

WDNR Turkey Advisory Committee  
December 3, 2019  
9 AM – 10 AM  
Teleconference

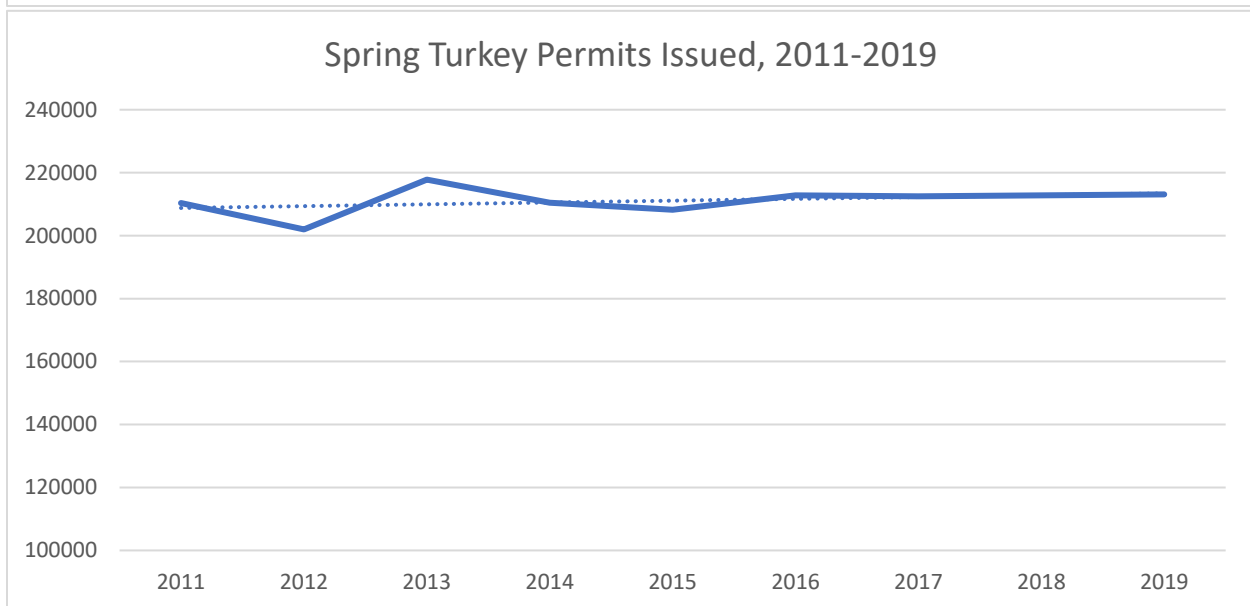
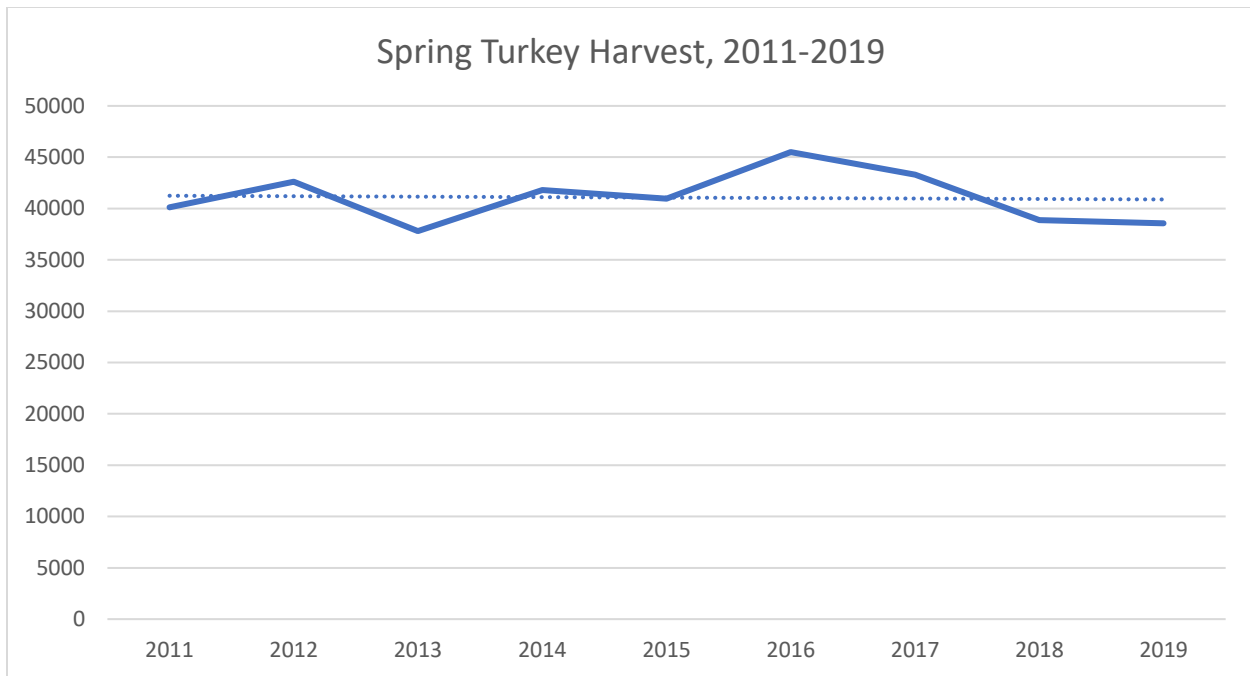
---

### **Attendance**

- Mark Witecha- DNR WM
- Alaina Gerrits- DNR WM
- Tim Eisele- Outdoor News
- Brian Dhuey- DNR OAS
- Matt Weegman- NWTF
- Paul Napierala- DNR WM
- Ralph Fritsch- WWF
- Keb Guralski- Douglas County
- Carrie Milestone- DNR WM
- Linda Olver- DNR CS
- Rich Kirchmeyer- WI Bowhunter's Association
- Dean Edlin- DNR NHC
- Chris Pollentier- DNR OAS
- Kevin Morgan- DNR WM
- Steve Easterly- DNR WM
- Travis Anderson- DNR WM

### **2019 Spring Harvest**

- Overall, we seem to be meeting the demand of applicants as very few applicants did not receive a permit in the spring drawing
- Total tags sold= 213,078 fairly consistent for the last ~10 years
- Total harvest for spring 2019 = 38,576, zones 1-3 make up a bulk of the harvest
- Success rates were 18.1% similar to previous years, slightly lower
- Largest increase in harvest linked to more favorable weather conditions for Learn-to-Hunt and Youth Hunts
- 84.1% of all birds harvested were adult males
- The last ~10 years we have harvested between 37,000 and 43,000 birds which seems to be stable as the population reached carrying capacity, brief period of increased harvests of ~50,000 in the past decade were likely due to populations over-shooting carrying capacity



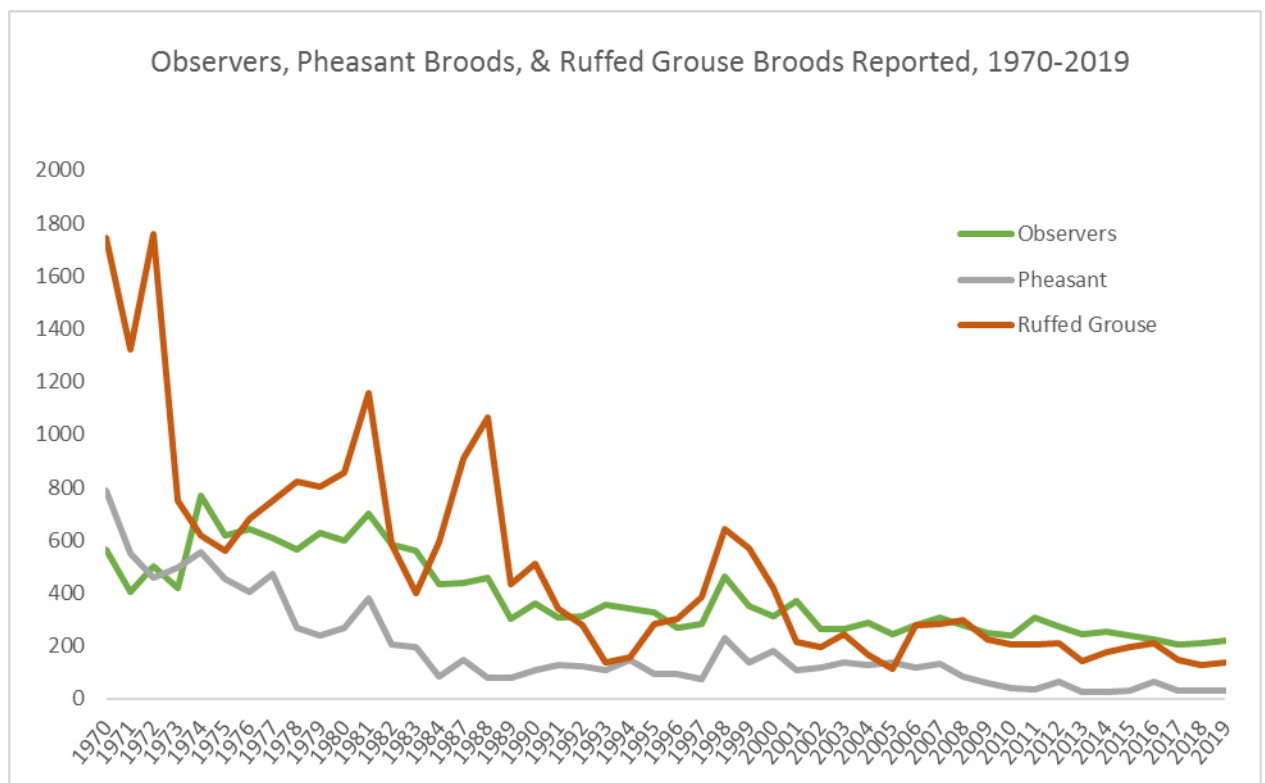
### 2019 Fall Turkey Harvested

- Current harvest levels (as of 12/2/19) 2,828 birds registered, 2018 we harvested approximately 3,700 birds so currently we are a little behind in harvest and may not meet last year's levels, but still one month left in season
- Early onset of winter weather in November likely led to decreased harvest and participation up to this point
- Permit levels are approximately the same as last year, however it seems in general the popularity and novelty of fall turkey hunting is dropping off

- Approximately 1 in 3 fall turkey hunters are deer archers who opportunistically harvest turkeys, so not pursuing turkeys as primary target

### Status of 10-week brood surveys

- With record low observers and sample size DNR does not feel comfortable using 10-week brood surveys as a reliable survey method at this time
- Due to changing workloads and a reduced work force, sampling effort has decreased
- This year, instead of releasing a formal survey report on ten-week brood surveys a more informal update on the status of the survey was released
- Wildlife management is evaluating all of its wildlife surveys, including the 10-week brood survey, for possible improvements and opportunities to include citizen science



### Overview of Turkey Stamp Accomplishments 18/19

- 63 projects funded
- 11 cooperator projects
- 8 carryover projects
- 8 projects haven't submitted reports
- Allotted approximately \$1.3 million, ~\$880,000 spent
- Impacted 29,059 acres
- Major reason for underspending is because managers were directed to use Pittman-Robertson (PR) funds instead of Turkey Stamp funds, as we lose PR funds if not spent,;

work was accomplished and sometimes exceeded original goals because of the alternate PR funding.

- Turkey stamp funds that are unspent are simply rolled into the next biennium for allocation. Another good biennium in the books for Turkey Stamp.

### **WCC Spring Hearing Questions**

- Upland game advisory commission forwarded one resolution for vote to move the turkey season up to the second Wednesday in April vs the third Wednesday in April.
- There was interest in the past to extend turkey season to go through Memorial Day because people are off work. But many turkey hunters have been opposed and would like to go to an earlier season framework, it would always start the second Wednesday which could be earlier, on average, than recent decades when the season started the Wednesday nearest April 13.
- Most biologists believe turkey season should start season with or after peak in nesting incubation or second gobbling peak, its about April 20 in Wisconsin, but we also spread pressure evenly over 6 period time seasons.
- We have shared our concerns for possible negative impacts to production due to early harvest, but congress is moving it forward for vote
- Could we extend the season into Memorial Day weekend to satisfy both groups? This would add complexities to the rules, but could potential be an option
- But many people do value the ability to hunt when they are off work and when we have terrible weather to start the season people seem to voice concern less. In the north we have had a lot of snow the first week, this could mean even worse conditions if we start even earlier
- A split opener southern/northern season was discussed by WCC but was not advanced
- DNR is considering posing a Spring Hearing advisory question to gauge interest in eliminating landowner preference with the spring permit drawing; this rule would require a statutory change
- Landowner preference adds a lot of complexity and error to the drawing and many turkey hunters have complained that it isn't fair when people don't own land.
- It is not done for any other species besides turkeys.
- Originally it was put in statute because the area we released turkeys in southern WI was almost all private lands, the department wanted a way to strengthen the private lands relationship and thank them for their collaboration.
- There may be some concern that if landowners aren't given preference, they may not be as open to allowing others to hunt their land in later periods, but don't have data on this

### **2020 Harvest Authorization Levels**

- Changes to permits have been relatively minor in recent years, primarily trying to meet applicant demand in zones 6 & 7
- Do we have any desire to change permit levels in any zones?

- Kevin Morgan – northern district representative, what are your thoughts on levels for 6 & 7? Went from 4,900 to 5,400 trying to meet demand, crowding of hunters may be more concerning than biological concerns, perhaps this is where we should stop increasing here. Local staff seems satisfied but his probably a good place to cap things off.
- In Zone 2 almost all tags sold out, zones 1 and 3 had leftover permits, zone 4 was nearly sold out, zones 5, 6 & 7 were sold out, this makes us feel the committee has done a great job balancing social and biological considerations and we are meeting demand.
- Matt Weegman NWTF- hearing positive things regarding available permits, no negative feedback.
- Our turkey hunter surveys have also shown 75-80% satisfaction in hunting and management, people have been very supportive.
- Chris Pollentier DNR OAS- motion to maintain 2019 harvest authorization levels for 2020 season.
- UNANIMOUS recommendation to maintain permit levels from 2019 for 2020.
- Mark will draw up an issue brief and distribute to Wildlife Leadership Team to get final approval.

2019 Spring Turkey Harvest Authorizations (previously known as permits/tags)							2020 Harvest Authorizations
Zone	Amount Available	Issued in Drawing	Sold Over-the-Counter	Total Issued*	Birds Harvested*	Hunter Success**	Recommended Levels
1	74,646	35,175	24,560	59,735	10,335	17.3%	74,646
2	51,036	34,452	16,576	51,028	9,333	18.3%	51,036
3	63,018	28,436	20,003	48,439	9,500	19.6%	63,018
4	34,968	20,102	12,187	32,289	5,978	18.5%	34,968
5	12,000	8,355	3,578	11,933	1,901	15.9%	12,000
6	5,400	5,174	226	5,400	966	17.9%	5,400
7	3,900	3,508	392	3,900	467	12.0%	3,900

## Public Comments/ Partner Updates

- Public Comment: Greg Wurz from Lake Mills-suggests to decrease the size of zone 2 and increase zone 5 in size to allow for more people in populous zone 2 to draw preferred time period permits.
- Changing zone structure requires a rule change and could not be implemented in time for 2020
- What would be benefit of splitting the zones instead of offering more permits? Common complaint for zone 2 is that the drawing is competitive because of high population in the zone, so it's more about time period concerns and less about bonus tags.
- Historically permit levels were set based on habitat quality/quantity at zone level, if we changed zones or permit levels, we'd have to consider a few other variables. May be appropriate to consider as part of management plan review.
- Other comments from up north, general dislike of turkeys where baiting and feeding is still allowed; turkeys are interfering with deer hunting
- Agricultural issues with turkeys, ag damage permits could be a potential solution if the landowner is willing to allow public hunting access
- NWTF convention – National convention February 12<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> in Nashville. We expect participation to be even bigger than last year.
- NWTF updates- national forestry initiative forester in Driftless area of WI works with farmers on farm bill programs, Crystal Bailey in Richland Center. Throughout the country there were 24 of these forester positions.