) PGC Wild Turkey Biologists Mary Jo Casalena presents TMA 7B wild turkey study project research paper as part of NWTF's 9th Wild Turkey Symposia and Status in North America in December 2005.
- 39) Fall turkey hunting WMU season lengths are reduced in several WMU's between 2004 and 2007 based on wild turkey biologist's management data and fall season length guidelines due to poor reproduction.
- 40) NWTF and PA Chapter Hunting Heritage Super Fund expenditures exceed \$4,000,000 in 2006 for wild turkey projects and events in Pennsylvania.
- 41) Statewide second spring gobbler tag issued in 2006, regulations added in 2005, legislation signed in 2004; first year 2006 - 8,040 licenses sold.
- 42) State wide first-ever PGC gobbler leg band study started in 2006, first year completed of 4 year research study, being partially funded by NWTF and PANWTF for Pennsylvania, study will determine "wild turkey harvest rates and annual survival rates", and is being coordinated with Ohio and New York state wildlife agency studies.
- 43) Mentored Youth Hunting Program initiated in 2006 for spring gobbler, squirrel, and groundhogs, turkey hunting starts in 2007 for spring gobbler season only.
- 44) PGC Wild Turkey Biologists Mary Jo Casalena completes revisions for updating 2006-2015 PGC Management Plan For Wild Turkeys In Pennsylvania, management plan adopted in February 2007.

45) Spring gobbler season length expanded to include Memorial Day 2008 based on wild turkey biologists management data and PANWTF support, PANWTF will continue recommendation for season length to be lengthened to May 31.

46) Spring gobbler season regulation for mandatory use of orange removed by vote of PGC Board of Commissioner's at January 29, 2008 board meeting to voluntary use of orange - hunter's choice, as supported and recommended by PA Chapter NWTF Board of Director's.