

PROBLEMS AND STRATEGIES FOR WILD TURKEY MANAGEMENT IN MAINE

Prepared by: Andrew Weik
April 2001

Problem 1: Wild Turkey populations may not naturally spread into all unoccupied suitable habitat in Maine.

Strategy 1.1: Improve the Department's Wild Turkey monitoring system and relocation activities in order to locate birds for capture and relocate them into unoccupied suitable habitat.

Strategy 1.2: Increase capture effort in order to move Wild Turkeys into remaining suitable habitat. Wild Turkey population expansion can be expedited with additional resources and staff time.

Problem 2: Habitats in Maine may not have the capacity to support a Wild Turkey population large enough to allow unlimited spring hunting opportunity of sufficient quality and safety.

Strategy 2.1: Identify maximum allowable harvest rate and hunter numbers that will maintain desired population demographics and monitor harvest rates.

Strategy 2.2: Adjust the numbers of hunters accordingly with the permit system.

Problem 3: There is a lack of accurate information on Wild Turkey populations, annual survival, recruitment, and distribution in Maine.

Strategy 3.1: The Department needs to obtain additional sources of funding and/or redistribute existing personnel time to acquire information on Wild Turkey populations, annual survival, recruitment, and distribution in Maine.

Strategy 3.2: Develop and implement a system to monitor Wild Turkey populations on a Wildlife Management District basis. These data are required before a fall hunting season can be implemented.

Problem 4: An increase in the Wild Turkey population in some areas will likely result in an increase in nuisance complaints and potential for damage to agricultural crops.

Wild Turkey Problems and Strategies

Strategy 4.1: Develop a component of the Department's Nuisance Wildlife Policy that addresses Wild Turkeys.

Strategy 4.2: Develop a protocol to monitor nuisance complaints.

Strategy 4.3: Conduct research to assess magnitude of agricultural depredation and develop and identify practices to mitigate problems.

Strategy 4.4: Develop a Landowner Relations Program to work with landowners to mitigate problems associated with nuisance Wild Turkeys and crop depredation.

Strategy 4.5: Increase public awareness of the Wild Turkey program for both consumptive and non-consumptive users.

Problem 5: An increase in hunter numbers will likely result in more frequent instances of hunter interference, leading to hunter dissatisfaction, increased potential for hunting accidents, conflicts with landowners, potential for illegal harvest of hens, and an additional burden on Department staff.

Strategy 5.1: Significantly expand the turkey hunter education program and emphasize safety, turkey hunting ethics, and landowner relations.

Strategy 5.2: Measure hunter interference and satisfaction by adding pertinent questions to annual Turkey Hunter Questionnaire.

Strategy 5.3: Increase enforcement effort during the hunting season.