

**Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Natural Resources Board Agenda Item**

SUBJECT:

Request approval of a ten year plan for wild turkey management

FOR: April 2015 Board meeting

PRESENTER'S NAME AND TITLE: Scott Walter, Upland Wildlife Ecologist

ACTION ITEM:

This document serves as both a guidance document for the turkey management program during the period from 2015 through 2025, and as an outreach tool to better inform and engage the public on turkey ecology and management issues.

SUMMARY:

"Ecology of Wild Turkeys in Wisconsin and a Plan for Their Management, 2015-2025" was developed by members of the Wisconsin DNR Turkey Advisory Committee, which includes representation from a diverse array of public agencies and conservation organizations that collectively bring a wealth of interests and experience to the table. The foundation of the document rests on sound scientific data on turkey ecology and population dynamics, historic turkey demographic and harvest data from Wisconsin, and significant input from the public.

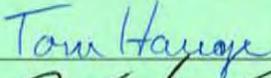
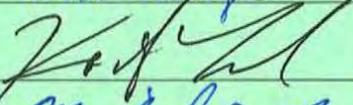
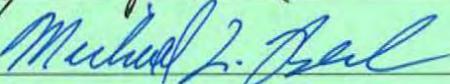
The information included in this plan is intended to provide interested citizens a completely transparent view of our wild turkey management program, in hopes that it allows constituents to become better informed and more actively engaged partners in the management of Wisconsin's turkey resource. Only via open exchange of information and opinions can strategies be enacted that effectively address the broad spectrum of biological and social issues involved in wild turkey management.

The management plan which is the subject of this agenda item can also be found on the department's website at: <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/wildlifehabitat/turkeymanagement.html>

RECOMMENDATION: That the Board approve the ten year plan for wild turkey management.

LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS (check all that are applicable):

- Background memo
- 10 year management plan

| Approved by | Signature | Date |
|-------------------------------------|--|---------|
| Tom Hauge, Bureau Director |  | 3/13/15 |
| Kurt Thiede, Division Administrator |  | 3/16/15 |
| Cathy Stepp, Secretary |  | 3/16/15 |

cc: Board Liaison – AD/8

for

Scott Walter, Upland Wildlife Ecologist

DATE: March 10, 2015

TO: Natural Resources Board Members

FROM: Cathy Stepp

SUBJECT: Approval request: 10-year plan for wild turkey management

This document serves as both a guidance document for the turkey management program during the period from 2015 through 2025, and as an outreach tool to better inform and engage the public on turkey ecology and management issues.

Background

The restoration of wild turkeys to Wisconsin's landscape is widely recognized as one of the greatest success stories in our state's rich wildlife management history, and stands as a testament to the multiple values that stem from properly integrating scientific information with proactive assessments of the myriad social issues inherent in managing a public resource.

"Ecology of Wild Turkeys in Wisconsin and a Plan for Their Management, 2015-2025" was developed by members of the Wisconsin DNR Turkey Advisory Committee, which includes representation from a diverse array of public agencies and conservation organizations that collectively bring a wealth of interests and experience to the table. The foundation of the document rests on sound scientific data on turkey ecology and population dynamics, historic turkey demographic and harvest data from Wisconsin, and significant input from the public.

The over-arching goal for the turkey management program is to maintain healthy turkey populations in all suitable range, optimize quality turkey hunting opportunities in spring and fall, and promote a positive public image of our wild turkey resource. Specific objectives that will guide efforts toward achieving this goal from 2015-2025 are:

- Protect turkey populations and optimize hunter opportunity and satisfaction
- Improve habitat for wild turkeys within the confines of broad land-management goals
- Develop educational and outreach tools to communicate effectively with hunters, landowners, and the public regarding turkey population ecology and management issues
- Minimize negative interactions between wild turkeys and the public
- Invest Wild Turkey Stamp funds to maximize benefits to turkeys, turkey management, and turkey hunting in Wisconsin
- Conduct research as appropriate to address specific needs related to turkey management in Wisconsin

Public Involvement

Preparation of the plan began in 2012 with an initial round of public input and, in 2015, a second series of meetings on the draft plan. The meeting locations and attendance are summarized below.

| | | |
|---------|---|----|
| 4/19/12 | Northland College, Ashland | 7 |
| 4/20/12 | UW-Barron County, Rice Lake | 4 |
| 4/21/12 | UW-Eau Claire | 6 |
| 4/24/12 | Brookfield Suites Hotel & Conference Center | 17 |
| 4/25/12 | Madison Marriott West, Middleton | 14 |
| 4/30/12 | UW-Platteville | 2 |
| 5/2/12 | UW-Marinette | 5 |
| 5/3/12 | UW-Oshkosh | 6 |
| 5/10/12 | UW-La Crosse | 4 |
| 5/14/12 | Reuland's Conference Center, Minocqua | 2 |
| 5/15/12 | UW-Stevens Point | 10 |
| 2/10/15 | Natural Resources Office Building, Madison | 5 |
| 2/12/15 | Rothschild/Wausau, Stoney Creek Inn | 0 |

Prior to drafting the plan, a survey was made available to members of the public in order to identify issues that might need to be addressed and to assess satisfaction or dissatisfaction with turkey management and hunting opportunities. The survey was made available online and to meeting attendees during the initial public input period. A total of 2,124 responses were received. A copy of the survey and response results is attached in an appendix to this memo.

Public comments received during the final round of public meetings in 2015, and the department's responses, are summarized below.

Public comments and department responses

Spring Turkey Hunting Season

We received a total of 24 comments regarding the spring turkey hunting season. 20 comments referenced the spring season framework; comments including both support for the current season structure and recommendations to consolidate time periods, recommendations to both return to five-day time periods and a noon daily hunting hour closure, and one suggestion to open each time period on Monday instead of Wednesday.

Response: Hunters have repeatedly expressed majority support for the current six 7-day time period structure. 76% of respondents on the 2012 public input survey indicated that they favor the current season structure, while only 32.8% indicated support of a single 42-day-long season. The current system also continues to garner strong support from hunters on the annual Spring Turkey Hunter Questionnaire, with 81 – 87% of respondents indicating satisfaction with the current season structure on the 2011 – 2014 questionnaires.

The addition of Mondays and Tuesdays to the spring season time periods was supported by a three-fifths majority with approval from 58 out of 72 counties on the 2011 Wisconsin Conservation Congress Spring Hearing Questionnaire, and this change has not led to any reported problems while increasing hunter opportunity.

The daily closure time for the spring turkey season was extended from noon to 5:00 p.m. starting with the 1999 spring season, and from 5:00 p.m. to sunset starting with the 2007 spring season, with the goal of increasing hunter opportunity. The suggestion that closure times vary by day would complicate hunting regulations and increase the potential for inadvertent violations.

The Wednesday opener has been a constant since the initial spring season in 1983, and is believed to help spread hunters out throughout the time period, minimizing the chances of interference or competition with other hunters and helping maintain a safe hunt. More hunters (55%) supported the current Wednesday opener than did a Monday opener (9%) on the 2012 public input survey.

1 respondent expressed dislike for the current spring turkey permit application, on which they are able to select only two time periods.

Response: The new application form (initiated in 2012) greatly simplifies the application process for both license vendors and hunters, reducing the number of inputs required to select zone and time period preferences from 11 to 5. Staff in the Bureau of Customer Outreach Services simulated the 2012 spring drawing under both the old and new formats, and found that the new format didn't change the drawing results for >98.5% of applicants compared to the old format. Hunters are able to select a third choice (any time period in X zone).

2 respondents recommended eliminating the spring season permit drawing and selling all permits over-the-counter.

Response: The elimination of the spring season permit drawing is not feasible at this time, given trends in hunter participation and demand for permits; a permit drawing is necessary for fairness (since demand for available permits virtually always exceeds availability for the earlier time periods), making solely over-the-counter sales of permits impossible under current state statute.

1 respondent recommended that the use of dogs to hunt turkeys be made legal during the spring season in order to reduce crippling loss.

Response: A dog can be used to help a hunter follow a blood trail and retrieve dead or mortally-wounded game at any time of year, as long as that dog is kept on a leash and the hunter doesn't possess a weapon (i.e. gun or bow) on his or her person while accompanied by the dog. However, allowing the use of dogs during spring turkey hunting activities would likely cause an unwanted level of disturbance to other hunters in the field.

Fall Turkey Hunting Season

We received a total of 11 comments regarding the fall turkey hunting season. 6 of those comments recommended changes to the fall season framework, including elimination of the fall permit drawing, partial or complete elimination of fall hen harvest, increasing permit availability statewide or within certain TMZs, or using a county-based quota system.

Responses: The WDNR Turkey Advisory Committee is currently examining the issue of the fall drawing, and will develop recommendations in the near future. However, Wisconsin Administrative Code NR 10.25(1)(d) requires a drawing be held when hunter demand for permits exceeds availability.

All other states with a fall turkey hunting season allow either-sex harvest, because it is more difficult to differentiate hens from gobblers during the fall, especially in the case of juvenile birds. Limiting legal harvest to particular age or sex classes therefore increases the likelihood of unintentional violations by hunters. Additionally, current hen harvests do not limit the growth of the Wisconsin wild turkey population, precluding the need for special regulations to protect hens.

The WDNR Turkey Advisory Committee annually evaluates permit levels based on indices to population health and estimates of harvest and hunter success rates. Permit levels have only increased over time and future increases will be considered when prudent.

Establishing county-level quotas would unnecessarily increase regulatory complexity and require hunters to seek daily updates on the county or counties in which they intend to hunt in order to avoid citations for hunting out of season. Wisconsin's 72 counties represent an even greater fragmentation of the state than the original 46-zone structure, which was consolidated into the current 7-zone structure based on the recognition that the distribution of turkeys and turkey habitat is similar on a scale greater than that captured by the original 46 zones.

1 respondent questioned the use of dogs to hunt turkeys, and another respondent favored increased representation of the use of dogs to hunt turkeys within the Plan.

Response: The use of dogs as a hunting aid during the fall turkey hunting season has been legal statewide since 2010, and has become a very popular practice amongst a small contingent of fall turkey hunters (approximately 2% of fall permit holders pursue turkeys with the aid of dogs). There is no indication or evidence that the use of dogs is detrimental to either Wisconsin's turkey population or to other turkey hunters.

The goal of the Wisconsin Wild Turkey Management Plan is not to highlight hunting tactics, and no detailed descriptions of either spring or fall turkey hunting strategies are included.

2 comments referenced the proposal to keep the fall turkey hunting season open during the 9-day gun deer hunt, with 1 respondent in favor of the proposal and 1 respondent opposed.

Response: Listed as an advisory question on the spring 2015 Conservation Congress questionnaire.

Turkey Management Zone (TMZ) Structure

We received a total of 4 comments regarding Turkey Management Zone (TMZ) structure. 2 comments supported the adjustment of TMZ boundaries, including splitting zone 2.

Responses: Hunters have continually expressed strong majority support for the current TMZ structure and boundaries. Any adjustments to the boundaries of the TMZs would result in subsequent adjustments to the number of permits available in the resulting zones and therefore would not increase an individual hunter's access to available permits.

1 comment argued against the consolidation of the TMZs in 2009.

Response: The 2009 consolidation from 46 to 7 zones was carried out in order to offer hunters more flexibility in choosing their hunting location, simplify hunting regulations, and acknowledge the fact that turkey habitat is similar across broad scales. Hunters have repeatedly expressed strong support for the current 7-zone structure. On the 2013 Spring Turkey Hunter Questionnaire, 67.4% of respondents agreed that they felt the current 7-zone system afforded them sufficient opportunity to hunt different locations, compared to only 11% who disagreed with this statement.

Nuisance Turkeys:

We received a total of 6 comments on the subject of nuisance turkeys. Two comments related to crop or other agricultural damage.

Response: The Wildlife Damage and Claims Program (WDACP) is available to provide farmers and other agricultural producers with options to address instances of damage caused by turkeys, and is supported as Strategy D1 in the Plan.

Three comments related to nuisance turkeys in urban areas, including a recommendation to legalize the use of net guns within city limits.

Response: The revised Wisconsin Wild Turkey Management Plan emphasizes awareness of the issues related to turkeys in urban and suburban areas, recognizing that conflicts are increasing. The issue is discussed on pages 61 and 62 within the Plan, and Objective D focuses on means of addressing these concerns, with two strategies and three products defined on pages 88 and 89.

One respondent suggested the creation of a list of volunteers from the American Wild Turkey Hunting Dog Association who are available to assist with nuisance turkey issues.

Response: The Wildlife Damage Abatement and Claims Program (WDACP) maintains a list of landowners who have been granted permits for the removal of nuisance turkeys. Members of AWTHDA can contact these landowners to see if assistance is needed in removing nuisance turkeys under those permits.

Wild Turkey Stamp:

We received a total of 3 comments regarding the Wild Turkey Stamp program. 2 respondents questioned the need for the Wild Turkey Stamp now that managers are no longer focused on restoring the species to Wisconsin.

Response: In accordance with Wisconsin Statutes s. 20.370(1)(ht), wild turkey restoration, all moneys received under s. 29.164(a), wild turkey hunting stamps, shall be applied to "developing, managing, preserving, restoring and maintaining the wild turkey population in the state." Revenue from the sale of the Wild Turkey Stamp has been used not only for population restoration efforts, but also contributes to ongoing management of the species and its associated habitat types. Stamp funds continue to benefit turkeys and turkey hunters beyond the initial restoration efforts. 70% of 2,172 constituents surveyed in 2012 supported continuance of the Wild Turkey Stamp program.

1 respondent expressed a desire for habitat funding via the Wild Turkey Stamp to be made available throughout southern Wisconsin.

Response: Access to Wild Turkey Stamp funding is currently available to applicants statewide, and funds are allocated based on the merits of individual projects rather than a proposal's location in any particular area of the state.

Additional Input on Turkey Management in Wisconsin

One respondent gave a comment favoring an increase in predator control in the northern portion of the state (TMZs 5 and 7), by increasing harvest permit availability for coyote, bear, and bobcat.

Response: The revised Wild Turkey Management Plan addresses the issue of predator control in Box 1, "The Issue of Predation," on pages 12 and 13. The conclusion from a thorough review of the literature pertaining to the effects of predators on turkey populations is that predators do not regulate turkey populations and predator control efforts are not an effective investment of funds.

One respondent gave a comment favoring increased forest management that benefits both deer and turkey.

Response: We suggest referring to Objective B, "Improve habitat for wild turkeys within the confines of broad management goals," on pages 80 through 83. In particular, Strategy B1 addresses the need to define spatially-explicit turkey habitat enhancement goals for Wisconsin that recognize potential impacts on other wildlife species.

One respondent described a new set of simplified regulations for spring and fall turkey hunting, favoring a single one-month spring season (with hunting hours running from sunrise to noon with a limit of two

bearded turkeys) and a single one-month fall season (with hunting hours running from sunrise to sunset with a limit of two turkeys, one of which could be harvested in the proposed northern zone). The respondent also suggested a new license fee structure.

Response: The spring season time periods have been in place since the first modern spring hunt in 1983, and have been strongly supported by hunters in the intervening time. In the public input survey conducted during April and May of 2012, 76% of respondents indicated that they favor the current season structure, while only 32.8% indicated support for a single 42-day-long season. As well, 84.2% of respondents indicated satisfaction with the current spring season structure on the 2014 Spring Turkey Hunter Questionnaire. The shortening of the spring and fall seasons would likely not be favored by hunters, as it would reduce hunting opportunity significantly. Other departures from current season structure (i.e. changes to the duration of daily hunting hours and bag limits) would need to be addressed through the regular rule change process. Changes related to license fee structure are beyond the scope of the Wisconsin Wild Turkey Management Plan, but could be addressed through the Wisconsin Conservation Congress.

One respondent expressed a wish to see more information about the management of turkey diseases.

Response: The Wisconsin Wild Turkey Management Plan covers health considerations for turkeys on pages 52 through 58, and Strategy A4 on pages 72 and 73 includes two products intended to monitor and manage health considerations such as disease. In addition, the Bureau of Wildlife Management's Wildlife Health Section maintains a webpage on the WDNR website with tools for members of the public to report observations to the appropriate staff. A link to this page will likely be added to the WDNR turkey webpage.

One respondent gave a comment concerning the loss of public land, and a request for the Wild Turkey Management Plan to include a means to monitor the impacts of the loss of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund.

Response: The elimination of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund is a current budget proposal only that has not yet been finalized.

One respondent recommends reimbursing farmers in order to encourage them to leave ten acres of cropland unmown until late June, presumably to avoid the potential loss of turkey hens, nests, and broods.

Response: Cost-sharing options that would accomplish this are already available through the Farm Bill, and participation in these programs is up to individual farmers.

One respondent questioned the hunter numbers provided on page 40, suggesting that they should be higher.

Response: We believe that the respondent confused permit numbers with hunter numbers. Upon review, the numbers given are accurate.

One respondent suggested that county wildlife biologists dedicate several days each spring/fall to a survey of the wild turkey population within their assigned county/counties.

Response: The addition of such survey responsibilities would lead to staff workload issues. Currently, harvest numbers and other data such as hunter success rates are used to monitor the health of Wisconsin's turkey population, and this information has been and is expected to continue to be sufficient in detecting dramatic population changes. Additionally, current season structure and permit allocation practices are not based on population numbers, but rather the management of hunter satisfaction (with regard to competition and interference rates). County-based surveys would contribute an index little different from the indices we currently glean from harvest numbers; any efforts to actually quantify the size of Wisconsin's turkey population (develop a population estimate)

would lead to estimates with significant associated errors and likely lead to debates about the accuracy of the estimates themselves, since hunters would each have impressions of abundance based on their own experience/observations. Developing population estimates is expensive and time-consuming, requiring more data than currently available, research to assess the accuracy and precision of estimates, and would not significantly improve our ability to manage harvest or hunter satisfaction.

One respondent recommends making it legal for the general public to hunt turkeys within urban areas/city limits, by means of a net gun.

Response: a change of this nature would need to involve both the general public and individual municipalities, and the best venue for proposal of such a change is the Wisconsin Conservation Congress.

One respondent suggested that the statement on page 79 regarding over-the-counter permit availability (“However, in recent years the availability of permits during the fall season has exceeded demand in TMZs 1-5, with all hunters applying in these zones receiving permits”) is inaccurate.

Response: The respondent is correct. For the 2013 and 2014 fall turkey seasons, no over-the-counter permits were available in TMZ 2. In other words, permit availability did not exceed demand. We will adjust the statement accordingly.

One respondent suggests that turkey abundance is more closely tied to areas with high dairy production rather than the percent forest cover used in the Plan.

Response: The importance of landscape composition to turkey abundance is strongly supported by data from gobbling surveys conducted in 2004-2008 and 2010-2011, which show that abundance is highest when forests cover 30-70% of the landscape, and lower in more open and more heavily forested landscapes. Locally, turkey abundance certainly does reflect local habitat composition, and conditions in many areas with an active dairy industry are certainly supportive of healthy turkey populations.

One respondent wondered if total forest cover accurately reflects turkey abundance within TMZ 2.

Response: This question is recognized within the Wisconsin Wild Turkey Management Plan, and research to better ascertain the effect of forest dispersion on turkey abundance in TMZ 2 is recommended as a priority research project within Issue F4 on page 93.

One respondent recommended that easements be made available to landowners in order to protect the forests throughout southeast Wisconsin.

Response: Farm Bill and other easement programs are available to landowners as conservation options throughout Wisconsin; the pursuit of such options is up to the individual landowners. Strategy B3 on page 86 of the plan suggests the importance of easements as a conservation tool, supportive of the respondent's statement.

One respondent recommended that the American Wild Turkey Hunting Dog Association (AWTHDA) be included in the list of partner organizations that WDNR regularly collaborates with regarding turkey management issues.

Response: At this time, turkey management staff are not familiar enough with AWTHDA's governing structure to include them as a collaborative partner organization, but would welcome future discussions along those lines. Currently, existing partner organizations have a state-wide membership base, and are governed by a robust board of directors or other such administrative body such that the views of the organization's membership are accurately represented.

One respondent suggested changing our methods of estimating turkey habitat quantity, in particular basing such estimates on alternative metrics like dairy production rather than or in addition to forest cover.

Response: The metrics suggested by the respondent are already known to be important components of quality turkey habitat, but turkey abundance on the landscape scale is determined primarily by the relative availability of forested and open habitats, so this metric still provides the best estimate of turkey habitat suitability at the scale at which management is practical.

One respondent would like the membership of the WDNR Turkey Advisory Committee to include a representative from AWTHTDA.

Response: Changes in membership on the WDNR Turkey Advisory Committee must be presented to and approved by the Lands Division Administrator.

Appendix - Wisconsin Wild Turkey Management Plan Revision Process Public Input Survey, Summary of Results

Wisconsin Wild Turkey Management Plan Revision Process Public Input Survey – Summary of Results

Prepared by: Krista McGinley and Scott Walter, WDNR Bureau of Wildlife Management
July 23rd, 2012

Overview

Following the successful reintroduction of wild turkeys to Wisconsin in the 1970s, turkeys have expanded their range so that they now occupy all counties in the state, and spring and fall turkey hunting have become very popular outdoor activities. The current Wisconsin Wild Turkey Management Plan, written in 1996, needs to be revised to include treatment of contemporary issues related to turkey management in the state. A critical part of the revision process includes soliciting, gathering, and analyzing input from the public regarding challenges and opportunities in turkey management and hunting in Wisconsin. During late April and early May of 2012, eleven public input sessions were held around the state, during which attendees were presented with background information and asked to complete a survey that addressed important issues related to the future direction of turkey management. The survey was also available online through the end of May. Information gleaned from this survey will help all of the partners involved in managing our state's turkey flock in developing a plan that protects the turkey resource, but also optimizes recreational opportunities for outdoor enthusiasts. A draft of the revised plan will be developed by the fall of 2012, with the final plan being submitted for approval by summer 2013. What follows is a summary of the responses to individual questions asked during the public input process.

Total surveys completed: 2,124 (2,047 submitted online; 77 from in-person sessions)

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

1. How long have you been hunting turkey in Wisconsin? Please use whole numbers only. If this is your first year hunting turkey, please enter "1". If you are not a hunter, please check the box below.
 - *Average: 13.3 years (range: 1 – 44 years)*
2. Which county do you live in? If you are not a Wisconsin resident, please check the box below.
 - *Responses were received by hunters residing in all counties of Wisconsin with the exception of Menominee County. The number of surveys received from each county is depicted in the image on the following page.*

ISSUE #1: Current Turkey Management Zone Structure

4. Do you think the current 7-zone structure provides enough opportunity to hunt different locations?
 - 80.9% responded "Yes"
 - 13.8% responded "No"
 - 5.1% responded "Unsure"

5. Do you believe that the current 7-zone structure increases, decreases, or doesn't impact a turkey hunter's chances of receiving a turkey permit?
 - 30.5% responded "Increases"
 - 15.6% responded "Decreases"
 - 38.6% responded "No impact"
 - 15.3% responded "Unsure"

6. Do you agree or disagree that the current 7-zone structure is necessary to manage the number of turkeys harvested?
 - 30.7% responded "Strongly agree"
 - 30.5% responded "Somewhat agree"
 - 18.7% responded "Neither agree nor disagree"
 - 11.3% responded "Somewhat disagree"
 - 8.8% responded "Strongly disagree"

7. Do you agree or disagree that the current 7-zone structure is necessary to reduce hunter interference rates?
 - 32.6% responded "Strongly agree"
 - 29.0% responded "Somewhat agree"
 - 17.0% responded "Neither agree nor disagree"
 - 11.7% responded "Somewhat disagree"
 - 9.7% responded "Strongly disagree"

ISSUE #2: Spring Wild Turkey Hunting Season

8. Do you hunt wild turkey during the spring season?
 - 97.4% of respondents stated that they hunt turkeys during the spring season

9. If you hunt during the spring turkey season, where do you typically hunt? A map of the Turkey Management Zones is available on the last page of this survey. If you do not hunt during the spring season, please check the box below.
 - 32.7% of respondents hunt in Zone 1 during the spring season
 - 21.0% of respondents hunt in Zone 2 during the spring season
 - 23.4% of respondents hunt in Zone 3 during the spring season
 - 12.2% of respondents hunt in Zone 4 during the spring season
 - 6.2% of respondents hunt in Zone 5 during the spring season
 - 2.9% of respondents hunt in Zone 6 during the spring season
 - 1.6% of respondents hunt in Zone 7 during the spring season

10. When would you prefer Wisconsin's spring turkey season to open?

- 74.8% responded "at the same time it does now"
- 16.6% responded "earlier than it does now"
- 1.8% responded "later than it does now"
- 5.9% responded "no preference/unsure"

11. Would you support or oppose the spring turkey season opening and closing a week later in the northern zones (5, 6, and 7)? Please mark only one selection.

Statewide: 1,986 responses

- 11.3% would "definitely support"
- 26.4% would "probably support"
- 43.3% were "neutral/unsure"
- 9.6% would "probably oppose"
- 9.4% would "definitely oppose"

Zone 5, 6, and 7 hunters only: 208 responses

- 18.8% would "definitely support"
- 22.6% would "probably support"
- 13.5% were "neutral/unsure"
- 20.7% would "probably oppose"
- 24.5% would "definitely oppose"

12. During the spring turkey season, which time period (A – F) do you most prefer to hunt? Please check the one answer that best describes your preference. Dates for the 2012 spring season are listed as examples.

- 35.6% responded "Period A"
- 30.7% responded "Period B"
- 17.4% responded "Period C"
- 7.9% responded "Period D"
- 2.9% responded "Period E"
- 1.5% responded "Period F"

13. On which day of the week would you prefer that the spring time periods begin? Currently, the time periods begin on Wednesday and run through the following Tuesday.

- 9.9% responded "Monday"
- 0.9% responded "Tuesday"
- 55.0% responded "Wednesday"
- 5.7% responded "Thursday"
- 4.1% responded "Friday"
- 8.8% responded "Saturday"
- 1.4% responded "Sunday"
- 14.3% responded "no preference/unsure"

14. The following are five possible impacts of having 6 time periods in the spring turkey season. Using the scale provided, rank each of the impacts according to how important you think they are.

1 = most important; 2 = second most important; 3 = third most important; 4 = fourth most important; 5 = least important

The six spring time periods...

Average Score

| | |
|------|---|
| 2.03 | <i>Reduce hunter competition and interference rates</i> |
| 3.38 | <i>Influence how many turkeys are harvested</i> |
| 3.01 | <i>Influence a hunter's chances of harvesting a turkey</i> |
| 2.96 | <i>Better distribute hunting opportunity</i> |
| 3.48 | <i>Allow hunters to hunt on the same land during different time periods</i> |

15. The following are four potential options for the spring turkey season structure. Using the scale provided, please tell us how much you would favor or oppose each of the following scenarios.

Option 1: Four 1-week time periods followed by one 2-week time period

- 7.8% "strongly favor"
- 27.9% "probably favor"
- 18.1% "neutral/unsure"
- 17.6% "probably oppose"
- 15.3% "strongly oppose"

Option 2: Three 1-week time periods followed by one 3-week time period

- 7.0% "strongly favor"
- 18.7% "probably favor"
- 19.2% "neutral/unsure"
- 29.3% "probably oppose"
- 25.6% "strongly oppose"

Option 3: The current system with six 1-week time periods

- 58.4% "strongly favor"
- 17.6% "probably favor"
- 10.9% "neutral/unsure"
- 5.7% "probably oppose"
- 7.5% "strongly oppose"

Option 4: A season that runs for 6 weeks straight, with no separate time periods

- 25.9% "strongly favor"
- 6.9% "probably favor"
- 4.6% "neutral/unsure"
- 9.4% "probably oppose"
- 53.1% "strongly oppose"

16. Given the choice between a shorter, earlier spring time period or a later, longer time period, when would you prefer to hunt?
- 51.0% would prefer hunting during the "shorter, earlier" time period
 - 18.0% would prefer hunting during the "later, longer" time period
 - 23.8% have "no preference"
 - 6.4% were "unsure"
17. Imagine that the spring turkey season in Wisconsin ran for 6 weeks straight, with no separate time periods, and that permits were still limited within each zone. Do you agree or disagree that the spring permit drawing should then be eliminated, with permits available over-the-counter only?
- 21.3% "strongly agree"
 - 16.8% "somewhat agree"
 - 8.4% were "neutral/unsure"
 - 12.8% "somewhat disagree"
 - 40.7% "strongly disagree"
18. If Wisconsin eliminated the spring permit drawing, what would you like the spring season bag limit (total turkeys allowed for the entire season) to be? Please answer this question for the zone in which you typically hunt during the spring turkey season.
- 49.3% responded "1 gobbler"
 - 41.2% responded "2 gobblers"
 - 5.1% responded "3 gobblers"
 - 3.8% responded "4 gobblers"
 - 0.7% responded "unsure/not applicable"
 -
19. Do you think that the current permit allocation system provides hunters with a fair chance at drawing a spring turkey permit for their desired **zone**? Please mark only one selection.
- 51.8% responded "definitely yes"
 - 32.6% responded "probably yes"
 - 5.8% responded "neutral/unsure"
 - 5.1% responded "probably no"
 - 4.7% responded "definitely no"
20. Do you think that the current permit allocation system provides hunters with a fair chance at drawing a spring turkey permit for their desired **time period**? Please mark only one selection.
- 34.0% responded "definitely yes"
 - 37.9% responded "probably yes"
 - 9.2% responded "neutral/unsure"
 - 11.5% responded "probably no"
 - 7.4% responded "definitely no"

ISSUE #3: Fall Wild Turkey Hunting Season

21. Do you hunt wild turkey during the fall season?

- 66.1% responded "yes"

22. If you hunt during the fall turkey season, where do you typically hunt?

- 26.1% responded "Zone 1"
- 25.5% responded "Zone 2"
- 23.5% responded "Zone 3"
- 11.7% responded "Zone 4"
- 7.0% responded "Zone 5"
- 3.5% responded "Zone 6"
- 2.7% responded "Zone 7"

23. When would you prefer Wisconsin's fall turkey season to open? Please mark only one selection.

- 62.6% responded "at the same time it does now"
- 5.2% responded "earlier than it does now"
- 5.6% responded "later than it does now"
- 26.7% responded "no preference/unsure"

24. Do you believe that the fall turkey season should be shorter, longer, or the same length that it is now? At this time we are unable to provide specific examples, but we'd like to use this opportunity to measure interest in possible changes. In 2012, the regular fall season will run from September 15th through November 15th (62 days), and the extended season in Zones 1-5 will run from November 26th through December 31st (36 days). Please mark only one selection.

- 55.3% responded "the same length as it is now"
- 12.9% responded "shorter than it is now"
- 10.4% responded "longer than it is now"
- 21.4% responded "no preference/unsure"

25. Currently, individuals apply for a permit to hunt turkeys during the fall season, and must have their application drawn (or, purchase an over-the-counter permit, if available) in order to hunt. Would you prefer that the fall permit drawing be eliminated and replaced with over-the-counter sales of fall turkey licenses only? Assume that any hunter wishing to purchase a fall turkey license would be able to do so, and that a bag limit would be established for each license. Please mark only one selection.

- 35.7% "strongly prefer elimination"
- 20.5% "somewhat prefer elimination"
- 19.5% "unsure/no preference"
- 8.8% "somewhat prefer the fall drawing remain"
- 15.4% "strongly prefer the fall drawing remain"

26. If Wisconsin eliminated the fall permit drawing, what would you like the fall season bag limit (total turkeys allowed for the entire season) to be? Assume that any hunter wishing to purchase a fall turkey license would be able to do so. Please answer this question for the zone in which you typically hunt during the fall turkey season. Please mark only one selection.

- 50.5% responded "1 turkey"
- 29.7% responded "2 turkeys"
- 2.9% responded "3 turkeys"
- 1.2% responded "4 turkeys"
- 6.2% responded "unlimited with a tag"
- 9.4% responded "unsure/not applicable"

ISSUE #4: Permit Allocation

27. From the list below, please rank the items according to how much influence you believe they have on the annual changes in the size of the turkey population *in the zone in which you typically hunt turkey during the spring season*. Use "1" to mark the most influential factor, "2" for the second most influential, and so on, so that "5" marks the least influential factor.

Average Score

| | |
|------|--------------------------------|
| 2.92 | Spring harvest (gobblers only) |
| 3.23 | Fall harvest (either sex) |
| 1.73 | Weather |
| 2.08 | Predation |

28. Using the scale provided, please tell us if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

a) Wisconsin resident landowners (residents who own at least 50 contiguous acres of land in Wisconsin) should have top priority in the permit drawings.

- 30.3% "strongly agree"
- 23.9% "somewhat agree"
- 14.2% "neutral/unsure"
- 17.0% "somewhat disagree"
- 14.6% "strongly disagree"

b) All landowners, resident and non-resident, should have equal preference for turkey permits.

- 18.8% "strongly agree"
- 20.1% "somewhat agree"
- 13.5% "neutral/unsure"
- 24.6% "somewhat disagree"
- 23.1% "strongly disagree"

c) The landowner preference category should be eliminated.

Statewide: 1,921 responses

- 19.2% "strongly agree"
- 13.1% "somewhat agree"
- 17.6% "neutral/unsure"
- 24.3% "somewhat disagree"
- 25.7% "strongly disagree"

Non-landowners only: 1,506 responses

- 23.5% "strongly agree"
- 16.1% "somewhat agree"
- 20.5% "neutral/unsure"
- 25.0% "somewhat disagree"
- 14.8% "strongly disagree"

d) Residents should have priority over non-residents in the permit drawings.

- 67.8% "strongly agree"
- 20.2% "somewhat agree"
- 4.9% "neutral/unsure"
- 2.9% "somewhat disagree"
- 4.2% "strongly disagree"

ISSUE #5: Turkey Damage

29. Do you agree or disagree that crop damage from turkeys is a significant problem in the Turkey Management Zone in which you live?

- 4.6% "strongly agree"
- 24.0% "somewhat agree"
- 20.9% "neutral/unsure"
- 35.7% "somewhat disagree"
- 14.8% "strongly disagree"

ISSUE #6: Wild Turkey Stamp Program

30. Now that you've seen the presentation on the revision process for the statewide Wild Turkey Management Plan, how would you say that your understanding of how revenue from sales of the Wild Turkey Stamp is spent has changed?

- 6.7% responded "greatly increased"
- 24.0% responded "somewhat increased"
- 28.1% responded "remained the same"
- 41.3% responded "didn't view the presentation"

31. Do you agree or disagree that the money generated by sales of the Wild Turkey Stamp is well-spent? Please mark only one selection.

- 12.6% responded "strongly agree"
- 31.1% responded "somewhat agree"
- 20.4% responded "neither agree nor disagree"
- 4.4% responded "somewhat disagree"
- 3.1% responded "strongly disagree"
- 28.4% responded "I don't have a good understanding of this issue"

32. Do you think that the cost of the Wild Turkey Stamp (\$5.25) is reasonable? Please mark only one selection.

- 79.1% responded "Yes"
- 15.9% responded "No, it should cost less"
- 5.0% responded "No, it should cost more"

33. Using the scale provided, please tell us how important it is that each of the following items be funded by the revenue from sales of the Wild Turkey Stamp.

1 = not important at all

3 = neither important nor unimportant

4 = somewhat important

2 = somewhat unimportant

5 = very important

Average Score

| | |
|------|-------------------------------------|
| 3.56 | Habitat improvement |
| 3.20 | Land acquisition |
| 3.41 | Turkey research |
| 3.22 | Education & outreach |
| 3.16 | Hunter recruitment & retention |
| 3.17 | Equipment purchase for habitat work |
| 3.19 | Law enforcement |
| 3.22 | Increasing access to private lands |

34. How do you think the revenue from sales of the Wild Turkey Stamp should be divided across the Wild Turkey Management Program? Please mark only one selection

- 22.8% responded "proportional to the distribution of turkeys"
- 21.5% responded "proportional to the distribution of hunters"
- 24.8% responded "in areas with marginal habitat/low turkey numbers"
- 21.7% responded "equally across the state"
- 9.2% responded "unsure/no opinion"

35. Do you agree or disagree that revenue from the sales of the Wild Turkey Stamp should be made available to individuals and organizations outside of the Wisconsin DNR? For example, a non-profit organization might receive an award to hold educational events for novice turkey hunters, or a county forestry department might receive funding to improve turkey habitat on their lands.

- 19.3% responded "strongly agree"
- 40.7% responded "somewhat agree"
- 13.9% responded "neutral/unsure"
- 9.8% responded "somewhat disagree"
- 13.6% responded "strongly disagree"

36. Should the Wild Turkey Stamp Program be continued?

- 70.0% responded "Yes"
- 7.3% responded "Yes, but it should be consolidated with the other 2 stamp programs"
- 9.6% responded "No, purchase of the Wild Turkey Stamp should be optional for hunters"
- 6.7% responded "No, the Wild Turkey Stamp should be completely discontinued"
- 6.6% responded "unsure"