

Maryland Spring Turkey Hunter Survey – Results Summary August 2007

INTRODUCTION AND METHODS

This survey was conducted to investigate the preferences and opinions of Maryland's spring turkey hunters regarding turkey management, populations, and regulations. It also was designed to obtain information about hunter characteristics and spring turkey hunting techniques that will allow the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to better manage the turkey resource.

Surveys were sent to 978 hunters who indicated that they hunted turkeys during the spring on at least 1 of the 3 most recent annual hunter mail surveys (HMS). The HMS randomly surveys approximately 7% of license-buyers annually to estimate the effort for and harvest of a variety of game species, including turkey. A total of 556 completed spring turkey hunter survey forms were returned. The HMS estimates that about 10,000 usually hunt spring turkey annually. Therefore our sample represents about 6% of Maryland's spring turkey hunters. Accounting for non-deliverable surveys (change-of-address, death, etc.), the response rate for the spring turkey hunter survey was 59%. Because previous HMS survey respondents may have been more likely to respond to this survey, our sample cannot be considered truly random. Nevertheless we feel the hunters that responded were adequately representative of spring turkey hunters in Maryland.

RESULTS

Below is a brief summary of the survey responses. Appendix 1 shows the actual survey questions and distribution of all responses. Appendix 2 lists all additional written comments received.

Spring Turkey Hunter Characteristics, Attitudes, and Behaviors

The average Maryland spring turkey hunter is 49 years old, has hunted spring turkeys for 14 years and hunted 8 days during the 2007 spring season. Most (65%) survey respondents were older than 45 years old and only 14% were younger than 35 years old. Although 30% of respondents have hunted spring turkeys for more than 20 years, a large portion (43%) have hunted less than 10 years. Fifteen percent of the respondents did not hunt turkeys in 2007. Of those that did not hunt, 91% listed "no time", "work", or "health issues" as reasons that they did not hunt. Over one-third of respondents hunted in at least 1 other state in 2007.

The majority of spring turkey hunters only hunted in 1 Maryland county (55%). Expectedly, hunters reported hunting most often in counties (and regions) with high numbers of turkeys. The highest percentage of respondents hunted the Eastern Coastal Plain Region (31%), but the Ridge and Valley Region (25%), Western Coastal Plain Region (17%), and Appalachian Plateau Region (14%) were also popular areas.

Over one-half (56%) of spring turkey hunters reported hunting at least 1 day on public land and 83% hunted at least 1 day on private land. About 39% of respondents hunted both private and public land in 2007.

Respondents ranked safety and access to land as the most important aspects of turkey hunting. Enjoying time afield, getting away from work, and hearing/seeing turkeys also ranked as very important. Killing a turkey was only a moderately important part of turkey hunting to respondents.

Respondents reported spending an average of \$455 on turkey hunting-related expenses in 2007. A large portion of that total was spent on travel (\$173) and hunt club or lease fees (\$122). About 43% of hunters reported spending money on club or lease fees for turkey hunting.

Over 73% of respondents reported using decoys to some extent, with most hunters using them occasionally (40%) or usually (29%). Lead shotshells were used twice as frequently

as “heavier than lead” loads such as Hevi-Shot. Number 4 and #5 shot size appeared to be most popular.

Turkey Populations

Overall, 85% of respondents thought that turkey numbers in the county they hunt most often were moderate or abundant. Most respondents (84%) also felt that the turkey population was increasing or stable in the county they hunt.

When responses were summarized regionally, over 80% of hunters in most regions felt that turkeys were either moderate or abundant. The only exception was in the Piedmont region (Central Maryland) where 47% of respondents felt turkeys were scarce. Over 20% of hunters in the Appalachian Plateau (Garrett county), Blue Ridge (Frederick county), and Piedmont (Central Maryland) regions perceived populations as decreasing. These results generally concur with other Maryland DNR data regarding current wild turkey densities and trends.

Hunter Interference and Safety

Overall, most hunters had minimal negative interference from other hunters and had limited concerns about safety. Although 65% of hunters at least occasionally encountered other hunters in the 2007 season, only 22% of hunters felt that any encounters negatively affected their hunting success. Unsafe encounters were even less frequent, with only 6% of hunters reporting they felt unsafe at some time in the 2007 season. The type of land that the individual hunted appeared to have some effect on negative encounters; 17% of hunters that only hunted private land had negative encounters, whereas 34% of public land-only hunters felt that other hunters impacted their success. However public land hunters reported having unsafe encounters only slightly more than private land hunters (8% vs. 5%).

Despite regulations that do not require fluorescent orange in spring turkey seasons, two-thirds of the respondents said that they used orange in some way. The most common uses of orange were by hunters that placed orange on a harvested bird (43%) and that wore a blaze orange hat while moving (35%). Thirteen percent of hunters reported that they place an orange hat or ribbon in a nearby tree while calling.

Seasons and Bag Limits

In general, hunters appeared to be satisfied with current seasons and bag limits. Eighty percent of respondents thought the season length (5 weeks) was “about right”. The majority (55%) did not agree with always starting the season on a Saturday and only 25% wanted a Saturday opener. Over 75% of the respondents felt that the current spring season bag limit of 2 turkeys was the best. Only 9% wanted a 3-bird limit. When asked if the daily bag limit should be changed from 1 per day to 2 per day, hunters were divided; 53% did not support the change and 47% either supported it or had no opinion.

Hunters were also divided over lengthening hunting hours to sunset. Fifty-six percent supported all-day hunting, 38% disapproved, and 22% had no opinion. However 65% stated that they would hunt in the afternoon if given the chance.

One-half of the respondents supported allowing crossbows to be used to hunt spring turkeys and 17% had no opinion. Surprisingly, 22% of hunters said they would use a crossbow if legal.

Miscellaneous Results

Only 9% of hunters responded that they observed some type of illegal activity during the 2007 spring turkey season. The majority of the illegal activity reported involved trespassing (78% of those answering “yes”), baiting (24%), or shooting before or after hours (20%).

Nine percent of hunters reported flushing a hen off of a nest during the 2007 season. As expected, most of the flushes (66%) occurred during the last 2 weeks of the season.

Over one-half (53%) of hunters aged 16 and younger hunted on the special youth turkey hunting day on April 14, 2007. Seventeen percent of adult hunters (21 and over) took a youth hunter on the youth day.

APPENDIX 1: 2007 Spring Turkey Hunter Survey – Questions and Responses

Response Rate Information:

556 Surveys Returned / (978 Surveys Mailed – 30 Non-deliverable Surveys) = **59% Response Rate**

**Note – Percentages may not total to 100% due to rounding*

1. In what Maryland county or counties do you hunt turkeys in the spring? List up to 4 counties starting with the county you hunt the *most often*:

Distribution of the number of counties hunted:

55% 1 County
25% 2 Counties
13% 3 Counties
7% 4 or More Counties

Distribution of regions listed as most often hunted:

14% APPALACHIAN PLATEAU REGION (Garrett)
25% RIDGE AND VALLEY REGION (Allegany, Washington)
6% BLUE RIDGE REGION (Frederick)
6% PIEDMONT (Carroll, Cecil, Harford, Howard, Montgomery)
17% WESTERN COASTAL PLAIN REGION (Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, St. Mary's, Prince George's)
31% EASTERN COASTAL PLAIN REGION (Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot, Somerset, Wicomico, Worcester)

2. In your opinion, which *best* describes the number of turkeys in the county you listed as hunting *most often*:

21% ABUNDANT
64% MODERATE
15% SCARCE

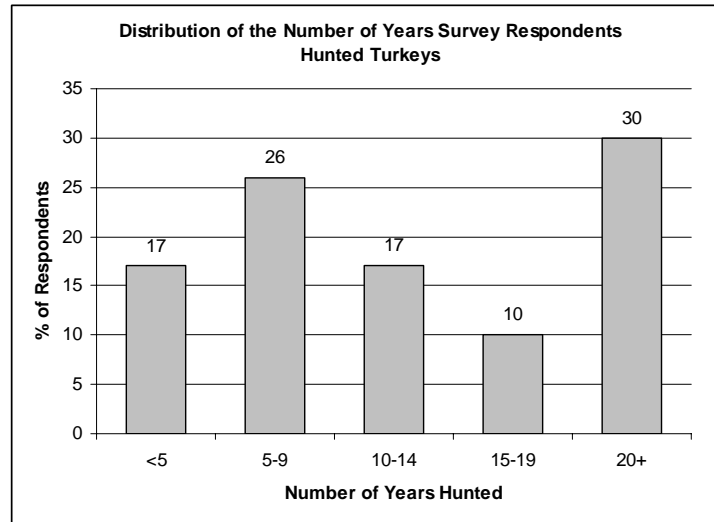
3. In your opinion, is the turkey population in that county:

27% INCREASING
57% STABLE
16% DECREASING

Percent of respondents who perceived turkey numbers as abundant, moderate, or scarce and population trends as increasing, decreasing, or stable by region listed as hunted most often.

| Region | Population Size | | | Population Trend | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|----------|--------|------------------|--------|------------|
| | Abundant | Moderate | Scarce | Increasing | Stable | Decreasing |
| Appalachian Plateau | 16% | 69% | 16% | 12% | 60% | 28% |
| Ridge and Valley | 20% | 69% | 11% | 15% | 70% | 15% |
| Blue Ridge | 3% | 77% | 20% | 15% | 62% | 24% |
| Piedmont | 12% | 41% | 47% | 41% | 38% | 21% |
| Western Coastal Plain | 7% | 81% | 12% | 30% | 38% | 13% |
| Eastern Coastal Plain | 39% | 50% | 11% | 42% | 38% | 11% |

4. Approximately how many years have you been turkey hunting in the spring? **AVERAGE = 14 YEARS**



5. Which of the following *best* describes your use of turkey decoys (circle one)?

17% I NEVER use decoys
40% I OCCASIONALLY use decoys
29% I USUALLY use decoys
15% I ALWAYS use decoys

6. Do you feel that the length of the current regular hunting season (5 weeks) is (circle one):

14% TOO SHORT
80% ABOUT RIGHT
6% TOO LONG

7. The current regular spring season begins on April 18th regardless of the day of the week. Would you prefer if the season always started on the 3rd Saturday in April (circle one)?

25% YES
55% NO
20% NO OPINION

8. The current spring season bag limit is 2 turkeys per season. Which bag limit would you prefer (circle one):

14% 1 turkey
77% 2 turkeys
9% 3 turkeys

9. The current daily bag limit is 1 turkey per day. Would you support allowing a person to harvest 2 turkeys in the same day (same as the spring season bag limit)?

42% YES
53% NO
5% NO OPINION

10. Which type of shot do you *most often* use when hunting turkeys in the spring (circle one)?

64% LEAD
28% "HEAVIER THAN LEAD" (e.g. Hevi-shot, Hevi-13, Extended Range, etc.)
8% STEEL

16. Would you support allowing crossbows to be used to hunt turkeys?

- 50% YES
- 33% NO
- 17% NO OPINION

17. Would you use a crossbow to hunt turkeys if it was legal?

- 22% YES
- 60% NO
- 17% NOT SURE

18. Which of the following describes your use of fluorescent orange or blaze orange when you are spring turkey hunting (circle all that apply)?:

- 33% I never use fluorescent orange while spring turkey hunting
- 35% I usually wear an orange hat only while moving
- 13% I usually place an orange hat or ribbon in a nearby tree while calling
- 43% If I kill a turkey, I place some type of orange on the bird when walking out of the woods
- 4% I usually wear orange at all times

19. Did you hunt turkeys in Maryland in the 2007 spring turkey season?

- 85% YES
- 15% NO

20. If you answered NO to question # 19, please list the reason or reasons that you did not hunt:

- 45% No time
- 24% Work
- 22% Health issues

21. List any other states that you hunted turkeys in during the 2007 spring season:

- 34% Hunted at least 1 other state
- 66% Hunted only Maryland

Percentage of respondents who hunted in the following states in 2007:

- 15% Pennsylvania
- 6% West Virginia
- 3% Virginia
- 2% New York
- 1% Delaware, Ohio
- <1% Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, North Carolina, Nebraska, New Jersey, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, South Dakota, Wisconsin, Wyoming

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WERE ASKED REGARDING THE 2007 SPRING TURKEY SEASON AND ASKED ONLY TO RESPONDENTS WHO ANSWERED “YES” TO QUESTION #19.

22. Approximately how many days did you hunt on private and public lands during the 2007 season?

AVERAGE TOTAL DAYS HUNTED = 8

- 56% Hunted at least 1 day on PUBLIC land
- 83% Hunted at least 1 day on PRIVATE land

- 44% Hunted ONLY PRIVATE land
- 17% Hunted ONLY PUBLIC land
- 39% Hunted BOTH PRIVATE AND PUBLIC land

23. How often did you encounter other turkey hunters while spring turkey hunting (circle one)?:

- 36% NEVER
- 50% OCCASIONALLY
- 11% USUALLY
- 4% ALWAYS

24. Did you encounter interference from other hunters that you feel negatively affected your turkey hunting success?

- 22% YES
- 78% NO

25. Did you have any encounters with other hunters where you felt unsafe?

- 6% YES
- 94% NO

Percent of respondents that reported interference from other hunters that negatively affected their success or made them feel unsafe (summarized by type of land hunted.)

| Type of Land Hunted | Interference Negatively Affected Success? | | Unsafe Encounters? | |
|---------------------|---|-----|--------------------|-----|
| | Yes | No | Yes | No |
| Only Private | 17% | 83% | 5% | 95% |
| Private and Public | 24% | 76% | 6% | 94% |
| Only Public | 34% | 66% | 8% | 92% |

26. Did you observe any illegal hunting activity during the spring turkey season?

- 9% YES
- 91% NO

27. If you answered YES to question #26, what type(s) of illegal hunting activity did you observe (circle all that apply)? Responses listed as percentage of those that reported illegal activity:

- 10% Hunting before or after the season
- 20% Shooting before or after shooting hours
- 2% Shooting over bag limit
- 24% Baiting
- 10% Killing a hen
- 78% Trespassing

28. Please estimate how much money you spent on the following items related to turkey hunting in 2007:

| | |
|--|---------------------------|
| Travel (including lodging, food, and fuel) | AVERAGE = \$173.25 |
| Hunt club or lease fees | AVERAGE = \$121.78 |
| Guns and/or ammunition..... | AVERAGE = \$81.37 |
| Other equipment (clothing, calls, decoys, etc.)..... | AVERAGE = \$78.37 |
| TOTAL | = \$454.75 |

29. Did you flush any turkey hens off their nest during the 2007 season?

- 9% YES
- 91% NO

30. If yes, list the date(s):

Distribution by week of season:

9% 1st WEEK
17% 2nd WEEK
9% 3rd WEEK
26% 4th WEEK
40% 5th WEEK

31. Did you hunt OR take a youth hunting on the youth turkey hunting day (April 14)?

Hunters aged 16 and younger (hunting youth day):

53% YES
47% NO

Hunters aged 21 and older (took youth hunter on youth day):

17% YES
83% NO

32. Please list any additional comments you have about turkey hunting in Maryland (ASKED TO ALL RESPONDENTS):

Comments listed in Appendix 2

APPENDIX 2: Comments

**Note -All comments received are categorized, numbered, and listed below. Some comments were shortened for summary purposes.*

REGULATIONS

General

- 1) The current spring season is just right and wouldn't want to see any changes to it.
- 2) I believe turkey hunting should be limited to counties with large numbers....Poaching laws need to be much tougher.
- 3) I like everything the way it is. Thank you very much.
- 4) The current season limits and regulations are fine.
- 5) I like the present just fine. No improvements needed in my opinion.
- 6) While I feel that the turkey population is increasing in Dorchester, we are not ready for increases bag limits or hunting hours.
- 7) I think turkey season is one of the seasons governed right in MD.
- 8) Just leave it alone.
- 9) Very happy with how MD's season is set up. More public land in Southern MD would be nice, but it is adequate.
- 10) Overall everything about your season and bag limits are fine...
- 11) I think that right now the regulations are just right...
- 12) The way we have our season is perfect for anyone. Please leave it as is.

Hunting Hours

- 1) All-day hunting might increase participation by providing evening hunting opportunities for shift workers and late-risers.
- 2) ...I would like to hunt in the afternoon if it did not affect the turkey population.
- 3) People work and can't always make the morning hunt. It would be nice to hunt in the afternoon.
- 4) If extended – not by number of days or all day but by 2 hours instead of noon. Maybe at 2:00 instead.
- 5) I would encourage changing the spring hunt to an all-day event like other states.
- 6) Just like to see hunting all day in spring. You can't kill a hen anyway so make it all day. Then the season would be long enough.
- 7) Extend hunting hours to all day. Hunting on Sunday is a plus.
- 8) During the past years turkey hunting has become a big part of my spring plans. Since it takes 2 hours to get to my property and being able to hunt all day would be nice.
- 9) I think that afternoon hunting would make turkeys harder to kill. With the added pressure they probably won't gobble as well. Also more turkeys would wind up getting killed by field hunters.
- 10) I would like to have all-day hunting in MD. I sometimes have a whole day but can't take advantage of it...
- 11) Please do not have all-day hunting. You will have people shooting them coming to roost.
- 12) I would strongly agree to hunt turkeys all day because they usually come back out to the fields before they roost.
- 13) Working a full-time job – it's hard to take off in AM. Having a full day to hunt (like deer) would greatly improve flexibility to allow me to hunt more days.
- 14) If I were going to change anything about turkey hunting it would be the hours.
- 15) Maybe we could try a week of evening hunts just to see if it works.
- 16) Some other states already allow "all day" spring gobbler hunting or are proposing it. I feel most turkey hunters can tell the difference between a gobbler and hen.
- 17) Have all-day hunting allowed only in the last 1-2 weeks (like VA)
- 18) I love turkey hunting and would like to go past noon. I get up early everyday and would like to sleep late on vacation.
- 19) All-day hunting would help working people hunt more...
- 20) Hunting in the afternoon would be great for me. I only have Saturdays to hunt.
- 21) Need to allow all-day hunt!
- 22) A full day of hunting would be great!
- 23) I think ½ day hunting hours allows the turkeys to regroup and prevents them from over disturbed even in fairly high-pressure areas. I would recommend keeping the ½ day hunting (my wife agrees for other reasons!)
- 24) Extending the shooting hours to "all day" would help many ways – economically – i.e. gas and travel expense and time. Driving 4 hours one-way to hunt ½ day is a hard sell.
- 25) We should not be allowed to hunt all-day – it is easy to locate birds at dusk when they go back to roost – people might illegally shoot a bird after dark on roost with a light.
- 26) I feel the birds need the afternoon time to be left alone to feed and roost in peace!
- 27) Maybe all day with bags the same will harvest more turkeys. If not add Sundays if not extend the season not by length but sooner before the hens get with gobblers.
- 28) It would be nice to have the season open til 1:00.
- 29) I feel that MD law should include all-day hunting for turkeys...I would be very appreciative.

- 30) Maybe ½ season afternoon is OK.
- 31) I would like you to consider extending the hunting hours to at least 1:00 pm like WV. I don't think it would significantly increase the kill but would give you an extra hour.
- 32) There's not enough turkeys in the wild to hunt all day.
- 33) I think afternoon hunting would be a good opportunity for working people...
- 34) I think the state really should consider all day hunting in spring across the state and/or allow fall hunting across the state. I believe the population could withstand.

Bag Limits

- 1) I would like to see only 1 bird harvested in the spring.
- 2) Increasing bag limit may encourage harvesting of jakes, while decreasing bag limit may encourage hunters to wait on a mature bird.
- 3) If you start letting hunters kill 2 a day it is hard enough to just kill one a day. The turkeys are now just coming back in MD. They are not like deer. They get killed by foxes and the young don't make it in the 1st year. maybe 30% live.
- 4) I think a 3rd bird in the seasonal bag is possible. May consider 3, only 2 per county.
- 5) One bird only in the spring.
- 6) ...maybe a 3rd bird being a hen after 2 toms by permit or purchased stamp or 1 hen in the fall shotgun season.
- 7) I would like to see a bag limit of 1 hen in fall and 2 gobblers spring.
- 8) Although I checked 2 birds per season, if the population was decreasing at all I would support a 1 bird limit.
- 9) 3 bird limit like VA seems reasonable.
- 10) I like the fact that if I do not harvest a bird in the fall I can harvest 2 birds in the spring.

Season Dates

- 1) It would be great if the season would start 1 week earlier and stay in an additional week.
- 2) You don't need a longer season. After 2 weeks the hens are nesting - you might get an answer but the toms don't come in much.
- 3) Needs to be a larger window of time for hunting in MD.
- 4) Keep opening day on the 18th. Love when it falls in middle of the week, less hunters. Too many hunters on Saturdays.
- 5) I would like to see spring turkey come in about 2 weeks earlier – if you hunt on the Eastern Shore the ticks and mosquitoes are very bad.
- 6) How about establishing 2 pre-season days for seniors? Or combining with youth turkey day.
- 7) Have the season start a week early (e.g. April 10).
- 8) Season should come in 2-3 weeks later – say the end of April.
- 9) Start the season a week earlier.
- 10) As a nonresident of MD a Saturday start would be great. I only hunt public land.
- 11) Season should start earlier in April.
- 12) I feel the season could be opened 1 week earlier.
- 13) Give youth hunters a few more days to harvest a turkeys and extend hunting hours. It's hard hunting when I have 2 sons who love the outdoors.
- 14) The season needs to start the 1st or 2nd Saturday in April – not the 3rd. The turkeys are more active earlier in the month.
- 15) Moving start date by 1 week would help Southern MD hunters.
- 16) The season should start and end on a Saturday and hunt until 1:00PM to compensate for daylight savings time.
- 17) I think the season could open sooner than the 18th of April.
- 18) Need more than 1 day for youth hunt.
- 19) I would like to have 1 or 2 Sundays available for hunting.
- 20) I feel our season starts too late – should start around April 1st – most of the mating is done by the time our season starts.
- 21) Need more days for youth hunting.
- 22) Youth day is a great asset. Keep it in place.
- 23) I would like to see season begin about 3 weeks earlier.
- 24) I would like to see the season open on the 3rd Thursday of April or stay the same.
- 25) I think the season dates and lengths are fine; however I strongly support all-day hunting. ..
- 26) Extend season at beginning. Hunting afternoon only during 2nd half of season.
- 27) Season should start same day as PA season. Our public lands are limited and we are overrun by hunters from PA. Maybe we should have reciprocal limits with PA.
- 28) Start season 2 weeks earlier. Birds on Eastern Shore are different than western part of the state.
- 29) Spring turkey season to start 1-week earlier.
- 30) I would like to see turkey hunting start in the end of March and go until the middle of May.
- 31) Would like to see the season open 1 week later.
- 32) I think the turkey season could start a week or 2 earlier in April.
- 33) I would love to see the season open 1 week earlier. By the end of 2nd week it is rare to hear a gobble.

- 34) They should have more youth days.
- 35) April 18th is too late to start season. Toms have already mated most hens. Early April, 1st week would be better season opener!
- 36) Add more days for youth hunting. Strongly recommend all-day hunting.
- 37) Not enough time for working person – not enough turkey – hunted in OH...
- 38) ...would like to see additional consideration given to extending the season to favor the weather. Perhaps a 2nd spring season of a week.
- 39) Would like to see spring season open in March.

Fall Season

- 1) I would like to see a fall season. I see more turkeys in the fall.
- 2) I would like to see a fall hunting season. Maybe a week before Thanksgiving with a 1 bird limit.
- 3) Would like to see a fall season in Southern MD – I see more birds there than I do in Western counties.
- 4) It would be nice to have a fall season.
- 5) Is MD considering a fall season on the Eastern Shore? A bag limit of 1 bearded turkey if only 1 killed in spring would be preferred.
- 6) I believe we need to have a fall season in Southern MD.
- 7) Maybe closing the fall season in Western MD for a while might bring the turkey numbers back up.
- 8) Need fall season to reduce number of hens. Each gobbler seen had 10-15 hens even during last week. Impossible to call gobblers away from this number of hens.
- 9) Have a lot of hens and no fall season. Implement a fall season or allow a hen in the spring season as a third bird or in lieu of a tom.
- 10) Should consider a short fall season around Thanksgiving.
- 11) Allow hen hunting.
- 12) Allow 1 hen to be harvested in fall season in addition to the 2 gobblers in spring. Too many turkeys need to reduce population.
- 13) Why not hunt turkey in the fall in south counties or do crossbow only. Spring hunt is OK, but you are disturbing other animals including deer when caring for newborns, and disturbing hens on the nest. Leave hunting to a fall tradition.
- 14) It would be nice to have a fall turkey hunt on the Eastern Shore.
- 15) I would like a fall hunt in Frederick County west of US 15.
- 16) It's time for a fall season which includes 1 hen in MD. It's nothing to see 10 or more hens for every 1 tom...especially during deer season....
- 17) If the population continues to improve a short either-sex fall season would be good.
- 18) ...I would like to see a fall hunting season for the Eastern Shore...
- 19) MD needs to enlarge the hunting season in the fall. Many states have 4-6 weeks and we only have several days. The spring season is fine but the fall season is far too short.
- 20) I would like to have a fall season.
- 21) It would be nice to have a fall turkey hunt on the Eastern Shore.
- 22) I would like a fall hunt in Frederick County west of US 15.
- 23) I think that right now the regulations are just right. I would like to hunt in the afternoon if it did not affect the turkey population.
- 24) It's time for a fall season which includes 1 hen in MD. It's nothing to see 10 or more hens for every 1 tom...especially during deer season....
- 25) If the population continues to improve a short either-sex fall season would be good.
- 26) ...I would like to see a fall hunting season for the Eastern Shore...
- 27) MD needs to enlarge the hunting season in the fall. Many states have 4-6 weeks and we only have several days. The spring season is fine but the fall season is far too short.
- 28) I would like to have a fall season.
- 29) Have a fall hunt in southern counties.
- 30) A fall 3-4 day season would be nice for southern MD if no turkey taken in spring.
- 31) Because of health problem I can't cover ground like I once did – it would be nice to be able to take hen turkeys in fall season like western MD.
- 32) No fall season on Eastern Shore!
- 33) A fall turkey season – hen or gobbler.
- 34) How about a fall season on the Eastern Shore? Seems to be plenty of turkeys but no fall season.
- 35) It's time for a brief fall season. Extending the season 1 week earlier and later would cover the weather variations. In VA, the last 2 weeks are dawn to dusk. This gives the traveling hunter more time in the field and an entirely different perspective, and makes my wife mad...
- 36) I'd like to see DNR institute and either-sex fall youth turkey hunting date in all counties that have a sizable turkey population....this would be another opportunity for getting our youth in the field while not trying to encourage trophy hunting, etc. It's great family time.

Other Regulation Issues

- 1) Crossbows should be legal for turkeys. They are not that much better than compound bows if you use effective camouflage. They are certainly not as deadly as a shotgun with or without effective optics.
- 2) Thank you for having no age limit in MD....I wish you would let people hunt deer on Sundays.
- 3) Sunday hunting is the only fair way to treat MD hunters. Has anyone in the state government ever heard of discrimination? States west of us get to hunt Sundays.
- 4) I enjoy turkey hunting. The only thing I wish to see change is allowing hunters to use bait....the turkeys would be more dispersed if private owners didn't hold them on their ground!
- 5) In WV they are allowed to use rifles in spring. Don't let that happen in MD...calling them in close enough to kill with a shotgun is what it's all about.
- 6) Require orange hat or vest while moving or walking through the woods.
- 7) Would like to be able to use .22 cal. centerfire rifle to hunt spring turkey.
- 8) I would like to have Sunday to hunt so you could make weekend trips instead of just 1 day and all-day hunting would make it better also. You may have a better chance of calling afternoon because hens on nests.
- 9) I would like to see an early archery season
- 10) Consider hunting on the 1st Sunday.
- 11) Please allow Sunday hunting!!!
- 12) I would like to see Sunday hunting for all hunting seasons!
- 13) I am for Sunday hunting. As a contractor I can only hunt weekends.
- 14) It would be nice to hunt on Sunday, having to work Monday – Friday and some Saturdays. OR allow all day hunting.
- 15) More Sunday hunts for turkeys and deer.
- 16) Florescent orange is not the answer for safety.
- 17) Maybe necessary to buy a turkey stamp to eliminate some of the hunters who do not hunt ethically.

TURKEY POPULATIONS (AND PREDATORS OF TURKEYS)

- 1) Too many foxes and hawks. Hurting bird and rabbit population.
- 2) Coyotes and fishers seem to be taking a toll on turkey population.
- 3) I keep a diary every day I either scout or hunt for turkeys....In the spring of 2004 I found many scratchings and had many sightings of turkeys...Each year since then the amount of sign and sighting decreased...
- 4) I would like to see some type of increase day or night hunting of predators of turkeys (young).
- 5) I believe the red fox populations in our area are hurting the turkey flock, esp. the younger birds.
- 6) The re-introduction of turkeys to the Eastern Shore has been a great success, I see them everywhere. If I had to make a choice, I would rather hunt turkeys than deer.
- 7) Where I hunt in Central MD there are few turkeys, but it has been like that for 20 years. I doubt the habitat will ever support greater numbers....I don't see the need for any major changes.
- 8) As of June 20th I have yet to see any poults??? I think the foxes could be a big problem for their survival. I see foxes everyday.
- 9) While turkey population on the shore and in the mountains are very good, there is still a small growing population in counties like Harford, Cecil, and Kent that I would like to see get better before allowing 3 birds to be harvested or all-day hunting.
- 10) I believe the decline in turkeys is due to fox and eagles killing many of the young turkeys. I used to see 25-50 turkeys a day. Now you are lucky to see 5.
- 11) St. Mary's has good population – Charles County has more.
- 12) Turkey population in the areas I hunt are very good.
- 13) In my private land I have seen less and less turkeys. This is why I would not encourage increased bag limits.
- 14) I feel the turkey population on the mid-shore is somewhat decreasing. I believe this may be due to poaching problems.
- 15) Too many hens in some counties.
- 16) I feel like the turkey program that was started in Charles County back in the 90's was a great success and should be done in every county in the state.
- 17) We can't seem to hold turkeys on our lease, so turkey hunting when there are no birds or you never hear a gobble is pretty discouraging.
- 18) I've hunted leased property in Charles Co. for 6 years. The number of turkeys I've seen during winter has dropped substantially, so during the spring season I have noticed less and less birds and more predators (foxes) specifically. Coyotes have been spotted as well.
- 19) There are plenty of birds to hunt...
- 20) I hunt Kent county and turkey population has been steadily improving....thank you for this opportunity.
- 21) Turkey populations "appear" to be declining, but they appear to be stabilizing at levels lower than the average over the last 15 yrs hunting in MD.
- 22) I have seen as many as 65-70 turkeys in a flock.
- 23) Need to transplant turkeys to central MD.
- 24) We must reduce the number of foxes and coyotes.

- 25) Fox, coons, and possums must be reduced in Dorchester Co.
- 26) Too many bears and coyotes are killing too many young turkeys and turkey eggs. A longer bear season is needed and coyotes should be “shot on sight” – 365 days a year no limit – in my opinion.
- 27) The problem where I hunt is the fox...maybe that could be why the turkey is not growing as much in our state.
- 28) We need to control predators for wildlife as well as farm animals.
- 29) I think the population of turkeys in Kent Co. is definitely increasing – keep up the good work.
- 30) I have seen less turkeys in areas where coyotes have been regularly spotted.
- 31) Have seen more birds in Queen Anne County over last few years...turkey population growth seems to be slow on Eastern Shore vs. what I experienced in the 80's-90's in western MD. But there is a higher density of predators.
- 32) The wild turkey population has slowly been going down in Garrett County the last 10 years; esp. the last 5 yrs. I live in St. Mary's county and there is not a huntable population down there...
- 33) They don't seem to be reproducing in the mountains where I hunt in MD or VA which I think is related to increase in predators and pressure during spring season. Also, extreme baiting along boundaries of public lands.
- 34) Need to help with nest robbers- fox, coon, etc.
- 35) ...If you would place a small bounty on coyote it would allow all game in my area to repopulate including deer, grouse, turkey, and squirrel, all of which have dropped in numbers the past 3 years.
- 36) The turkey population is very good in some areas and weak in others...increase the fox season in all the counties that the population is lower...I believe that's one reason Charles Co. is doing so well.
- 37) Numbers seem to be increasing and so does range...
- 38) I need to find better areas to hunt – few turkeys where I hunt...
- 39) The populations I see hens far outnumber toms...
- 40) I think coyotes are having an effect on the young turkeys right after the hatch.

MARYLAND DNR

Turkey Management in General

- 1) I believe the DNR is doing a great job.
- 2) Thank you DNR for efforts over the years to increase the turkey populations.
- 3) Thank you for the opportunity to provide my comments, observations.
- 4) You guys have done a great job building up the flock. There is just too many hunters not enough land – but it is still enjoyable.
- 5) Thank you.
- 6) Thank you for introducing turkeys to Eastern Shore and allowing turkey hunting. I have had a blast in 9 years of hunting. It is a great thrill to hear the turkeys in the woods.
- 7) ...All in all, I think you are doing A GREAT JOB with your turkey management in MD!
- 8) I think MD is doing a good job managing turkeys. Wish I had more time to hunt to take advantage of public lands in western MD...keep up the good work.
- 9) I am glad after so many years they brought turkeys to the Eastern Shore. For many years I had to buy a turkey stamp and never seen a turkey.
- 10) I think the state did a marvelous job restoring the wild turkey population in Dorchester Co. – Hope you continue!
- 11) Thank you for the opportunity to give you my opinions.
- 12) I feel the DNR are doing a great job. Thank you.
- 13) No comment, just that you are doing a great job.
- 14) Thanks for the input.
- 15) I appreciate the job you folks have done in bringing the turkey back through the state. It sure is nice to be able to hunt locally without having to travel to western MD. Thank you.
- 16) This is a very good survey!!!
- 17) Re-stock the Eastern Shore with turkeys.
- 18) I enjoy MD hunting – thanks for doing a good job!
- 19) I think DNR is doing a very good job. KEEP IT UP.
- 20) Restoration of turkeys shows that good management of wildlife does work. Thanks for all you have done and are doing to improve our outdoor heritage.
- 21) Very fine program – State should be applauded of their management efforts!
- 22) Thanks for your efforts.
- 23) I like hunting in MD and I think the DNR really cares about the animals.
- 24) The state is doing a great job with turkeys as far as I can tell. Great job.
- 25) Thanks for doing this survey. I support DNR's efforts to better manage ALL the game seasons including liberalized deer seasons, waterfowl hunting hours, black bear seasons, resident Canada goose seasons...thanks for letting MD hunters voice their opinions. Say no to democratic non-sense swaying sound DNR management.
- 26) Thank you for your interest, I love turkey calling.
- 27) I like to see turkey relocated to more state hunting grounds.

- 28) Additional stocking in Eastern counties west of the Chesapeake Bay...
- 29) I love turkey hunting. Maryland DNR about 10 years ago trapped turkeys where I hunt..they have not yet rebounded and are hard to find on public land.
- 30) ..please keep up the good job you have been doing increasing the turkey population around the state.
- 31) Thanks to DNR and the NWTf. We have very good turkey hunting in MD.

Public Lands

- 1) Great public lands, too bad DE started buying land to hunt too late.
- 2) Public hunting lands for turkey in central MD counties.
- 3) More access to land along Patuxent River...most of that land is Parkland that should be open to hunting. Hunters pay taxes and taxes pay for wildlife. Non-hunters hold that land hostage.
- 4) Make more land available.
- 5) More access to private lands. They pay farmers to open access out west to public. Thank you for your concern. Keep up the good job.
- 6) I would like to see the state purchase more public land in Harford, Cecil, Baltimore counties or open areas like the Rocks and Susquehanna State Parks. Both hold good population of turkeys.
- 7) Open government land to hunters.
- 8) Most public lands are overhunted....maybe a managed hunt is necessary for only a few hunters per section of land.
- 9) I would like to see more public land in Balto. County, the cost of gas limited my hunting.
- 10) We are fortunate to have state land to hunt. MD should acquire as much land as possible for the future.
- 11) Until the State gets its act together by allowing the public on all these Chesapeake Forest lands, they are depriving potential license buyers and hunters from places to hunt. The lands that DNR does manage have no management activities – food plots and tree thinning. DNR is doing a poor job.
- 12) I wish there were more access to public lands in MD.
- 13) I believe that additional public land should be opened and made accessible for MD hunters.
- 14) I think you're doing good work on your public hunting grounds. I've been an out of state hunter for years. Keep up the good work. Thanks.
- 15) Better enforcement of no ATVs in Wildlife Management Areas.
- 16) There are certain places...where deer and turkey population are OVERFLOWING. But DNR and MCP don't allow hunting...It would be nice if these areas could be considered.
- 17) I would like to see food plots planted on public land. Private lands offer more food for the turkeys.
- 18) In the Central region more areas (particularly state parks) need to be opened up to turkey hunters.
- 19) Public land is crowded.

Other DNR Issues

- 1) What is the state doing about gypsy moth devastation in Savage River SF?
- 2) Something that could be helpful - you could open up some of the Park and Planning land to the hunters.
- 3) I firmly disagree with your elimination of check stations – it invites poaching and shooting over your limit! I've never been checked in the field. OH has the right system – they check the records and make many more arrests for people abusing the system.
- 4) I've heard accusations that insurance companies or organizations have introduced coyotes in areas where they experience excessive losses due to deer and auto collisions. Address this issue as fact or rumor...
- 5) I was checked by a game warden and was treated respectfully and courteous.
- 6) Your conservation officers are enjoyable to meet and do a professional job.
- 7) Need more NRP officers to patrol private property.
- 8) We were checked by 3 officers on Sideling Hill. They were professional, courteous, and friendly. It is nice to know we have quality people helping to protect our sport!
- 9) More DNR presence would maybe eliminate any poaching violators from poaching.
- 10) The state needs more public lands. The Park Service both state and federal has thousands of acres that could be used...what a waste. Be willing to buy game lands stamp for its use.
- 11) I would like to see us go back to check stations for turkey season. It would keep more people legal.
- 12) I like the phone system.

THE 2007 SPRING SEASON

- 1) The hunting on public land was good. I heard birds on almost every hunt & had good response to my calling. I called several birds into gun range but never fired a shot.
- 2) Hunted only 1 day – called in 2 hens and 1 tom. Could not get a good shot.
- 3) This was my best year for turkeys. Seen and heard turkeys everyday I went out.
- 4) I saw a lot of jakes on a few different farms. As many as 4 at 1 time come in. Also had a lot of hens come in to me.
- 5) In general turkey hunting in MD is not bad but this spring for some reason it was terrible.
- 6) I did not see a hen turkey in 2007 but I did see 8 males.

- 7) I killed a 23.5 lb gobbler with a 10.5 inch beard and 1.5 inch spurs...with a compound bow. I saw birds everyday I was in the field.
- 8) I did not take a youth on youth day but took my 12 year-old nephew nearly every day of regular season. We seen turkeys most mornings but were not able to call within range. A rifle would have been nice, but I realize rifles could be dangerous for turkeys.
- 9) Harvested bird 1st Sat., missed bird 1st Thurs., had 5-6 legal birds in range. Called in 2 for dad – missed, called in 1 for brother – missed. Could have had 2 if dad and bro could shoot this year ☺ Most came in silent, little gobbling as predicted. Good Job!
- 10) Could have killed 2 jakes – chose not to shoot. Called up nice longbeard – 55 yards. Still too far.
- 11) Not good.
- 12) I took my son hunting during the regular season. As usual it is a great experience.
- 13) Had another hunter shoot my jake decoy, first time in 30 years of hunting.
- 14) I have seen a total of 3 coyotes this spring and I have never seen coyotes before this year.
- 15) I had a red-tailed hawk land on one of my decoys. Last year had a bald eagle try to take a hen coming to my calls.
- 16) I did not hear or see a turkey in the 4 times afield in 2007.
- 17) ...I bagged a huge coyote (black) next to Blackwater NWR.
- 18) I saw smaller flocks this year.
- 19) It was a good year. I didn't kill a turkey but saw a lot. They were henned up...After season I have been seeing turkeys in every field I look at.
- 20) Worst season ever. No gobbling activity during whole season.
- 21) This year I did not see as many turkeys. Also I saw more hunters. I did not work many birds and only saw 1 longbeard.
- 22) Had an excellent season.
- 23) Last year 2006 season hunted almost everyday...this year 2007 I was lucky if I even seen or heard turkeys at all.
- 24) This year I think they mated early... it was harder to hunt them...I've called in and killed 2 gobblers for the past 7 years...this year I got skunked.
- 25) I had a great season this year but did not harvest a tom by choice. Called in at least 20 birds on my own land.
- 26) The weather was not good for 2007 turkey hunting.
- 27) I encountered a lot of hens in the spring. Matter of fact too many hens for the amount of gobblers.
- 28) Weather was #@%! Less birds gobbling.
- 29) Saw, heard and got info from other hunters that more mating activity occurred during March, mid April thru May had little activity.
- 30) Saw only 2 gobblers – both after 12pm. Saw in excess of 40 hens in 4 days of hunting.
- 31) Although there was an abundance of birds, the weather was not conducive to good hunting....
- 32) I finally killed my first turkey on April 28th...I hunted a lot this year and heard very few turkeys gobble.

MISCELLANEAUS

- 1) Where are they?
- 2) Maryland residents should have priority – PA hunters in 1st 3 days of season approached me with high disregard for safety or respect. 2 separate instances made me feel unsafe...
- 3) I do not like the practice of planting food plots or baiting for deer. It will also draw turkeys to these spots. I prefer to hunt deer and turkeys one-on-one, as it should be.
- 4) I love it.
- 5) My only complaint is hunter interference. Something needs to be done to educate hunters to not try to sneak on a gobbler when they should have heard my calling. I had 2 gobblers spooked this spring by slob hunters.
- 6) I own 400 acres in Allegany County and pay a lot of taxes. I feel it is a total rip-off that I have to buy a non-resident license...
- 7) We need more land to hunt on in Montgomery Co. and the whole state – Stop the building and destruction of the forest.
- 8) I wish that there was more private property to hunt on. People wouldn't litter so much at public hunting areas.
- 9) I am a DE resident with a 13 year old daughter...would have brought her if she didn't need a \$130 license. DE allows nonresident kids to hunt for free with an adult that has one.
- 10) We need an easier breed of birds to come to calls.
- 11) To call a turkey and hear one answer back "is the BEST".
- 12) Overall very satisfied.
- 13) Too many PA hunters crowding public lands...ruins a quality hunt....this is a serious problem....I live up here and hunt all the time and see this going on always....
- 14) One of the most enjoyable sports of hunting except "ducks" in my opinion...looking forward to next season already.
- 15) A great sport.
- 16) Great majority of hunters that I encounter are non-residents (typically from PA) who hunt MD's earlier season until their home state opens.
- 17) The hunting is great and so are the turkeys.

- 18) With the exception of Garrett and Allegany counties, public areas are too crowded....there are more PA hunters in MD woods than Marylanders....MD is a bargain for PA residents.
- 19) It is unfortunately becoming like deerhunting – a “job”, Many hunters have lost sight of why “we” hunt and are too into “one-upmanship”. I am primarily a goose hunter now and enjoy seeing geese and maybe not getting a shot. Same with turkey. Sometimes frustrating but overall enjoyable.
- 20) ...Turkey hunting for me is not about killing a bird but the outdoor experience and the thrill of calling a tom in.
- 21) Don't stop it. Its fun and brings \$\$ to the state.
- 22) Increasing people hunting turkey lack experience.
- 23) A good way to experience God and his great outdoors.
- 24) Always enjoy hunting in MD.
- 25) Very enjoyable, my sons like to go also.
- 26) I love it!
- 27) I enjoy the spring season...
- 28) Great just being outdoors!
- 29) Had lots of fun hunting MD. Gives me extra time with the spring season coming in April 18th.
- 30) I think our area has very good turkey hunting. I don't know which I like best – spring turkey hunting or bowhunting for deer. I always hunt by myself.
- 31) MD nonresident license went way up way to high = very discouraging. National Wild Turkey Federation JAKES program encourages safe, new hunters. Credit NWTF with work for turkeys. I think more turkeys are taken illegally during fall deer season. Anybody get Lyme disease from ticks?
- 32) No comments – I just enjoy being in the woods in spring. Also to hunt mushrooms, etc.
- 33) Have a lot of trouble trespassing because they hear birds!
- 34) I do not enjoy the chiggers and ticks. I was diagnosed with Lyme disease this year.
- 35) It is the best hunting sport in the state. I have been hunting since I was 13 yrs old.
- 36) Although I have not yet to kill a turkey, sightings continue to rise and success is imminent!!
- 37) I am a youth hunter and enjoy hunting with my brother and grandfather.
- 38) Very good.
- 39) It is a great sport and a great time of year to be in the woods.
- 40) The amount of pressure on public property has the birds spooked by or shortly after opening day. I don't mind the added challenge but if the birds don't gobble it does take some of the excitement out of the hunt. Not sure if there is any answer to that problem though.
- 41) People need to be better educated about the difference between male and female and how they respond...
- 42) I feel there are too many roads open to vehicles in the Green Ridge Area.
- 43) To be able to understand turkey hunting takes skill and knowledge that all hunters are not skilled enough to do it...
- 44) I just love being in the woods. Kill or no kill it is OK. Turkeys are much harder to call in now than they were years ago. Love spring hunting...
- 45) Nonresident license very costly for MD landowners.
- 46) ...And I don't want to see it become commercialized like goose hunting and deer season.
- 47) I greatly enjoy the sport of turkey hunting in MD...
- 48) Keep traps legal in all counties!
- 49) Get state to help private landowners do prescribed burns...willing to pay to have it done. NWTF state to offer chufa again. Also get state to plant food plots back in state forest that have grown up in bushes.
- 50) I think there should be a season for the Blackwater NWR just like for deer. Either a lottery or open season. I see a lot of birds on several tracts.
- 51) I am fortunate to hunt on private land. Without that I would not be as able or comfortable hunting on public land. Would be nice to have a 3 day license to hunt.
- 52) I live in PA and I enjoy hunting in your state. It seems to me that the State of MD cares about their wildlife. The deer population in PA I so bad. The turkey hunting in your state is so good. Deer hunting is getting better.
- 53) I think people who have private land to hunt turkeys on have the best advantage because of feeding techniques. Public lands turkeys are very scarce.
- 54) Woods are beautiful at this time of year. Not many hunters during the week. being retired, I can take advantage of this.
- 55) Great time to be in the woods – whether you get a bird or not.
- 56) Always enjoy MD, probably retire in Washington Co. Hunt 3 states in 10 minutes...
- 57) I will enjoy taking my daughter next year; I have hunted with my uncle for years.
- 58) Turkey hunting in MD is an economic boost for the entire state. It allows me more time afield to enjoy the outdoors. With the extended season it provides hunters to be more selective in the hunt and bigger birds.