

**NWTF Technical Committee Representatives' Report - PA Chapter NWTF
Board of Directors Meeting, March 6, 2011**

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Harvest Management

The preliminary fall 2010 harvest was approximately 18,000 turkeys, which is a 20% decrease from 2009 and 25% lower than the previous three-year average of 24,085 (Table 1). These data still are being checked. Final harvest totals from the annual Game-Take survey will be available this summer.

Wild Turkey Season Recommendations

During the January PGC Board of Commissioners meeting, the Board gave preliminary approval of staff recommendations to maintain the closed fall season in WMUs 5C and 5D for the second year and maintain the 3-day (Tuesday, November 1 – Thursday, November 3) season in WMU 5A for the second year. Also, in support of the hen harvest and survival rate study, the Board gave preliminary approval to return to the 2- and 3-week seasons in the remaining WMUs, opening Saturday, October 29. However, in the 3-week WMUs the Board gave preliminary approval to close the fall wild turkey season on Friday, Nov. 18, to allow the black bear season to open Saturday, Nov. 19 without conflict with turkey hunters (WMUs 2B, 2F, 2G, 3A, 3B, 3C, 3D, 4C and 4E). The Bureau of Wildlife Management has not developed a final position regarding this Board action. However, there are several issues to consider regarding whether to agree with a Friday turkey season closure in the 3-week WMUs or request the season closes Saturday and concurrent with the first day of black bear season. The main objective of the study is to determine if harvest rates differ significantly between the 2-week and 3-week season WMUs. As important though is to study a season structure that will remain in place for the future. Therefore, the ultimate question is whether the fall turkey and bear hunters prefer an overlapping season or not. The current fall turkey hunter survey includes two questions asking whether or not they prefer the turkey season to overlap with the first day of bear season.

Wild Turkey Spring Harvest Rates and Annual Survival Rates Study

Dr. Duane Diefenbach submitted the manuscript, Variation in Spring Harvest Rates of Male Wild Turkeys in New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, to the peer-reviewed *Journal of Wildlife Management*, where it has passed the initial review process.

Hen Turkey Survival and Harvest Rate Study

All regional turkey trapping teams have been busy baiting, trapping and attaching leg bands and transmitter to wild turkeys for this study. As of 28 February, we have banded 245 of the 310 hen winter quota, which is 79% of our total, trapping an average of 8 hens per trapping attempt (similar to last year). We are ahead of last year's bandings when we banded 227 by the same time period, thanks to a successful trapping by WCO Dick Bodenhorn in Elk County, WMU 2F, of 44 turkeys!! Two turkeys escaped, 2 were males and 1 hen was a recapture from last winter, totaling 42 newly banded hens – the most turkeys ever caught under 1 net in PA that I recall. Banding totals per Region are: NC Region, 111 (quota = 146); SC Region, 62 (quota = 73); SW Region, 55 (quota = 49), NW Region, 17 (quota = 42). We also legbanded 85 males, mostly jakes, with non-reward bands incidental to hen trapping, almost twice as many as last year (44 males). For unknown reasons jakes have remained with hen flocks longer than normal this winter, decreasing our overall success of hen trapping. To maintain a sample of 60 transmittered hens, we have been re-deploying transmitters

from hens that have died during the first year. To date, we have re-deployed 20 of the 25 transmitters ready to be used. Trapping will continue through March

Sample sizes were low for legband/transmitter returns from the 2010 fall turkey hunting season (n=11) because of being the first year so conclusions cannot yet be made. Preliminary results showed slightly higher harvest rates in the study area with a shorter fall season (WMUs 2C, 2E, 4A, 4B & 4D).

2010 Fall Turkey Hunter Survey

The survey (to determine fall turkey hunter participation, recruitment and satisfaction with the fall turkey hunting season) was mailed to a random sample of 10,000 hunters on January 12 with a reminder postcard mailed to nonrespondents Jan. 27. Approximately 50% have been completed and returned. Survey data will be analyzed and provided prior to the April Commission meeting.

2011 PANWTF Habitat Superfund Projects

The PA Chapter NWTF was able to fund 70 proposals for 2011 on 705.8 acres of private, state, county and federal lands in Pennsylvania, totaling \$99,272.50 PANWTF habitat superfund dollars – much of which is matched with cooperator monies/labor, so the total on-the-ground dollars for habitat improvement could be twice that amount. This, along with the PANWTF's seed subsidy and conservation seed programs shows the PANWTF's great partnership for improving wildlife habitat throughout Pennsylvania. Fifty-one of the 70 proposals (74%) are funded in cooperation with the PA Game Commission for a total of \$72,965.95 funded to the Game Commission by the PA NWTF. Most habitat improvement projects were funded at a lower level than requested because there simply were not enough funds available to fully fund every proposal.

Turkey Population Model

I provided an update at the January board meeting. The board requested an additional update at this meeting. Due to other commitments (turkey trapping, turkey hunter survey and preparation for the PGC Commission meeting and three other meetings) we do not have an update. Work on the model will begin again after trapping season, April 1.

Meetings

NE Upland Gamebird Technical Committee Meeting, National Conservation Training Center, WV

In attendance were state upland gamebird biologists from most northeast states and technical representatives from the NWTF. The technical committee exists to serve NE Association of Fish & Wildlife Administrators by working on specific charges they give us, specifically to identify and resolve population management issues associated with the various upland game bird species, and identify habitat needs and priorities to provide to the NE Upland Habitat Committee. The committee is also important for facilitating exchange of information and to establish coordination and collaboration on projects. We are considering collaborating with the SE Tech Committee to validate/standardize population survey techniques, and development of a habitat suitability index. These would be long-term projects requiring large-scale funding.

10th National Wild Turkey Symposium, NCTC, WV

I presented the results of the agency's 2008 Pennsylvania wild turkey hunter survey (hunter knowledge, characteristics and attitudes) and compared results with our surveys conducted in 1995 and 2001. The peer-reviewed paper will be published in the Symposium Proceedings next year. Several general conclusions were:

- 1) Turkey hunters in Pennsylvania generally are not initially supportive of regulation changes
 - gradual acceptance over time

- Education & Time needed to garner support for changes.
- 2) One-third have hunted turkeys for only 1–10 years.
 - a substantial pool of new turkey hunters not yet committed to tradition who could be more agreeable to changes and
 - 3) Not all hunters understand relationship between turkey populations & fall harvest.
 - educational efforts must continue annually regarding hunter safety, turkey biology and how season structure can impact turkey populations.

Annual NWTF Convention and Sport Show, Nashville, TN

Thanks to the generous support from the Pennsylvania State Chapter, the Game Commission sent Technical Committee representative, Mary Jo Casalena, to the National Convention, where I attended the 2-day National Technical Committee meeting, presented the first year results of the hen harvest/survival rate study and an update on the NE Upland Gamebird Technical Committee, and attended the NWTF Research Grant Proposals meeting where we prioritized wild turkey research proposals for possible NWTF funding. Also attending the Convention for the Game Commission were Bureau of Wildlife Protection Director, Rich Palmer, the Joe Kurz award recipient, Matt Belding, Land Management Officer in the Southeast Region and Wildlife Conservation Officer of the Year award recipient, Chris Ivicic, Clearfield County, Northcentral Region.

Table 1. Pennsylvania spring and fall wild turkey harvests, by Wildlife Management Unit (WMU), determined from Game-Take Surveys, 2006 - 2009. Spring harvests include initial harvest + second bird harvests. Preliminary 2010 data are from reported harvests corrected for reporting rates.

WMU	Spring					Fall				
	2006	2007	2008	2009	Prelim. 2010	2006	2007	2008	2009	Prelim. 2010
1A	1,674	2,185	1,305	2,163	2,581	1,015	805	745	1,430	738
1B	2,312	3,183	2,878	3,372	3,139	1,626	1,006	1,598	1,634	1,227
2A	2,685	1,692	2,293	3,321	2,321	1,321	1,208	533	613	566
2B	1,853	1,385	2,168	1,605	1,767	1,117	805	319	714	545
2C	2,363	2,357	2,191	1,752	2,375	915	1,309	1,065	1,634	1,119
2D	2,822	2,490	3,166	4,153	3,384	2,641	1,611	2,130	1,532	1,171
2E	1,134	335	1,163	1,035	1,259	609	1,006	1,065	919	722
2F	1,650	1,679	1,462	1,520	1,499	1,219	805	639	817	914
2G	2,387	2,302	3,061	2,566	2,994	2,539	2,315	2,342	1,634	1,889
3A	2,064	1,212	992	1,538	1,692	1,117	1,510	958	306	1,003
3B	2,268	2,175	2,533	3,129	2,577	711	1,409	958	1,327	1,151
3C	2,395	2,028	3,680	2,988	2,804	1,524	2,617	2,982	2,043	1,147
3D	2,177	2,467	2,006	2,525	2,017	711	704	958	511	477
4A	1,968	1,507	1,276	1,954	1,599	1,828	2,315	1,172	1,634	674
4B	2,067	1,397	1,097	1,548	1,401	1,321	1,006	1,065	511	710
4C	2,480	2,687	2,744	2,362	2,704	1,015	603	958	511	1,119
4D	1,463	2,180	2,830	2,467	2,824	1,524	2,315	3,088	1,430	1,392
4E	1,898	2,561	3,064	2,767	2,937	1,321	1,811	1,598	1,634	1,219
5A	412	774	730	314	649	-	-	-	-	176
5B	321	491	425	509	729	-	-	-	-	8
5C	895	797	1,242	830	1,266	387	201	107	102	4
5D	52	79	103	196	42	19	8	10	-	4
Unknown	-	29	28	27	228					17,976
TOTAL	39,339	37,992	42,437	44,639	44,788	24,482	25,369	24,288	20,934	