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April 21, 2020

MDIFW NEWS: Governor, Commissioner Open Turkey Season Early, Temporarily Suspend Registration Requirement For Spring Season Only

AUGUSTA, Maine - In order to provide more opportunity for both youth and adult turkey hunters and abide by current executive orders, Commissioner Judy Camuso with the support of Governor Janet Mills, will open the turkey season early, providing hunters with additional days to hunt this spring season, and will also suspend the requirement to register your harvested turkey.

"The extra days will provide hunters with more opportunities to enjoy one of Maine's most popular hunts, and the temporary suspension of the registration requirement ensures that all involved in Maines turkey hunt will do their part to keep Maine safe during this unprecedented time," said Judy Camuso, Commissioner of the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. Under the revised season framework, youth hunters will now get two youth hunting days, Saturday April 25 and Monday, April 27 instead of only May 2. The regular season for all turkey hunters will now start on Saturday, May 2, instead of Monday, May 4. This will give youth hunters and adult hunters each an extra day to hunt, and will start the season earlier. The season will conclude as scheduled on June 6, 2020.

In order to comply with the governors executive order requiring social distancing, the requirement to register your harvested turkey will also be suspended for the spring season only. While biologists gather vital information about harvest numbers and turkey population health through the registration, this temporary, one-time suspension of the tagging requirement is not expected to have any long term impacts on the turkey population health. All other current bag limits, license and permit requirements apply.

Temporarily removing the requirement to register turkeys during the spring season will be a challenge when it comes to determining the harvest, said Nate Webb, Wildlife Division Director for MDIFW, Fortunately we have captured and banded a large number of turkeys for the Departments wild turkey study and that will help us generate population estimates in the short term to help manage the turkey population.

In order to try and gather the biological data lost through the suspension of the registration requirement, the department may send all turkey permit holders a post-hunt survey to gather information about how many birds they harvested, their location and other pertinent information.

Hunters are asked to fill out the survey, and also report a banded turkey if they harvest one. Information on how to report the turkey is on the band, including visiting https://wildturkeyme.org/report-a-tag/ (https://wildturkeyme.org/report-a-tag/) or calling 1-844-234-9237.

Turkey hunting continues to grow in popularity, and I hope these extra days of hunting will provide a welcome break during this unique time, said Camuso.

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