

# **Maryland Spring Turkey Hunter Survey – Results Summary**

## **August 2017**

### **INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY**

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 Maryland Department of Natural Resources to better manage the turkey resource. A similar survey was conducted in 2007.

Surveys were sent to 1,030 hunters who indicated that they hunted turkeys during the spring season on one of the three most recent annual hunter mail surveys. The hunter mail survey randomly surveys approximately seven percent of license-buyers annually to estimate the effort for and harvest of a variety of game species, including turkey.

A total of 604 completed spring turkey hunter survey forms were returned. Accounting for non-deliverable surveys, the response rate for the spring turkey hunter survey was 60 percent. Because previous mail 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. About 10,000 resident and non-resident hunters usually pursue spring turkeys annually in Maryland. Therefore our sample represents about six percent of Maryland's spring turkey hunters.

### **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 has hunted turkeys in the spring for 16 years and hunted seven days during the 2017 season. Forty percent of respondents have hunted spring turkeys for more than 20 years, but a significant number (35%) have hunted less than 10 years.

Nineteen percent of the respondents did not hunt turkeys in 2017. Of those that did not hunt, the most common reasons listed were "no time", "work" or "health issues". Over one-third of respondents hunted in at least one other state in 2017, primarily the surrounding states of Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Virginia and Delaware.

Most hunters hunted at least one day on private land (92%). Public land was hunted by 44 percent of respondents. About 36 percent of respondents hunted both private and public land in 2017.

Similar to success rates estimated from other sources, about 30 percent of hunters harvested at least one turkey. Only about one-third of the respondents hunted in the afternoon when it was legal during the last two weeks of the season, with nine percent of those hunters taking a turkey in the afternoon.

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.

Respondents reported spending an average of \$404 on turkey hunting-related expenses in 2017. A large portion of that total was spent on travel (\$135) and hunt club or lease fees

(\$132). About 44 percent of hunters reported spending money on club or lease fees for turkey hunting.

About 88 percent of respondents reported using decoys to some extent, with most hunters using them occasionally (40%) or usually (32%). However, only six percent have ever used decoys or turkey fans to hide behind or to stalk turkeys. Many hunters (58%) used blinds at least occasionally while turkey hunting. The majority of hunters preferred 12 gauge shotguns, lead shotshells, and shot sizes #4 and #5.

### **Turkey Populations**

Overall, 89 percent of respondents thought that turkey numbers in the county they hunt most often were “moderate” or “abundant”. Most respondents (82%) also felt that the turkey population was “increasing” or “stable” in the county they hunt.

When responses were summarized regionally, over 90 percent of hunters in most regions felt that turkeys were either “moderate” or “abundant”. The only exceptions were in the Piedmont and Ridge and Valley regions where slightly more respondents felt turkeys were “scarce”. The majority of hunters in all regions felt turkey populations were “stable” or “increasing”. However, compared to other regions, more hunters in the Ridge and Valley and Appalachian Plateau regions felt turkey populations were “declining”.

### **Hunter Interference and Safety**

Most hunters reported minimal negative interference from other hunters and relatively few unsafe encounters. Although 51 percent of respondents at least occasionally encountered other hunters in the 2017 season, only 14 percent felt that any encounters negatively affected their hunting success. Unsafe encounters were even less frequent, with only three percent of hunters reporting they felt unsafe at some time in the 2017 season.

The type of land that the individual hunted appeared to have some effect on negative encounters; 10 percent of hunters that only hunted private land had negative encounters, whereas 18 percent of public land-only hunters and 27 percent of hunters that hunt both public and private land felt that other hunters impacted their success. The number of hunters that experienced unsafe encounters was also higher for public land hunters, but still low at less than six percent.

### **Seasons and Bag Limits**

Hunters appeared to be generally satisfied with current seasons and bag limits. Most respondents (80%) thought the season length was “about right”. Although 39 percent of hunters would prefer an earlier opening date, 61 percent would prefer the same opening date or a later opening. The majority (52%) did not agree with always starting the season on a Saturday and only 30 percent preferred a Saturday opener.

Most hunters (83%) felt that the current spring season bag limit of two turkeys was the best. Only eight percent wanted a three bird limit. When asked if the daily bag limit should be changed from one per day to two per day, hunters were divided; 51 percent favored the change and the others either did not support it or had no opinion. A slight majority of hunters also supported allowing hunting until sunset for the entire season (54%).

### **Miscellaneous Results**

Only four percent of hunters responded that they observed some type of illegal activity during the 2017 spring turkey season. Trespassing, shooting after hours and baiting were the most commonly reported activities.

Few hunters (2%) reported flushing a hen off of a nest during the 2017 season. As expected, most of the flushes occurred during the latter part of the season.

## Comparison to 2007 Survey

Many of the same questions were asked on the 2007 spring turkey hunter survey. Generally, responses were very similar, but a few differences were evident. Responses to questions about turkey populations have changed, paralleling changes in turkey populations that are also supported by other data. The number of hunters that perceived populations as “moderate” or “abundant” was lower in all regions 10 years ago with the exception of the Ridge and Valley region.

Before the 2007 survey, spring hunting was restricted to the morning hours. On that survey, 56 percent supported allowing all-day hunting and 65 percent said they would hunt in the afternoon if given the chance. But in 2017, only 34 percent of hunters hunted in the afternoon and support for expanded all-day hunting dropped to 54 percent.

Some behavior changes were also noted. For example, the use of decoys appears to be higher now. Eighty-eight percent of hunters use decoys now compared to 73 percent 10 years ago. Maryland hunters are more experienced on average now as well, with 40 percent of hunters having hunted for 20+ years compared to 30 percent in 2007.

Some of the responses indicated that hunters are having a more enjoyable and safer turkey hunting experience in recent years. The percentage of hunters reporting interference that negatively affected their hunting dropped from 22 percent to 14 percent and the percentage of hunters experiencing unsafe encounters decreased from six percent to three percent. Hunters reporting illegal activity decreased from nine percent to four percent since 2007.

**APPENDIX 1: 2017 Spring Turkey Hunter Survey – Questions and Responses****Response Rate Information:**

604 Surveys Returned / (1030 Surveys Mailed – 21 Non-deliverable Surveys) = **60% Response Rate**

***\*Note – Percentages may not total to 100 percent due to rounding***

1. In which Maryland county do you *most often* hunt turkeys?

*Counties grouped into regions. Distribution of regions listed as most often hunted:*

- 12%** APPALACHIAN PLATEAU REGION (Garrett)
- 19%** RIDGE AND VALLEY REGION (Allegany, Washington)
- 6%** BLUE RIDGE REGION (Frederick)
- 12%** PIEDMONT (Carroll, Cecil, Harford, Howard, Montgomery)
- 19%** WESTERN COASTAL PLAIN REGION (Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, St. Mary's, Prince George's)
- 32%** 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 above county:

- 24%** ABUNDANT
- 65%** MODERATE
- 10%** SCARCE

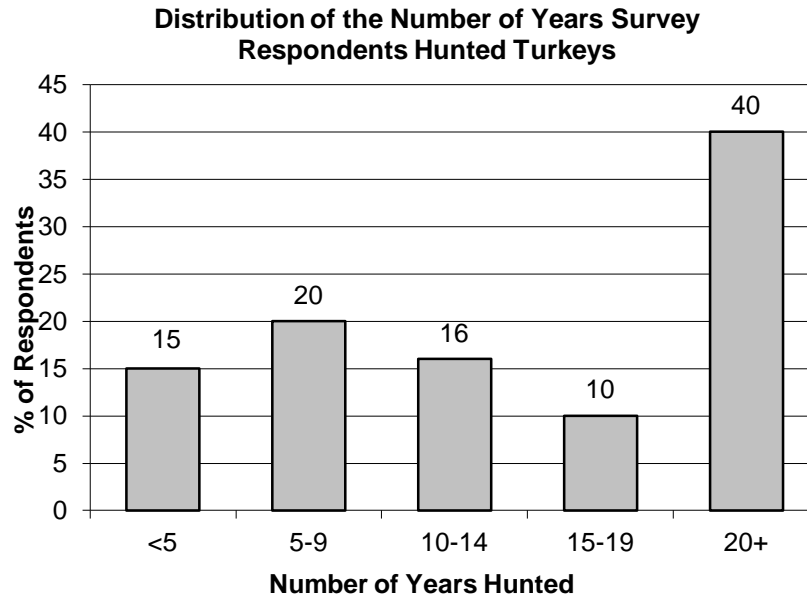
3. In your opinion, the turkey population in that county is:

- 26%** INCREASING
- 56%** STABLE
- 18%** 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	24%	66%	10%	9%	69%	23%
Ridge and Valley	23%	65%	12%	18%	59%	23%
Blue Ridge	18%	74%	8%	32%	58%	11%
Piedmont	16%	61%	23%	39%	45%	16%
Western Coastal Plain	26%	66%	9%	34%	47%	19%
Eastern Coastal Plain	29%	66%	5%	27%	57%	16%

4. Approximately how many years have you been turkey hunting in the spring season? **AVERAGE = 16 YEARS**



5. Which of the following *best* describes your use of turkey decoys (check only 1):

- 12%** I *never* use decoys
- 40%** I *occasionally* use decoys
- 32%** I *usually* use decoys
- 16%** I *always* use decoys

6. Which of the following *best* describes your use of blinds while turkey hunting:

- 42%** I *never* use a blind
- 38%** I *occasionally* use a blind
- 14%** I *usually* use a blind
- 6%** I *always* use a blind

7. Have you ever hidden behind a decoy or turkey fan as you call or sneak up on a turkey (this is sometimes called “fanning” or “reaping”)?

- 6%** YES
- 94%** NO

8. In your opinion, the length of the current spring turkey hunting season (5 weeks) is:

- 15%** TOO SHORT
- 80%** ABOUT RIGHT
- 4%** TOO LONG

9. The current spring season begins on April 18th and the weekend prior to that is the youth-only hunt days. Would you like the season to begin\_\_\_\_\_?

- 39%** EARLIER
- 58%** THE SAME TIME
- 3%** LATER

10. The current spring season always starts on April 18th, regardless of the day of the week. Would you prefer if the season always started on a Saturday?

- 30%** YES
- 52%** NO
- 18%** NO OPINION

11. The current spring season bag limit is 2 turkeys *per season*. Which bag limit would you prefer?

- 9%** 1 turkey
- 83%** 2 turkeys (no change)
- 8%** 3 turkeys

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

- 51%** YES
- 45%** NO
- 5%** NO OPINION

13. Which type of shot do you *most often* use when hunting turkeys in the spring?

- 64%** Lead
- 30%** "Heavier than lead" (e.g. Hevi-13, Extended Range, etc.)
- 6%** Steel

14. Which shot size do you *most often* use?

- 35%** #4
- 41%** #5
- 15%** #6
- 2%** #7
- 7%** Other [*responses typically were combinations of sizes*]

15. Which shotgun gauge do you *most often* use?

- 93%** 12 gauge
- 5%** 20 gauge
- 2%** Other

16. The current shooting hours end at noon during the first 3 weeks of the season and sunset during the last 2 weeks and on the youth days. Would you support a change to allow *all-day hunting* for the *entire* season?

- 54%** YES
- 37%** NO
- 9%** NO OPINION

17. Did you hunt turkeys during the 2017 Maryland spring season?

- 81%** YES
- 19%** NO

18. If you answered "No" to question #17, list the reason or reasons you did not hunt:

- 33%** No time
- 23%** Health issues
- 21%** Work
- 5%** No access
- 18%** Other

21. List any other states that you hunted turkeys in during the 2017 spring season:

- 36%** Hunted at least 1 other state  
**74%** Hunted only Maryland or did not hunt

*Percentage of respondents who hunted in the following states in 2017*

- 12%** Pennsylvania  
**5%** West Virginia  
**4%** Virginia  
**2%** Delaware  
**<1%** Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas

20. Please rate each of the following aspects of turkey hunting based on how important they are to you. Circle 1 to 5 with 1 being VERY IMPORTANT and 5 being NOT IMPORTANT. [Average rating shown on scale].

	VERY Important				NOT Important
	1	2	3	4	5
a) Hearing / seeing turkeys .....	<b>1.2</b>				
b) Killing a turkey .....			<b>3.1</b>		
c) Calling a turkey to within range .....		<b>1.7</b>			
d) Enjoying time afield / getting away from work, etc. ....	<b>1.3</b>				
e) Being able to hunt without seeing other hunters .....	<b>1.6</b>				
f) Being able to hunt with family and/or friends..	<b>1.6</b>				
g) A safe hunting environment .....	<b>1.1</b>				
h) Having access to land to turkey hunt on.....	<b>1.2</b>				

**THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WERE ASKED ONLY TO RESPONDENTS WHO INDICATED THEY HUNTED DURING THE 2017 MARYLAND SPRING SEASON**

21. Approximately how many days did you hunt on private and public lands during the 2017 season?

**AVERAGE TOTAL DAYS HUNTED = 7**

- 44%** Hunted at least 1 day on PUBLIC land  
**92%** Hunted at least 1 day on PRIVATE land  
**56%** Hunted ONLY PRIVATE land  
**8%** Hunted ONLY PUBLIC land  
**36%** Hunted BOTH PRIVATE AND PUBLIC land

22. How many turkeys did you harvest in the 2017 spring season?

- 70%** None  
**22%** 1 turkey  
**9%** 2 turkeys

23. Hunting was permitted after noon on youth days and the last 2 weeks of the season. Did you hunt turkeys after noon in 2017?

**66%** NO  
**34%** YES

If YES, did you harvest a turkey?

**9%** YES  
**91%** NO

24. How often did you encounter other turkey hunters while spring turkey hunting?

**49%** NEVER  
**45%** OCCASIONALLY  
**5%** USUALLY  
**1%** ALWAYS

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

**14%** YES  
**86%** NO

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

**3%** YES  
**97%** 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	10%	90%	2%	98%
Private and Public	27%	73%	6%	94%
Only Public	18%	82%	4%	96%

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

**4%** YES  
**96%** NO

If YES list activity: *Responses listed as percentage of those that reported illegal activity.*

**32%** Trespassing  
**23%** Shooting after shooting hours  
**18%** Baiting  
**14%** Shooting over bag limit  
**9%** Road hunting  
**9%** Other  
**9%** Unspecified

28. Estimate how much money you spent on the following items related to turkey hunting in 2017:

Travel (including lodging, food, and fuel) .....	<b>AVERAGE = \$135</b>
Hunt club or lease fees .....	<b>AVERAGE = \$132</b>
Guns and/or ammunition.....	<b>AVERAGE = \$73</b>
Other equipment (clothing, calls, decoys, etc.).....	<b>AVERAGE = \$64</b>
	<b>TOTAL = \$404</b>



29. Did you flush any turkey hens off their nest during the 2017 season?

**2%** YES  
**97%** NO

If yes, list the date(s): *Distribution by week of season:*

**8%** 1<sup>st</sup> Week  
**17%** 2<sup>nd</sup> Week  
**42%** 3<sup>rd</sup> Week  
**25%** 4<sup>th</sup> Week  
**17%** 5<sup>th</sup> Week

30. Did you hunt OR take a youth hunting on the youth turkey hunting day(s) in 2017 (April 15 or 16)?

**15%** YES  
**85%** NO

31. 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. [*Department of Natural Resources' comments are in brackets*].

### **REGULATIONS**

#### **Hunting Hours**

- 1) Hunting after noon all season would be great!
- 2) I would prefer no hunting after noon.
- 3) Sunup to sundown.
- 4) Change shooting hours from noon to 1pm or 2pm ending gives you a couple more hunting hours.
- 5) All day? When will the turkeys have time to do anything? This is very bad. Please don't mess up a good thing. If a hunter doesn't have the passion to hunt nothing will help.
- 6) ...It would be a great thing to be able to hunt all day, even if you took the limit from 2 to 1. I think most would agree that having more time to hunt is more beneficial.
- 7) I understand some hunters who would like to see MD go to all day hunting throughout the season (because of demanding work schedule)....We must foremost consider the time the turkeys need!
- 8) Would love to see all day hunting for the whole season.
- 9) Would like all day...
- 10) Would like to see all day hunting expanded by at least 1 week.
- 11) I would very much like to see all day hunting all season.
- 12) I always thought hunting ended at noon. Was never aware of hunting til dusk.
- 13) I think you should only be allowed to hunt til noon.
- 14) I'm all for all-day hunting.
- 15) If you decide to allow hunting all day, please shorten the season by 1 week.
- 16) I feel when the season opens it should be to sunset.
- 17) Sunrise to sunset is good.
- 18) I would like to be able to hunt all day throughout the entire season...
- 19) Hunt all day not just until noon.

#### **Bag Limits**

- 1) Nobody needs to kill more than 2 turkeys.
- 2) I would very much like to see the spring season bag limit increased from 1 turkey per day to 2 per day, with a total of 2 turkeys per spring season remaining the same.
- 3) I would like to see the harvest numbers reduced to 1 bird per person, especially in zone "A".
- 4) I'd like to see the overall bag limit lowered to 1 per hunter per season.
- 5) I would like to be able to kill 2 turkeys a day.
- 6) I'd love to see a 3<sup>rd</sup> turkey allowed but suggest selling a stamp for it.
- 7) I support a 3 turkey bag limit if you didn't kill one in the fall or winter. The killing of hens eliminated!
- 8) One turkey limit should be implemented!
- 9) I would like to see a 1 bird limit for the entire season...would help the population grow and relieve hunting pressure.

#### **Season Dates**

- 1) Bringing the season in a little earlier than the 18<sup>th</sup> would give hunters more opportunity to call gobblers before the early breeding begins.
- 2) Season too short (10 weeks).
- 3) Would support a week or 2 earlier start date.
- 4) I would prefer that the season come in a couple of weeks earlier, because of the abundance of ticks and mosquitoes.
- 5) Season seems to start almost a month late.
- 6) Turkey season could open a week or 2 earlier, even if kept the same length, without lost productivity for hunters. End of season is not very productive.

- 7) The season needs to be just the month of May to give the gobblers a chance to breed instead of being shot. Like PA, they have lots of turkeys and only hunt in May.
- 8) Season too long...turkeys having little ones with the season still in.
- 9) I would like to see an earlier start to the season. The weather is cooler which reduces the amount of bugs...
- 10) I would hope that April 18<sup>th</sup> would remain as the start of the spring turkey season.
- 11) A longer season with the same limit will allow for better/earlier weather before the 18<sup>th</sup>. Things started early this year and couldn't capitalize.
- 12) On many occasions hens had poults during the last 2 weeks of the season. So our season timing seems good. Hens are nesting and toms are more eager to answer calls. I am always concerned though about bumping hens off nests.
- 13) ...consider extending the spring season an additional week...
- 14) Would like to see the season open earlier.
- 15) I would strongly prefer that the season remains as it is with always opening on the 18<sup>th</sup>. I feel when it opens during the week it is a better hunting experience for everyone.
- 16) For the past few years the spring "green-up" is occurring earlier. By the last week of the season the deer flies are so bad you can't spend time in the public forests.
- 17) The season should start earlier in April and could end a week earlier.
- 18) I would like to the season start and end a week earlier due to the ticks and mosquitoes...
- 19) If the season was longer, I think I would have hunted more. Also having the season open earlier would allow more comfortable hunting. No one wants to be hot and eaten by mosquitoes.
- 20) With season being warmer would like see season start earlier than April 18. Most big toms done by then.
- 21) Would like a longer season...
- 22) Having the season open or close on Friday or Saturday would help to increase participation for hunters that work.
- 23) Open season 2 weeks earlier if possible.
- 24) The season is too long.
- 25) Compared to other states I think the MD season is timed very well.
- 26) I would prefer additional season lengths.
- 27) ...with the weather the last couple years it seems the turkeys get right 2 weeks before the season and then when the season comes in it is a struggle to get them to work.
- 28) It seems that the turkeys begin their spring rituals a couple weeks before the season begins...for the past few years...season comes in a tail-end of hardcore mating season.
- 29) I wish the season would start earlier because we hear them on our land before the season starts...a lot of my friends wish it would start earlier, but just however. Thank you.
- 30) I think the spring season should be 4 weeks not 5.
- 31) Spring season should come in on the 11<sup>th</sup> of April and close on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May.
- 32) I would love to see the start a few days earlier...
- 33) I wish the season started a week or 2 earlier.
- 34) I would like to see the season come in about a week earlier.
- 35) Start the spring season on April 1<sup>st</sup> like DE.
- 36) Starting hunting 1 week earlier and start all day hunting on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April would be great.
- 37) I'm a weekend hunter so 5 weeks is long but not long enough.
- 38) I often feel that the 1<sup>st</sup> 2 weeks of the season aren't very productive.
- 39) I feel that the season should open April 1<sup>st</sup> or sooner.
- 40) We need to start the season on a Saturday and end on a Sunday so weekend hunters have more chances to hunt.
- 41) Season dates are just about perfect. Starting the season on a Saturday would be detrimental to the hunters seeking to avoid the crowd on opening day.
- 42) If season was earlier it would allow more time in field.

- 43) It is sometimes too hot in March and gnats are bad mostly in May. This is why I would like to see the spring turkey season open April 1<sup>st</sup> or the last week in March.
- 44) Saturday is a good time to open because the people working get a good chance to hunt as everyone else.
- 45) I would like to have the season come in a week or 2 earlier.

#### **Fall Season/Winter Season**

- 1) Longer fall season.
- 2) I would love to see a 2-3 day season before Thanksgiving. It would be awesome to put a bird on the table.
- 3) I think the most ignorant thing MD has ever done is to have the January turkey season. It provided the late season bow hunter the opportunity to shoot a turkey in his corn pile.
- 4) I would like to see the fall season increase to 2 weeks.
- 5) Need a fall season in Frederick County.
- 6) Stop the late winter hunt.
- 7) I don't think we need the winter season. I think enough hens are killed by coyotes while sitting on the nest in the spring.
- 8) No need for winter season.
- 9) Please consider a fall season in St. Mary's county...
- 10) I think you need to check into a 1 or 2 week fall season if no bird was taken during season. I had a pack of 55 birds at one time walk by in deer season; 19 were shooters.
- 11) Perhaps taking away winter/fall season would help turkey population.
- 12) I'm not sure about the winter season – I'm bowhunting and don't want rifles being used for turkey  
[rifles are not permitted in winter season]
- 13) I don't like the January season as I feel the majority of turkeys killed that time of year are with the aid of bait and with flocks of gobblers the same unethical hunter would kill more than the legal bag limit and not bat an eye.
- 14) Maybe lengthen the fall season to 2 weeks?
- 15) Stop the winter season certainly on the eastern counties. Game has a hard enough time surviving a really bad winter.
- 16) I do not like the winter hunt in January.
- 17) ...only negative is the winter season because of deer feeding – attracts turkeys to the food source and allows easy access to them for slob hunters!
- 18) Winter season in January is too late in year, either November or December would be better while hunting is active.
- 19) Wish there was fall season in Anne Arundel.
- 20) Need to bring fall/winter in early.
- 21) MD zone B needs a better and longer fall season for turkey hunting.

#### **Other Turkey Regulations**

- 1) Would be nice to have a senior hunt also (65+)
- 2) Keep it the same.
- 3) I think blinds and decoys should not be allowed. Very unsafe. This is how guys get killed.
- 4) Beard restriction on 2<sup>nd</sup> bird (6 inches or bigger).
- 5) Turkey reaping is unsafe and unacceptable. It is not part of the sport. Television has contributed to unethical practices.
- 6) Maryland is not Alabama or Missouri. We don't need big bag limits or long seasons. If you need more funds, raise the nonresident license.
- 7) My time is limited due to work. Changing laws would be helpful. Thank you.
- 8) Have youth hunt days before and after end of season...
- 9) I believe that the seasons and bag limits are OK as is.
- 10) Reference question 7 (*turkey fanning*): Not a good idea...would not hide behind a deer decoy or wear antlers during deer season....dangerous, cannot take safety for granted. Always potential for another hunter to be lurking around.

- 11) As a whole, I would like to promote activities that enhance rather than reduce the population. That liberal policies and limits exist when there is abundance and restriction when the population dips if such doing influences the numbers....
- 12) Hunters on adjoining properties have automatic feeders year-round. This has disrupted normal activity of turkeys and increased predation around feeders...I have found partially consumed birds near the feeders. I would suggest a regulation be established to prohibit game feeding 30 days prior to the start and during turkey season.
- 13) Prohibit all feeders beginning end of February. They need to go away. I know there are hunters killing turkeys around feeders in Dorchester County. Get it stopped. Probably goes on elsewhere.
- 14) Why is shot size limited to #4 and up? – turkeys are doing great in the state.
- 15) I would like to see an archery only season.
- 16) Traditional bow hunters should be allowed to shoot a turkey during the fall/winter deer season.
- 17) Youth days should be all day and allowed on Sunday in all counties.
- 18) The turkeys taken on our leased state property are called in from adjacent property where bait has been provided. Turkeys do not use the leased property very frequently.
- 19) The new law allowing baiting but not hunting over it close in insane!!! No bait in spring ever!!!
- 20) MD hunting laws are too strict. Catch up with the rest of the country.
- 21) Everything with spring turkey season is fair and I feel it needs no changes. Thanks.
- 22) Make and keep hens off-limit year-round.
- 23) I do not like the tail fans that mount on the barrel of a gun. Very unsafe.
- 24) I feel the turkey population is strong and hens should harvested.
- 25) Youth day should be 1 day only.
- 26) Fanning should be prohibited. It's too unsafe.
- 27) Wouldn't change a thing but I am getting too old to turkey hunt any more.
- 28) Fanning/reaping is totally unsafe – should be unlawful on private or public land.
- 29) Have a program like Montana's block management program. For turkey a limit of 1 hunter/hunting party might be appropriate for each hunting day.
- 30) Allow muzzleloaders for spring.
- 31) I think youth hunt should be same time as regular season.
- 32) Keep the season as is!!!
- 33) Just keep doing what you have been doing. It works.
- 34) Keep doing a great job – change nothing on my account.
- 35) There should be a 6-7 day cool down period between youth and main season. Where I hunt turkeys can get spooked after being shot at.
- 36) The last couple of years the toms have not been vocalizing...I speculate they are always "henned up." Perhaps the opportunity to shoot more hens should be enlarged on the eastern shore.

### **Sunday Hunting**

- 1) More Sunday hunting is needed...
- 2) Allow Sunday hunting on Sunday in PG county for deer and turkey.
- 3) Would like Sunday hunting on public lands.
- 4) Sunday hunting needed on private land in all counties.
- 5) Would like Sunday hunting youth and regular season.
- 6) Would like the first Sunday after opening day to be a "hunting allowed" Sunday (til noon only).
- 7) Allow Sunday hunting on private land in all counties in MD.
- 8) Love the Sunday opportunity.
- 9) Sunday hunting in Frederick Co should be allowed during the spring season...
- 10) Open up Sunday hunting in Worcester Co. for deer and especially turkey.
- 11) Sunday hunting would be appreciated in Somerset County like Dorchester County.
- 12) Keep Sunday hunting in Kent Co.
- 13) Please keep pushing for Sunday hunting. I normally can only get out on Saturdays. I only went once this spring.

- 14) I would like to see youth hunters have a whole weekend to hunt, Saturday and Sunday statewide.
- 15) Keep Sunday hunting in Charles and St. Mary's counties.
- 16) Should have Sunday hunting on all private and leased land in MD.

#### **Other Regulation Issues**

- 1) I'd like more liberal fox hunt daylight opportunities.
- 2) I wear hunter orange when moving and not stalking actual turkeys – impress that upon hunters for safety.
- 3) It would be nice to be able to dispatch foxes while turkey hunting...I'm sure they have a negative effect on my turkey hunting. Maybe a combination season for both.
- 4) I think more hunters from VA would come over if the non-resident license was reduced.

#### **TURKEY POPULATIONS (AND PREDATORS OF TURKEYS)**

- 1) Frederick City watershed seems to be decreasing in turkeys.
- 2) In many areas, I've recently seen an increase in population in many of the outlying areas, showing an expansion in range...
- 3) The area I hunt has so many fox dens and growth in the population that they have decimated the turkeys.
- 4) Due to the increasing signs and sighting of both bears and coyote on the property, I have not seen as many turkeys over the past year. But I'm not sure if the two are related.
- 5) There are turkeys in some places, and in other places there are none.
- 6) I have noticed a decrease in birds...farming practices have also changed turkey behavior...I also believe predators have contributed to less gobbling in areas of the Eastern Shore.
- 7) There are so many hens here calling will not work. You sit where you see them cross and hope for the best like deer hunting.
- 8) Turkeys do not seem to be as vocal as they used to be in Calvert county, especially in the evening on roost. I suspect coyotes are having some impact in area I hunt.
- 9) My biggest concern is the dropoff of the turkey population in Washington County...the decline started when I began to see coyotes about 8 years ago. In my opinion they have really affected the turkey population in a negative way.
- 10) A defined increase in the number of turkeys where I hunt. We see them while deer hunting also.
- 11) Too many coyote.
- 12) Ever since the introduction of coyotes by the state, the turkey population has been going down by 50%. We are trying to harvest the coyotes. They are killing everything! [*The state did not introduce coyotes*]
- 13) Turkey population in Green Ridge State Forest has declined markedly over the years...
- 14) In the last 10 years, I have seen a decrease in the number of turkeys on and around my property (Somerset Co.)...
- 15) I hunted a number of locations in my county and heard little to no shooting. Perhaps everyone was bowhunting, lost interest this year or turkey were not being seen.
- 16) Need to cut the fox population down.
- 17) While harvest numbers were up statewide, the properties I hunt in Charles county (both public and private) seemed to have fewer birds.
- 18) Too many predators...we didn't hear or see any before the season...I don't have much time...too many people think it's easy...it's not like that in reality....It's no fun watching trees grow!
- 19) Coyotes have become a problem on eastern side of 301. Have noticed turkeys do not gobble as well and will leave area if coyotes are howling...
- 20) Turkey numbers are extremely declining in PG county due to loss of habitat. Very unfortunate.
- 21) Not enough turkeys on public land to hold up to the hunting pressure..and then you add a winter season?
- 22) I feel the addition of coyotes in the area has affected the flocks in our area (Savage River).

- 23) I would like to thank the DNR for populating turkeys throughout the state. Thirty years ago there were no turkeys on the eastern shore ...and over the last 7 years since I've started hunting again I've only seen the population increase.
- 24) In last several years I'm seeing very few hens and no young poults. I think it is because of all the predators.
- 25) I also hunt in Washington Co...and I think there are less turkeys in that area.
- 26) I have seen turkey population decline in the areas I hunt for several years. This has caused me to lose interest in Western MD.
- 27) Turkey numbers in Allegany Co. are stable but not as good as they were 10 years ago.
- 28) I have shot about 16 turkeys in 23 years...populations have fallen in areas I hunt (Somerset, Dorchester, and Wicomico). Bad weather during nesting season, west Nile? Too many predators? You tell me.
- 29) ... I see the turkey population is increasing...
- 30) I also hunt turkeys in Trappe MD. The flock has gotten thin in the last 7 years!
- 31) I think we have a lot of predators killing our turkeys.
- 32) I'm very happy to see the expansion of the turkey range in MD.
- 33) It seems the past few years the turkey are not as widespread as in the past. They seem to be more abundant in certain areas, where other areas I have noticed a marked decline.
- 34) This year the population in eastern Charles and Dorchester highest ever. Bald eagle predation on turkeys is a real problem..we found 3 carcasses.
- 35) Turkeys seem to have a very stable/growing population in my area. I see/hear turkeys quite a bit year-round.
- 36) I hunt spring turkey every year but haven't harvested one in at least 3-4 years. I am seeing a lot more coyote...and a lot less turkeys...
- 37) My observation is small deer are being killed by coyotes. My fear is the turkey population will be impacted very soon...
- 38) I have had private ground for 30 years and seeing less turkeys each year. Have abundance of coyotes and bears...
- 39) Predators don't appear to be a problem although 1 coyote was videoed in area...
- 40) Never have shot one but cool to see them in our area.

## **MARYLAND DNR**

### **Turkey Management in General**

- 1) When I started turkey hunting in MD there were very few birds now they are plentiful thanks to the efforts of DNR and hunter conservation groups. Thanks.
- 2) I believe the state has done a great job on making turkeys come back. Thanks!
- 3) Appreciate the efforts of DNR to establish turkeys in all counties. I have seen firsthand the population expand in Cecil County. The downside to that is more people crowding area spots, public and private.
- 4) Out of all 3 states I hunt, MD has the most turkeys.
- 5) Keep up the great work on sustaining our wonderful turkey populations! Thank you!
- 6) I like the current management of the season by MD DNR.
- 7) We appreciate the efforts of DNR to provide turkeys to hunt...Keep up your good work!
- 8) I would like to see a longer season or have all day hunting...because like me a lot of people have to work Monday-Friday.
- 9) ...I think that overall Maryland has a good program and I am content to see the regulations remain the same.
- 10) The wildlife division has done an excellent job in restoring turkeys to the lower eastern shore.
- 11) Good job has been done expanding the range throughout Maryland counties.
- 12) Please keep close eye on breeding season creeping earlier because of climate change...Continue efforts to get turkeys throughout MD. Thank you!

- 13) It would be great to know how the hatch goes each year from the state. *[An annual wild turkey observation survey is conducted each summer and results posted on website].*
- 14) Thanks guys!!
- 15) Turkeys have come a long way in MD. Please protect them!
- 16) I commend DNR field staff for the wonderful work they do. They are a great group of dedicated people.
- 17) MD provides great opportunity to hunt turkeys.
- 18) Overall I like MD's turkey program, the 3 different seasons and access to public land.
- 19) Restocking proven areas of habitat.
- 20) Thank you!
- 21) You are doing a good job – seems fair, and fun. Not hurting the population. Some trespassing onto private land, but overall a pretty good system.
- 22) I like things pretty much the way they are...
- 23) State is doing a great job with managing this species.
- 24) It is a wonderful state for turkey hunting and the DNR doing a good job...
- 25) Thanks you DNR for having the insight to restore wild turkeys to Maryland! One of the best moves by your agency ever!!
- 26) It has been great to see and be a part of the steady turkey increase this last 20 years in St. Mary's County. Thanks to the NWTF and Maryland DNR.
- 27) Hope the DNR keeps up the good work they have been doing especially with the wild turkey. Thanks Bob Long. PS- this is a good survey.
- 28) Appreciate you conducting this survey – hope I was able to help!
- 29) Please note opinions regarding aspects of hunting that are most important are my own and not reflective of other hunters. Note also that any speculation on turkey population density and rate of growth is based solely on personal observations within the local area in which I hunt.
- 30) MD spring turkey is a well-managed program that does not need any changes. Public input such as this survey has maintained the program so that it meets hunter needs. Keep up the good work!
- 31) Restocking in areas where turkeys were known to thrive.
- 32) Thanks for your efforts managing the turkey population. There has been a steady increase in turkeys heard/seen since I started hunting. Keep up the good work!

#### **Public Lands**

- 1) I would like to see really good maps of all the public hunting areas in a book. They did this years ago...
- 2) There needs to be a place to put trash and recyclables. A porta-pot would be nice too.
- 3) I love hunting in MD but must say the maps of the hunting areas are horrible. I've gotten used to the DE aerial mapping system, Check it out. Your WMA's are wonderful, very diverse and well maintained. Thanks for your work.
- 4) Our public lands are shot out thanks to the PA hunters.
- 5) I enjoy the outdoors though public land is too risky at times.
- 6) I'm 68 years old, it's hard to find places to hunt...I think DNR dropped the ball in Frederick county for turkey hunters. But I support DNR on many other programs.
- 7) More state ground to hunt.
- 8) Would like to see bow-only access areas open for up for turkey.
- 9) I enjoy turkey hunting in western MD a great deal and am thankful for the opportunities that public lands provide. I only wish I had more time to go and I wish the population was a little higher.
- 10) During youth season on public land my hunt was interrupted by a man walking 2 dogs off leash and man scouting for the normal season.
- 11) I am looking for more mountaintop access, as hiking up mountain sides is impossible alone with handicap/disability campsites.
- 12) Turkeys are abundant in the bow-only sections of WSSC...I've talked to them about turkey hunting but they've stated that they have no plans to open for turkey hunting. Maybe you can convince them!



- 13) I am grateful for the public land opportunities. However they could be even better with restricted access and an emphasis on quality hunting (especially deer). Thanks!
- 14) Need more access to good hunting land.
- 15) Would like to be able to bowhunt throughout state parks, less limitations and more areas available, less areas off-limits to hunting.
- 16) More public land would be awesome! Perhaps lease for public?
- 17) Public land turkey hunting in MD overall is quite good.
- 18) Usually have an enjoyable hunt on MD public property! Thank you!!
- 19) Not enough hunting land in MD.
- 20) I greatly enjoy hunting on Green Ridge State Forest. I would like to hunt public land on the Eastern Shore.

#### **Other DNR Issues**

- 1) Please no additional charges on anything! Please stop cutting our forest down (Greenridge mountains)
- 2) The lack of land to hunt is the #1 reason young people don't start hunting and other people stop...
- 3) How many people call in a kill for turkey or deer and never harvested either? No wonder kill numbers for these species is high. Of course DNR can always inflate the numbers☺
- 4) I like the check in system.
- 5) Deer population is way down – please address that!!!!
- 6) I have owned and hunt on 28 acres for 17 years. Should have some relief on license fees. Non-resident, resident, and special landowner fees are in order.
- 7) Thanks for years of DNR service (hunter for 35 years).
- 8) DNR made a big mistake doing away with check stations. I don't see much honor in their honor system....Thanks for the large amount of deer that can be killed and bringing all the PA hunters here. Driving the price of property so high that local people can't hunt...
- 9) Not enough game wardens, poaching, illegal hunting, RV access inadequate.
- 10) Congrats to DNR for all you do – your efforts (in all divisions) are greatly appreciated!

#### **THE 2017 SPRING SEASON**

- 1) Did not see many turkeys.
- 2) Wild turkey vocalization was down this year on our area. Heard distant shots but that was also down in numbers. Saw less birds this year than past seasons.
- 3) For some reason, I observed few jakes this spring in much of the area I hunt in QA and Caroline Counties. Jake numbers in Kent and Cecil seemed normal.
- 4) I missed one on opening day ☺ and called two other longbeards within range but no shot! It still hurts!!!
- 5) In 7 years of turkey hunting I've killed 3 turkeys. Two of them were this year. Best season so far in my opinion.
- 6) Wish I had more time in my schedule to hunt more than just once this season.
- 7) I missed my gobbler this year, but that is alright.
- 8) I saw a lot of turkeys for 3-4 weeks before the season...but when the season started the were few and far between.
- 9) I only hunted on private land...I was successful in calling in birds and enjoyed the experience...
- 10) Seen many jakes this year.
- 11) I think the 2017 season should have started about a month earlier.
- 12) I only hunted 1 day this year because I got the flu after that hunt. Had one large gobbler just out of range and 4-5 other calling.
- 13) I had very few encounters and heard minimal calling...
- 14) Very poor year on my lease. Heard minimal gobbling the first week and virtually no gobbling after the initial 10 days...Didn't hunt the last week at all – disgusted!!
- 15) I am sorry that I couldn't hunt this season.

- 16) Was a wet spring this year. Saw and heard plenty of turkeys..the population over the past couple years seems to have exploded.
- 17) Runs hot and cold in Carroll County. Heard 1 turkey before season started, 1 at season's end, and 2 birds total for 2017 spring season. End of deer season this past year saw lots of birds.
- 18) The birds did not seem to be too active the last 1 - 1 ½ weeks of the season.
- 19) I had a great season. Seen jakes every day.
- 20) Didn't see or hear any turkeys during youth hunt with my oldest son but still had a great time.
- 21) ...Killed a turkey the first hour.
- 22) I heard a lot of turkeys on Warrior Mountain WMA...
- 23) This was an off year for me...
- 24) Saw a hen with chicks before season was over. Warm weather affected the beginning of season.
- 25) The weather was unseasonably cool, wet, damp and windy...
- 26) Birds were active 2 weeks prior to hunting season start date. Birds were not vocal as in previous years.
- 27) Terrible weather conditions this year...didn't hear a gobbler on several outings...lots of coyotes around.
- 28) Saw/hearing turkeys every time.
- 29) Have been doing a turkey camp in western MD for 12 plus years. This year was first for any turkeys seen, 2 were taken.
- 30) Did take a youth hunter during regular season and killed 1<sup>st</sup> turkey – second day ever hunted.
- 31) I hunted 4 different properties this spring and saw or heard birds every time out.
- 32) I had the opportunity to harvest birds on 2 occasions but did not shoot them....in order to keep a growing population on our farm. I also did not shoot a turkey in a tree...afterwards I could not find any rules on this.
- 33) I hunted 3 different farms, I saw 11 different red foxes.
- 34) I missed the 2017 season, but will be back next year.
- 35) I must have misread the game bag limit...shot a longbeard opening morning...with a crossbow...Didn't hunt after that.
- 36) 14 days I only had 2 turkeys in close enough to harvest and could not see them. I feel that turkeys are down in that part of MD.
- 37) This season was unusual, I guess because of the warm spell we had in March...
- 38) Turkeys were very quiet this spring, early gobbling only.
- 39) 2 weeks prior to the spring season starting I was observing between 30-50 turkeys. However there was several gun shots on neighboring properties after this no more turkeys were observed or heard from.
- 40) I saw many mature birds this season but didn't count. This spring was odd this year and the birds were kind of odd as well.
- 41) The 2 weeks prior to the opener date 18<sup>th</sup> I see all types of turkeys...5-8 toms together and with hens. Opening day zero...

### **MISCELLANEAUS**

- 1) For now I enjoy any time, any year I can get out to hunt....We enjoy the outdoors, all my life hunting has always been and will remain a part of that outdoor time.
- 2) Too many bugs.
- 3) I love spring gobbler season.
- 4) Love turkey hunting, lots of fun! I like reloading my own shells!
- 5) Turkey hunting (spring) is my favorite hunting activity. Twenty-five plus years of doing it own my property in Garrett. Co. and I seen great improvement in the improvements in the turkey populations statewide. Great Job DNR!!
- 6) CRP land could be improved by farmers adopting IVM techniques...
- 7) Love it!!!
- 8) Enjoy hunting MD. Usually hear and see a bird or 2. Hunting pressure down from a few years ago.

- 9) Turkeys are beginning to call the last few years in Allegany County during late February...by April 10<sup>th</sup> most male turkeys do not call but 30 minutes in morning and around 10am some more but clam up by noon...
- 10) I have only harvested 1 turkey over the last 10 years. Very busy in the spring with little time to hunt...
- 11) Looking forward to next season!
- 12) I will be turkey hunting next year. I love spring turkey hunting. There is nothing like calling a tom into range.
- 13) Enjoy hunting and the outdoors. 75 years old.
- 14) Thanks, it is a privilege to be able to hunt and enjoy the outdoors.
- 15) Spring – too many ticks!!!
- 16) Should make survey shorter!!
- 17) I am not an avid turkey hunter, but it's growing on me all the time.
- 18) I just enjoy sitting in the outdoors with my bow or gun and calling.
- 19) I love it when I can get away.
- 20) Spring turkey hunting has become a favorite outdoor activity of mine. I enjoy every aspect of hunting MD's wild turkey and have for 23 years.
- 21) Ticks with Lymes is a big concern nowadays.
- 22) Enjoy very much. I am 75 years old and turkey is one of the hunting sports I do.
- 23) I hunt all game for the time spent enjoying them in their natural habitat. Killing is very low on my list of why I hunt. Thanks.
- 24) Good time to shed hunt/mushroom hunt, just enjoying the Good Lord's creations.
- 25) Unable to locate land to hunt in Maryland.
- 26) Getting older but still enjoy when I get to go.
- 27) Up until the last 2 years I have been greatly successful taking a fall bird in Allegany Co (also in spring)...
- 28) Fun on private land, probably be a hassle on public land.
- 29) CRP lands that often hold turkeys are sometimes sprayed and killed which results in turkey leaving the area and no turkey hunting in surrounding wooded areas.
- 30) I hunt/kill longbeards only...
- 31) When the winter is warm in February, March, they breed earlier. Then they don't gobble much in late season.
- 32) Usually kill my turkeys during the last part of the season. Love turkey hunting.
- 33) It is not the kill that is important but the look in their eyes when they know they made a mistake.
- 34) Try to increase the flocks. Try to decrease predators. I had a coyote try to take my turkey decoy. Need to find a way to have more private land open. There is plenty of public land.
- 35) Me and my family love to hunt on our private property in MD because it is a very quiet environment.