



GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
LANSING



DANIEL EICHINGER
DIRECTOR

SUBMITTED: September 12, 2022

MEMORANDUM TO THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Subject: Spring Turkey Regulations
Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 5 of 2022
FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Authority:

The Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, authorizes the Director and the Commission to issue orders to manage wild animals in this state.

Discussion and Background:

Current spring turkey regulations have been in place since 2020 as part of a three-year stabilized regulation process that originated in 2008. The spring wild turkey season is designed to maximize hunter opportunity for a satisfactory hunting experience while sustaining a viable wild turkey population. The Department reviewed potential regulatory changes for the 2023-2025 spring turkey seasons and included discussions on spring turkey bag limits. In addition, adjustments to spring turkey license quotas and hunt units were considered.

For the 2023-2025 regulatory cycle, a single minor adjustment to one Turkey Management Unit (TMU) season structure is recommended. In addition, the Department intends to take actions to better inform future discussions relative to spring turkey bag limits and season structures.

TMU E Season Structure

The Department recommends that the TMU E structure be altered to eliminate the two one-week season structure and implement a single hunt period in TMU E which is two weeks long. This structure matches most of the other TMU seasons in the Northern Lower Peninsula. The total number of available licenses would remain the same at 1,700.

Moving to a two-week season allows more time for each hunter to be actively hunting turkeys. The Department has moved toward this structure in many other TMUs and the change seems to allow more individual opportunity without needing to reduce license quotas and without having a significant impact on populations, success rates, or hunter satisfaction.

Issues Pros and Cons

The change from two one-week seasons to one two-week season in TMU E will offer the same number of licenses as before but allow hunters twice as long to pursue turkeys. This is generally a favorable change for turkey hunters. Success rates may increase slightly, but likely not significantly. There is the potential for more interference among turkey hunters with twice as many people potentially in the field at the same time. However, in areas where this change has already occurred or in TMUs with much higher license quotas, the Department has not seen significant impacts on interference or satisfaction. Hunter satisfaction and success rates are at or near all-time highs.

Biological

No biological impact is expected as a result of this change.

Social

Hunters in TMU E will likely be happy with a longer season and few will experience any negative impacts from the potential increase in the number of hunters afield during the season.

Economic

Increases in season length may increase the number of trips, or the amount of time hunters spend pursuing turkeys in TMU E.

Spring Turkey Bag Limit Discussions, Looking Forward

The Department invested time considering and investigating the potential for some form of harvest structure changes that would allow for the take of two birds by one hunter in the spring. A change of this type is supported by the Michigan United Conservation Clubs but opposed by the National Wild Turkey Federation. Review of current literature and active research projects in several other states have indicated that the spring harvest of male turkeys may be having population level impacts. Michigan's turkey populations appear stable but there would be significant benefits to improve the quality and type of data available on turkey populations in the state. In addition, given the likely need to significantly modify season structure and timing to accommodate a two-bird harvest sustainably, it is unclear how most turkey stakeholders would feel about such changes.

As a result of these uncertainties and the strong scientific indications that spring male harvest can impact populations under some circumstances, the Department is recommending no changes to the spring turkey bag limit at this time. However, the Department is implementing some model updates and developing additional recommendations for data enhancement efforts. These activities will begin this fall. The Department also plans to meet with relevant stakeholder groups to discuss potential future regulatory changes to the spring season that will ensure sustainable harvest without undesired biological impacts on the population while seeking to provide desired hunting opportunities. In addition, the Department will be reviewing new research findings anticipated from multiple projects in other states and will be discussing future research needs for Michigan to ensure the state has the best information available to manage turkey populations into the future.

Issues Pros and Cons

There are strong opinions and feelings about a multi-bird spring harvest opportunity. Some will be frustrated with a no change recommendation while others will be pleased. Retaining the current spring bag limit with an increase in emphasis in gathering more data and continuing conversations regarding spring bag limits and seasons structures will allow for continued high hunter success rates and high hunter satisfaction while exploring other desired opportunities.

Biological

The Department does not anticipate a biological impact to the no change recommendation.

Social

Some stakeholders will be pleased while other will be disappointed with this recommendation. The Department anticipates continued high success rates and satisfaction with the current spring turkey regulatory structure and hunting season.

Economic

The Department does not expect an economic impact.

Technical Changes

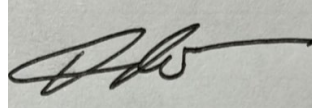
The Department discovered an error in the Wildlife Conservation Order regarding the season date structure for the spring turkey season. The Department recommends updating this language to reflect the current season structure. In addition, there is a numbering error in chapter 12 requiring a technical change.

Relevant Divisions have contributed to the preparation of this order. This order is being submitted for information and consideration. This item appeared on the Department's October 4, 2022 calendar and may be eligible for approval on November 10, 2022.

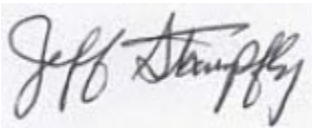


for

Jared Duquette, Chief
Wildlife Division



David Shaw, Chief
Law Enforcement Division



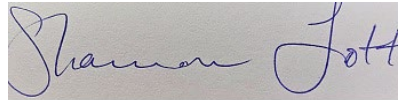
Jeff Stampfly, Chief
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Natural Resources Deputy

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ORDER

Amendment No. 5 of 2022

By authority conferred on the Natural Resources Commission and the Director of the Department of Natural Resources by sections 40107 and 40113a of 1994 PA 451, MCL 324.40107 and 324.40113a, it is ordered that effective November 11, 2022, the following section(s) of the Wildlife Conservation Order shall read as follows:

3.300a Wild turkey population, harvest quotas.

Sec 3.300a. (1) The spring wild turkey hunt seasons and quotas for general licenses valid on all land within the listed unit shall be as shown in table 6:

TABLE 6
Spring Wild Turkey General License Seasons and Quotas

Hunt Number	Open Units	Hunt Seasons	License Quotas
101	A	Begins on the second to last Saturday in April and continues for 14 days.	5,500
102	B	Begins on the second to last Saturday in April and continues for 14 days.	1,000
103	E	Begins on the second to last Saturday in April and continues for 7 14 days.	850 1,700
404	E	Begins 7 days after the second to last Saturday in April and continues for 7 days.	850
105	F	Begins on the second to last Saturday in April and continues for 14 days.	5,000
107	J	Begins on the second to last Saturday in April and continues for 14 days.	4,000
108	K	Begins on the second to last Saturday in April and continues for 7 days.	4,000
109	K	Begins 7 days after the second to last Saturday in April and continues for 7 days.	4,500
110	M	Begins on the second to last Saturday in April and continues through May 31.	6,000
111	ZA	Begins on the second to last Saturday in April and continues for 7 days and June 1 through June 7.	1,200
112	ZA	Begins 7 days after the second to last Saturday in April and continues for 14 days.	1,800
113	ZA	Begins 21 days after the second to last Saturday in April and continues through May 31.	1,800
115	ZB	Begins on the second to last Saturday in April and continues for 7 days and June 1 through June 7.	650
116	ZB	Begins 7 days after the second to last Saturday in April and continues for 14 days.	975
117	ZB	Begins 21 days after the second to last Saturday in April and continues through May 31.	975
119	ZC	Begins on the second to last Saturday in April and continues for 7 days and June 1 through June 7.	600
120	ZC	Begins 7 days after the second to last Saturday in April and continues for 14 days.	900
121	ZC	Begins 21 days after the second to last Saturday in April and continues through May 31.	900
123	ZD	Begins on the second to last Saturday in April and continues for 7 days and June 1 through June 7.	10
124	ZD	Begins 7 days after the second to last Saturday in April and continues for 14 days.	15
125	ZD	Begins 21 days after the second to last Saturday in April and continues through May 31.	15

127	ZE	Begins on the second to last Saturday in April and continues for 7 days and June 1 through June 7.	500
128	ZE	Begins 7 days after the second to last Saturday in April and continues for 14 days.	750
129	ZE	Begins 21 days after the second to last Saturday in April and continues through May 31.	750
131	ZF	Begins on the second to last Saturday in April and continues for 7 days and June 1 through June 7.	1,300
132	ZF	Begins 7 days after the second to last Saturday in April and continues for 14 days.	1,300
133	ZF	Begins 21 days after the second to last Saturday in April and continues through May 31.	3,000

(2) The spring wild turkey hunt seasons and quotas for private land only licenses which are not valid on county, state or federal lands, except that they may be used to hunt Fort Custer military lands with permission, shall be as shown in table 7:

TABLE 7
Spring Wild Turkey Private Land License Seasons and Quotas

Hunt Number	Open Units	Hunt Seasons	License Quotas
301	ZZ	Begins on the second to last Saturday in April and continues through May 31.	50,000

(3) Hunt number 234 begins 14 days after the second to last Saturday in April and continues through May 31. Licenses for hunt number 234 are valid on private and public land in spring turkey management units, except public lands in southern Lower Peninsula wild turkey management unit (unit ZZ). Individuals who possess a valid license for hunt number 234 may hunt Fort Custer military land with permission.

(4) An individual may purchase a license for hunt number 234 when leftover licenses are made available for purchase through May 31; no application is required.

(5) If any limited quota licenses remain after the drawing, an unsuccessful applicant may purchase one leftover license on a first-come, first-served basis for a one-week period. Any limited-quota licenses that remain after this one-week period will be made available to all hunters on a first-come, first-served basis.

(6) The wildlife division chief may recommend to the director the need for any appropriate significant changes in quotas based on experience with population densities, hunter satisfaction levels, hunter application rates, or survey results. The director, in consultation with the chairman or vice-chairman of the natural resources commission, may make changes in quotas in a turkey management unit to address this new information.

(7) It is unlawful to purchase more than one Michigan spring turkey hunting license.

3.304 Wild turkey, spring management units open season.

Sec. 3.304 The open season for taking wild turkey in the spring wild turkey management units described in chapter XII shall start no earlier than the **second to last Saturday in April** ~~Monday closest to April 20~~ and shall close no later than June 7.

12.636 "Spring wild turkey management unit ZB" defined.

Sec. 12.6386 "Spring wild turkey management unit ZB" means all of Huron, Sanilac, and Tuscola counties.

Issued on this 10th day of November, 2022.

Approved as to matters over which the Natural Resources Commission has authority.

Thomas Baird, Chair
Natural Resources Commission

Approved as to matters over which the Director has authority.

Daniel Eichinger
Director