



GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
LANSING



DANIEL EICHINGER
DIRECTOR

SUBMITTED: March 18, 2019
RESUBMITTED: April 16, 2019

APPROVED _____, 20____ MICHIGAN NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION _____ (ASSISTANT TO THE COMMISSION)

MEMORANDUM TO THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Subject: Fall Turkey Regulations
Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 5 of 2019

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:

Managing wild turkeys in Michigan involves the complex interactions of turkey populations, their habitat and their relationship to people. Current fall turkey regulations have been in place since 2016 as part of a three-year stabilized regulation process that originated in 2008. Fall wild turkey hunting seasons were implemented in Michigan to help maintain turkey populations at levels matching biological and social carrying capacities. The intent of the fall wild turkey season is to maintain turkey numbers while also providing opportunities to address local nuisance turkey concerns and provide extra recreational opportunities without harming core turkey populations. Most areas in Northern Lower Michigan where local wild turkey populations are near or lower than the desired social and biological carrying capacity are closed for fall turkey hunting.

The proposed recommendations are the result of discussions with stakeholder groups and Department staff and marks the beginning of the fifth-cycle of three-year stabilized regulations for wild turkey management. The recommendations are similar to the last three-year regulatory setting cycles and are an effort to provide recreational opportunity without impacting the quality of fall or spring turkey hunting. In keeping with efforts to stabilize regulations by using multi-year cycles, these regulations are proposed for the 2019, 2020, and 2021 seasons.

License Quotas

License quotas are developed to harvest the desired number of turkeys to meet the management goal. The Department recommends that a total of 51,350 licenses be made available and approximately 44,943 square miles of area be open to fall turkey hunting.

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The Department further recommends that a total of 4,650 general licenses be made available through a lottery in turkey management units (TMU): G, GB, GC, J, L, M, T, WA, and W.

The Department recommends maintaining the existing general license quota of 200 for TMU G, 250 for TMU GB, 200 for TMU GC, 1,500 for TMU J, 500 for TMU L, 1,500 for TMU M, 200 for TMU T, 200 for TMU W, and 100 for TMU WA. The Department does not recommend any changes to the private land license quotas or application process.

TMU HA will continue to have a private land quota of 1,700, with the private land licenses being available initially through an application. Licenses in fall hunt TMU YY, encompassing only private lands in southern Michigan and Beaver Island, may be purchased over the counter when leftover fall turkey licenses are made available for purchase. YY licenses do not require an application and will be sold until the 45,000 private-land only license quota is achieved for the TMU.

The Department does not recommend any changes to the application process for limited-quota hunt TMUs or leftover license sales. The Department further recommends maintaining the one-license-per-day purchase limit for leftover licenses when available.

From 2016-2018, 11 management units totaling about 44,943 square miles were open for fall turkey hunting during September 15 through November 14. The open area to hunting for 2013-2015 increased by 25% from 2012 (an additional 8,865 square miles), when three new management units were created (TMUs J, T, and WA). The Department does not recommend any additional areas open for the fall turkey hunting stabilized regulation period.

Biological

The 2017 Michigan Fall Turkey Hunter survey concluded that approximately 4,305 turkeys were harvested in 2017. From the 3,894 hunters who took at least one turkey, 93 percent of these hunters took one turkey, six percent took two turkeys, and about one percent took more than two turkeys. Of the 4,305 turkeys harvested in 2017, 90 percent of these birds were taken on private land, seven percent on public land, and 3 percent on both private and public lands. About 64 percent of the harvested birds had a beard and most of these bearded birds were adults; 17 percent were juvenile birds.

Social

During the last three years, the Department requested feedback about wild turkey regulations from conservation organizations, turkey hunters, and others. Generally, most hunters are satisfied with the regulations currently in place.

The National Wild Turkey Federation, Wildlife Unlimited of Delta and Dickinson Counties, Superior Turkey Trackers, Menominee National Wild Turkey Federation, Menominee Strutting Toms, Bays De Noc Gobblers, and Eastern Dickinson County Sportsman Club support the proposed recommendations.

Season Dates

Some individuals expressed concerns regarding the fall turkey season opening dates. During the development and evaluation of the next three years of stabilized regulations, Department staff and stakeholder groups discussed season dates and it was recommended to maintain the current season date structure: September 15 through November 14. Maintaining the current season date structure is supported by field staff and the majority of constituents, as well as fall turkey harvest information from the 2017 Michigan Fall Turkey Hunter Survey.

Economic

Turkey hunting opportunities provide economic benefits by enhancing the amount of recreation and hunting-related expenditures, e.g., costs of ammunition, food, travel, and lodging.

The proposed recommendations are not expected to have a significant economic effect.

Relevant Divisions have contributed to the preparation of this order. This order was submitted for information on April 11, 2019, at the Natural Resources Commission meeting. This item appeared on the Department's March calendar and may be eligible for approval on May 9, 2019.



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Ronald A. Olson, Chief
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James Dexter, Chief
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Marketing and Outreach Division



Mark Hoffman
Chief Administrative Officer



William O'Neill
Natural Resources Deputy

I have analyzed and discussed these recommendations with staff and concur as to matters over which the Director has authority.

Daniel Eichinger, Director

Date

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ORDER

Amendment No. 5 of 2019

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 May 10, 2019, the following section(s) of the Wildlife Conservation Order shall read as follows:

3.300b Wild Turkey population, fall harvest quotas.

Sec. 3.300b (1) The quotas for general licenses valid on all private and public lands within the listed unit for the fall wild turkey hunt seasons defined in section 3.303, are as shown in table 8:

TABLE 8	
Fall Wild Turkey General License Quotas per Unit	
Open Unit	License Quota
A	0
D	0
E	0
G	200
GB	250
GC	200
H	0
HA	0
HB	0
J	1,500
L	500
M	1,500
Q	0
T	200
W	200
WA	100

(2) The quotas for private land only licenses for the fall wild turkey hunt seasons defined in section 3.303, are as shown in table 9:

TABLE 9	
Fall Wild Turkey Private Land Only License Quotas per Unit	
Open Unit	License Quota
A	0
D	0
E	0
G	0
GB	0
GC	0
H	0
HA	1,700
HB	0
J	0

L	0
M	0
Q	0
T	0
W	0
YY	45,000

(3) Each successful applicant may purchase the license for which they were selected. Unsuccessful applicants may purchase one leftover license or a license for hunt unit YY the first week leftover licenses are available for purchase. After this one-week period, any hunter may purchase one remaining license per day until the quota is met for each hunt unit.

(a) Licenses for unit YY may be purchased over the counter with no application required when leftover licenses are made available for purchase.

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

Issued on this 9th day of May, 2019.

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

Vicki J. Pontz, Chair
Natural Resources Commission

Approved as to matters over which the Director has authority.

Daniel Eichinger
Director