

This is a draft statement for review and decision making by PANWTF Board of Directors.

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As you are all aware PGC Commissioners adopted under proposed rule making for 2010 fall hunting seasons and bag limits to start the state-wide bear season on 3rd Saturday, November 20, with 2 additional days on Monday and Tuesday only, while removing extended bear season from 2010 fall bear hunting season.

Also during the fall turkey hunting season in the WMU's open for 3 weeks to remove the 3rd Saturday from the fall hunting season. Small game season will still be open on that Saturday state-wide.

I believe that covers those species hunting season proposals. If additional information can be added please do so.

This proposed Saturday bear season opener presents several issues to the Hen Harvest Rate Study. Below is a list of issues and reasons why PA Chapter NWTF can not support the early Saturday bear season opener, can not support the closure of the 3rd Saturday for fall turkey season, and reasons why the Hen Harvest Rate Study can not be jeopardized.

As you know I emailed all the Commissioner's with my personal issues and recommendations back in January. I talked at length with Jay Delaney at the Convention about these 3 issues, Hen Harvest Rate Study, 3rd Saturday being closed in 3 week WMUs, and possible early Saturday bear season. I have also talked and emailed Mary Jo, Bob Boyd, and Bob Eriksen on these issues.

I will detail the responses as best I can, if additional support information, and can not support information, needs to be added or changed to these comments please do so before the March 6-7 Executive Committee and Board meetings.

My goal from the March Board meeting is to have this information condensed and placed into a board member, local chapter presidents or contact name, email for mass emails being sent to PGC executive staff and commissioners in mid and late March. Personal letters can be mailed and face to face visits with Commissioner's can be scheduled. Follow ups to be distributed as information becomes available.

Turkey Talk, Spring Edition, needs a page or page and a half coverage to keep members informed and educated and to ask members to send emails, letters, or schedule face to face visits with Commissioners. We can use the same planning criteria I documented as was done with the spring season orange alerts and information distribution. Like orange alert everybody has a stake in these planning

efforts and everyone has the opportunity to help distribute information and make personal contacts with staff and commissioners. Now the rest of this is up to NWTF, PANWTF, Local Chapter understanding and participation.

These are the starting talking points for our Turkey Talk Alert plan, Board and Local Chapter Presidents and NWTF Members Alert plan.

Don...

Support PGC Hen Harvest Rate Study, 2010-2013, as documented and rolled out in the PGC Fall Harvest Rates Of Female Wild Turkeys In Pennsylvania, Executive Summary, Goal and Objectives.

Utilizing Study Executive Summary Goal and Objectives:

Do turkey hunters want to lose the last Saturday of Fall Season in WMU's with 3rd week, 3rd Saturday? Answer NO

The long term structure of the three week fall season has been a closing date on the Saturday prior to bear season. The season consists of four Saturdays and three weeks' worth of weekdays. Cutting a Saturday from that structure is a significant alteration of the "traditional" fall turkey hunting season structure.

Typically that Saturday sees a "blip" in hunting pressure and harvest rates in WMUs with the three weeks season. This is especially evident in the WMUs with considerable public land where deer and bear camps are located.

Changing the three week fall turkey season from a 19 day season to an 18 day season might not be that much of an issue if the day eliminated were a weekday. Under this current Commissioner proposed rule making decision that is not the case. For the 4 year hen harvest rate study this proposed change will result in a failure to test the way seasons have been structured for decades.

As documented in the Executive Summary the proposed research is designed to meet the following primary objectives: 1) estimate hen wild turkey harvest rates; 2) determine the effect of changing fall season length on harvest rates of hen wild turkeys.

Study data will NOT be the same regardless of the ending date if that ending date is not a Saturday as it has been traditionally.

How to utilize this information:

Anyone who argues that closing the last Saturday won't make a difference is in effect

telling turkey hunters that they will never see that Saturday open for turkey hunting again.

The best approach might be (and this also has potential biases) to keep the Saturday open for turkey hunting coincidental with bear hunting. Under that scenario there would likely be far more hunters in the woods than there have been traditionally. I am less concerned with the incidental/opportunistic take of turkeys by bear hunters than I am with the sheer number of people in the woods moving turkeys, breaking flocks and the like. Another consideration is that some turkey hunters are also bear hunters. Therefore given that the Saturday would be opening day, normal turkey hunter numbers might diminished by some unknown factor affecting the veracity of the assumptions and hypotheses in the study design.

Losing 3rd Saturday will adversely affect hen harvest rates as documented in Study objectives:

PGC has been working since 1999 to start hen harvest rate study.

1999 PGC Management Plan For Wild Turkeys In Pennsylvania documented population strategies and recommended a gobbler leg band study and hen harvest rate study.

PGC agreed to run the Gobbler Leg Banding Study as first state-wide banding study for 2006-2009.

Hen Harvest Rate Study to be scheduled to follow gobbler leg banding in 2010-2013.

2 study groups of WMUs approved and scheduled, Group 1 - WMUs 2C, 2E, 4A, 4B and Group 2 – WMUs 2F and 2G.

A cross-over study WMU design provides a better than 80% chance of measuring the effect of changing fall season length.

4 year study includes after 2 years changing the season length in each study area from 2 week season to 3 week season.

3rd week of season contributes 25% of fall harvest, last Saturday is ½ of 3rd week harvest [12.5%].

Population modeling suggests fall harvest rates are high.

Fall harvest rate goal is 10%, by losing the last Saturday harvest data would move harvest rate down to 8%.

Will be harder to detect differences between 2 and 3 week seasons without last Saturday harvest data as has been done in previous years.

Need to evaluate issues and differences for what is being proposed and what will cause and effect on the Hen Harvest Rate Study will be.

Why run a \$3 million 4-year study if harvest rate data collection and results will be put in jeopardy and adversely affect study objectives if season lengths are arbitrarily changed during 4 year study period?

4 options:

Close 3rd Saturday to fall turkey hunting as being proposed.

Run early Saturday bear opening day with 3rd Saturday of November with 3rd Saturday of fall turkey hunting season in those WMU's with 3 week hunting season.

Re-open turkey season after bear season, longer season than current 3 weeks.

Don't change bear season opening day to the 3rd Saturday in November.

Concurrent Saturday for turkey and bear season was only done once in 1966 and then removed.

Goes against wild turkey management plan for incidental take/harvest.

Why change bear season:

PGC has effective tools and season lengths in place to manage bear season.

PA resident survey indicates the public is satisfied with current bear population.

What if Saturday opening day state-wide bear season does not work over the next 4 years?

What happens if the Saturday opening day has to high bear harvest rate?

What is the impact on the 4 year hen harvest rate study?

It is possible under this proposed rule making to remove and take away a 3rd Saturday of fall turkey season for turkey hunters.

Additional fall season harvest rate information:

From PGC 2009 Turkey Annual Report,

3rd Week Harvest

16.2% - Monday thru Friday

12% - last Saturday

28.2% last week of WMU 3rd week

45% of last week is on last Saturday

Additional harvest rate data and information can be found in the PGC Management Plan For Wild Turkeys In Pennsylvania, Population Objective section.