

Meeting Date: November 20, 2020

Agenda Item No. 15

Agenda Item: Draft Wild Turkey Management Plan

Bureau Chief Approval: TB

Prepared by: John O'Neill, Regional Farm Bill Coordinator, and Don Jenkins, Regional Habitat Manager

Background:

Wild turkey populations in Idaho provide excellent hunting opportunities, with some of the highest success rates in the United States. In general, seasons are structured to maximize hunter opportunity. This provides abundant opportunities for youth hunting and mentoring, as wild turkey hunting is often considered a good way to introduce young people to hunting.

Currently, Department staff are developing a wild turkey management plan. While there was a short chapter dedicated to wild turkey in the 1990 upland game management plan, the Commission has not previously approved a dedicated wild turkey management plan. When completed, this plan will function as the action plan for wild turkey management in Idaho. It will outline the major issues affecting wild turkey management and provide overall direction for wild turkey management - including guidance for damage/nuisance turkeys and winter feeding - during the next 6 years (2021-2026). This plan will guide the Department in annual work plan development and program prioritization, and provide guidance on development of regulatory recommendations.

To inform management guidance for this wild turkey management planning process, the Department conducted an opinion survey of all wild turkey tag holders, with a valid email address, from 2016 to 2020. Department staff sent emails to 42,871 hunters and received responses from 6,944 individuals (16% response). The wild turkey management plan is scheduled for completion during spring 2021.

Staff will present an overview of the 2020 turkey hunter opinion survey and provide an update on the wild turkey management planning process.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

The Idaho Fish and Game Commission administers state wildlife policy through supervision and management of the Department (Idaho Code 36-104). Species management plans are the guiding documents to manage wildlife and are a direct reflection of the Department Strategic Plan. The Wild Turkey Management Plan will function as the action plan for wild turkey management in Idaho.

Public Involvement Process:

Informational item.

Justification:

The Commission sets policy and provides direction, considers input from the public, and has the authority to adopt, amend, or reject Department-recommended plans.

Staff Recommendation:

This agenda item is for Commission information. No action requested. A DRAFT wild turkey management plan will be presented during 2021 with the intent to request approval to solicit public comment on the draft plan.