

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF ANGLERS & HUNTERS

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Ontario Conservation Centre

OFAH FILE: 410A/794

August 5, 2020

Public Input Coordinator
MNRF Fish and Wildlife Policy Branch – Wildlife Section
300 Water Street
5th floor, North Tower
Peterborough, ON
K9J 3C7

Dear Sir or Madam:

Subject: ERO # 019-1985: Proposal to open fall Wild Turkey hunting seasons in Wildlife Management Units 72 and 95 beginning in 2020

The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH) is Ontario's largest, non-profit, fish and wildlife conservation-based organization, representing 100,000 members, subscribers and supporters, and 725 member clubs. We have reviewed the proposal to open fall Wild Turkey hunting seasons in wildlife management units (WMU) 72 and 95 and fully support it.

The reintroduction of Wild Turkey into Ontario is a conservation success story and perfectly illustrates what can be gained when conservation organizations, such as the OFAH, and governmental agencies, such as the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF), work in partnership. The opening of fall hunting seasons in WMUs 72 and 95 are in line with the OFAH's long-standing advocacy efforts to maximize sustainable hunting opportunities and the benefits they bring to Ontario's wildlife, economy and cultural well-being. We will continue to advocate for new hunting opportunities, not only for fall seasons in WMUs with an existing spring season, but also for new spring seasons in WMUs that currently have neither season.

As a science-based organization, the OFAH supports harvest decisions that are based on criteria that are clearly stated and communicated. The *Wild Turkey Management Plan for Ontario* outlines the criteria for determining the eligibility of a WMU for fall and spring seasons, based on reported harvest and hunter observations. OFAH staff annually review the available hunter reporting data to identify new sustainable Wild Turkey hunting opportunities, so we can proactively engage MNRF staff in advocating for their creation, as was done in the case of WMU 72. This highlights the importance of the MNRF making the results of the mandatory hunter reporting publicly available in a timely manner. This allows for transparency behind harvest management decisions, aids in the advocacy of invested organizations like the OFAH, and demonstrates the value of mandatory reporting to hunters.

We are moving into a new phase of Wild Turkey management in the province. The reintroduction phase, a resounding success, is now complete and has resulted in healthy populations that continue to expand their range. At the same time, wildlife management in the province has changed significantly since the *Wild Turkey Management Plan for Ontario* was published in 2007, most notably through the introduction of the new mandatory reporting framework. Combined with other factors such as a growing human population driving increased residential and agriculture development, disease concerns such as West Nile Virus, and new conservation initiatives such as ALUS Canada, we believe now is an appropriate time to review Wild Turkey management in the province to ensure that it is up to date and reflects the current management context. As a keystone partner in the reintroduction of Wild Turkeys in Ontario since the 1980s, we stand ready to assist in moving Wild Turkey management forward, building on our shared successes and ensuring sustainable Wild Turkey populations for future generations of Ontarians.

In conclusion, we fully support the proposed fall hunting seasons in WMUs 72 and 95 and look forward to continuing the discussion of Wild Turkey management in Ontario.

Yours in Conservation,



Keith Munro, Ph.D.
Wildlife Biologist

KM/jb

cc: OFAH Board of Directors
OFAH Small Game Advisory Committee
Angelo Lombardo, OFAH Executive Director
Matt DeMille, OFAH Manager, Fish and Wildlife Services
Mark Ryckman, OFAH Manager, Policy
OFAH Fish and Wildlife Staff