

**Wisconsin Conservation Congress**

**Turkey Committee Meeting**

**Ramada Inn**

**Stevens Point, WI**

**Friday, August 14, 2009**

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 PM by Chairman Mike Rogers.

Members present: Mike Rogers, Clarence Koch, Donald Anderson, David Andraschko, Darrel Eberhardt, Dale Ebert, Paul Fluhr, Mead Grim, David Grisar, Mark Guderski, John Harmon, Davey Henschel, John Hoeffs, Jerry Thompson, Patricia Kukull, Mike La Rose, Paul Mau, Thomas Roskopf, Walter Seibel, Arlyn Splitt, Dave Wendel, Marcell Wieloch, Curtis Youngbauer and Armond Zastrow.

Members absent: Thomas Johnson.

DNR Liaison attending: Scott Hull and Chuck Horn and Sharon Fandel.

Others attending: Dr. Scott Lutz, Brian Dhuey, and the author of resolution #37-05-09

The meeting was attended by Conservation Congress Chairman Edgar Harvey, WCC Liaison Kurt Thiede.

Because of the number of new committee members, Chairman Rogers asked every member to introduce themselves.

The Turkey Committee Mission Statement that had been drafted at the August 22, 2008 committee meeting was read and accepted.

The mission of the Turkey Committee, of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress, is to ensure the continued success of the Wild Turkey program in Wisconsin. Ensure that future generations have the ability to enjoy spring and fall turkey hunting. Promote expanded harvest opportunities based on sound science. Work with the department to review management objectives. Encourage the participation of youth in turkey hunting. Promote sound conservation practices and habitat management for turkeys.

Dr. Scott Lutz, Professor of Wildlife Ecology, UW – Madison, gave a presentation of turkey research that he has conducted using turkey stamp funds. The project was to determine cause and effect of various factors on turkey abundance. The study addressed the effect of habitat composition, habitat pattern and winter severity on turkey abundance. The Time required to kill a gobbler was a factor in determining abundance. Radio telemetry was used to track adult toms to determine what habitat was used and the distance traveled. The average spring gobbler covers an area of 1,200 acres (2 sections) and the farthest distance that a gobbler moved was 20 miles in one day. The major discovery of the research was that 50% forested to open cover was optimal.

Surprisingly the composition of the woodlots as to Species of trees and size and the composition of the open areas had no appreciable effect on turkey abundance.

Brian Dhuey, Research Scientist, WI DNR, presented statistics from research funded by Pittman-Robertson and turkey stamp monies. The presentation addressed hunter attitudes using a formula (success x satisfaction /interference) to determine hunter happiness. Data from the 45% return rate of the 10,000 hunter questionnaires sent annually was used. Positive happiness factors were seeing hens, hearing gobblers and having a kill opportunity. Killing a gobbler was neither negative nor positive and the longer time required to kill a gobbler was a negative factor. The goal is to manage turkey hunting for hunter happiness. Of hunters surveyed eighty five percent were very satisfied with the current season structure and 12% complained of interference. On a scale of 1 to 10 hunters rate the turkey hunt as 7.2. Only 4% of hunters disliked the new consolidated zones and 75% did not change where they hunted with the new larger zones.

Scott Hull of the DNR provided statistics on the spring hunt. The harvest was 52,581 gobblers killed with 86% of the kill being adult gobblers. The success rate was 24%. Results of the fall drawing should be available by Monday August 24<sup>th</sup>. Wisconsin remains the number one state in turkey harvest numbers. Regulation changes that are in the works are turkey hunting with dogs, the fall season extension and online or phone in registration of turkeys.

Chuch Horn DNR warden stated that arrest numbers were down, this could be attributed to the mileage restrictions that wardens are operating under. There was one accident in Crawford County. Sixty four Learn to Hunt events were conducted. Richard Kirchmeier reported on funds that are available for The Learn to Hunt Program.

Sharon Fandel of the DNR presented a report on turkey stamp projects for 2008 – 2009. Projects were conducted on 48,143 public acres and 20,600 private acres.

Scott Hull stated that they are revising the Wild Turkey Management plan as it is ten years old and has accomplished its stated goals. The DNR turkey committee is charged with writing the plan with a goal of completion in 2011. Some of the topics to be addressed are:

- Season framework
- Hunter satisfaction
- Winter mortality
- Tolerable harvest rates
- Turkey habitat
- Research questions or needs
- Turkey stamp

Scott queried the group for other topics of concern that needed to be addressed.

A letter from Senator Russ Decker listing Legislative Reference Bureau proposals was distributed and discussed. The committee did not favor the proposed changes especially the suggested turkey permit changes.

Resolutions considered:

Resolution #37-05-09 - For each turkey hunting period to run from Monday to Sunday for a seven day hunt with no break between hunting periods.

Discussion covered giving the turkeys a rest, mushroom gatherers, hunter interference, northern zones concern for turkey numbers and giving wardens a chance to find baits.

The motion to accept this resolution lost on a vote of 10 yes and 12 no.

Resolution #51-03-09 – To create a hen only, all hunting periods, spring archery permit.

Discussion was about concerns for illegally shooting turkeys over legal deer baits, archery success rates and the poll of wardens which was 0 for and 13 against.

The motion to reject passed on a voice vote

Resolution #71-05-09 – Permit preference for group spring turkey hunting.

Discussion ranged from the fact that preference is statutory to that the author doesn't understand permit rules. A warden poll was 0 for and 13 against.

The motion to reject carried on a voice vote.

Under Member Matters resolution #60-01-09 which has been assigned to the Outdoor Heritage committee was discussed. After much discussion and debate the committee formulated the following recommendation which will be forwarded to Outdoor Heritage committee.

- Any first time hunter education graduate who shows his or her hunter safety certificate will be issued a spring or fall turkey permit with at a charge at the mentor rate of \$7.00.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 10:30 PM

Respectfully submitted

Clarence Koch, Secretary