Spring Turkey Season Opens May 1 in New Hampshire with Some Changes Due to COVID-19 Including Online Registration

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CONTACT:
Dan Bergeron: (603) 271-1126
Allison Keating: (603) 271-2461

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Eastern Wild Turkey, Photo: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Concord, NH –The Granite State's spring turkey hunt will open on May 1, and run through May 31, with the youth turkey hunt taking place the preceding weekend, Saturday, April 25, and Sunday, April 26, as scheduled. The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department (NHFG) urges hunters to take advantage of the state's weather, woodlands, and natural resources this year with hunting safety in mind and while preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Detailed information regarding the 2020 spring and fall turkey seasons is available at: https://www.wildlife.state.nh.us/hunting/turkey.html.

Because of the health emergency in New Hampshire, hunting locally is recommended and that hunters opt for day trips rather than traveling to camp. Hunters should venture out alone or with immediate family members from the same household only and avoid crowds to maintain the recommended social distance of at least six feet between people. Hunters

must also be aware of the increased number of people recreating in the outdoors this spring—it is more important than ever to be absolutely sure of your target and what lies beyond it. Hunters are strongly encouraged to maximize pre-season scouting and be prepared with back-up locations if their desired spot is busy with other outdoor enthusiasts during the spring turkey season.

NHFG continues to work with many registration locations throughout the state to provide local resources for hunters to register their birds. However, some registration stations may be closed, have limited hours, or be experiencing other restrictions because of the COVID-19 public health emergency. **To ensure that hunters can register their harvest, NHFG has filed an emergency rule with the New Hampshire Legislature that allows for an online registration process for turkeys this spring**.

Hunters who will register their birds online must do so within 24 hours of harvest. The tag that is issued with the hunter's turkey license must be affixed to the bird, and the first harvested bird must be legally registered prior to harvesting a second bird in those Wildlife Management Units where two spring birds are permitted. **Prior to starting the online registration process, hunters should have the following information readily available:**

- Hunting/turkey license information
- License plate number of the vehicle used while hunting
- Town and Wildlife Management Unit where the turkey was harvested
- Sex of the bird
- Age of the bird (adult vs. juvenile)
- Weight of the bird (to the nearest 1/4 pound)
- Beard length (to the nearest 1/4 inch)
- Spur lengths (to the nearest 1/16 inch)

Successful online registration will result in a confirmation page upon completion which must be immediately printed or saved to mobile devices as a screen shot. Hunters must retain a copy of this confirmation as proof that their turkey was legally registered online.

Accurately entered registration data is imperative as the information is relied upon by wildlife biologists and conservation officers who depend upon its accuracy.

For those who will register their spring turkeys online, tips on how to age, weigh, and measure birds can be found at https://www.wildlife.state.nh.us/hunting/turkey-reg.html.

Hunters who choose to register their turkey at local registration stations will find the process has not changed. The same information will be collected as the online registration, however turkeys registered at a check station will continue to receive the official leg seal. Hunters should call ahead to find out if their local registration station will be open this spring and continuing to register turkeys. For a list of all the registration stations in New Hampshire visit: https://wildlife.state.nh.us/hunting/deer-check-stations.html. Due to the rapidly changing nature of the public health emergency, this list may not be up-to-date and hunters are again reminded to call ahead if they choose to register their turkey at a physical station.

No other changes have been made to the spring 2020 turkey season. Bag limit changes initiated in 2019 remain in effect and spring turkey hunters can harvest two male or bearded birds. One bird can be taken statewide and the other may only be taken in **WMUs H1, H2, J2, K, L, or M**. The first bird must be legally registered before another bird can be harvested.

Turkey hunters who harvest a second bird during the spring season forfeit their chance to take a fall bird during either the statewide fall archery season OR during the 7-day fall shotgun season. The fall shotgun season is restricted to **WMUs D2, G, H1, H2, I1, I2, J1, J2, K, L, and M**. The fall season allows for the taking of one bird of either sex.

People who would like to try hunting turkeys this spring and were unable to complete Hunter Education due to class cancellations associated with COVID-19 or for any other reason should consider the Apprentice Hunting License. This license allows those 16 and older interested in trying hunting to do so under the guidance of an experienced hunter without first taking Hunter Education. Learn more at www.huntnh.com/hunting/apprentice.html or call (603) 271-3422 for more information.

A New Hampshire turkey license is required for hunters of all ages ($16 for state residents and $31 for nonresidents). Hunters age 16 and older must hold either a current New Hampshire hunting or archery license and a turkey permit. Licenses are available online at https://www.nhfishandgame.com/ or from license agents that are open at this time. All rules and regulations associated with New Hampshire's spring turkey season remain in effect and will be enforced.

About 20,000 people participate in turkey hunting in New Hampshire out of a total of approximately 60,000 hunters in the state. Last year, spring turkey hunters harvested 5,092 birds. See turkey harvest by town and Wildlife Management Unit in the newly published *2019 NH Wildlife Harvest Summary*, available at www.wildnh.com/hunting/harvest-summary.html (select 2019).

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April 2020

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- September 2019
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- April 2019
- March 2019
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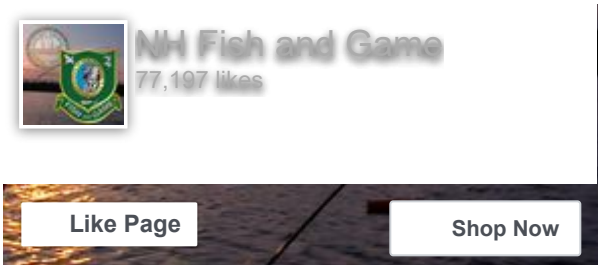

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