



PENNSYLVANIA CHAPTER NATIONAL WILD TURKEY FEDERATION

ORGANIZED 1975

**Dedicated to the Conservation of the Wild Turkey and
Preservation of the Turkey Hunting Tradition**

Pa. Chapter NWTf home page www.panwtf.org E-mail: panwtfrep@panwtf.org

Director Roe, Deputy Director Schmit, President Pallone,
Commissioners:

On behalf of the members and Board of Directors of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation I would like to express appreciation for the productive relationship we have with the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Our organization remains supportive of sound species management decisions based on the best available data. The Management Plan for Wild Turkeys in Pennsylvania is an outstanding document that sets the course for improved management of this important game species. Following the guidelines and strategies in the plan will assure Pennsylvania remains a leader in wild turkey management.

Thank you for the support and personnel time provided to our Women in the Outdoors Program. Participation by the Game Commission in this and other outreach programs have helped us to build a successful base and will ultimately help to recruit and retain new hunters. We also wish to compliment the Game Commission for the dedication of staff and equipment to the Tri-State Gobbler Banding Project. This research project has been successful because of participation by personnel from all three of the field bureaus within the agency. Now in its fourth year, this study will make much needed data available to commission biologists enabling them to “fine tune” wild turkey management in the commonwealth. The research project has already resulted in the publication of an important scientific paper. As this work nears

completion, we remind the commissioners of our pledge of volunteer and financial support for the next step, a study of fall harvest rates and hen survival.

Our members greatly appreciated the inclusion of Memorial Day Monday in the 2008 spring gobbler season. Many members took advantage of the extra day of hunting provided by this change. We encourage the commission to further expand recreational opportunity available to spring hunters by ending the season on May 31 in 2010 and permanently establishing May 31 as the closing date for spring hunting. This suggested change could provide up to six days of opportunity to Keystone State turkey hunters with little potential for impacting the wild turkey resource. Another option supported by our members for future consideration by the commission is an increase in spring hunting hours to sunset daily, for young hunters on the special youth day and for all hunters for the duration of the season. Our members would like to see this change considered for the 2011 spring season if the current research indicates that it can be safely instituted.

The Pennsylvania Chapter-NWTF has previously requested that the commissioners review the feasibility of allowing mentored youth hunters to participate in the fall turkey season. We understand the reservations staff may have with this concept based on the lack of data on mentored youth numbers and the potential for fall harvest to affect turkey populations. Therefore we suggest that the commissioners explore the possibility of allowing the transfer of a fall turkey tag by a mentor to a youth hunter that they are mentoring. This approach would not result in a harvest over and above that which might occur based on license sales. A review of the statutes affecting the transfer of tags indicates that legislative action might be required to accomplish this goal. Our chapter would support such legislation or a regulatory change that would accomplish the same thing. Our members would like to see mentored youth hunters given the opportunity to hunt fall turkeys

in 2009. Our members would also support the requirement of a license or permit for mentored youth hunters that would provide reliable data on the number of youth hunters and enable the Game Commission to better evaluate the success of this innovative program.

Our organization is pleased with the guidelines in the Management Plan for Wild Turkeys in Pennsylvania concerning fall turkey season length decision-making. Our members support lengthening fall seasons when population indices indicate that population levels can withstand such changes. On the other hand, we support reducing fall season length in Wildlife Management Units where spring harvest and summer sighting indices point to declining turkey numbers. The Pennsylvania Chapter will agree with season length recommendations made by the Bureau of Wildlife Management that are based on these decision-making guidelines.

In closing we congratulate the Game Commission on the success of the major research effort studying spring gobbler harvest rates. In addition, we look forward to continued cooperation between the commission and our group on habitat enhancement, land acquisition, hunter safety and education, wild turkey research and wild turkey management.