

1st Wild Turkey Stakeholder Group Meeting Notes (9/10/2015)

Welcome and thank you for taking time to attend meeting.

Introductions:

- Chad Lehman – senior wildlife biologist out of Custer State Park
- Dean Schueler– Sioux Falls, National Wildlife Turkey Federation (NWTF) board member, hunter
- Chris Hesla – executive director of SD Wildlife Federation, Pierre
- Neil Bien – Marshall County, rancher, turkeys used to not be in his area but present now
- Mike McKernan – president of South Dakota NWTF Chapter, Grant County
- Collin Smith – NWTF regional biologist for Dakotas, Montana, Wyoming, worked in Black Hills until recently, now in Montana, hunter
- John Cooper – Commissioner, worked with NWTF for a variety of things, part of 2001 management plan, works on funding sources, hunter
- Terry Mayes – stationed in Sturgis during growth of turkey hunting in the Black Hills, hunter, part-time volunteer for GFP since 2000s, advisory board panel member for West River, Black Hills sportsmen’s board member, SD camo coalition member, was on Elk management plan stakeholder group
- Alex Solem (GFP) – upland game biologist in Huron, hunter
- Travis Runia (GFP) – senior upland game biologist – Huron, research and management
- John Kanta (GFP) – regional wildlife manager for western part of state
- Nathan Baker (GFP) – regional wildlife manager, central part of state
- Keith Fisk (GFP) – Administrator of Wildlife Damage Management Program
- Jacquie Ermer (GFP) – regional wildlife manager in northeast part of state
- Cliff Stone (GFP) – central SD regional supervisor, in Chamberlain
- Paul Coughlin (GFP) – habitat program administrator, Pierre, oversees private lands habitat program, and public land acquisition
- Tom Kirschenmann (GFP) – worked on lots of mgmt. plans, need formal adoption of mgmt. plans by commission, mgmt. plans are an open public process, expect synergy with NWTF national plan
- Cindy Longmire (GFP) – Human Dimensions Specialist, Pierre, surveys, public input
- Heather Berg (GFP) – GIS and Mapping team – note taker
- Mark DeVries– Belvidere, rancher, wildlife committee chair for Stockgrowers committee
- Scott Lindgren (GFP)– regional supervisor for northeastern part of the state
- Emmett Keyser (GFP) regional supervisor for southeast SD

Meetings and Commission Approach

Turkey stakeholder group requires a 3 meeting time commitment

- 1st meeting provides info to discuss with your constituents
- 2nd meeting - deeper discussion of topics
- 3rd meeting - review draft plan and wrap up edits on plan

Department will present final draft of the plan to the Commission for their adoption at the April/May 2016 Commission meeting. The draft plan will go out for a 30-day public comment period prior to bringing the plan to the Commission. The Commission will not need a formal proposal for the plan, just a vote from Commission to formally adopt the plan.

Presenter: Chad Switzer, PowerPoint Presentation – 1st Wild Turkey Stakeholder Group Meeting

Presentation

- Discussed purpose, objectives, authority, roles, and responsibilities of stakeholder group – see handout from meeting
- Discussed GFP's roles and responsibility as an agency
 - Agency's mission goal, mission statement, and values
 - Balance between hunting, fishing, and trapping with biological structure and land use
 - Strong partnership and importance of land owners to provide quality habitat
- Stakeholders will help put the puzzle together and are represented by agriculture, general public, and hunters
- most of [Chad's] time is spent managing the public and working with people, incorporate the needs and desires of stakeholders while managing wildlife
 - Chad overall feels that the agency is doing a good job with public perception and wildlife population balance
- Management Plan
 - Writing of new plan is not just an exercise, GFP is taking a more serious approach to management plans than in the past
 - Plan needs to justify GFP activities
 - Goals, objectives, strategies, evaluation
 - What worked and what didn't, why?
 - Where are we, where do we want to be, how to get there, did we make it
 - Strategies are used to meet objectives
 - Annually evaluate what and why objectives got accomplished and what failed
 - Guiding document for season recommendations
 - Provide transparency to public on why GFP is doing what it's doing
- Stakeholder group
 - Diverse group
 - Have broad issues to address and discuss
 - Includes sportsman, general public, agriculture, landowners
 - Hope this group provides enough representation of public users
 - Members are encouraged to express opinions, thoughts, and concerns
 - Discussions will be shared with public to offer transparency
- Objectives of Stakeholder Group
 - Important link between agency and the public
 - Identify challenges and opportunities regarding turkeys
 - Promote discussion points to take back to the public and other organizations
 - Voluntary presence, members have a voice, but don't have authority over official decision making, budgeting, or personnel management

- Stakeholder Member Responsibilities
 - Commitment to attend
 - Offer thoughts and ideas
 - Participate with respect
 - Serve as sounding board
 - Receive recognition at Commission
- GFP Division of Wildlife Responsibility
 - Information sharing on turkey topics, depredation tactics, and background information
 - Serve as facilitator
 - If you feel GFP is not doing the job you think it needs to do with regards to facilitating, let GFP staff know so that it can be addressed
 - Schedule meetings and provide facility
 - Provide meeting notes that will be made public after review process
- State can reimburse stakeholder members for travel as appropriate, turn in I-9 form

Presenter: Chad Lehman, PowerPoint Presentation – Wild Turkey Management Plan 2016-2020 Stakeholder Meeting I

Presentation

- Management plan is a strategic guidance document for GFP
 - The planning process is more important than the document itself
 - This group has a very important role in the future of turkey management in South Dakota
- Focus on three ideas for first meeting
 - Guidance of developing plan
 - Direction for fall and spring seasons
 - Guidance for unit objectives
- Introduction and Background
 - Wild turkey is largest North American game bird
 - 5 subspecies in North American
 - Merriam's and Eastern subspecies are found in South Dakota
 - Rio Grande subspecies has been reintroduced in limited numbers across the state
 - Eastern subspecies was native to South Dakota, then extirpated in early 1900s
 - Native range would have been up and down the Missouri River in riparian areas of cottonwood and bur oak
 - Successful reintroductions of turkeys across state in 1970s
 - Merriam's have flourished in western part of state in ponderosa pine ecosystem
 - One of the best populations of Merriam's in the country is in the Black Hills
 - South Dakota turkey populations peaked in early 2000s

Discussion (John Cooper)

- What is the long term population goal?
 - Can we look at the overall long term average instead of just the ups and downs?
 - Public gets confused by up and down graph

- Do we have a long term goal to display on maps as far as harvest is concerned?
- How do we measure how well we are doing with population management?
- Hard to visualize currently
- Lots of turkey units are fairly young but GFP does have some long term data for older units
- GFP needs to better communicate with public on how turkeys are doing
 - Is a forecast model like what we have for pheasants possible?
 - If population is currently down for this year, how does it compare to long term?
 - The pheasant survey allows for a continued discussion into the spring when hunting isn't going on
 - Forecast keeps dialogue open
 - Lots of folks want to come to South Dakota to hunt and they want to know how turkeys are doing here
 - Need to do a spring turkey population survey
- How do we get the basic info out to the public in a way they can understand and easily access
 - In Hunter Handbook
 - On GFP website
 - In newsletters
- For example, how did Winter Storm Atlas in October 2013 impact turkeys?
- Provide public with general information
 - What biologists feel about turkey population
 - May not need to have strong science to back up
 - More anecdotal from field staff on what they are seeing
- Draw long term average of turkey population similar to migratory bird group
- Most of turkeys in South Dakota are Eastern and Merriam's
 - Where did Rio Grande subspecies come from?
 - Birds from Oklahoma and south in the 1970s
 - Experimented to see if subspecies would do better here since it's a prairie bird
 - GFP released birds have been augmented by private transferring of Merriam's turkeys in northeastern part of state
 - People releasing their own turkeys on private property
 - Birds down on Cheyenne River in Fall River county are starting to exhibit Rio Grande characteristics
 - These birds are likely originating from the Wyoming Thunder Basin release of Rio Grande's
 - Worrisome that this Rio Grande group could intermingle with Black Hills?
 - Is this a biological concern?
 - Intermingle of Rio and Merriam's would not likely impact a Merriam's turkey survival
 - Rios in ponderosa area would not do as well because they are prairie birds
 - Seeing brown on fan creeping into Black Hills birds
 - Merriam's can exhibit natural coloration of tail fan
 - Merriam's do really good in ponderosa pines
 - Brown birds are coming up in Fall River

- Showing brown tail color and shorter tail coverts that indicate Rios
- In riparian areas, you could see intermix of Eastern's, Merriam's, and Rio Grande's
 - All of these subspecies would do ok in this habitat

Presenter: Keith Fisk, PowerPoint Presentation – Turkey Depredation

Presentation

- All wildlife is public resource
 - Most wildlife is raised on private land
 - 80-85% of South Dakota is privately owned
 - Hunters rely heavily on private land – percentages based on 2009 survey
 - 73% for pheasant hunting
 - 62% for waterfowl hunting
 - Did not specifically ask about turkey in survey
- Wildlife Damage Management (WDM) services
 - Allow GFP to manage higher wildlife populations to help build social and landowner tolerance of problem species
 - WDM services keeps GFP from having to directly pay for damages
 - Better to be proactive
- 1998 Law allows \$5 surcharge to go towards WDM
 - Cooperating landowner have to sign an agreement to get assistance which allows free, reasonable access to non-family members on their property for hunting
 - Reasonable access – agency has decided that as long as some people are allowed, its reasonable
 - Landowners receiving assistance cannot charge a fee for hunting access for turkey
- Volume of requests for WDM service
 - Variable from year-to-year depending on turkey population, weather, and tolerance
 - Use hunting season as a tool
 - WDM program service is responsive to landowner/producer needs
- Chart – History
 - Money towards turkeys was high in 2008, but pretty low in 2013
 - WDM services for turkeys follows closely with turkey population
 - WDM spent 3% of budget on turkeys
- Damage
 - 90% of calls related to turkeys are about birds eating stored feed supply for livestock, causing damage to buildings (via droppings), bird waste on feed supply, disruption in urban areas, and being aggressive towards people in the spring
- Focus Areas Map
 - Darker red indicates more complaints from 2010-2015 time frame
 - Lot of complaints on northern edge of the Black Hills, the Prairie Coteau, and in riparian areas along the Missouri River
- Efforts
 - 2014, worked with 14 landowners
 - Primarily in western and southeastern South Dakota

- Management Techniques
 - Primary management tool is hunting during spring and fall seasons
 - Fall hunting season is targeted to reduce turkey population and depredation
- Abatement
 - Protective netting around stored food
 - Really effective on hay and ground feed
 - If bigger population
 - use trap and transfer in the Black Hills because more public land to move them too
 - Trap and transfer not as common in prairie because you have to move them to private land and that could cause more problems
 - Use short-stop feeding
 - Permanent 15-foot high fence
 - Fence used once or twice and its effective but pricey
 - No complaints since the fence went up
 - Fence also keeps deer out
 - Hazing is used to put pressure on birds and scare them off so they don't come back as quickly
- Depredation Hunts
 - Occur when seasons are closed
 - Authorized by GFP Secretary
 - Try to use only in extreme situations
 - Last time turkey pool hunts were used was in 2013
 - 147 tags that took 53 birds in northeast
 - Used hunters who signed up
- Agency wants to be transparent so produce annual reports to show what we are doing with landowners and how money is getting spent

Discussion (Group)

- Landowner Matters Newsletter
 - Never read an article on turkey depredation; suggestion to include article on turkey depredation
 - Over the last 6 months, GFP has been taking a more active approach to send out newsletter
 - Newsletter will go out twice a year to more landowners and be posted online
 - Newsletter previously was released when staff got enough comments to send out a letter
- If only working with 14 landowners, WDM program is doing really well about managing turkeys
- Most problems in Black Hills are likely spurred from people feeding turkeys
 - Problems occur when urban areas are near rural areas
- Complaints
 - 8-10 landowner complaints in western South Dakota this year
 - 5 years ago, had complaints randomly across the west
 - Now GFP is dealing with concentrated areas

- Turkeys coming into same area year after year
- Domestic Turkeys
 - Box Elder area– guy raising free-range turkeys that were getting beat up by wild turkeys
 - Could be a problem if the domestic birds are interbreeding with wild turkey
 - Not all white turkeys are domestic
 - Hunters have to be careful because albino and “smoke” turkeys are white
 - These wild color variants look different than domestic white turkeys
 - Need for a discussion on which agency is in charge of releasing of wild turkeys
 - Currently it is regulated by Department of Agriculture but should it be moved over to the wildlife agency?
 - Other states are regulated by wildlife agency
 - Regulation is a way to prohibit release of “wild” birds
 - Maybe too big of a hurdle to tackle in South Dakota
 - Birds bought in stores are considered “wild” by the public but are not truly wild
 - This is an actual problem in state that could become worse
 - Other states make it illegal to release birds into the wild
- Current status of Depredation Tools
 - Keith, do you feel like you have all of the tools you need?
 - Keith feels that we are open for experimenting with new tools but feels that we are pretty good with our turkey tools currently
- Change in attitude towards turkeys in northeast part of South Dakota
 - Early on people thought of them as more of a problem that was dumped on them
 - Now turkeys improve the quality of life even if landowners don’t hunt
 - Tolerance is lot higher now
 - Turkeys do cause some damage, but growing appreciation and acceptance of turkeys in northeast
 - Attitude change is being seen in other species as well
 - Generation that starting having problems with growing/new wildlife populations are being replaced by a generation that has always grown up with wildlife depredation
 - Tolerance levels are changing towards acceptance
 - People who didn’t like turkeys before are now protective of them in the northeast
- 4 minute video on turkey work in Black Hills
 - Trap and transfer turkey program with Utah
 - Trapped birds in Edgemont and Hermosa and shipped them off to Utah
 - Used drop nets so able to use traps on subsequent days
 - Rocket nets are too disruptive for multiple days
 - SD received Utah mountain goats in exchange for turkeys
- Need to incorporate habitat into new plan

Presenter: Chad Lehman, PowerPoint Presentation – Wild Turkey Management Plan 2016-2020 Stakeholder Meeting I

- Hunting Seasons
 - Commission establishes hunting season for turkeys

- Currently changes to seasons are made annually but moving into a 2-year rotation of changes beginning in 2016
 - Don't have to revisit all seasons for units every year
- Currently 5 spring seasons and 3 fall seasons
 - Prairie, Black Hills, Mentored, Custer State Park, Archery
- Fall seasons
 - Units are modified to target depredation areas
- Spring seasons
 - Unit allocations
 - Units are different boundaries than in fall season
- Department recommendation process
 - Loosely based on expired Turkey Management plan
 - Emphasis on providing satisfactory spring hunt for gobblers
 - Fall season provides hunting opportunity, but primarily used for population control
 - Factors that influence season recommendations
 - Hunter success, survey satisfaction, depredation, public comment, biological data, field staff input
 - Regional manager gets staff input and analyzes available data
 - CRD group meets and presents recommendations to Commission
- New Management Plan
 - Focus on guidance in developing management strategies
 - Set management objective for each unit
 - Things to consider for spring and fall seasons
 - Unit boundary
 - License type
 - License allocations
 - Limited vs unlimited
 - Resident vs Nonresident
 - Season length
 - Season closures
 - Depredation pool hunts
 - Legal weapons
 - Landowner preference

Discussion (Group) about Management Tools that could be used for Substantially Increase Management Objective

Goal of Discussion – looking for group input to design a package for staff to help develop season recommendations for the next 5 years. Setting fall season recommendations has been a painful process over the last several years.

Substantially Increase Objective - unit is an area with low hunter success or a brand new unit and has the most conservative regulations

- Food plots
 - Work with private landowners to plant these

- If new area, consider releasing birds to area
 - If release occurs, close off area to hunting for a few years until flock gets established
- If an existing area
 - GFP needs to manage public lands for better habitat
- Habitat Needs Assessment
 - Look at habitat for roosting, nesting
 - Work with landowner tolerance
 - Long-term solution to increase turkey population
- Season closure
 - No fall hunting allowed for either sex
 - Best approach is to eliminate fall hunting
 - Hunters understand why units get closed during fall
 - Don't hear much complaint from hunters
 - Need to focus on protecting the hen
 - In fall, hunters can't distinguish a male from a female
 - When you want to increase the population, keep the females
 - If truly want to substantially increase population, close all hunting
- Tag type
 - Look at changes between spring and fall season
 - Restrict number of tags allowed
- Legal weapons – make it harder for hunter to bag a bird
 - Remove option to use rifle
- Season length
 - Shorten it
- Modified unit for the fall season
- Predator control
 - Mountain lions in Black Hills having an impact?
 - Is this biologically true or public perception?
 - Coyote depredation
 - You can call a coyote with a turkey call
 - Especially in Fall River County unit
 - Coyotes will certainly eat a turkey but no idea if coyotes cause a substantial loss of turkey population
 - Great horned owls are a big predator for turkeys when they are roosting
- Depredation Pool Hunts
 - Have a closed area for fall hunting but exhausted all other depredation tools, is pool hunt an option?
 - Get feedback on using pool hunts in a closed unit that is receiving turkey depredation complaints
 - Wildlife Damage Management staff discuss with GFP wildlife biologists about how many birds need to be removed from a problem area
 - GFP staff works closely with landowner on what landowner is comfortable with
 - Landowner helps determine what number of people they want to allow for pool hunt and where and when hunters can participate

- Pool hunt is very structured and uses all established hunting laws
 - Depredation Pool Hunt is a good tool and provides a good opportunity for hunters, but it's not always the most effective tool
 - Sometimes hunters are not available when they are needed
 - GFP should maintain the ability to allow depredation pool hunts
 - Landowners want the birds gone quickly
 - Pool hunters want to use the depredation pool as a true hunting opportunity, not just to go out and whack birds
 - Do pool hunts work?
 - Stakeholder Group supports if they actually work
 - Variables impact success of pool hunts
 - Weather, bird history in area, hunter skill and participation
- Landowner Kill Permit
 - Should GFP be able to issue depredation tags to landowners to take care of birds on his property?
 - This can be perceived negatively by public because hunters aren't allowed the opportunity to hunt
 - Public perception - why can landowners kill birds but I can't?
 - Landowners have been issued tags as part of the depredation pool hunt on their property
 - Birds have been donated to Sportsmen Against Hunger
 - GFP should use managed hunting where appropriate
 - Need education outreach on benefits of depredation strategies
 - Need to retain kill permits for landowners to shoot 1 or 2 birds when birds are present, just be aware that GFP will get some kickback from public
 - Is the answer to kill birds or just disperse birds?
 - Better to let landowner shoot 1 or 2 birds periodically to chase them off
 - Hunters may spook birds off with their activity, but if no shots are fired, birds aren't likely to stay gone for long
 - Most landowners don't want to go out and just kill birds
 - Landowners eliminate pests when necessary, but most landowners are sportsmen and don't want to kill game species
 - Landowners don't want to shoot when the birds are vulnerable during the winter
 - Landowners are a diverse group, some would be more receptive than others to different depredation techniques
- Depredation Techniques
 - Pool hunts are generally run as a way to haze the birds with shots and not actually kill lots of birds
 - Shouldn't be able to use kill permit or pool hunts in back to back years
 - Should allow hunting season in between years of kill permit and pool hunt
 - Landowner kill permit and pool hunt should be the last resort for substantially increased population objective management strategy
 - Lot of hazing is required for areas where birds are used to coming year after year

- Constant hazing helps more than killing
- Lure crops
 - Try to use lure crop to get turkeys to move to different area
 - Have to use a lot of food, so when do you stop or cut back feeding in winter?
 - An artificial food source can cause its own problems
 - Inflated population
 - Spread of disease
 - Habituation to food source, once food stops, birds can become problem somewhere else
 - What happens when landowner doesn't want to use lure crop after several years of habituating the birds?
 - Is it a good management practice to provide food for turkeys to get them to move off of an area instead of killing birds?
 - NWTF staff would hate to see birds habituated to a feeding site, either from farming operation or from alternative feeding site
 - Almost always a reason why turkeys are congregating at same site year after year
 - Would landowners be receptive to alternate feeding sites and some way to make turkeys comfortable in new feeding site area?
- Should be able to address blocking off food source from turkeys rather than feeding and habituating turkeys to a food source
 - Blocking food source is a more long-term solution than lure crops
 - Hard to completely restrict turkeys from getting to all stored food piles
 - Wildlife Damage Management services are not always convenient and can't be used on an entire area for landowners
 - Services can also be very expensive
- Do you spend \$20-30,000 to satisfy each landowner?
- Hunting Access to Private Land
 - Can landowner tolerate a bunch of hunters versus a bunch of turkeys
 - Tolerance varies for each landowner
 - Most people are reasonable about allowing a few hunters
 - Landowner more likely to let you and your buddy go out and hunt to take 1 or 2 birds, but landowner doesn't want you to fill all 10 of your tags on his area
 - When this happens, people have no respect and appreciation for the bird
- Merriam turkeys can congregate in massive groups during winter
 - These birds will distribute during the spring season
- Biggest Priority for Substantial Increase Population Objective
 - Need to commit getting birds through the winter and address landowner tolerance
 - Big issue is to how to work with landowner to help him be ok with 350 birds every year
- Something is out of whack if we are trying to increase population and having lots of depredation problems
 - In this situation, should we really be increasing the pop objective?
- Should we manage by biological carrying capacity?
- Who decides who sets the unit objective?

- Do you let a few landowner depredation issues impact how the rest of the hunting district gets managed?
 - Usually an isolated issue

Presenter: Chad Lehman, PowerPoint Presentation – Wild Turkey Management Plan 2016-2020

Stakeholder Meeting I

- Unit Boundaries
 - Chad asks stakeholder group to provide direction for unit boundaries
 - Current spring units are primarily county based
 - For most part, fall hunting units have matching boundaries to spring season East River, but vary greatly West River
 - Fall 2012, season had a huge West River unit
 - Should GFP go to a two county unit? Or a 4 county unit?
 - Also want to evaluate unit objectives
 - Need a strategy for objectives by unit for each season
- Colored Map
 - Map shows what GFP staff currently rank population objectives by unit
- Harvest Information – refer to packet of graphs for visuals
 - Black Hills Unit
 - Current management objective is to slightly increase population
 - Harvest has been around 30% success rate
 - Lots of birds harvested in 2000s, hunter success dropping now
 - Harding Unit
 - Current management objective is to slightly increase population
 - Fall season was closed

Discussion (Group)

- What does slightly vs substantially mean in regards to unit population objectives?
 - Unit objectives are set for all big game species
 - Wildlife managers look at sportsmen’s opinions, landowner comments, input from conservation officers, harvest rates, and what field staff are seeing in the field and hearing from the public
 - Wildlife managers compile this information to get at an objective
 - Managers work with the regional supervisor and then go to CRD group and Commission with objective suggestion
- GFP will always be dealing with landowner complaints, but need to know where you want to get to (goal)
 - GFP can’t change its mind whenever more complaints come in – need to follow objectives laid out in plan
- Need to find out how many turkeys constituents want on the landscape
 - GFP will never get a hard number for the population objective
 - Trick is to figure out how many birds people want and then how to get those numbers
- What are the triggers to know if we have met population objectives?
 - Get rid of 5 categories and move to 3 category system

- Increase, maintain, decrease
 - Harvest success would be your major indicator of how close unit objective was met
 - When hunter success is set appropriately, we can better gauge if unit objectives have been met
- We do not estimate turkey populations for each unit
- Can you put a number on substantially vs slightly?
 - Lambda (rate of population change) of 1 means population is stagnant, stable
 - 1.01 to 1.09 is slightly increase, 1.1 and above is substantial increase
 - We already know what causes lambda changes for NE
 - Some places just can't produce turkeys so substantial vs slightly increase is variable from unit to unit
 - Need to get statistical data to get hard value for substantial vs slightly
- We need to put side boards on objectives so that it's not so subjective
 - Can't let landowners influence the population objective too much
 - Would require year to year changes and be more subjective
 - Use objectives for a guide to establish a threshold for goals and to know which tools to use to manage population and meet objectives
 - When have you reached your objective goal?
 - 1 year, 3, 5, or 10 years?
- Make a decision matrix that can be shown to CRD and Commission
 - Display what unit goals are
 - Display what was done to meet the goal
 - Provide a way to evaluate if goal was met
- Bird populations fluctuate more from year to year than big game due to impacts of weather and hatch production
 - Turkey are impacted more by weather and environmental factors, elk are impacted more by habitat
 - Increasing populations depends more on environmental factors and goes beyond what the agency can manage for
 - Harvest management can help offset loss from environmental impacts
- GFP should survey landowners and public and use Stakeholder Opinion Database (SOD) to get status of turkey population based on public's opinion
 - SOD survey focuses on asking people more about the number of birds on their land and not so much focused on habitat
 - In most cases, we will reach landowner tolerance before we ever meet habitat carrying capacity
- Objectives should define management instead of focusing on "squeaky wheel" landowner complaints
- Where does carrying capacity of the land come in to the setting of management objectives?
- Any thought on getting information for habitat and carrying capacity?
- Need to do more education outreach on how important turkeys are recreationally and financially
 - Outreach should target sportsmen and non-consumptive users as well as landowners

- Is there a need to increase the amount of biological data we are collecting to help augment the public opinion data that is coming in when setting objective goals?
- It is difficult to manage the spring unit when you have a very open fall unit
 - Large fall units are great for hunters but hard to manage for spring season
 - If you want to decrease birds in one county, you can't target this county if the entire unit is West River
 - We are in a different landscape now, back in 2008 South Dakota had a big fall hunting unit, but SD also had lots of turkeys on the ground
- Public Opinion Survey
 - When Cindy asks the public about bird populations, does the public have a good grasp on what the objective means?
 - Substantial vs slightly?
 - Research about a hard number vs a category are not clear
 - Hard numbers do not predict social tolerance well
 - Better to ask if you want to maintain, decrease, or increase species population
 - In general, the public would like us to lean towards simplicity
 - We need to explain clearly that we looked at other methods to change populations
 - We looked at other options and explain why these are good or bad alternatives
 - When you ask the landowner if they have too many or too few turkeys, he could give you a different answer depending on the time of year
 - Good times and bad times for turkeys throughout the year
 - Landowners won't have problems with turkeys year round, just for a few months out of the year (usually winter)
 - Most of the year they are feeding on natural food sources
 - Even landowners don't care about the number of turkeys during non-depredation times of the year
 - We can have as many turkeys as we want most of the year, if you dump turkeys on a landowner at a bad time of year, landowners or the public will be upset
 - In summer and fall we could have 10 to 20 times as many turkey than come winter when they congregate and become a problem for landowners
- Public Reports
 - Public looks at harvest records but hunter may not be able to easily quantify the number of birds in a unit
 - Better indicator is hunter satisfaction and combination of hunter success
 - Biology (λ) means nothing to the general public, but matters to biologists
 - Pheasant survey is pretty simple and easily understood by public
 - Provides a forecasting plan
 - Should try to doing something similar for turkey seasons
 - Discussed the challenges with this and limitations in survey data
 - Include anecdotal data in the forecasting report
 - Had two years of tough weather
 - The prairie units would have a general forecast based on this information

- The Black Hills would have its own forecast based on weather and anecdotal information
 - NWTF has created a thunderstorm fall and spring turkey forecast map
 - Hunters love it but managers struggle to create it
- Challenge to set turkey regulations because we don't know what South Dakota turkeys are going to produce
 - Use hunter success and satisfaction to gauge goals
 - Satisfaction trend is good measure along with landowner complaints
 - Conservation Officers are really good about knowing what bird populations are at any given time of year
 - Conservation Officers are a lot better than statistical data
 - If we are in maintain population objective, then we should expect a certain range of success and satisfaction
 - For waterfowl population estimates
 - Use May pair counts, numbers from waterfowl managers up and down the flyway, and Provincial Canada survey data
 - Used hunter satisfaction as another gauge instead of hard numbers to set population objectives?
 - Hunter satisfaction is subjective but if we used general categories, more likely to get social tolerance estimate
 - Lots of things factor into a hunter's satisfaction
 - Weather, how they feel GFP is managing wildlife as a whole, season regulations, number of critters seen → may have to change how we ask the survey questions
 - Satisfaction is not a clean number
 - Success is also not a good measure of species populations
 - Hunters are getting more skilled at killing
 - 7-9% of gobblers are harvested with a rifle
 - Consider removing non-residents from satisfaction
 - They do much better in South Dakota than in other states because our birds are easier to kill
 - Look at resident hunters to get better sample of general hunter population – beginners down to proficient hunters
 - Look at previous year's data to tease out change in resident vs non-resident hunter success
 - GFP has documentation that non-residents kill at a higher rate than residents
 - If we remove non-residents from satisfaction and success, will this skew our survey data?
- Use of Rifle as a Lethal Weapon
 - Consider taking rifles off of list for lethal weapon
 - Concern is safety first and ethical concern of shooting turkeys at long range with a rifle
 - Is it time to do public surveys?

- Does the public favor removing rifles from spring hunting season?
 - This was perceived as an anti-gun campaign when it was done in 2000 but likely perceptions have changed
 - NWTf and other hunting shows depict mostly bow and arrow or shotgun of bird coming in close, not a lot of positive perception of long range rifle
 - See “South Dakota Resident Spring Turkey Hunter Survey Report-2009” by Dr. Larry Gigliotti.
- Lots of different hunting techniques now; hold fan in front of face, could get shot by someone, hunter hunts farther from his bird, more likely to be a safety concern
- Wildlife Damage Services
 - Maybe we want to help long term depredation control if it will allow for long term social tolerance of turkeys to increase populations in different areas
 - Is there a need for more money to help social tolerance issue?
 - WDM money is not a limiting factor for turkeys but then starts a precedent for other wildlife damage species such as deer
- Concern that social tolerance is going to set the objective goal and will be driven by landowner tolerance for a few winter problem months
 - Focus on increasing turkeys and work on helping landowners for the few months they have problems
 - When we have a bad spring, some years landowners have no problems with turkeys
- Fall is when we have the most turkeys on the ground and this time of year we get no turkey complaints
 - Turkeys don’t migrate so when weather turns bad, they have to go where they can survive which is where people are or food source is
 - The reason turkeys weren’t here in South Dakota historically is because they didn’t have the reliable food source

Presenter: Chad Lehman, PowerPoint Presentation – Wild Turkey Management Plan 2016-2020 Stakeholder Meeting I

Biological Data

- Collect feather data from fall harvest to get gender and age in order to get population reconstruction from harvest data
 - When you have limited fall harvest, you get a limited sample of feathers
- Winter flock counts – opportunistically go in and count the birds
 - Mostly total numbers and not age and sex
 - Been getting sex and gender in more recent years
- Brood counts
 - Getting brood counts East River is very difficult, especially when low abundance of turkeys
- Matrix model
 - Available for Region 1 (West River)
 - Additional variables are from research studies to get population estimate, spring precipitation values

- Could be made available for other regions as well with research data

Discussion (Group)

- Additional biological data would help augment and support decision making
 - Do we have sufficient data?
 - Should collecting biological data be a higher priority?
 - Are there other methods we should be doing to collect data?
 - Why don't we have the data we need?
 - Money, man power, method?
- Current GFP Surveys
 - Most of GFP surveys are opportunistic
 - Document when field staff are out doing other things
 - Flock counts are more standardized
- If we had a program for getting interns to come out and collect more data, is it worth it?
- Research projects are coming from universities that we are getting some good data from
- Money is part of the problem
 - GFP only has so much spending authority that we can spend on research and data collection
- Do we have a suspicion of why each unit has the bell shaped curve for peak at 2005?
 - Do we have data to support any theories?
 - Graph trend is a combination of weather, harvest, habitat
 - It's likely that turkeys were overharvested in a lot of units
- We are not making changes to good management (i.e. number of licenses, etc.) unless environmental impacts are problematic for too many years in a row
 - If we can't stand behind our management plan, it leads public perception to think that GFP is favoring hunters or landowners
- 30% harvest success rate
 - 30% of hunters killed a turkey in that unit
 - The harvest rate success could vary by unit
 - Some units cannot change harvest rate, we just have to accept that rate for those units
- What have other states have been doing?
 - Other states' plans are very vague and do not provide a lot of structure
 - Structure is nice so that you have defensible guidelines
 - Missouri is the only state that has population abundance estimates
 - Missouri does a population reconstruction with lots of biological data
 - They have an unlimited spring season and stricter fall season
 - South Dakota has been a pretty successful turkey state for a long time
- GFP probably did not plan man power and budget for management plan decisions
 - Need budget to support reasonable expansion of funds towards research
- Edge away from managing for three disgruntled landowners that can never be satisfied
 - These disgruntled people should not dictate statewide management of turkey populations
- Any insurance programs that could be funded by GFP and landowners?

- See if landowner can get reimbursed if landowner loses x amount of grain
- GFP would help pay some of the premiums
- If landowner has a chronic issue, GFP would support insurance program instead of having to put in money and man power to continually battle turkeys
 - Just let the turkeys have the food source
- GFP would have to work with landowner for a certain standard in which the landowner does certain amount of effort to protect his food source
 - Insurance would cover up to a certain point
- When you introduce a species to new area where they didn't exist before, population will explode
 - Sometimes our population expectations get set too high
 - We may feel that the population should always be that high
 - This is not true, eventually the population will reach an equilibrium with the natural carrying capacity
 - Conditions were different in the past and may have been able to support a higher population
- We need to know the intersection of the turkey population dropping with hunter pressure
 - Once we find this out, we are proactive instead of reactive
 - What is the best tool to find intersection between population and harvest number
 - Success rate best option?
 - If we had bad spring population, use this to gauge what fall harvest should be
- 2-year cycle for bird populations to keep up with
 - Protocol to back harvest down 2 years after a high year mark
- If we can increase social tolerance, it opens the door for GFP to be more proactive instead of reactive for fall season
 - Weather is the biggest impact
- When landowner has an issue with turkeys, we have limited tools to use
- Population of turkeys climbed and climbed and harvest numbers reflected this, but once population dropped, we did not decrease hunting pressure because we were cautiously in favor of landowners to reduce depredation complaints
- Need to educate the public that we do not know what SD carrying capacity population is?
 - Should 2005 population be the goal?

Chad Switzer Open Discussion: What do you think are the key components that should be in the new Turkey Management Plan?

- Depredation Program
 - Landowners appreciate the effort GFP takes, even if they don't get the exact result they want
 - Landowners don't expect all turkeys to be eliminated
 - GFP effort helps to improve tolerance but there are a few landowners who will not be satisfied
- Legal weapons – revisit rifles for spring season, fall not likely to change
- Assurance that this plan will be reviewed annually or bi-annually for success
 - After first year of plan implementation, have a meeting with stakeholder group

- Evaluation of plan success
- Share transparency with public
 - What goals have we reached?
 - Keep public informed and educated that plan is being implemented and how
 - Public outreach for status report
 - Transparency of not only what we are doing with sportsmen's money on the ground, but also what we are doing to achieve plan objectives
- Release of turkeys by the public
 - Education, the public thinks they are doing good by releasing "wild" turkeys
 - Need to get control for GFP
 - Statutorily this was taken from GFP and given to Department of Agriculture—Animal Industry Board
 - It was deemed that GFP was grabbing control from a commercial business
 - If landowner does not have intent to take care of birds, then should be illegal to just turn birds loose into the wild
 - Need better education on wild bird release
- Shooting Preserve Birds
 - GFP regulates what birds are released on shooting preserves
 - Include some statement of what type of marked bird can be released and shot
 - Concern about released birds that don't get shot
 - release impure strains into the wild
 - Preserve operation fought for turkey release, should we fight to eliminate turkey releases again?
 - Do any preserves exist that offer impure birds?
- Better education on value of a turkeys in South Dakota to public and landowners
 - Educate benefits of turkeys when visiting landowners
 - Turkeys likely generate more revenue than elk in the state
- Public access on private land – Walk-in Areas (WIA)
 - Especially for spring season
 - Not likely going to happen during fall season due to deer hunting
 - Normal walk in program is aimed at areas that are geared towards upland birds and antelope
 - GFP has not targeted turkey habitat for WIA program. In visiting with Mark Norton, WIA Coordinator, after the meeting, he indicated staff have tried to get spring turkey access in the past, but no success
 - Investigate some of WIA moneys to turkey and deer access locations?
 - Gregory county has WIAs available for spring turkey
 - Would CHAP work for a spring turkey season?
 - CHAP specifically for youth turkey already exists
 - Access program has been targeted for multiple species
 - Should access program look into feasibility of getting deer and turkey access in the Black Hills?
 - Potential new strategy – Public Access for Spring Turkeys and deer in the Black Hills

- Prairie units have lots of WIA access already; no one has approached the Black Hills for turkey. In visiting with Mark Norton, WIA Coordinator, after the meeting, he says this statement is not true.
- Losing WIAs due to fall deer hunting
 - Landowners won't sign up for WIA because they don't want people to deer or pheasant hunt when they or their family are hunting this species
- Lot more likely to get permission for turkeys in spring than in fall
- Hard to find who to ask for WIA program in spring, lot of absentee landowners
- Would CHAP be better than WIA?
 - More likely to provide a quality hunt?
 - CHAP is also a hassle for landowner in some cases
 - CHAP can be tailored so that requests come through GFP staff and not a hassle for the landowner
 - Landowners want to know where and when people are going to be on their land
 - Some form of control is often best way to provide quality hunt, landowners may require restrictions so that hunters can get a quality hunt
- Public opinion survey on social tolerance
- Review of current hunting units to be more consistent and uniform – make units more simplified
 - Look at unit consistency and closures uniformity
- Data collection of biological data
 - Identify which data should be collected and useful
 - Collect survival information as part of long term monitoring and surveys
- Need to use a robust model for statewide basis for each region?
 - Is this realistic with staffing limitations?
- Diseases and outbreak management
- Funding Sources
 - Something to address funding?
 - If we are going to implement this plan, should we analyze funding source appropriate for education and outreach
- Decision making matrix for setting seasons
 - Produce documentation of population objective goals as part of matrix
- Any gaps that need to work on for establishing turkey flocks?
 - Public thinks there are gaps in McCook, McPherson, and Lake counties
- Additional Public Outreach
 - Nuisance/depredation for agriculture and urban areas
 - Education outreach about feeding turkeys
 - Can't hunt or view turkeys in urban setting
 - For 30 years, GFP was playing defense, now we are in a prime place to play offense and start telling the public all of the great things we are doing to help manage the population
 - Promote work for GFP management plans and all of the programs we have
- Trap and Transfer
 - Do we trap birds in cities and move them into huntable areas?
 - If we take trap and transfer approach, we will be trapping birds all over the place

- More of a band aid approach because birds will move back in
 - Public perception is that GFP is at least trying to do something; end result may not be great
 - Lot of areas are lacking birds on public lands and landowners are willing to take birds
 - Don't relocate birds back to the Black Hills because birds have learned to go to cities and will go right back to where they were causing problems (4 month movement period)
 - People who want the turkeys would have to provide public access
 - 37 turkeys were brought to Slim Buttes in Harding County last year
 - Be real careful how we tread with transfer birds
 - Landowners who don't want turkeys will start to blame GFP for bringing turkeys into areas where problems didn't exist before
- How are we going to increase turkeys?
 - Save the Habitat, Save the Hunt document by NWTF
 - Get assessment of turkey habitat within the state
- Have hope for change
 - Remembers 1st deer season in Marshall county
 - Remembers when giant Canada goose was thought to be extinct
 - Remembers when 90% of state didn't have turkeys
 - Remembers when mountain lions where a rumor in the state
 - Almost anything can be done if you do the right things to prepare for it – have hope
- Landowners are sportsmen and care just as much as others do about wildlife

Next meeting will discuss the topics that were outlined today and have more talks about depredation tools

- Higher Priorities for Future Discussion
 - Outreach and education, what does this look like?
 - Depredation
 - Decision Matrix
 - Ways to Increase turkey populations – habitat programs
 - Public access
 - Consistency and simplicity of hunting units
 - Type of weapons used

Action Items

For Stakeholders Members

- Get your constituents thoughts on what we have discussed and things we may have missed in this discussion
- Is there anything GFP staff can do to improve the Stakeholder Group meetings?
- Get list of landowners from Collin Smith that want turkeys

For GFP Staff

- Bullet list of 4-5 things to have stakeholders bring to next meeting
- Send slides electronically

- Provide PDFs of research projects for group to read
- Forward stakeholders with list of staff to contact for more info
- Increase staff interactions with landowners
- Get examples of other states plans
- Look into any insurance programs that could be funded by GFP and landowners?
- Public access for spring turkeys and deer in the Black Hills
- Get stakeholders and commission a list of what GFP needs for biological data
- Save the Habitat, Save the Hunt document – get from NWTF
- Have Emily Kiel and/or Jason Kool attend next meeting when discussing education and outreach