

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF ANGLERS & HUNTERS



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Ontario Conservation Centre

OFAH FILE: 410A/452

January 21, 2015

Ms. Deb Stetson, Manager
Wildlife Policy Section
Ministry of Natural Resources
300 Water Street
Peterborough, Ontario
K9J 3C7

Deb

Dear Ms. Stetson:

Subject: Wild Turkey Management

On behalf of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH), and its 100,000 members, subscribers and supporters, and 725 member clubs, we have highlighted three important areas of wild turkey management that should be given further consideration by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF). We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with MNRF Wildlife Policy Section staff to discuss the following:

1. Reporting/Monitoring

The OFAH supports the collection of harvest and hunting activity data at a level that enables the MNRF to best manage the province's wild turkey population. We also recognize the need for a combination of mandatory and voluntary surveys for licensed hunters.

While recent deer hunter sighting data would suggest turkey populations are stable, there continues to be a declining trend in Wild Turkey Harvest Reporting. The OFAH remains concerned about the ongoing drop in hunter reporting rates, and is committed to working with the MNRF to explore opportunities to address this issue. First and foremost, to get an estimate of non-reporting bias in mandatory harvest reports, we recommend the MNRF collect additional data through a turkey hunting mail survey.

2. Ontario Wild Turkey Working Group

The OFAH has been a long-standing member of the Ontario Wild Turkey Working Group (OWTWG). We recognize the challenges of reconvening the OWTWG, as several members have retired from their respective organizations; however, we strongly encourage the MNRF to maintain a forum for this important group, and meet at least once a year, to discuss the management of wild turkeys in the province. This group would be an ideal venue to discuss the efficacy of new or expanded turkey hunting opportunities (e.g. bows-only fall wild turkey hunt proposed by the OFAH in the past). We value the role of this working group and believe there are many benefits to revitalizing its membership. The OFAH would be happy to work with the MNRF to determine how the OWTWG can continue to play an important role in wild turkey management in Ontario.

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF ANGLERS AND HUNTERS

Ms. Deb Stetson
January 21, 2015
Page Two

3. Youth Wild Turkey Hunts

The wild turkey population in Ontario continues to thrive, and we continue to train a large number of apprenticeship hunters. Youth wild turkey hunts are presently in effect in a number of US jurisdictions (and the Province of Manitoba) to increase hunter recruitment and retention, and enhance youth hunting opportunities (jurisdictional scan attached). Likewise, we believe initiating a Youth Wild Turkey Hunt on a weekend prior to the regular season in Ontario, would provide the following benefits:

- Promote Youth Hunting Heritage: Encourages the involvement of young people in wild turkey hunting to help ensure the future of hunting for generations to come.
- Recreational Opportunities: The proposal would provide additional sustainable and quality wild turkey hunting opportunities to young hunters in Ontario.
- Conservation: Young people introduced to wild turkey hunting at an early age, will develop a greater understanding and appreciation of conservation.
- Safety: Helps ensure safety and a quality wild turkey hunting experience for new young hunters.

We appreciate your consideration of these important topics and would welcome the opportunity to discuss our recommendations with you further. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours in Conservation,



Matt DeMille
Manager, Fish & Wildlife Services

MD/ds/gh
Attach.

cc: OFAH Board of Directors
 OFAH Sporting Dogs/Small Game/Migratory Birds/Wetlands Advisory Committee
 Angelo Lombardo, OFAH Executive Director
 Mark Ryckman, OFAH Senior Wildlife Biologist
 Dawn Sucee, OFAH Fish and Wildlife Biologist

YOUTH WILD TURKEY HUNTS - Jurisdictional Scan				
Jurisdiction	Season	Age/Requirement	Other Regulations/Information	Website
Connecticut	Designate certain Saturdays in April before regular season	Licensed junior hunters may hunt with licensed adult; adult mentor may not carry a firearm, bow, crossbow	Licensed junior hunter and mentor must have a valid spring season permit (for either private land or state land); written landowner consent is also required for private land	http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/27836.html
Florida	Weekend (2-day hunt) prior to the regular spring turkey season	Designed for youth under 16 year of age, supervised by an adult (18+); no licence or permit is required on private land; however, if the supervising adult plans to participate in the hunt (e.g. calling) a licence and turkey permit is required	Youth hunt first established in 2011 on private property, and extended to other wildlife management areas (WMAs) the following year due to its success; most VMA's require youth spring turkey quota permit	http://myfwc.com/hunting/by-species/turkey/weekend
Indiana	During a special season in April	Youth 17 years old and younger; must be accompanied by licenced adult (18+); mentor may not possess a firearm, bow, crossbow; both youth and mentor must possess valid turkey hunting licence	Youth may only harvest one bearded turkey during the spring season (this includes the youth and regular season)	http://www.eregulations.com/indiana/hunting/wild-turkey
Maine	First Saturday prior to opening of regular spring season	Youth (ages 10-16) with a junior hunting licence; must hunt under adult supervision, and adult must have a hunting licence	Youth can hunt for two bearded turkeys	http://www.maine.gov/ifw/hunting_trapping/hunting/wild_turkey.htm
Manitoba	One week prior to the regular spring season and continues throughout the regular season; a fall youth season runs the same time as the regular fall season	Youth (ages 12-17) must complete hunter education training; youth may hunt without a licence under the direct supervision of an adult licensed hunter, OR under their own bag limit if they purchase a licence (available at a reduced cost) which is valid for spring and fall seasons (and may be used to form party)	Youth that purchase a Youth Wild Turkey licence are not permitted to purchase regular season licence; Bag limit of one wild turkey with beard in spring, and one wild turkey in the fall	http://www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/wildlife/hunting/youthlead.html
Massachusetts	Saturday prior to the last Monday in April	Youth (ages 12-17) must be accompanied by an adult licensed hunter; all participants must have a valid hunter education certificate	Youth Turkey Hunt Program Planning guide available for sportsmen's clubs.	http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dfg/dfw/education/events/youth-turkey-hunt-program.html
Minnesota	Designate two days (in April); on private land	Youth (ages 12-17) must be "first-time" turkey hunters and have completed firearms safety course and pre-season orientation; must be accompanied by an adult (with or without hunting licence) and a guide who has permission to hunt the private land	Purpose of the youth hunt is to provide first time hunters with a "high quality experience" to help recruit them as hunters	http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/youthturkey/index.html

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Jurisdiction	Season	Age/Requirement	Other Regulations/Information	Website
Missouri	Two-day wild turkey youth hunt occurs on the weekend one week prior to the regular season	Youth (ages 6-15); Youth who are not yet hunter-education certified must hunt with a licensed adult; Youth who are hunter-education certified may hunt without an adult mentor; must possess spring turkey hunting permit	One bearded turkey; Youth may not harvest a second bird until the second week of the regular season; Youth hunt has resulted in an increase in hunter recruitment and retention; and an increase in the number of youth tags sold and total turkey tags sold	http://mdc.mo.gov/hunting-trapping/regulations/turkey-regulations/spring-turkey-hunting-regulations.aspx
New York	The youth hunt is for spring turkey hunting only and is a two-day weekend hunt, which always precedes the start of the regular season by at least 3 days.	Youth (ages 12 - 15) holding a junior hunting licence and a turkey permit; all youth hunters must be accompanied by an adult with a current hunting licence and turkey permit; the accompanying adult may not carry a firearm, bow, crossbow	Bag limit for the youth hunt is one bearded bird, which becomes part of the youth's regular season bag limit of two bearded birds	http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/27836.html
Ohio	Weekend (2-day hunt) prior to the regular spring turkey season	All youth (regardless of age) must be accompanied by adult (18+); adult may not possess firearms, bow, crossbow; youth must have their valid youth licence and spring wild turkey permit	Youth permitted one bearded turkey during youth season; may only kill total of 2 during youth and regular season combined; special youth hunts also held during regular season in selected wildlife areas and state parks; require controlled hunting permit acquired during the March draw	http://www.ohiodnr.gov/wildlife/dow/regulations/hunting_youth.aspx
Rhode Island	Junior turkey hunting weekend (2-day hunt) the Saturday & Sunday immediately prior to the regular season	Youth (ages 12 - 14) in possession of a valid Rhode Island hunting licence; Junior hunters must be accompanied by qualified licensed adult (21+)	An adult may accompany no more than two junior hunters at one time; the adult mentor may not carry a firearm, bow, crossbow; bag limit is one bearded turkey per licence per year	http://www.dem.ri.gov/pubs/regs/regs/fishwild/hunt_1314.pdf
Wisconsin	The weekend (2-day hunt) one week prior to the regular season	Youth (ages 10 - 15) that have either successfully completed a Hunter Education Program (or in the Hunting Mentorship program), and hold all required permits; Must be accompanied by adult (18+); adult may not possess firearm, bow, crossbow	Youth must have spring licence, stamp, and valid carcass tag; one bearded turkey total during youth hunt	http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/hunt/documents/turkyouthhunt.pdf