FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION
WILD TURKEY PERMIT PROGRAM
2012-2013 ANNUAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report documents the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) use of Wild Turkey Permit funds during Fiscal Year 2012-2013. Permit fund revenues and expenditures totaled $805,663 and $659,768, respectively. Program activities encompassed management projects; wild turkey population restoration; data collection, management, and analysis; technical assistance; and research and development. Funds totaling $395,470 were provided for 59 management projects on 34 public wildlife management areas (WMAs). The cost-share program resulted in $845,407 of value when considering other cooperator dollars and in-kind services. Staff used a mail survey of hunters to estimate the 2012 spring turkey season harvest at 21,005. The 2012 spring mail survey also determined that an estimated 5,068 youth hunters participated in the special Youth Turkey Season. Several recently restored wild turkey populations were monitored in Holmes County, Guana River WMA (St. Johns County), and Everglades National Park. FWC staff continued analysis of the 2011 statewide assessment of wild turkey distributions and provided research assistance for a study of Lymphoproliferative Disease Virus, a newly discovered disease of wild turkeys in North America. Staff is also conducting a small study of coyote diets with particular attention to any potential impacts to wild turkey populations. The United States Forest Service, the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF), and FWC continued to cooperatively fund a wild turkey biologist position; the contract for this position is in effect through Fiscal Year 2014-2015. Cooperative funding also continued for a wild turkey biologist to work primarily on State forests. Funding partners included the Florida Forest Service, the NWTF, and FWC. The contract for this position was renewed and runs through March 2016. Additionally, FWC's Wild Turkey Management Program (WTMP) staff and cooperative wild turkey biologists provided technical assistance to various organizations, private citizens, and the media, including 48 site visits to private landowner properties and 11 site visits to publicly held properties.

INTRODUCTION

The public has a strong interest in wild turkey management and hunting. The Osceola subspecies, which occurs only in peninsular Florida, often draws particular interest. Because the wild turkey occupies a wide variety of habitat on private and public lands in all of Florida's 67 counties, a comprehensive program, involving management, restoration, technical assistance, data analysis, and research, is required. FWC's WTMP coordinates these activities with other FWC programs and personnel, other state and federal agencies, conservation groups, private landowners, and the general public. FWC uses revenues primarily from the sale of turkey permits to accomplish this work.

Established in 1986, section 379.354(8)(b), Florida Statutes requires all individuals hunting wild turkeys in Florida to purchase and possess a turkey permit, in addition to their hunting license, unless exempt from permit requirements. Between June 1, 1986, and June 30, 2003, turkey permits were $5 for resident and non-resident turkey hunters. Beginning July 1, 2003, the Florida Legislature increased the cost for a non-resident turkey permit to $100, and beginning July 1, 2010, the resident and non-resident turkey permit

fees increased to $10 and $125 respectively. In 2007 and then again in 2012, the Florida Legislature appropriated additional funds for wild turkey management based on increased revenues from the sale of turkey hunting permits. The law stipulates that revenue generated from the sale of wild turkey permits or that pro rata portion of any license that includes turkey hunting privileges shall be used for the conservation, research, and management of wild turkeys or to promote the cultural heritage of hunting. FWC is authorized to expend up to ten percent of permit revenues to promote hunting and sport fishing activities with an emphasis on youth participation (s. 379.354, Florida Statutes).

Pursuant to requirements in section 379.354(8), Florida Statutes, this report documents the revenues and expenditures associated with the turkey permit fund for Fiscal Year 2012-2013 and summarizes activities conducted by FWC through the use of these funds.

TURKEY PERMIT REVENUES AND PROGRAM EXPENDITURES

During Fiscal Year 2012-2013, 23,556 one-year resident turkey permits ($10 each), 332 five-year resident turkey permits ($50 each) and 2,278 one-year non-resident turkey permits ($125 each) were sold. The revenues from these permit sales, plus those derived from the sale of other licenses that included turkey hunting privileges (e.g., annual sportsman's, gold sportsman's, etc.), totaled $805,663. $28,323 was set aside to promote youth hunting programs in Florida (e.g., Beau Turner Youth Conservation Center in Jefferson County, Florida Youth Hunting Program, Ocala Youth Conservation Camp, etc.). Total expenditures for conservation, research, and management were $659,768.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

FWC's WTMP is charged with coordinating wild turkey management and research activities across the State and providing a statewide approach to conservation and management of Florida's wild turkey population. The goal, developed as part of the 10-year (2008 – 2018) wild turkey strategic management plan (http://myfwc.com/media/460317/Turkey_StrategicPlan.pdf), is to "Ensure healthy and sustainable wild turkey populations throughout the State while providing and promoting compatible uses of the resource." Such a broad program requires involvement of FWC WTMP personnel in activities generally encompassed within five categories: management projects; wild turkey population restoration; data collection, management, and analysis; technical assistance; and research and development.

Management Projects

With continuing changes in the quality and quantity of wild turkey habitat in different locations in Florida, habitat management efforts continue to be vital to FWC's objective of maintaining turkey distributions across the State. Management funded by turkey permit revenue has primarily focused on the State's 5.8 million-acre WMA system because of the management opportunities it presents, the recreational public use of these lands, and their associated funding needs. Management activities, such as mowing, prescribed burning, wildlife plantings, native ground cover restoration, exotic species control, and the creation of wildlife openings have enhanced habitat on these areas for wild turkeys and many other wildlife species.

During this past fiscal year, funds totaling $395,470 were made available for 59 management projects on 34 WMAs (Table 1). Historically, much of this management work has been accomplished through a cost-share program with the Florida Chapter of the NWTF. This fiscal year, however, the Florida Chapter of the NWTF was unable to contribute financially to cost-share these WMA activities. Consequently, the funding provided for these management projects was provided primarily from turkey permit funds. In many cases, though, FWC or cooperating agencies provided equipment, personnel, or other funding for these projects. These matching contributions had a total value of $449,937, resulting in a total WMA cost-share program value of $845,407. Moreover, volunteers from the Florida Chapter of the NWTF and other organizations assisted FWC personnel with projects on several WMAs. Clearly, these projects provide substantial benefits for wild turkeys and other wildlife at a considerable cost savings relative to their overall value.

Wild Turkey Population Restoration

Widespread efforts to restore wild turkey populations in all suitable areas of Florida were essentially completed in 1970; however, areas have been identified from time to time where smaller-scale maintenance and restoration efforts have been warranted. For example, in 1997, FWC determined that turkey populations were low or non-existent in Holmes County. As a result, FWC closed the entire county to all turkey hunting and stocked 121 turkeys at 8 release sites. FWC monitored Holmes County for evidence of turkey population growth and expansion using bait-station surveys conducted annually from 2000 through 2007 and, as satisfactory expansion of the population occurred, biennially thereafter (no survey was conducted in 2008, 2010 or 2012). The FWC WTMP is planning to conduct a bait station survey during September 2013.

As a result of the documented increase and expansion of the turkey population in Holmes County, FWC opened a 3-day spring turkey season (1 bird bag limit) in 2006. All indications were that the 2006-2008 spring turkey hunts were quite successful, and FWC expanded the turkey season to 16 days beginning with the 2009 spring season. All reports indicate that the 2009-2013 spring hunts were a success under the 16-day season. Fall turkey hunting remains closed in Holmes County. Upon completion of the bait station survey planned for September 2013, FWC plans to further evaluate the possibility of increasing turkey hunting opportunity in Holmes County based on success of the hunts, results of the 2013 bait-station survey, and stakeholder input. This past September, the FWC WTMP held a public meeting in Holmes County to provide residents an update on the restoration effort and to share habitat management information. Members of the public in attendance at this meeting indicated that they would be supportive of additional opportunity at this time.

Another example of smaller-scale restoration efforts occurs in the 10,000-acre Guana River WMA in St. Johns County, which has historically supported wild turkeys. Prior to State acquisition of the property, however, indiscriminant hunting and habitat degradation due to lack of prescribed fire, are believed to have resulted in a severe population decline. Following State acquisition, improved habitat management enhanced wild turkey habitat on the area, but natural (i.e. the Tolomato River) and man-made barriers (i.e., urban development) isolated it from other wild turkey populations. Therefore, chances were low that turkeys would move back into the area from surrounding property. Consequently, in December 2002, FWC biologists and volunteers from the Florida Chapter of the NWTF

trapped 35 wild turkeys (15 males and 20 females) from nearby private lands (with landowner approval) and released them on Guana River WMA. Camera surveys and routine observations by FWC personnel, and other reliable sources, indicated successful reproduction and population increase. As a result, a limited spring turkey hunt (6 quota permits for each of two 3-day hunts) was implemented for the 2009 spring turkey season and has continued to date. During the 2013 spring turkey season, hunters harvested 2 turkeys during 22 hunter-days of effort, down somewhat from previous years, but still a good hunt in terms of hunter success rates. FWC staff will continue to monitor this turkey population to ensure that the reestablished hunting opportunities are appropriate with regard to turkey populations.

A final example of restoration efforts began in 2000 for the Everglades National Park at the request of the National Park Service and the Florida Chapter of the NWTF. The original release of 29 turkeys (7 males and 22 females) resulted in documented reproduction, but monitoring by the National Park Service suggested that while these turkeys survived, numbers were not increasing as desired. In January 2006, 31 additional turkeys (11 males and 20 females) were released. A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between FWC and the National Park Service called for improved monitoring of these recently released birds. Preliminary results documented successful reproduction during the 2006–2009 nesting seasons. While the MOA only included monitoring through the 2009 nesting season, the National Park Service has continued to document the presence of wild turkeys in the park via visitor and staff sightings of turkeys and through photos of turkeys captured incidental to ongoing panther surveys that use infrared-triggered cameras. The FWC WTMP reviewed a sample of these photos (from 2010 and 2011) and documented successful reproduction during the 2011 season (based on fall 2011 photos) and continued recruitment (the addition of fully grown offspring) into the population. FWC is working with the National Park Service to try and further use these incidental photos of wild turkeys to provide an index of annual reproduction and recruitment.

Data Collection, Management, and Analysis

One role of the FWC WTMP is to conduct an annual mail survey of spring turkey hunters. Through this process, a random sample of licensed turkey hunters is surveyed to estimate turkey harvest, hunter effort, and hunter satisfaction. For the 2012 spring turkey season, 17,500 survey forms were mailed (23% of licensed turkey hunters) and included two follow-up mailings to those who did not respond to previous mailings. A total of 4,682 responses were received (27% response rate). Harvest estimates derived from this survey between 1988 and 2012 are summarized in Table 2 and indicate a gradual decline in total harvest since 2008. The 2013 spring turkey season mail survey was mailed to 17,000 license holders (20% of licensed turkey hunters) during June 2013, with the third mailing scheduled to occur in September 2013.

In addition to the regular postcard mail survey, the FWC WTMP is currently evaluating an email and internet survey method in an effort to reduce costs. In this regard, beginning with the 2011 survey, invitations were sent via email to randomly selected licensed turkey hunters who were not selected to receive a postcard survey. Email invitations included a link to an internet-based survey to collect the required information. Just as with the postcard survey, up to two follow-up email messages were sent to individuals who did not respond to previous survey invitations. During the 2012 survey, 10,412 hunters were selected to receive invitations to participate in the survey. The

response rate for the 2012 online survey (17.9%) was lower than with the standard postcard survey (27.0%). The number of individuals who indicated they had hunted during the spring season also was quite different between the online and postcard surveys (65% and 38%, respectively). The differences are significant because these values are used to extrapolate to a total harvest estimate. The FWC WTMP will continue to compare data collected through the online method to data from the postcard survey to determine whether internet-based survey responses are consistent from year to year. If responses are consistent, FWC can account for any differences between survey methods and still obtain a reliable harvest estimate, such that long-term harvest trends would not be interrupted by using the different survey approach. If the online method produces reliable results, it would significantly decrease costs associated with printing, postage, data entry, and staff time to administer future surveys.

In February 2010, the FWC Commissioners approved a youth turkey season to occur the weekend prior to the regular spring turkey season. FWC offered this special, youth-only hunt during the 2011 spring turkey season on private lands statewide and expanded it to public lands in 2012. These hunts are designed for youth under 16 years of age who are supervised by an adult 18 years of age or older. FWC has received considerable positive feedback concerning these youth turkey hunts and the positive experiences they offer Florida's youth. During the 2012 spring turkey mail survey, the FWC WTMP inquired about the level of participation during the youth hunt. Based on survey responses, 14.1% of turkey hunters supervised a youth during the special 2-day hunt, providing opportunity for as many as 5,068 youth hunters to participate.

The FWC WTMP also collects and summarizes harvest data from WMAs with check stations. These data are used to determine area-specific hunter success rates. Harvest data and hunter success rates can, in some instances, be useful as an indicator of the status of an area's wild turkey population and/or the quality of its turkey hunting opportunities. Hunter success rates for the 2013 Special-Opportunity Turkey Hunts are presented in Table 3.

Technical Assistance

The FWC WTMP, other FWC personnel, and the two cooperative wild turkey biologists are often called upon to provide information to other agencies, various organizations, private landowners, the media, and the general public concerning wild turkeys. Such assistance covers a wide range of topics including questions on wild turkey history and management, survey techniques, nuisance and crop depredation complaints, hunting information and opportunities, data collection, and research issues.

Agency Assistance -- FWC and other agency personnel frequently request assistance concerning turkey population surveys, turkey management on WMAs and other public hunting lands, and development of funding proposals for habitat management projects. During Fiscal Year 2012-2013, the FWC WTMP and the cooperative wild turkey biologists visited 11 WMAs, State forests, national forests, national wildlife refuges, and military installations to provide input on wild turkey management or hunting regulations, to participate in turkey surveys, or to discuss funding opportunities for management projects. In addition, the FWC WTMP continued to work cooperatively with the Northwest Florida Water Management District to conduct prescribed burning and to maintain wildlife

openings on the Choctawhatchee River WMA in Holmes County, providing positive public relations and improving turkey habitat.

Public Assistance -- The public frequently requests information on turkey hunting and management. FWC usually handles such requests by phone, e-mail, or regular mail service to distribute appropriate information. Sometimes requests are best addressed through personal contact and on-site visits. This fiscal year, FWC WTMP personnel and cooperative wild turkey biologists made 48 on-site visits to discuss habitat management options for wild turkeys. FWC also provided information to the public through various news releases, magazine articles, brochures, and media contacts (including an ESPN radio interview of the cooperative wild turkey biologists) both internally and through media outlets provided by the NWTF.

The FWC WTMP and wild turkey cooperative biologists gave presentations, staffed displays, and interacted with attendees at numerous workshops, expos and speaking engagements during Fiscal Year 2012-2013. The following list is a sample of some of the events attended: Longleaf Pine Management field days (Madison and Alachua counties); Forest Stewardship Field Day at Whippoorwill Farms (Gadsden County); Upland Game Bird workshop (Hamilton County); Wild Turkey workshop in New Port Richey (Pasco County); Wildlife Management for the Fall workshop in DeFuniak Springs (Walton County); Native Plants workshop in Milton (Santa Rosa County); Holmes County Turkey Management and Restoration Update meeting in Bonifay; Prescribed Fire for Wildlife course at Corbett WMA (Palm Beach County); Florida Forest Service County Forester's Cooperative Forestry Assistance Workshop in Brooksville (Hernando County); Florida Chapter of the Wildlife Society – Spring Conference in Melbourne (Brevard County); FWC summer youth camps at the Ocala Youth Camp (Marion County), the Beau Turner Youth Conservation Center (BTYCC) in Monticello (Jefferson County), and at Hard Labor Creek in Chipley (Washington County); Apopka Elementary School Career Day (Orange and Seminole counties); Jefferson County Rotary Club; the Big Buck Expo in Lakeland (Polk County); Hunter's Night Out in Alachua (Alachua County); Big Boys Toys Expo in Lake City (Columbia County); Wildlife Heritage and Outdoor Festival at the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge (Wakulla County); the CEMEX company's Earth Day celebration in Bushnell (Sumter County); and the BTYCC Youth Turkey Challenge (Jefferson County). In addition, staff and cooperative biologists attended several WMA Management Advisory Group planning meetings; met with representatives of the University of Florida, several other State agencies (including the Florida Forest Service, the Suwannee River Water Management District and the Northwest Florida Water Management District), federal agencies (including the United States Forest Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service) and private institutions (including Gulf Power and the Kirchman Foundation); and attended multiple local NWTF chapter events.

FWC works closely with the NWTF throughout the year. A 2007 Memorandum of Understanding between FWC, the NWTF, and the Florida Chapter of the NWTF provides support to continue the many mutually beneficial interests and activities of each party. The FWC WTMP currently serves on the Technical Committee of the NWTF and serves as Technical Advisor to the Florida Chapter of the NWTF Board of Directors. Some of the related activities in which FWC participated last year included three board meetings of the

Florida Chapter of the NWTF, the Florida Chapter of the NWTF Super Fund committee meeting, and the NWTF Technical Committee meeting.

The FWC WTMP administers a wild turkey registry program, which awards certificates to hunters harvesting an outstanding gobbler (male turkey). Depending on the area where the turkey was harvested, either an Osceola (Florida) subspecies or the Eastern subspecies Outstanding Gobbler certificate is awarded for gobblers meeting minimum standards (at least an 11-inch beard and 1 ¼-inch spurs). A certificate is also awarded for youth hunters who harvest their first gobbler. Since this recognition program began in 2001, 511 Outstanding Osceola, 150 Outstanding Eastern, and 361 First Gobbler certificates have been awarded. Of the 35 First Gobbler certificates awarded during Fiscal Year 2012-2013, 18 went to youth harvesting their first turkey during the youth turkey hunt weekend.

Research and Development

In 1973 and 1977, the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission (a predecessor agency to FWC) conducted statewide assessments of wild turkey distributions. In 2001, the FWC WTMP completed a similar survey for comparison. To further evaluate recent trends in the distribution and abundance of the statewide turkey population, the FWC WTMP worked with an outside vendor to develop an internet-based mapping system to conduct a similar survey during 2011. Resource specialists from FWC, other state and federal agencies, and industrial timber companies, as well as members of the Florida Chapter of the NWTF, the Florida Chapter of The Wildlife Society and antlerless deer permit holders were asked to participate in the survey. The FWC WTMP has since been working with FWC Geographic Information System specialists and research staff to analyze these data. In total, 310 people responded to the survey; unfortunately, survey responses did not provide complete coverage of the State and other means were necessary to acquire information about areas lacking survey data. To this end, FWC staff developed a Likelihood-based Moving Window Model that uses extrinsic data (including habitat suitability models and movement distance data) and information from known areas to inform estimates for unknown areas. Development and validation of these underlying models and databases have been completed, but some very large unknown areas are still causing problems. Nevertheless, a final statewide distribution map should soon be finalized. Once completed, staff will then be able to relate current turkey population distributions (based on the 2011 data) to previous assessments, vegetative communities, land ownership, harvest records, and other pertinent information. Based on this information, the FWC WTMP will be better able to focus management on particular areas of the State that have suitable turkey habitat but low turkey populations.

This past year, the FWC WTMP coordinated with FWC staff at select WMAs to collect wild turkey liver samples for a regional study being conducted by the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study (SCWDS). They are investigating Lymphoproliferative Disease Virus (LPDV), a relatively new disease to North America. In 2009, researchers at SCWDS first documented LPDV in a wild turkey. Prior to this discovery, LPDV was only known to occur in Europe and the Middle East and was only associated with domestic turkeys. Since then, LPDV has been found in multiple wild turkeys throughout the Southeast, Midwest, and Northeast. These represent the first documented cases of LPDV in wild turkeys and in North America. To understand more about the prevalence of this disease in wild turkeys, SCWDS requested assistance from all the eastern states to provide

tissue samples from asymptomatic (i.e., healthy-looking), hunter-harvested birds. FWC staff collected 171 samples during the fall and spring turkey seasons from birds primarily harvested on the various WMAs. Thirty-six percent of the birds tested positive for the virus, which is similar to results from other states in the study. The FWC WTMP plans to work with WMA staff again this coming year to collect additional samples for the study.

The FWC WTMP also provided assistance during the winter of 2012-2013 to FWC researchers who are conducting a short-term study investigating the diet of coyotes in urban and rural landscapes in Florida. Coyote presence in Florida has led to some debate regarding the species' effect on native wildlife, particularly deer and turkey populations. The study is two-fold in purpose: 1) determine what percentage of coyotes' diet is made up of wild turkey, with particular focus during the nesting season, and 2) determine the role of human-derived food sources (such as garbage and pet foods) in coyote diets. Unlike most past diet studies, which analyzed waste samples, this study is analyzing stomach contents, which should provide a better indication of coyote diets (particularly easily-digestible human-derived sources) because samples are collected prior to complete digestion. Preliminary sorting of contents from roughly 90 stomachs was completed last winter. Mammals (usually small and medium-sized ones such as mice, rats and squirrels), vegetation (grass), and insects were the most commonly occurring food items. Although a few stomachs contained bird remains, to date no wild turkey remains (including egg shells) have been observed. Collection of coyote stomach samples will continue for another year.

Planning is also under way on a multi-year, multi-faceted research project being conducted in coordination with FWC's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute—Upland Game Bird Program and the Tall Timbers Research Station. This endeavor began with an interest in documenting the breeding chronology of wild turkeys in Florida to better inform decisions related to timing of spring hunting seasons. Staff plans to use radio telemetry to acquire nesting behavior information, and given the opportunities afforded by the use of telemetry, have sought to expand the project to make full use of the equipment and obtain information on several other high-priority topics. In addition to investigating the breeding chronology, cooperators propose to use radio-transmittered turkeys to also study the practice of providing supplemental feed to quail and its effect on wild turkey movement and behavior patterns, to test a population estimation technique utilizing thermal imagery, and to obtain estimates of mortality and survival rates of male and female wild turkeys. The WTMP will use information gained from this study to better manage statewide turkey populations and associated hunting opportunities.

Since 2006, NWTF National Technical Committee members have documented a declining trend in reproductive output from wild turkeys in other parts of the southeastern U.S. In several states these declines have been followed by declines in wild turkey population indices and harvest estimates. These declines, which in some states have been rather severe, prompted collaborative efforts of the member states comprising the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' Wild Turkey Working Group to investigate this decline. The intent of this work is ultimately to identify possible causes of the declines and, thus, to better guide future management. Because of the potential for these declines to impact Florida's wild turkey populations, the FWC WTMP, which represents Florida on this working group, is involved with this effort that began in 2012. Along with the other southeastern states, the FWC WTMP committed to contribute financially ($8,700 for two years) to the study and has worked with the principle

investigators to provide historical wild turkey population data, harvest estimates, and any other relevant information available for Florida.

PROGRAM DIRECTION

To further expand wild turkey management efforts throughout Florida, a cooperative wild turkey biologist position was established through a partnership contract beginning in 2006 among FWC, the United States Forest Service, and the NWTF. The contract for that position expired near the end of Fiscal Year 2011-2012 and was renewed for another 3-year term. Due to the success of this initial cooperative position, another partnership contract was executed in 2008 between FWC, the Florida Division of Forestry (now the Florida Forest Service), and the NWTF for a second cooperative wild turkey biologist to further promote and achieve the mission of the FWC WTMP. This second position was established in part to promote habitat and forest restoration work on State forests. The contract for this position was recently renewed and runs through March 2016. The NWTF serves as the employer for both of these positions and provides the necessary funding to complete work on the ground; however, the multiple partners coordinate closely on the development of an annual work plan and provide specific oversight for accomplishment of defined activities during Steering Committee meetings held bi-annually. The FWC WTMP works to incorporate priority items identified in Florida's 10-year strategic plan for wild turkey management into the annual work plans for each of these positions. Foremost, these positions are used to promote improved turkey habitat management on private lands, through both their involvement with workshops and by providing individual landowner assistance. This past year, site visits by the cooperative wild turkey biologists provided habitat management recommendations impacting a combined 10,312 acres of private land. Another priority area in which the cooperative biologists have been directed to focus is promotion of the hunting heritage, especially among youth and young hunters. As one aspect of meeting this objective, the cooperative biologists provide assistance to the Youth Hunting Program of Florida, an FWC-sponsored program designed to introduce young people to the sport of hunting through safe, mentored hunts. This past year the cooperative biologists helped conduct Hunt Master training for 15 adults (where the adults were taught how to run a program-sponsored hunt) and assisted with five youth hunts, participated in by 43 young hunters.

FWC maintains a Wild Turkey Standing Team composed of FWC staff as well as associate members from the NWTF. This team provides input and assistance to ongoing program activities and emerging issues, and specific tasks are assigned as appropriate. The team's ongoing efforts are primarily guided by the priority tasks and the implementation schedule outlined in the 10-year Strategic Plan for Wild Turkey Management which they completed writing during Fiscal Year 2007-2008.

The goal of the wild turkey strategic plan is to "Ensure healthy and sustainable wild turkey populations throughout the State while providing and promoting compatible uses of the resource." All of the efforts discussed in this report are undertaken to work toward achieving that goal. The FWC WTMP will continue to provide excellent customer service, increase positive contacts with conservation organizations, develop additional partnerships, and provide quality hunting areas, all of which benefit wild turkeys and the citizens of the State of Florida.

Table 1. Wildlife Management Area projects funded through the FWC/NWTF cost-share program during Fiscal Year 2012-2013 (WMA = Wildlife Management Area, WEA = Wildlife and Environmental Area, SF = State Forest, NF = National Forest)

Location	Project Description	FWC/NWTF Cost-share Funding	Other Cooperator Funding
Apalachicola River WEA	Purchase of Roller Chopper	$10,000	$10,000
OK Slough WMA/SF	Native Community Restoration	$13,000	$17,100
L. Kirk Edwards WEA	Native Community Restoration	$5,110	$11,530
Big Bend WMA	Mowing/Roller Chopping	$5,000	$15,100
Lake George WMA/SF - Dexter/Mary Farms Unit	Mechanical Treatment	$5,500	$2,050
Box R WMA	Mowing	$5,000	$7,000
Big Bend WMA	Gates	$10,890	$13,386
Big Bend WMA	Tree/Shrub Planting	$1,700	$3,475
Camp Blanding WMA	Prescribed Burning	$2,675	$5,000
Blackwater WMA/SF - Hutton Unit	Wildlife Plantings	$10,919	$35,148
Apalachee WMA	Wildlife Plantings	$3,420	$23,750
Big Cypress WMA	Outdoor Displays	$1,200	$839
Green Swamp West Unit WMA Unit WMA	Roller Chopping	$10,000	$10,000
Apalachicola River WEA	Mechanical Treatment	$13,500	$10,000
Chassowitzka WMA	Mowing/Disking	$7,000	$15,000
Apalachicola River WEA	Wildlife Plantings/ Drip Torches	$4,000	$10,000
Blackwater WMA/SF	Wildlife Plantings	$15,271	$31,008
Pine Log WMA/SF	Wildlife Plantings	$14,400	$21,700
Green Swamp WMA	Mowing	$10,500	$2,000
Blackwater WMA/SF - Kennedy Tract	Wildlife Plantings	$7,978	$2,265
Dinner Island Ranch WMA	Exotic Plant Control	$9,160	$10,550
Spirit of the Wild WMA	Tree/Shrub Planting	$11,580	$8,012
J.W. Corbett WMA	Prescribed Burning	$3,000	$14,996
Wakulla WMA/SF	Wildlife Plantings	$3,235	$3,828
Point Washington WMA/SF	Wildlife Plantings	$8,300	$10,900
Juniper Creek WMA	Wildlife Plantings	$4,080	$10,400
Hilochee WMA	Wildlife Plantings	$7,000	$5,000
Belmore WMA/SF	Wildlife Plantings	$4,100	$4,840
Raiford WMA	Wildlife Plantings	$550	$1,000
Blackwater WMA/SF - Juniper Tract	Wildlife Plantings	$2,150	$18,256
J.W. Corbett WMA	Palmetto Reduction	$14,500	$8,000
Apalachicola WMA/NF	Wildlife Plantings	$11,475	$11,000
Green Swamp West Unit WMA	Camera Survey	$600	$1,500
Hilochee WMA	Prescribed Burning Equipment	$7,000	$15,000
Hilochee WMA	Mowing	$7,000	$5,000
Raiford WMA	Mowing	$7,000	$1,500
Tate's Hell WMA/SF	Wildlife Plantings	$14,700	$15,000
Twin Rivers WMA/SF	Wildlife Plantings	$3,500	$1,500
OK Slough WMA/SF	Swamp Buggy Repair	$8,000	$7,500
Blackwater WMA/SF and Yellow River WMA	Wildlife Plantings	$3,420	$5,008
Hilochee WMA	Fireline Maintenance	$10,000	$2,000
Big Shoals WMA	Wildlife Plantings	$2,000	$1,000
Osceola WMA/NF and John Bethea WMA/SF	Wildlife Plantings	$15,000	$1,000
Apalachicola WMA/NF	Wildlife Plantings	$15,060	$9,300
Hungryland WEA	Palmetto Reduction	$17,500	$18,000
Blackwater WMA/SF	Wildlife Plantings	$1,930	$800
Camp Blanding WMA	Wildlife Plantings	$3,850	$2,500
Richloam WMA/SF	Wildlife Plantings	$3,120	$0

Table 1. Continued.

Location	Project Description	FWC/NWTF Cost-share Funding	Other Cooperator Funding
Camp Blanding WMA	Turkey Survey	$1,500	$500
Choctawhatchee River WMA	Prescribed Burning	$5,000	$0
Four Creeks WMA/SF	Wildlife Plantings	$2,125	$3,480
Four Creeks WMA/SF	Stump Removal	$4,720	$1,216
Dinner Island Ranch WMA	Repairs and Burning Equipment	$2,840	$0
Hilochee WMA	Exotic Plant Control	$7,000	$0
J.W. Corbett WMA	Planting Equipment	$8,300	$5,000
Lake Woodruff NWR	Wildlife Plantings	$500	$0
Blackwater WMA/SF - Hutton Unit	Exotic Plant Control	$5,812	$0
OK Slough WMA/SF	Prescribed Burning Equipment	$300	$0
OK Slough WMA/SF	Exotic Plant Control	$1,500	$0
	TOTAL	**$395,470**	**$449,937**
	GRAND TOTAL	**$845,407**	

Table 2. Spring turkey season harvest estimates and upper and lower values from mail survey with 95% confidence limits (The true harvest is within these numbers with 95% certainty.)

Year	Estimated Harvest	95% Confidence Limits
1988	15,774	12,249 - 19,298
1989	17,245	15,518 - 18,972
1990	16,173	14,463 - 17,883
1991	15,675	11,647 - 19,701
1992	10,897	9,786 - 12,007
1993	12,569	10,938 - 14,201
1994	14,237	12,487 - 15,988
1995[a]	-	-
1996	15,067	13,624 - 16,510
1997	19,358	18,185 - 20,531
1998	23,419	21,546 - 25,291
1999	21,613	19,687 - 23,538
2000[b]	15,446	14,749 - 16,144
2001	14,214	13,571 - 14,856
2002	15,495	14,814 - 16,176
2003	15,509	14,752 - 16,265
2004	17,241	16,529 - 17,953
2005[c]	25,057	23,521 - 26,593
2006	21,507	20,366 - 22,648
2007	24,353	23,391 - 25,315
2008	27,296	25,930 - 28,662
2009	25,859	24,705 - 27,014
2010	23,821	22,578 - 25,065
2011	23,006	21,827 - 24,185
2012	21,005	19,873 - 22,136
2013[d]	-	-

[a] A mail survey was not conducted.
[b] The survey instrument was substantially changed, thus the harvest estimate is not readily comparable to previous years.
[c] The survey was conducted through Florida State University using scan forms that resulted in data interpretation errors; the results may not be comparable to other years.
[d] Data is not yet available.

Table 3. Harvest, hunter pressure (hunter-days), and hunter success (number of days of hunting effort per turkey harvested) for Special Opportunity Turkey Hunts for the 2013 spring turkey season.

Wildlife Management Area	Harvest	Hunter Pressure	Hunter Success
Dexter/Mary Farms WMA	25	128	5.1
Fisheating Creek WMA	14	81	5.8
Ft. Drum WMA	10	29	2.9
Green Swamp West WMA	32	347	10.8
Homosassa WMA	5	26	5.2
Lake Panasoffkee WMA	6	73	12.2
Triple N Ranch WMA	23	98	4.3
Overall	**115**	**782**	**6.8**[a]

[a] This number represents the total combined pressure divided by total combined harvest for all listed WMAs.