

**Information to the commission about turkey harvest in 2018  
in Beaverhead, Jefferson and Madison Counties**

May 28, 2019

In their April 30, 2019 letter, the Public Lands/Water Access Association, Inc. (PLWAA), asked the Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission to "... consider a drawing for turkeys in the fall, a shot gun season for gobblers or even closing the fall season entirely" because of their expressed concern about the number of turkeys observed this spring. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks offers the following analysis of the effects of such actions.

Overall, as shown in the table below, few turkeys are harvested in the fall as hunters are typically pursuing other game. In the 10,308-square-mile three-county area considered here, only 34 male and 16 female turkeys were harvested during fall 2018. It is unlikely that any of the actions proposed by PLWAA for fall 2019 would have a measurable or noticeable effect on the number of turkeys in the population in spring 2020.

Wild turkey harvest in 2018 in Beaverhead, Jefferson and Madison Counties, Region 3 and the state.

Area	Total	Males		Total	Females
		Spring	Fall		Fall
Beaverhead Co.	12	9	3	12	0
Jefferson Co.	18	15	3	18	0
Madison Co.	117	71	28	98	16
3 Counties Combined	147	95	34	129	16
Region_3	510	310	108	417	86
State	5365	3270	1129	4399	795

While FWP biologists in the three-county area do not do regular turkey surveys, some make note of flocks they see while doing other survey work. Their observations to date are on par with past years. Moreover, like other upland birds, turkeys are very productive, and hunting is seldom a population driver.

The PLWAA letter refers to the commission's "... consideration of our concerns prior to the printing of the fall regulations." Turkey regulations are not printed in the fall. The regulations for both spring and fall seasons are in one document printed in February, separate from the upland game bird regulations. Changing the fall 2019 turkey regulations after the printed regulations have been in the public's hands for 4 months would lead to confusion among hunters regardless of FWP's efforts to inform hunters. FWP has recommended such changes in the past for other species when deemed necessary for the health of a population, but this is not such a case.