

Minutes
Cooperative PA Game Commission &
PA Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation Meeting
June 18, 2007
PGC Headquarters, Harrisburg
1:00 - 4:00 pm

1. NWTF Regional Biologist Position and Funding Renewal Status (B. Eriksen)
 - a. Funding renewal = July - Good for the next 2 years (08 & 09) (Roe).
 - b. This is the 6th year. Mutually beneficial. Accomplished a lot together.
 - c. NWTF does this with many agencies across the nation. Several new agreements proposed with states. ME & VT are possible states – first multi-state agreement. 4-5 new NWTF regional biologist positions proposed.
2. Possible extension of Spring Gobbler Season Dates through May 31 Annually (J. Pries)
 - a. No negative biological impact
 - b. Provide more hunting opportunity
 - c. Could create a 5-week season some years – but the added harvest at the end of the season shouldn't increase harvest significantly.
 - i. **Action:** PANWTF could propose for spring 2009.
 - d. PGC concern – general public may not understand how PGC can decrease fall season length while simultaneously lengthening spring season length. This simply requires more public education. – all forms of media and other sportsmen organizations, like PA Federation of Sportsmen.
3. All-day Youth Spring Hunt (J. Pries)
 - a. If weather is poor during morning (as was in 2005 & 06), or youth have commitments during the morning, this gives more opportunity for youth, prior to the general hunting population in woods.
 - b. May be perceived by hunters as first step into all-day spring hunting for all hunters. A long-term goal by PANWTF, if it is attainable with turkey populations.
 - c. Pre-mature to discuss this currently – better to discuss after results of the gobbler harvest rate study are analyzed & the new turkey population model is up and running.
 - d. All-day hunting potentially doubles length of the season (C. Roe) (However, afternoon participation rates are low and gobbling activity is low in afternoon – increase in harvest expected to be insignificant – see white paper by Casalena and Eriksen). Now have 2-bird bag limit with special license, and once we go to POS, hunters may have opportunity to purchase second license during the season - which of these opportunities are most important?
 - e. 26 states have all-day hunting. VA – all-day hunting for last 2 weeks, 2% increase in harvest in VA. NY is considering, but not moving toward all day hunting. Pressure may be from general hunting public.
 - f. Many parents still are not aware of mentored youth hunt – still need public education – esp. important to inform at youth field days.
 - i. **Action:** Suggest holding off until we have data from gobbler study and support for opening all-day hunting from general public.
4. 2007 Habitat Super Fund Report (C. Mowry, L. Holjencin)
 - a. Thanked PGC for MJ Casalena continuing to develop the spreadsheet listing all proposed projects – makes it easier for committee to review projects. Also thanked involvement of Ben Jones.

- b. 37 PGC projects, \$84,960.50. \$42,000+ funded to other agencies/ private. PGC receives the majority of projects.
 - c. PGC Land Managers working well with local chapters to develop projects to have local chapter involvement. Good to prioritize projects.
 - i. **Action:** PGC establish earlier deadline for PGC proposals – December 2007.
5. Fall 2006/Spring 2007 Preliminary Turkey HRSIs (K. Snyder)
- a. Written HRSI reports distributed
 - b. Fall Turkey 2006 – 4 HRSIs. Below 10-yr average. Increase in Line of Fire (2 this year, 50%), possibly due partially to larger turkey populations now so actual turkeys are involved with incident. All with shotgun.
 - c. Spring 2007 – 5 HRSIs. Below 10-yr average. One victim was in the line of fire, 4 were shot for game.
 - d. HRSIs related to number hunters – opening day & week, Saturdays.
 - i. **Action:** Look at 2001 PA Turkey Hunter Survey – Is there a correlation in firearm usage and age of hunter? **COMPLETED** - Results from the Survey showed 71% of turkey hunters used a shotgun during the fall season, 19% used a rifle or rifle/shotgun combination, 4% used a bow, 5% did not hunt turkeys in the fall and <1% each used a muzzleloader or handgun. Despite differences in weapon used, turkey hunters were evenly split on whether rifles should be illegal for fall hunting (44% agreed, 44% disagreed, 12% undecided). The breakdown by age of hunter showed a slight trend of hunters aged 51+ disagreeing with prohibiting the use of rifles for fall turkey season, as well as young hunters aged 12 – 20 (See Table below). Hunters aged 21-40 showed slight agreement with prohibiting rifles, whereas hunters aged 41 – 50 were evenly split.

2001 Turkey Hunter Survey Results; Question, Rifles should be illegal for fall turkey season, by age of hunter.

Answer (%)	Hunter Age (Years)								
	12-16	17-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	70+	Total(n)
Agree	35	37	51	48	44	42	42	42	1,291
Undecided	18	14	11	15	12	11	9	8	354
Disagree	47	49	37	38	44	46	48	50	1,285
Total (n)	106	100	245	560	756	609	384	170	2,930

- ii. **Action:** PANWTF will continue to put safety first with education.
 - e. Number of HRSIs currently is very low, K.Snyder warns not to be alarmed if we see a jump in HRSIs for a year, as this often occurs with such low numbers. Incident rate in PA is now below national average. Participation – number hours hunters are hunting may be decreasing. Number hunting days hasn't decreased, but hunters may be hunting for fewer hours each day – this would decrease HRSIs.
 - f. Discussion regarding direct mailing of turkey hunting tips, and including safety so hunters will view the DVDs – do once we have POS. But, quantitatively, spending ½ mil \$ to decrease HRSIs by 1 or 2, is this cost effective?
6. Eliminating Orange Requirement for Spring Hunting (D. Burdge)
- a. Even if regulation changes, PGC will **STRONGLY** encourage and promote hunters to wear orange when moving, especially in Hunter-Trapper Ed classes.

- i. **Action:** Bureau of I&E will give report on orange to PGC Board of Commissioners at June meeting. Staff will explain – Data show the spring orange regulation has not improved HRSIs, and regulation could be removed. COMPLETED. But, if incident rate increases, PGC could readily move back to orange requirement.
7. Wild Turkey Mgmt (D. Heckman/PGC)
- a. Partnership with PANWTF helpful for achieving strategies in turkey mgmt plan.
 - b. Turkey Mgmt Plan document important for PGC, each bureau responsible for reviewing objectives and strategies and tabulating outcomes and outputs, annually.
 - c. Deviation from the plan – fall seasons for WMUs 2G & 4D.
 - i. Pleased to see the guidelines in the plan, but understand the decisions made by the Commissioners involve more than just biological data.
 - ii. Also understand that spring harvest density data are more valuable than summer sighting data, but
 - iii. Both indices are important, because of their independence.
 - d. Northeast Volunteer Web-based summer turkey survey.
 - i. Difficult to manage quality of data.
 - ii. Concern – message sending the public regarding turkey mgmt. – a desperate move by PGC.
 - iii. The sale of the survey is important – to increase public participation or to encourage the public to help us with decision-making. We would rather have nothing than something bad.
 - 1. **Action:** PA will not join survey, but rather establish the confidence we have in our current surveys.
 - e. Hen Study
 - i. An entire other important facet of turkey data needed – hen harvest rates.
 - ii. We now have the gobbler study budgeted, so rolling it into a hen study could be possible.
 - 1. **Action:** BWM will begin our project and budget planning. Possibly begin hen study during last year of gobbler study (?). Must consider the logistics and funding.
 - iii. PANWTF money toward gobbler study could potentially be used for hen study, and possible NWTF Grant-in-Aid funding (?) dependent on national priorities and number of states involved in study.
 - f. Funding
 - i. K.Snyder asked PANWTF if funding available for advanced turkey hunter education curriculum.
 - 1. **Action:** Bring proposal to January PANWTF board meeting, to develop for next year's budget.
 - g. Tri-State Gobbler Study
 - i. Thank you for involving PANWTF chapter volunteers in assisting with trapping.
 - ii. Confidence builder for volunteers toward PGC, positive image builder for PGC
 - 1. **Action:** Continue PANWTF involvement during trapping.
 - h. Status of Wild Turkey Nuisance Complaint System and WCO training opportunity
 - i. PGC Bureau of Wildlife Protection is beginning to create an agency-wide nuisance tracking system for deer, bear, turkey, and other species.
 - 1. **Action:** Inform public when tracking system is complete and operational. Agency has since decided to keep tracking system solely for bear. Must develop something different for turkey.

- ii. Turkey damage identification – Last year Bob E. provided CD of Ohio wild turkey damage manual that shows how to identify turkey damage versus other species.
 - 1. **Action:** Bob E. will send another CD to Cal D. who will send to J. Feaser.
 - 2. **Action:** PGC can put CD on nuisance section of PGC website to provide this info service as a self-help of identifying turkey damage. Potentially dispatchers could direct callers to check the info on the website to help identify prior to sending out a WCO.
 - iii. WCO training – try again this year at Regional meetings.
 - 1. **Action:** Cal will discuss at upcoming senior staff meeting to have 1 hr. training during a winter regional meeting. B. Eriksen to remind Cal.
 - i. Rodent Bait Stations (B. Eriksen)
 - i. B. Eriksen spoke to fruit growers in Adams Co (Feb.). 4-5 orchard operators interested in placing bait stations on their orchards.
 - 1. **Action:** Bob will determine acreage and cost, write grant for purchasing materials for bait stations, and involve local chapters to build and place bait stations on orchards.
8. Special Spring Turkey Hunting License (D. Heckman)
 - a. Once POS is operational – hunters could purchase special license beginning July and throughout spring turkey season.
 - b. Concern is the change in the system, & possible biological impacts (?), but shouldn't be a problem because of inherently low hunter success rate for spring gobbler.
 - i. **Action:** Typically PGC waits 3 years before making additional changes to determine impacts of each change. However, with less than 10,000 special licenses sold during first two years, liberalizing the sale of the special license now, prior to 3rd year, should have no biological impact.
 - c. Hunting License Increase Package (D. Heckman)
 - i. Coalition will try this legislative session to include general turkey license – \$5 resident, \$20 nonresident.
 - ii. C. Roe – probably will not go through this legislative session. House Democrats do not want any more stamps included in license increase. Stabeck won't even meet with the Coalition currently. Not possible for turkey license to go through the House this year, politically.
 - 1. **Action:** Suggested try next year at the end of the session, in hopes to introduce it the next session.
 - 2. **Action:** After discussion here, D. Heckman will inform Coalition not to proceed with turkey license, but just general hunting license increase.
 - iii. Alternative funding. Reality is the state budget is tight currently, so probability is low of receiving \$15 million in state funds (\$10mil Game, \$5 mil Fish). Lobbying for this may help for long-term discussions for future governor – long-term stable funding for Game and Fish & Boat Commissions. Would be perceived as alternative to license increase. But license increase would be necessary along with this. Salaries of staff (working on behalf of everyone in PA) \$48-56 million dollars during next 10 years.
 - iv. Preferable recommendation is to have one general increase, and not piecemeal the increase.
 - v. General tax money – implications for PGC – we don't ask callers if they buy a hunting license before we provide a service. Fundamentally – funding should

not change our mission – this is the concern. Legislature views us as consumptive users, and do not perceive our nonconsumptive aspects. Other recreational users are a concern on SGLs.

9. Joint articles for PA Game News (B. Eriksen)
 - a. **Action:** We will focus on strategies in turkey mgmt plan
 - i. ??? (B. Eriksen provide complete list to MJC)
 - ii. Ethics and turkey hunting,
 - iii. Short article regarding timing of spring season.
 - iv. Superfund habitat projects (B. Eriksen) – grant in SW PA completed last fall - improving habitat on ROWs.
10. Women in the Outdoors Report (T. Mowry)
 - a. Tammy was working in Arkansas – sent written report.
 - b. Continuing to grow in PA - 27 events, 2007.
 - i. **Action:** Looking for more events through winter – please provide info if you know of possibility.
 - c. 1,000 women attending this year, similar to last year.
 - d. PANWTF appreciates the important partnership with PGC, especially with WCOs/LMOs helping at events and L. Richardson including events on PGC website.
 - e. Thank you for renewing partnership agreement last year, effective to 2009.
11. WCO & LMO (Joe Kurz) of the Year Award (G. Alwine)
 - a. Reminder of upcoming deadlines and criteria availability.
 - b. Joe Kurz Award can be given to any state agency employee, just not a WCO.
 - c. **Action:** Deadlines: WCO - November 19; Joe Kurz Award - July 13 (Completed).
12. Private Land Initiatives (B. Eriksen)
 - a. Landowner outreach programs – have been very successful, NWTF/PGC cooperation, along with other agencies and organizations. PANWTF is engaging BWM, Wildlife diversity staff, BWHM, Regional staff, LMOs, WCOs.
13. Partnering to Produce Educational Signs and Reminders (G. Alwine)
 - a. Would like to budget for 2008 and provide signs to PGC.
 - b. Hunter education/hunter safety signs printed on sturdy material (PGC and PANWTF logo).
 - i. **Action:** G. Alwine will send info to K. Snyder.
 - c. Also create the tan habitat signs with PGC and PANWTF logo.
 - i. **Action:** PANWTF will send info to B. Copouilliez.
14. NWTF 32nd Annual Convention – Atlanta, GA (L. Holjencin)
 - a. **Action:** PANWTF will continue to provide PGC \$1,600 – toward Joe Kurz, WCO of year, Ex. Director, Tech Committee members attendance.
 - b. Feb. 20-24, 2008, Georgia World Congress Center, Atlanta.
15. PGC Turkey Calls and Knives (C. Graybill)
 - a. Aug. 31 is deadline (extended).
 - i. **Action:** C. Graybill requested PANWTF to inform PANWTF members if possible.