

# **Turkey Stamp Projects Summary for Fiscal Years 1996-2003 The First Eight Years**



**2003 Turkey Stamp Design by Greg Alexander**



# **Turkey Stamp Projects Summary for Fiscal Years 1996-2003**

## **The First Eight Years**

A key role in the success of the wild turkey management program can be attributed to hunters through their purchase of the Wild Turkey Stamp which provides vital financial support in providing for future opportunities for turkey management and hunting in Wisconsin. Since wild turkeys were first successfully reintroduced into Wisconsin in 1976, population levels have increased and expanded statewide. Successful restoration of the wild turkey resulted from tremendous hunter and landowner support, good survival, and high quality habitat.

Turkey stamp funds have been providing opportunities for turkey management in Wisconsin since 1995. All turkey hunters are required to purchase the \$5.25 turkey stamp to legally hunt turkeys in Wisconsin. Sale of the turkey stamp currently brings in over \$400,000 annually for turkey stamp projects. Besides hunters purchasing the turkey stamp, many stamp collectors also purchase the turkey stamp. Turkey stamp funds are used for developing, managing, conserving, restoring, and maintaining the wild turkey population within the state. The purpose of proposed projects must address goals and objectives described in the wild turkey management plan.

### **ALLOCATION**

Money from the turkey stamp program is available to DNR personnel, government, and non-government partners. To receive turkey stamp funds a project proposal must be submitted. The proposals include a project description, cost of the project, partner contributions, and the requested amount from turkey stamp funds. Applicants are encouraged to have cost sharing. Cost sharing with partner groups and other government services has allowed for turkey stamp funds to be distributed to more projects.

Once project proposals are received, the WDNR turkey management committee reviews the projects and decides on recommended distributions. Recommended allocations receive final approval from the Wildlife Policy Team. Project review and funding takes place every two years, during the biennial budget process. At the end of the biennium, any unspent money will lapse back to the turkey stamp account. An interim accomplishment report is required after the first year, and at the end of the biennium a final accomplishment report is submitted. The accomplishment report outlines the costs of the project, the progress of the project, and also includes the number of acres affected by the project. This is a summary of accomplishments from fiscal years 1996-2003.

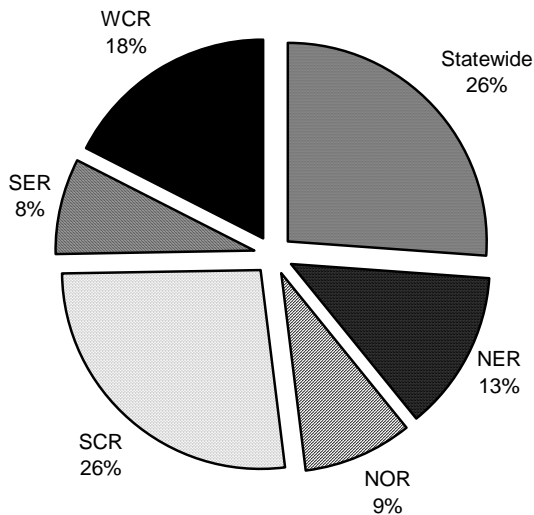
### **COST SHARING**

Cost sharing is an important part of turkey stamp allotments. Wisconsin's turkey stamp program has been very effective at fostering cooperative relationships with non-profit, conservation, private landowners, government, and non-governmental organizations. Partnerships with these organizations are beneficial because they stretch the amount of turkey stamp dollars allowing more projects to be funded. In addition, partnering also encourages public interest in conservation and natural resources and involves local user groups in actual habitat work. Therefore, projects that propose a portion of their total cost funded by an outside cooperating local conservation organization are given priority. Future uses of turkey stamp funds must include expansion of these partnerships. From FY1996 to FY2003 a total of 1.4 million was contributed in cost shared dollars. The majority of these dollars came from the Wisconsin Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf) in matching funds.

# Highlights from Eight Years of Turkey Stamp Fund Spending

Since FY1996, the first year Wisconsin's turkey stamp funds were available, over 360 projects have been funded benefiting Wisconsin's wild turkey. Allocated money from the turkey stamp exceeds \$2.7 million dollars, matched by \$1.4 million in partner funds, affecting over 81,000 acres of both public and private lands.

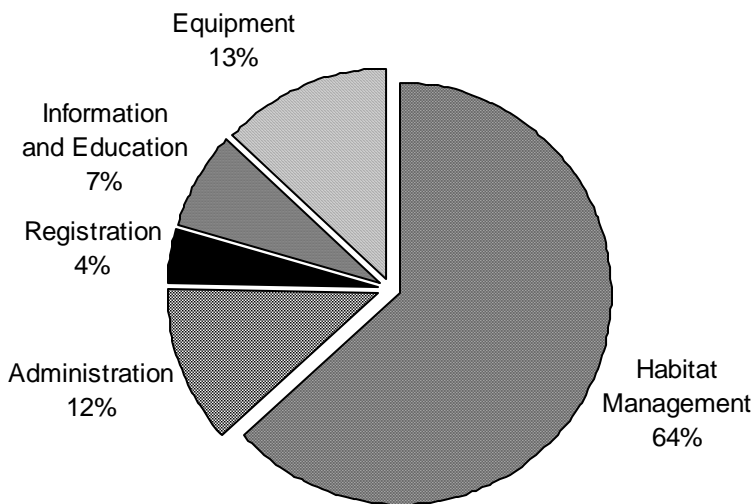
**Figure 1. Percent of Turkey Stamp Dollars Allocated by Region for FY1996-2003**



The percentages of allocated funds from FY1996 through FY2003 were broken down into five regional categories shown by figure 1. Statewide and south central region consisted of the largest percentage of allocated funds, 26%. Statewide funds are annually funded projects that cover several areas in the state, such as burning of state natural areas or creation of educational publications.

Funds were also divided into four main categories emphasizing type of work completed. Categories shown by figure 2 include equipment purchases, information and education, administration, and habitat management. Habitat management projects received the majority of funding, approximately 64%.

**Figure 2. Type of Work Completed with Turkey Stamp Dollars from FY 1996-2003**



## ADMINISTRATION:

Of the type of work completed with Turkey Stamp dollars, administration accounted for approximately 12% of the overall allocation. The majority of administrative work occurs in the central office. This includes tasks such as responding to the public, preparing news releases, creating and updating publications, research priorities, setting permit levels, printing and mailing of permits and regulations, registration payments to cooperators, printing of factsheets and stamp, and coordination of the wild turkey stamp fund. This also includes funding for a central office assistant. Duties include scheduling, preparing, and distributing materials to the wild turkey committee, as well as coordinating the spring and fall turkey hunting seasons.

*Accomplishments include:*

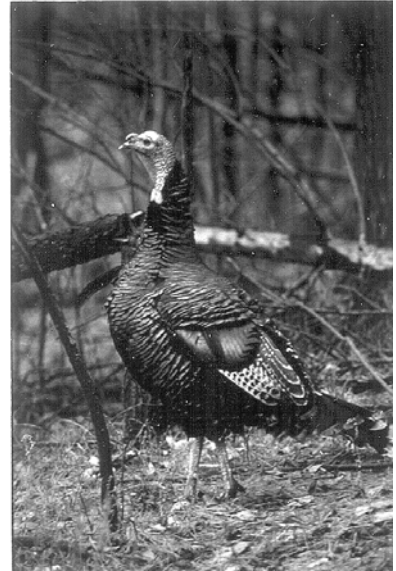
**Statewide turkey registration-** *Turkey registration has been mandatory since the first spring hunt in 1983. Starting in FY1996 funds from the turkey stamp were allocated to cover the costs of turkey registration. Turkey registration is mandatory and registration is done through cooperating businesses that get reimbursed \$.35 for every turkey they register. The information collected in this process is used to estimate the size and status of the turkey population and for setting future permit levels. Since turkey hunting started a total of 1.3 million spring turkey permits have been issued and over 594,000 fall permits. A total of 439,242 turkeys have been registered in Wisconsin.*

## **HABITAT MANAGEMENT:**

Successful restoration of wild turkeys in Wisconsin shows that turkeys can adapt to a variety of habitats. However, wild turkeys do require several basic habitat components to survive including a dependable food source, quality roosting sites, nesting cover, and suitable places to rear young. Because oak forests are a key habitat component for turkeys and many other wildlife species, responsible management of this resource is critical.

Habitat management projects funded by the wild turkey stamp enhance habitat suitable for wild turkeys on public and private lands. This category also includes money used to fund turkey management personnel and private landowner assistance. Approximately 1.7 million or 64% of allocated funds were devoted to habitat enhancement.

Examples of habitat work includes cutting or spraying of other tree species to encourage oak regeneration; planting of trees, shrubs, and native grasses; prescribed burning; and mowing.



*Accomplishments include:*

### **Bong Recreational Area turkey habitat restoration**

*Turkey Stamp Dollars along with an additional money from National Wild Turkey Federation and DNR Forestry helped to accomplish turkey habitat restoration on a former share-crop field. Forty acres were cleared of undesirable brush including aggressive boxelder through shearing, cutting, and burning. Approximately 24,000 trees were machine planted consisting of red, white, bur, and swamp white oak, green ash, walnut, and white pine. Follow-up herbicide and brush and grass control was completed.*

### **Burning on State Natural Areas**

*A total of 2,893 acres on State Natural Areas were maintained during FY2001-2003 as part of an oak savanna restoration effort. Efforts included clearing and removal of invasive understory woody species as buckthorn, honeysuckle, cherry, as well as canopy thinning. After brush removal prescribed burning will be planned on these areas annually for a number of years to help in controlling invasive species. Additional partner funds were gained through the Bureau of Endangered Resources, the National Wild Turkey Federation, as well as other conservation grant programs.*

### **A habitat development project-Greenwood Wildlife Area**

*Turkey stamp dollars along with funds from the National Wild Turkey Federation and the USF&WS helped in the completion of a restoration project benefiting wild turkeys on the Greenwood Wildlife Area in Waushara County. From 1994 to 1998 significant efforts to restore the area to a prairie and oak savanna occurred. During 1997 and 1998, Dave Neu secured \$13,600 from turkey stamp funds for the restoration efforts. The project involved planting approximately 504 acres to native grasses (such as*

*Indian grass and little bluestem) and wildflowers (such as purple coneflower and stiff goldenrod). Acorns were collected from surrounding area and brought to State Nursery in Wisconsin Rapids where they were grown for 2 years. Once the seedlings starting to grow they were planted in random clumps on a portion of the prairie, secured by tree tubes. The property now has a slight grade from oak forest to open prairie. Approximately 96 acres of tillable land remains in agriculture to provide food plots for turkeys and geese throughout the winter. The site was also designated as a federal recovery site for Karner blue butterflies, supporting a significant population of the species. The area now has a healthy wild turkey population, and other wildlife is readily abundant on the property.*

### **Maintaining oak and restoring a prairie-Waubesa State Natural Area**

*In 1998, Doris Rusch secured \$7,500 from turkey stamp funds, as well as \$3,000 partner dollars to complete a 100 acre prairie restoration project and maintenance of a small oak woodlot. The site, an old abandoned field, was cleared of woody vegetation with the help of LTE's, WCC crews, work-release prisoner crews, a construction company, and numerous volunteers. Arby construction lent their heavy equipment and manpower to remove and grade about 2 miles of fence line-all of which they did for free. Their hard-working efforts even made local headlines! After clearing, burning, mowing, and applying herbicide to the vegetation they were nearly ready for a prairie planting. The area first would be sharecropped for a few years, then planted to prairie. A seed source has been established from nearby Hook Lake, and the area will eventually be planted to prairie. In addition, maintenance of a small oak woods and wetlands was completed. The area is now an attractive place for turkeys among other wildlife.*

### **EQUIPMENT:**

Equipment purchases play a key role in habitat management. Purchases represent about 13% or approximately \$354,000 of the wild turkey funds used during the past eight years. Each piece of equipment purchased will affect hundreds to thousands of acres of public and private land over its lifetime. Various pieces of equipment have been purchased using turkey stamp funds including: no-till drills, mowers, prescribed burning equipment, ATVs, acorn collectors/planters, and hand planting equipment.

#### *Accomplishments include:*

- ❖ *Statewide eighteen tree planters have been purchased with turkey stamp funds over the past eight years. Tree planters allow a greater amount of trees to be planted in less time. Planters are used on both public and private lands and have greatly increased the amount of trees planted, especially oaks which are beneficial to wild turkeys.*
- ❖ *Eight brush mowers have been purchased and are being used for several different purposes including: maintaining firebreaks, mowing prairie/savanna restoration sites, as well as maintaining access roads and trails.*
- ❖ *Approximately nine forb/grass drills have been purchased for use on both public and private lands. Drills will be used for planting prairies, beneficial to the wild turkey as brood-rearing habitat.*



Photo by Keith Zygowicz, USDA-NRCS- Loading seed drill with prairie grass and forb seeds.

## **INFORMATION & EDUCATION:**

From FY1996 through FY2003 over \$202,000 was allocated for the purpose of education, outreach, and research. This category includes the sponsoring of private lands management seminars designed to promote understanding, development, and management of the components of turkey habitat; educational events related to turkey management and hunting at designated skills centers; and research projects addressing specific issues. In addition several exceptional publications have been funded through turkey stamp funds and partnerships including “The Turkey Hunter’s Guide”, “Managing Your Land for Wild Turkeys”, and “Wild Turkey Ecology and Management in Wisconsin”. Funds also allow for sponsoring of the annual turkey hunter education clinics. Clinics focus on teaching safety, ethics, and turkey conservation to hunters.

*Accomplishments include:*

### **Turkey hunter education clinics**

*Wisconsin has had a safe turkey hunting record with very few hunting accidents most in part due to the outreach efforts of hunter safety, low hunter densities, and turkey hunter education clinics. Free turkey hunter education clinics are held statewide every spring, led by volunteer instructors. Instructors review turkey biology and management, hunting methods, regulations, hunter ethics, safety, and stress good hunter-landowner relations. Approximately 40 turkey hunter clinics are held statewide, with total annual attendance reaching around 2,000 persons.*

### **Annual turkey hunter questionnaire**

*Every spring and fall a questionnaire is sent to a random selection of turkey hunters. This questionnaire monitors hunter participation in the season, hunter methods, kill methods, attitudes toward interference, and hunter satisfaction. Valuable information about hunter attitude and satisfaction is gained through these annual surveys.*



## **SUMMARY:**

Wild turkey stamp funds have been used in a variety of ways to manage and enhance turkey habitat and populations. The use of these funds helped create and restore countless acres of woodlands and grasslands resulting in expansion of the wild turkey population and the hunting tradition. Thanks to hunters, landowners, the National Wild Turkey Federation, partner groups, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and other individuals who worked together on these conservation efforts, the wild turkey stamp has had a very successful first eight years. Effects from purchase of the wild turkey stamp will only continue to grow in future years.