

Looking for Turkey Hunting Cooperators

Submitted by Jim Panaro on behalf of PANWTF Wild Turkey Management Committee

The Wild Turkey Management Committee is looking for your help! The committee is interested in setting up a Pennsylvania Turkey Hunter Cooperator program to gather real in-the-field information from throughout the state from die-hard turkey hunters that are interested in participating in an ongoing data collection network. This program will be modeled after very successful programs that have been in place for many years for wild turkeys in West Virginia and Virginia as well as for ruffed grouse here in PA. What we are looking for is to initially pick twenty NWTF members from each of the six regions of the state ... northwest, southwest, northcentral, southcentral, northeast and southeast ... split up like the current gobbler banding study. We will only take people with e-mail capability because our intention is to do this all via e-mail to save time and expense for the WTM committee to send and receive information. We are also only looking for members that are willing to take this on for the long haul because we are looking for consistent and meaningful information. West Virginia DNR for example just finished their 26th year of this program and the Pennsylvania Game Commission has been doing the same for grouse for over 40 years. Both state agencies have gained a wealth of knowledge on both species over that time.

We are starting from scratch and the program will surely change and improve over time but here are some of our initial plans. Our starting focus will be on the 2009 spring season and will cover scouting time through the end of June. This will be a 2-part survey with information received through a daily log that hunters will keep as well as a questionnaire that cooperators will fill out after the season has ended and poults are hatching. All information will be e-mailed to volunteer participants in late February asking for their input from personal observations during their time afield. Questions will be in regards to in the field observations related to such things as gobbling activity, brood sightings, hunting pressure, hatch timing, predation, etc. We have not finalized the Pennsylvania program yet but you can see an example of Virginia's questionnaire and daily log at www.dgif.state.va.us/hunting/va_game_wildlife/SGS_2004_form.pdf.

The information collected would be then be tabulated and tracked over a period of years to look at positive or negative trends and to use as another vital management input to go along with information that we are currently receiving from the PGC. I hope that the information collected will complement the PGC data but even conflicting data could be helpful if it identifies something that may be occurring in a particular region versus another.

If you have a serious interest in being involved in this exciting new program or if you would just like get more information, please send me an e-mail at jpanaro@panwtf.org. I will take the first 20 members that respond from each of the six region based on their home addresses.