



Spring Turkey Season Discussion



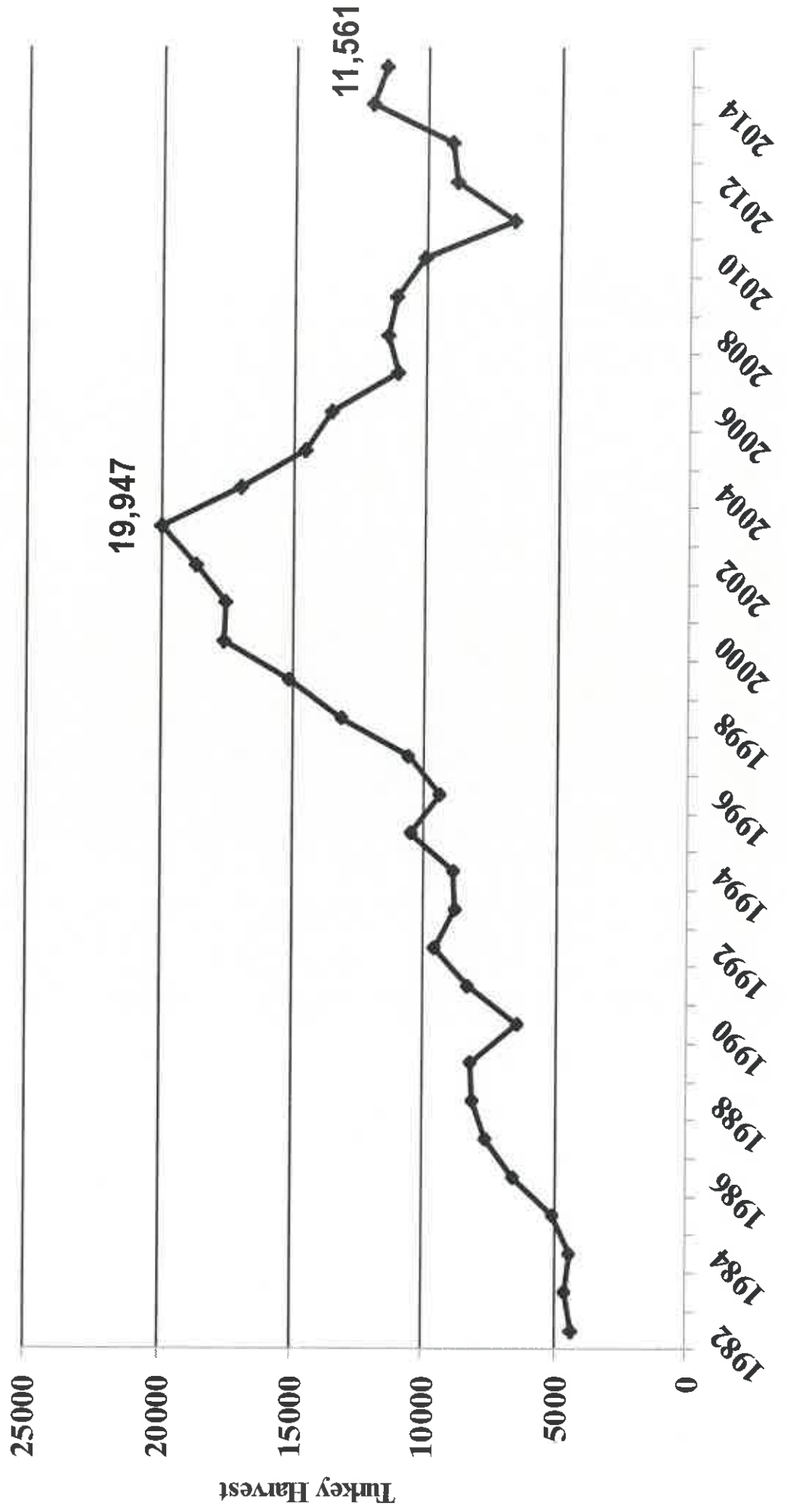


2015 Turkey Harvest

- Total of 11,561 turkeys checked (12,079 in 2014).
- 1,280 turkeys checked during youth hunts, down from 1,319 in 2014.
- Jakes made up 4% of turkeys checked in 2015, same as 2014; 7% in 2013; 5% in 2012; 7% in 2011 and 17% in 2010.
- Fulton County was the leading county with 431 turkeys checked.
- Ozark National Forest WMA was the leading public area with 124 turkeys checked.

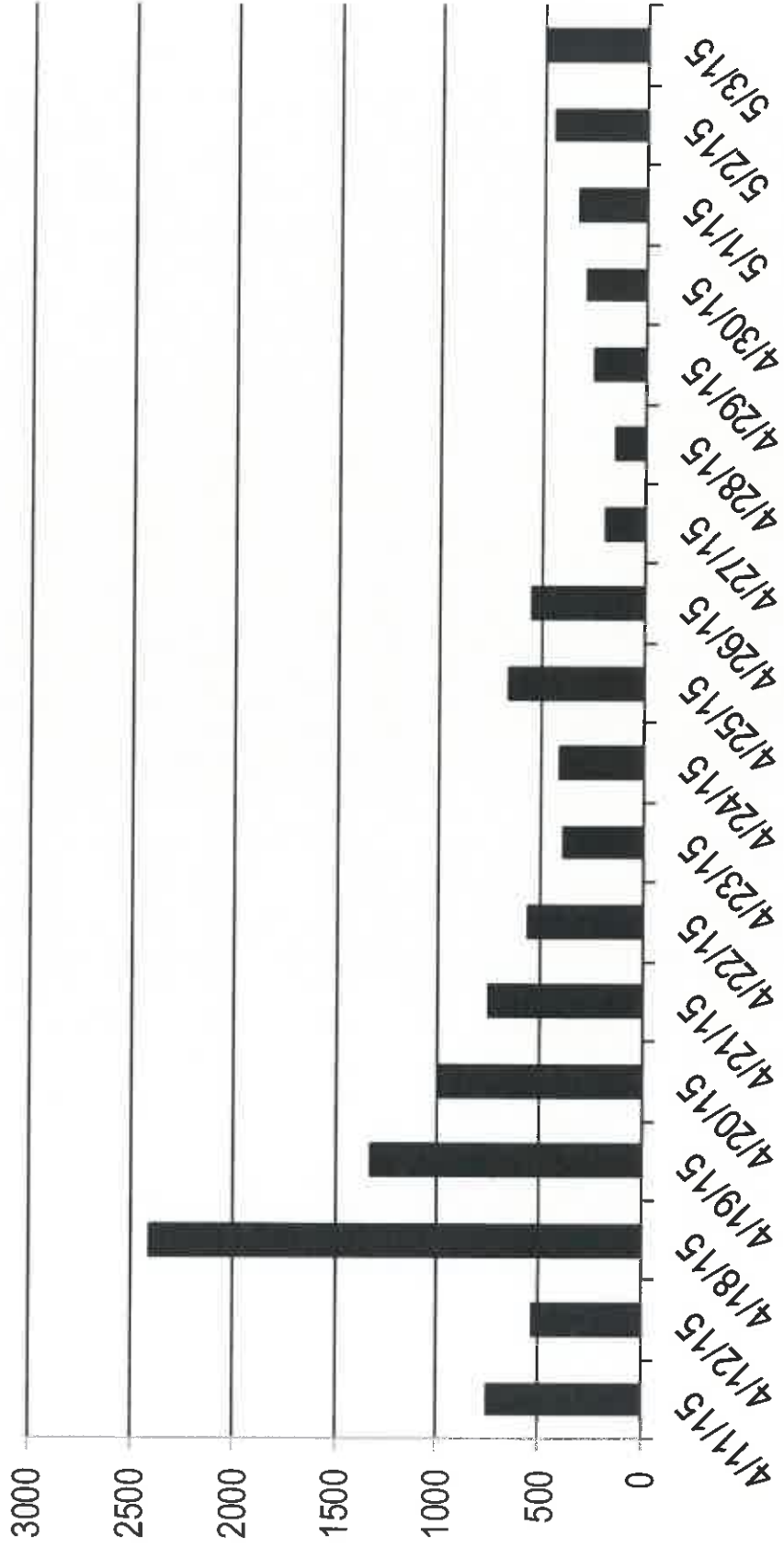


1982-2015 Turkey Harvest





2015 Turkey Harvest by Date



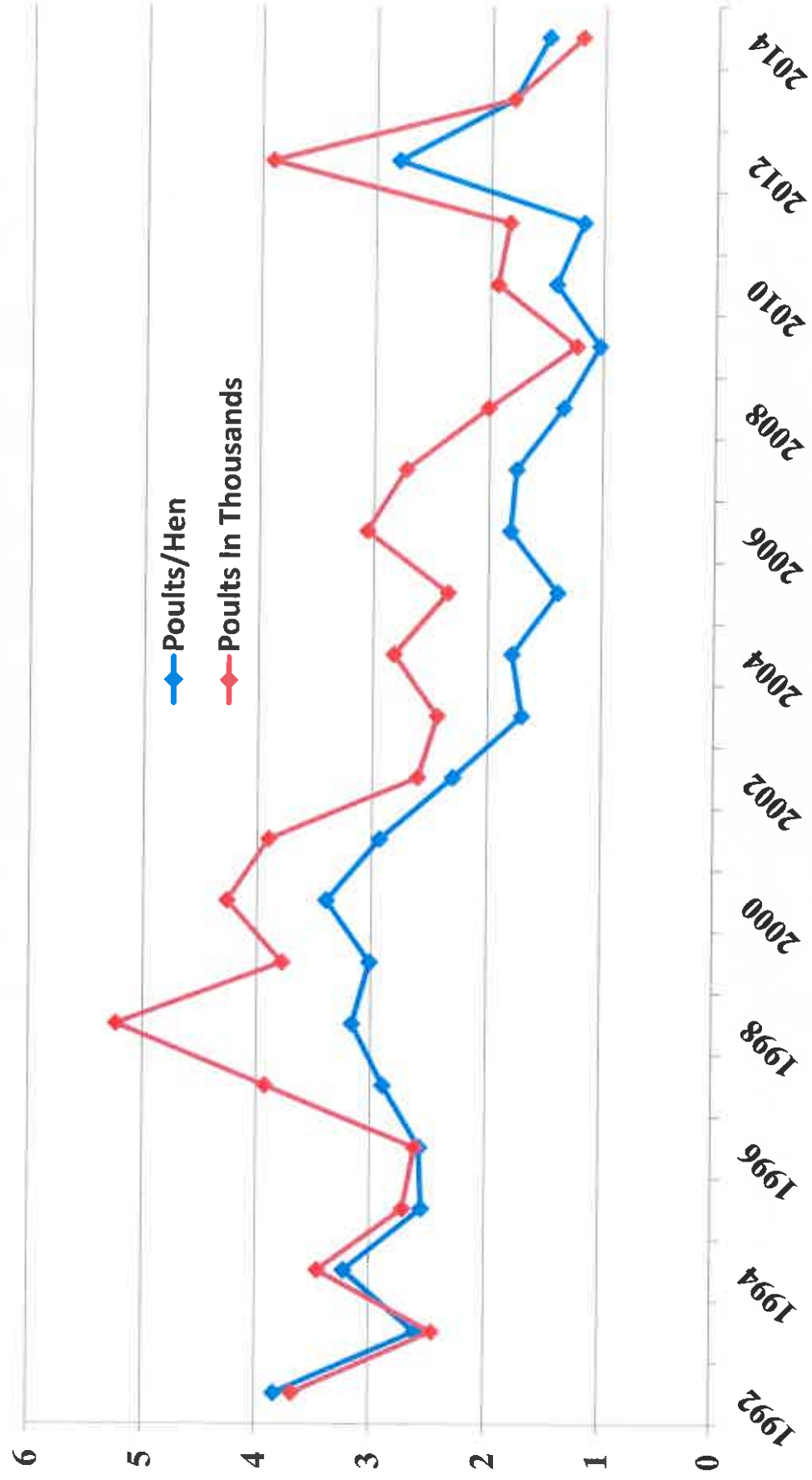


Strategic Wild Turkey Management Plan

- Approved by Commission in 2013 (revision to 1999 plan).
- Resource Goal: Establish and maintain long-term stability in the wild turkey population in all appropriate habitats within Arkansas.
- Contained Appendix which outlined the Wild Turkey Harvest Management Plan (WTHMP).
- The WTHMP stressed regulations should remain consistent for at least 5 years to more accurately reflect population trends. Therefore, only “emergency scenarios” should result in regulation adjustments during the 5-year evaluation period (e.g., several years of poor reproduction, dramatic decreases in harvest, disease outbreak, etc.).



Statewide Reproductive Trends in Arkansas from the Wild Turkey Brood Survey, 1992-2014





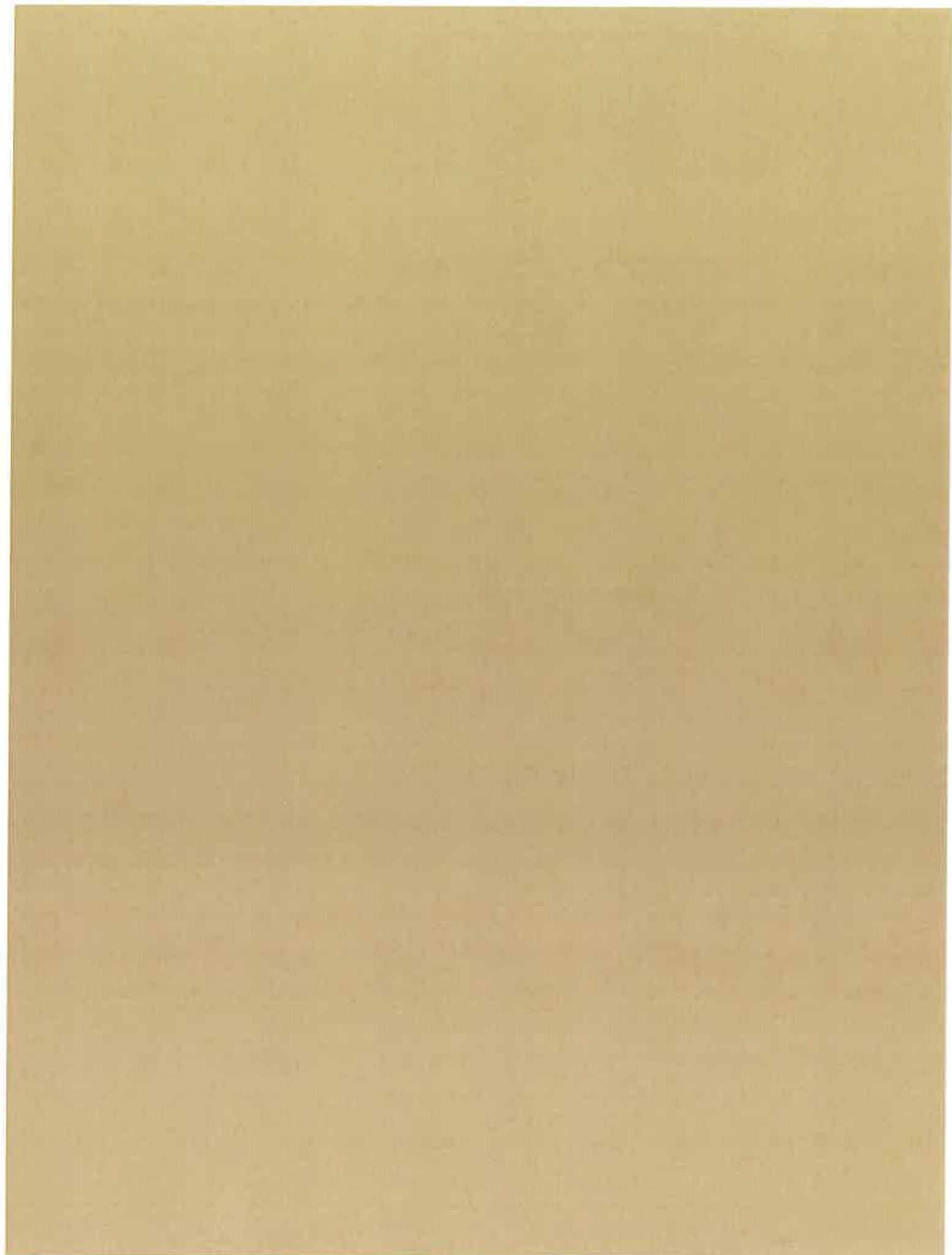
2016 Turkey Season Structure

- Statewide Youth Hunt: April 9-10.
- Regular Season Opening: Sat., April 16.
- Regular Season Length: 18 days (same as past three seasons).
- Approved at April 2015 Commission Meeting.
- Commission to Consider Moving Opening Date One Week Earlier at October Commission Meeting



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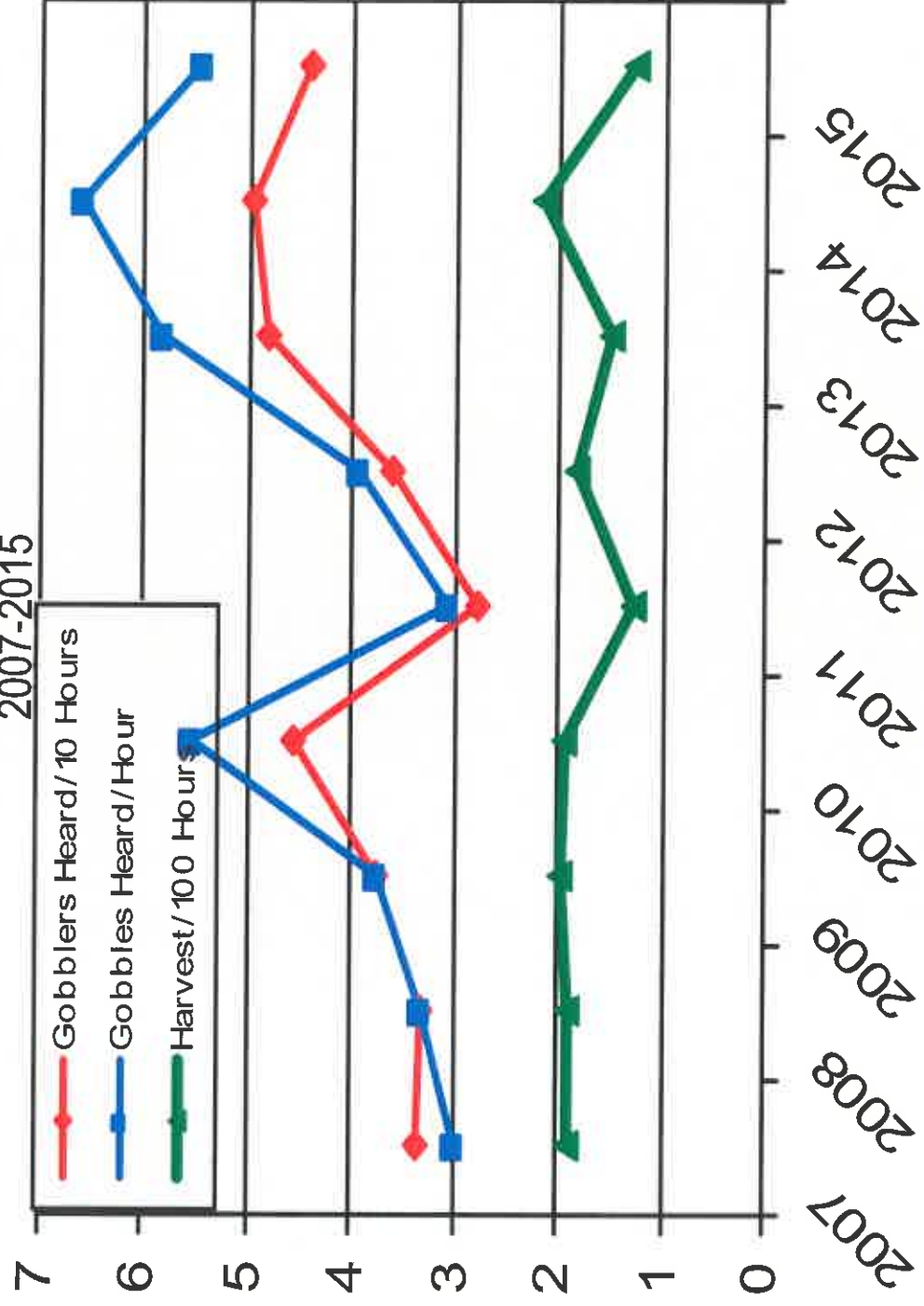
- Current season structure intended to open season after peak breeding dates to maximize likelihood for increasing reproduction and minimize illegal hen harvest.
- Research indicates that illegal hen harvest increases when spring season begins prior to the peak of incubation (Norman et. al 2000).
- The rationale for a later opening date and shortened season reflects the two variables which have the greatest ability to maintain long-term stability in the state's turkey population.
- Other options such as "half day hunting" and "reducing the bag limit" would likely have little impact and restrict hunters unnecessarily.





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Statewide trends in gobbling and harvest indices during the spring season, Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey, 2007-2015





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- The Spring Gobbling Chronology Survey and Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey provide data that show spring seasons are opening when the second peak of gobbling is occurring (corresponds to nest incubation).
- Reducing season length in 2007 through 2015 appears to have helped stabilize spring turkey harvest and improve gobbler carryover (gobbler/hen ratios have stabilized at or above the 0.5 gobbler/hen benchmark).
- Opening the spring season after peak breeding is the regulatory mechanism most likely to increase reproductive success.



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Plan for the Future

- Follow Harvest Management Plan within Strategic Wild Turkey Management Plan – stable regulations for at least 5 years
- Monitor effectiveness of no-jake regulation (to start in January 2016)
- Implement three-year survey of hunting license holders to establish baseline number of turkey hunters
- Formulate strategy to determine gobbler harvest rates



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