



**Wild Turkey Status and Management**  
**Kelsey Sullivan – MDIFW Game Bird Biologist**

# Wild Turkey – Species Planning

- Review most recent (2002) Management System - Goals and Objectives and progress towards these to date
- Review Future Management –
  - Set New Goals and Objectives
  - Address Emerging Issues

## **Goal for 2002 – 2015**

**Increase the size and distribution of the wild turkey population within all suitable habitat in Maine.**

**Objective 1:** By 2010, increase the size and distribution of the wild turkey population within all suitable habitat in Maine via trap and transfer activities.

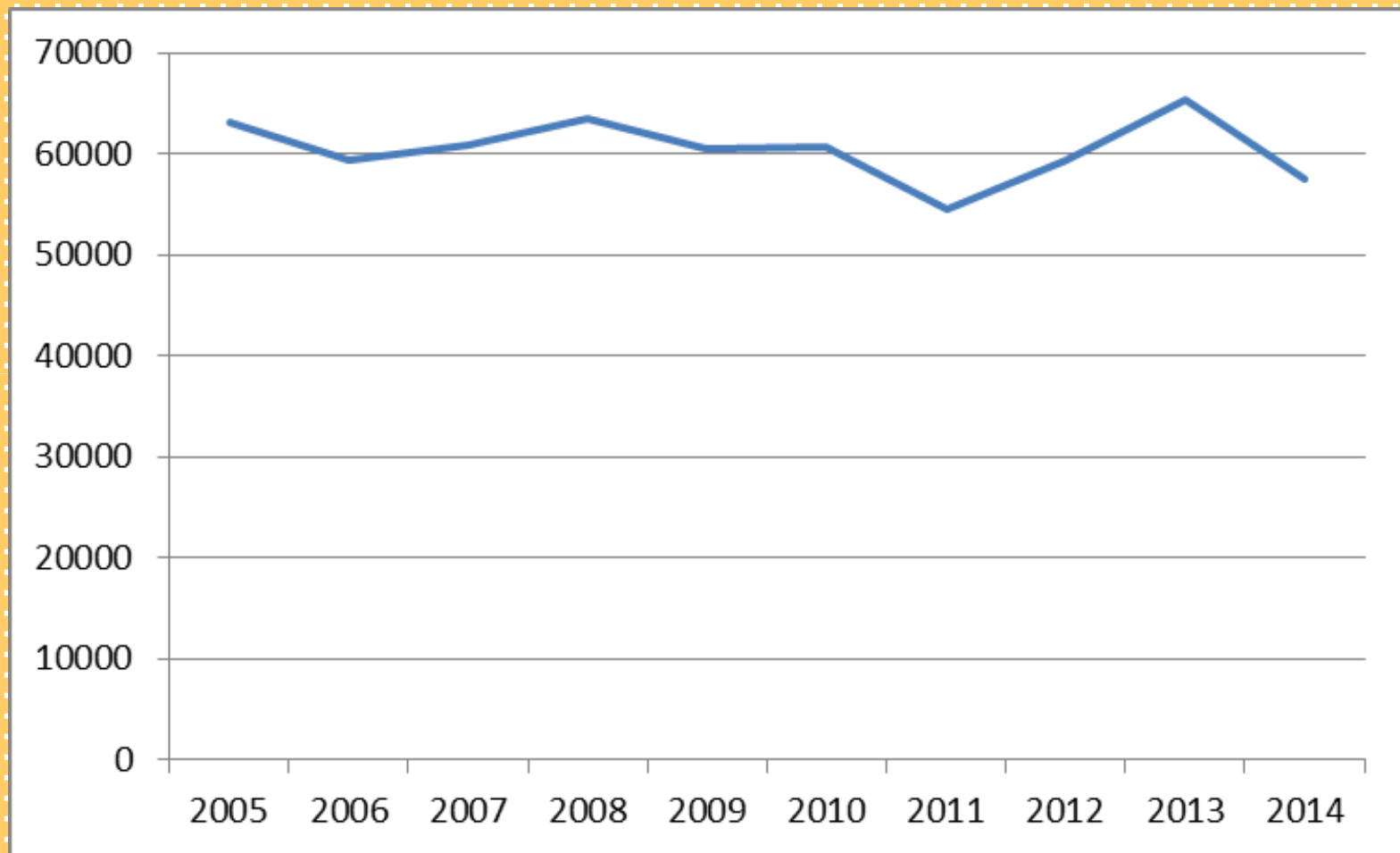
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– Wild turkeys now in all Maine Counties

# Maine's Wild Turkey Population

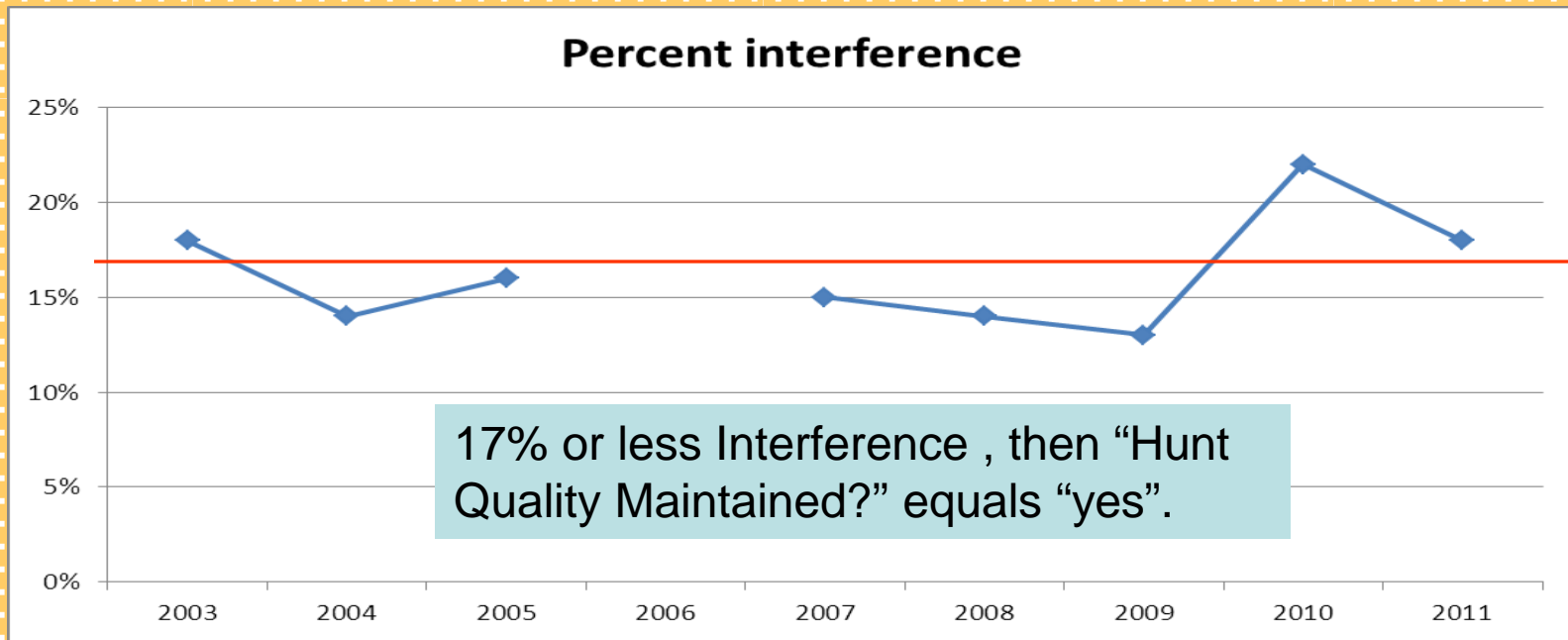
- Estimated population from 2005 to 2014



**Objective 2:** ...unlimited spring hunting opportunity as long as the wild turkey population can support it and current (2000) hunt quality is maintained.

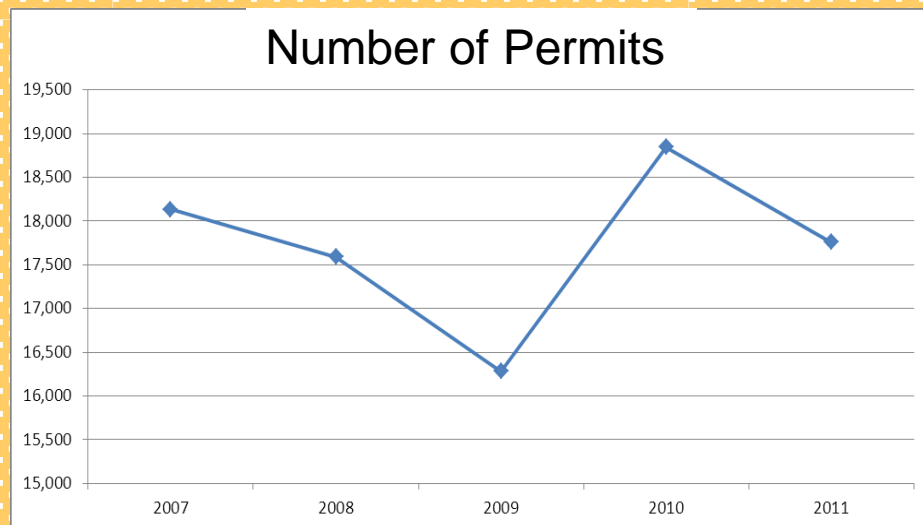
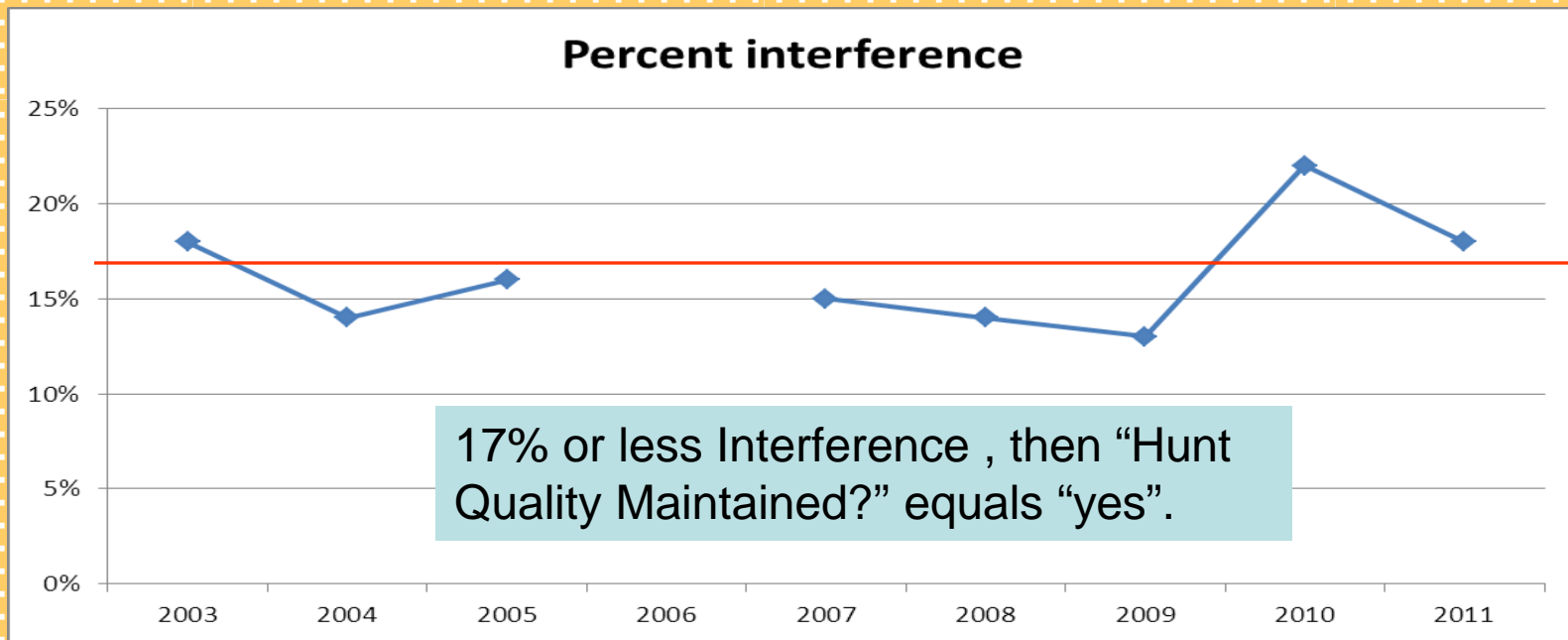
**“Quality” hunt = hearing, seeing, working, and hopefully harvesting a turkey without interference from others.**

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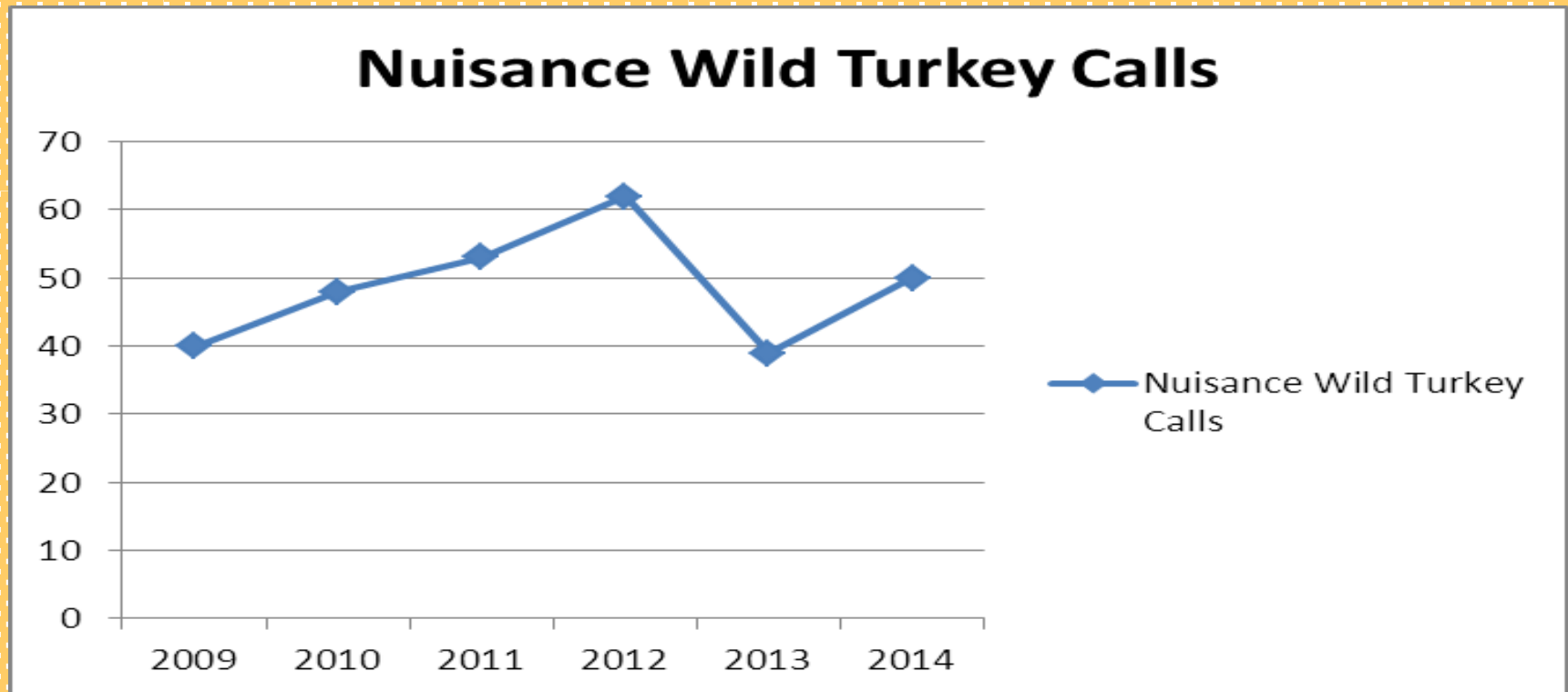


**Objective 3:** By 2002, develop a component to the Department's Nuisance Wildlife Policy to addresses wild turkeys.

**Non-lethal means are initiated and tried prior to any lethal take.**

**Title 12: Chapter 921; section 12401, pages 910 – 916.**

**12 §12401. ATTACKING DOMESTIC ANIMALS OR DESTROYING PROPERTY**  
allows for killing of wild turkey under certain damage scenarios



# Wild Turkey Foraging Behavior and Crop Depredation on Wild Blueberry Farms in Maine

- Survey showed most blueberry growers are concerned about damage from wild turkeys.
- Study results
  - Turkeys in blueberry fields during the pre-fruiting season more than the fruiting season (37% more in 2008 and 42% in 2009).
  - 90% of wild turkey diet was foods other than from the wild blueberry plants during the pre-fruiting season.
  - 50% of the wild turkey diet was wild blueberries during the fruiting season but wild turkey use of fields was low.
  - Found very little use of blueberry fields during fruiting season by Hens with broods.
  - Exception: small blueberry farms (<5 ha)

# Wild Turkey Interaction with Agriculture Study

- Investigated the incidence of disease in wild and domestic turkeys near dairy farms
- Salmonella was a big concern for dairy farmers

## Results:

- We confirmed what NH found – low incidence of Salmonella
- 8% of wild turkeys were positive for the Salmonella antibody, 9% in domestic

**Objective 4:** By 2003, implement a limited fall hunting season in areas where the wild turkey population can support it without adversely affecting Objective 2 (unlimited, quality spring hunt).

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Achieved – **2002** First fall bow season  
**2007** 6 day shotgun season in addition to bow  
**2013** Shotgun season extended to 1 month

**Objective 5: Develop a cooperative (*on-going*) habitat improvement program between landowners, the Maine Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf) , and Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IFW).**

- Planning  
IFW technical representation on state NWTf board  
IFW Farm Bill Coordinator
- Outreach  
State Chapters and landowners coordinate with IFW regional biologists
- Implementation  
Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program - WHIP  
Workshop/training days for landowners working with NWTf and IFW  
NWTf Biologists providing Forest Management Plans

## 2002 to 2015 Plan Summary:

- **Allow continued population growth** ✓
- **Protect and enhance spring gobbler hunting opportunities**
  - measured by high harvests ✓
  - high success rates ✓
  - low apparent interference ?
- **Provide additional recreation by allowing limited fall hunting opportunity** ✓
- **Address nuisance issues – ongoing and adaptive** ✓



# Accomplishments Time Line

- **2000: Wild Turkey Assessment updated**
- **2001: Wild Turkey Management Goals and Objectives established for 2000-2015**
- **2001: Number of hunting permits expanded; A/B seasons established**
- **2002: Number of hunting permits expanded; 2 week Fall archery season established**
- **2002: IFW Nuisance Wildlife Policy adapted to specifically address Wild Turkeys**
- **2003: Number of hunting permits expanded; Electronic calls legal, Landowner privilege**
- **2004: Number of hunting permits expanded, 5 week season, zone expanded, Youth Day**
- **2005: Number of hunting permits = number of hunters**
- **2006: Unlimited hunt, zone expanded; 4 week archery season in some WMDs**
- **2006: Southern Aroostook Wild Turkey Working Group established**
- **2007: Fall 6-day shotgun season established**
- **2008-2009: Wild Turkey/blueberry depredation study conducted by J. Huebner**
- **2009: A/B spring hunting season structure removed; archery zone expanded**
- **2010: Bag limits changed; 2 bird spring & 1 bird fall; second spring bird = \$20, no youth permit**
- **2012: Wild Turkey/Agriculture (Dairy) and disease study**
- **2014: 2 Birds in Spring, 2 in Fall = single \$20 permit, All day spring hunt**
- **2015: A/B season in WMD 1-6**

# Harvest Management Beyond 2015

- More precise population monitoring is desirable
  - Beyond relying on harvest as the Index
    - Brood surveys
    - Weather affects production
    - Harvest
    - Hunter effort
- Assess other mortality factors
  - Disease investigations
  - Continually improve the game tagging process

# 2015 and Beyond (cont.)

- Continue efforts to manage nuisance turkey problems using all management tools available
- Develop a statistically valid spring wild turkey hunter survey.



Hampden, ME 7/11/08: V.P. Reynolds photo