



**BACKCOUNTRY
HUNTERS & ANGLERS**
NEW ENGLAND

February 10, 2025

Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: LD 205: An Act to Amend the Bag Limit for Turkeys

Dear Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and Members of the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.

I am John Simoneau, Resident of Durham, submitting this testimony on behalf of New England Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers (BHA).

BHA seeks to ensure North America's outdoor heritage of hunting and fishing in a natural setting by supporting land conservation, public access to hunting and fishing areas, fair chase, and the sound management of fish and wildlife and their habitats.

On behalf of BHA's Maine members we are testifying in opposition of LD 205 An Act to Amend the Bag Limit for Turkeys. Consistent with our support for the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, Backcountry Hunters & Anglers believes fish and wild resources belong to the public and supports science-based fish and wildlife management. BHA supports the authority and responsibility of state wildlife agencies to manage resident fish and wildlife populations.

In 2016 Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MIFW) initiated an update to the Maine's Big Game Management Plan. This update had a steering committee to guide the process and subcommittees to provide recommendations for the management of each big game species. The process included a public survey seeking input from residents, hunters and landowners. The Wild Turkey subcommittee included hunters, guides and landowners. This plan established the following management goals and objectives related to Wild Turkey.

Goal #1: *Maintain a healthy, sustainable turkey population that provide opportunities for hunting and viewing, while also allowing turkeys to continue expanding into portions of northern, eastern, and western Maine.*

Goal #2: *Ensure public satisfaction with the turkey population*

Goal #3: *Increase the recreational value of the wild turkey resource by promoting participation in wild turkey hunting*

Goal #4: *Provide education to Maine residents (including hunters) on turkey biological, ecology, and management*

(Source: Wild Turkey: Upland Game Birds: Birds: Species Information: Wildlife: Fish & Wildlife: Maine Dept of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife)

Specifically related to this legislation Goal #1 includes the following objectives:

- In WMDs 15-17, 20-26 and 28, stabilize wild turkey populations below biological carrying capacity and at socially acceptable levels.
- Increase the size and distribution of turkey populations in WMDs 1-14, 18, 19, and 27.

These goals relate to the current spring **seasonal** turkey bag limits allowing for 1 bearded wild turkey in WMDs 1-6 & 8, but two bearded wild turkeys in WMDs 7, 9-29. The fall turkey hunt **seasonal** bag limit varies from 5 to 1 wild turkeys in the WMDs open, yet the season is closed in WMDs 1-5 & 9. This demonstrates that the Department is setting bag limits to match the objectives in the Big Game Management plan.

This legislation as written sets the wild turkey bag limit the same as the ruffed grouse bag limit. The management framework for upland game (ruffed grouse) is different than for big game (wild turkey). As stated earlier the turkey bag limits are **seasonal**, like other big game such as deer, bear & moose. For upland game the limit is a **Daily** Bag and a Possession Limit, such that for ruffed grouse the limit is 4 daily and 8 in possession. These limits applied to wild turkey would not be in alignment with the Wild Turkey management plan objectives.

In sum, we oppose LD 205: An Act to Amend the Bag Limit for Turkeys. It is important that the department continues to have the authority to set bag limits for turkey by rule. This rule making should be executed to meet the management goals and objectives in the Big Game management plan, which we believe the department is doing.

Sincerely,

John Simoneau,
New England Chapter Secretary
Maine State Team Chair
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