

Pennsylvania Wild Turkey Management Accomplishments and Turkey Hunting Regulations – 1958-2009

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Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) Management Plan For Wild Turkeys In Pennsylvania was revised and adopted in February 2007. There is one goal, 6 objectives, and 47 strategies to document management data collected from previous years, provide information and guidelines for recommending seasons and bag limit regulation, and outline criteria for decision making for future wild turkey management changes between 2006-2015.

The NWTF Pennsylvania Chapter's motives for continued accomplishments and future improvements for wild turkey management decision making and turkey hunting are based first on sound scientific wildlife management principles, management plan objectives and strategies, and in the ground/on the ground better field data to support recommended changes.

We support a fully funded PGC Management Plan For Wild Turkeys In Pennsylvania and partner with PGC to accomplish revised management plan objectives and strategies.

As of January 2007, these are key wild turkey management accomplishments and turkey hunting regulations made since 1958. These 50 accomplishments, current regulation recommendations, and revised wild turkey management plan objectives and strategies will drive Pennsylvania Chapter NWTF's wild turkey management and turkey hunting recommendations for future decades.

1950's - 1960's:

- 1) PGC begins full-scale wild turkey trap and transfer to expand and repopulate wild turkeys throughout Pennsylvania in suitable, but unoccupied wild turkey habitat.
- 2) PGC stopped winter-feeding of wildlife due to research results on lack of benefits.
- 3) PGC wild turkey biologists Jerry Wunz and Arnie Hayden doing several wild turkey population, habitat, and regional research project.
- 4) Spring gobbler season started in 1968 with one-week season.

1970's - 1980's:

- 5) Spring gobbler season start date moved to later in April from management data recommendations.
- 6) Spring gobbler season is expanded to two weeks in 1972, three weeks in 1975, four weeks in 1984.
- 7) Pennsylvania State Chapter NWTF formed in June 1975 in State College.
- 8) Escalating and improving trap and transfer both in state and out-of-state in the 1970's, 1980's, 1990's.
- 9) Closing PGC game farm production of turkeys in 1980-1981.

10) PGC establishes turkey management areas (TMAs) between 1982 and 1985 to effectively manage wild turkey populations at more local levels.

11) NWTF and Pennsylvania Chapter begin state Super Fund in 1985 to support habitat management, safety and education, land acquisition, other wild turkey management requests, state and local chapter wild turkey projects.

12) Continued use of wild turkey in-state trap and transfer in suitable but unoccupied habitat to expand wild turkey populations.

13) Last regional wild turkey research project completed by Arnie Hayden in 1988, until 1999.

1990's:

14) Expanded or reduced fall season lengths since 1990 to manage and improve wild turkey populations due to bad recruitment, bad spring hatch, bad winters. Using TMA's PGC is able to monitor fall harvest rates and change fall turkey hunting seasons based on wild turkey management sound scientific management principles.

15) New mandatory PGC turkey hunting fluorescent orange regulation changes begin in 1992-1993, without Pennsylvania NWTF support.

16) Reduced mandatory PGC fluorescent orange regulation changes to today's regulations in 1995, with Pennsylvania NWTF support.

17) PGC Wild Turkey Biologists Bill Drake completes first five-year Management Plan For Wild Turkeys In Pennsylvania and is adopted in April 1999.

18) TMA 7B Wild Turkey Task Force started in 1996-1997 to determine dramatic decline of wild turkey population on Michaux State Forest, PGC and Department of Conservation and Natural Resources staff participated in task force meetings with Pennsylvania NWTF coordinating and facilitating wild turkey task force.

19) TMA 7B wild turkey hen radio telemetry research study in 1999-2001 on Michaux State Forest to determine causes of a suppressed wild turkey population, partially funded by \$82,000 contribution from Pennsylvania NWTF.

2000's:

20) PGC signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with NWTF to partially fund the NWTF Regional Biologist to assist the agency with all forms of wild turkey management and research.

21) PGC creates wild turkey web page on web site to provide accurate public information and education on wild turkey management and research in 2000.

22) Wild turkey in-state trap and transfer in southeast used to expand population into further suitable habitat in 2000-2003. This completed the agency's wild turkey restoration program with over 3,500 wild turkeys transferred within Pennsylvania and to eight other states.

23) Closing fall turkey hunting seasons in TMA 9A [now WMU 5A] in 2001, TMA 9B [now WMU 5B]

in 2003.

- 24) Record number of wild turkey in Pennsylvania in 2001, 410,000 estimated statewide wild turkey population.
- 25) Prescribed burn policy approved for use as habitat management tool on State Game Lands in 2001.
- 26) PGC completes turkey hunter survey to determine hunter attitudes, characteristics, and satisfaction in 2001.
- 27) Improving turkey hunting safety portion of PGC Hunter Education course, adding turkey hunting safety section and questions to course test in 2001.
- 28) Northeastern states commissioned development of regional wild turkey population model in 2001, partially funding by \$15,000 Pennsylvania NWTF contribution.
- 29) Use of manmade blinds to hunt turkeys is legal, legislation signed in 2002, and regulation completed for 2003 hunting season.
- 30) Pennsylvania NWTF, NWTF and other state conservation organizations oppose PGC proposed regulation to increase mandatory fluorescent orange for fall hunting seasons, proposed regulation was not adopted.
- 31) PGC permit required prior to releasing farm-pen raised turkeys, to help eliminate release of game-farm turkeys.
- 32) Wild turkey management now accomplished using 22 Wildlife Management Units starting in 2003. PGC's Management Plan For Wild Turkeys In Pennsylvania data and graphs updated to include all 22 WMUs changes from old TMA units.
- 33) Closed WMU 5A [old TMA 7B] to fall turkey hunting in 2003, recommendation from TMA 7B Wild Turkey Task Force.
- 34) Research continued on Michaux State Forest [WMU 5A] to determine turkey usage of herbaceous openings.
- 35) Established 6 Game Commission regional Wildlife Management Supervisors, to provide among other tasks, direct technical assistance to private landowners and agency staff.
- 36) Special Saturday youth spring gobbler hunting day established by regulation one week before regular spring gobbler season starts.
- 37) NWTF Wild Turkey Biologists Bob Eriksen and PGC Wild Turkey Biologist Mary Jo Casalena begin series of informational, educational articles for PGC Hunting and Trapping Digest, PGC Game News, and Pennsylvania Turkey Talk.
- 38) PGC Wild Turkey Biologists Mary Jo Casalena presents TMA 7B wild turkey study project research paper as part of NWTF's 9th Wild Turkey Symposia and Status in North America in December 2005.
- 39) Fall turkey hunting WMU season lengths are reduced in several WMU's between 2004 and 2007 based on wild turkey biologist's management data and fall season length guidelines due to poor

reproduction.

40) NWTF and Pennsylvania Chapter Hunting Heritage Super Fund expenditures exceed \$4,000,000 in 2006 for wild turkey projects in Pennsylvania.

41) Statewide second spring gobbler tag issued in 2006, legislation signed in 2004, regulations added in 2005, first year 8,040 licenses sold.

42) State wide first-ever PGC gobbler leg band study started in 2006, first year completed of 4 year research study, being partially funded by NWTF and PANWTF for Pennsylvania, study will determine "wild turkey harvest rates and annual survival rates", and is being coordinated with Ohio and New York state agency studies.

43) Mentored Youth Hunting Program initiated in 2006 for spring gobbler, squirrel, and groundhogs, turkey hunting starts in 2007 for spring gobbler season only.

44) PGC Wild Turkey Biologists Mary Jo Casalena completes revisions for updating 2006-2015 PGC Management Plan For Wild Turkeys In Pennsylvania, February 2007.

45) Spring gobbler season length expanded to include Memorial Day 2008 based on wild turkey biologists management data and Pennsylvania NWTF support, Pennsylvania NWTF will continue recommendation for season length to be lengthened to May 31. Legislation signed by governor making Fall turkey hunting season with dog lawful.

46) Spring gobbler season regulation for mandatory use of orange changed by vote of PGC Board of Commissioner's to voluntary use of orange - hunter's choice, as supported and recommended by PA Chapter NWTF Board of Director's, starting Spring Gobbler Season 2008.

47) Pennsylvania NWTF and PGC distribute "Positively Identify Your Target" posters on state game lands, state forests, and other public hunting lands promoting turkey hunting safety.

48) NWTF creates their Turkey Hunting Success and Safety Pamphlet - Pennsylvania Edition for distribution to promote, inform, and educate turkey hunters on turkey hunting safety and ethics.

49) PANWTF turkey hunting safety "Think Safety – Hunt Safely", by Don Heckman, being used to promote and support turkey hunter safety and ethics while hunting.

50) Governor signs legislation in July 2009 for Prescribed Fire [Controlled Burn] by state agencies to be used for habitat management and improvement state-wide.

51) PGC supports funding for Hen Harvest Rate Study to begin in 2010. PGC Executive Summary for Fall Harvest Rates Of Female Wild Turkeys In Pennsylvania clearly documents and defines study objectives for 2010-2013 research project. PA Chapter NWTF fully supports Hen Harvest Rate Study as designed and approved. First PGC large scale 4 year WMU fall hen wild turkey management study in the history of the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

Pennsylvania Chapter NWTF web page is, <http://www.panwtf.org>

PGC Wild Turkey Management Plan, http://www.pgc.state.pa.us/pgc/lib/pgc/wildturkey/turkey_plan.pdf

National Wild Turkey Federation web page is, [http://www.nwtf.org/in_your_state/superfund?
STATE=PA](http://www.nwtf.org/in_your_state/superfund?STATE=PA)