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Preliminary Report

Florida Turkey Hunters' Opinions and Attitudes

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

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For More Information

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Background

Much of the late 20th century has been focused on the state initiative to recover from the decline in the Florida turkey population. The 21st century is expected to bring additional challenges as the turkey habitat is expected to lose 2.1 million acres of land by 2060. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) have dedicated itself to addressing these challenges to preserve the turkey population. In efforts to better understand the current turkey population and land management issues facing Florida, FWC was interested in understanding turkey hunter's opinions and attitudes regarding turkey hunting in Florida. This information is expected to guide the new 10-year strategic plan for wild turkey management.

Methods

The UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources (PIE Center) conducted six exploratory focus groups with 29 Florida turkey hunters in Crestview, Gainesville, Orlando, and West Palm, Florida. Participants received a \$50 cash incentive for their participation in the focus groups. A team of researchers, familiar with focus group procedures, created a moderators guide targeted at addressing regulations, land management, and population management. Focus group and wildlife management experts were used to ensure the moderators guide addressed wild turkey management. Trained moderators conducted the focus groups, assisted by an assistant moderator and note taker, between April 24th and May 7th. Data were captured by field notes and audio recorders and analyzed to determine common themes based on the participants' responses. The purpose of these focus groups was to understand the opinions and attitudes of turkey hunting in Florida.

Results

Demographics

Table 1. Focus group participants by pseudonym, gender, and occupation

Group	Pseudonym	Gender
1	Andrew	Male
1	Alan	Male
1	Adam	Male
1	Anthony	Male
1	Alex	Male
1	Ashley	Female
1	Aiden	Male

1	Albert	Male
2	Bill	Male
2	Brad	Male
2	Bob	Male
2	Bentley	Male
2	Brandon	Male
3	Chris	Male
4	Dan	Male
4	Derrick	Male
4	Donald	Male
4	Debra	Female
5	Evan	Male
5	Ethan	Male
5	Edwin	Male
5	Ernest	Male
6	Frank	Male
6	Felicia	Female
6	Farley	Male
6	Felix	Male
6	Ferris	Male
6	Ferguson	Male
6	Floyd	Male

Hunting Practices

To start the focus group discussion, participants were asked to describe their turkey hunting practices including: how they first became interested in hunting, a typical season, guiding and mentoring in turkey hunting, cost of hunting, quality of hunting and methods of take.

Gained Interest

Participants were asked to indicate how they became interested in turkey hunting and the factors that encouraged them to hunt each year.

Gainesville

In the Gainesville focus groups, the themes that surfaced to describe how they first became interested in turkey hunting were social element, personal gratification, and family element. Personal gratification and social element were the most common themes.

Social Element

The participants indicated they began turkey hunting as a social element, which was something they did to be around others, something that was done where they grew up, or something they did because of a friend or acquaintance.

- Albert: "It started with a friend of mine. He was a turkey hunter and he took me. Getting into [hunting] was a little tough, but I took the opportunity when I could."
- Anthony: "I had a graduate student take me out [turkey hunting]."

Personal Gratification

Personal gratification surfaced as the primary reason participants continued to turkey hunt each year. This was seen as enjoyable, exciting, personally pleasurable, or stress relieving.

- Albert: "Turkey hunting is different than deer hunting because it is more interactive."
- Alex: "Turkey hunting is a lot of fun. I just like to hear them gobble and seeing them come, gets you pumped up and excited."

Crestview

In the Crestview focus groups, family element, social element, and personal gratification were the common themes identified to describe how the participants first became interested in turkey hunting. The most common themes were family element and personal gratification.

Family Element

Several participants indicated they began turkey hunting as a result of a family member.

- Bentley: "My brother got me interested [in turkey hunting] when I was 14 or 15."
- Bill: "Got hooked [on turkey hunting] when I moved down south. I am from the north. My cousin got me hooked."

Personal Gratification

Personal gratification surfaced as the main reason participants continued to turkey hunt each year. This was seen as enjoyable, exciting, personally pleasurable, or stress relieving.

- Chris: "I like that turkey hunting is peaceful. It's the satisfaction of being able to provide your own food. They are delicious."

- Brandon: “Every morning when I sit down by the pine I think how many times I have done this, and I wonder how many more times I am going to get to do this. Turkey hunting is an addiction.”

Orlando

In the Orlando focus groups, the most common themes to describe how they first became interested in turkey hunting were social element and personal gratification.

Social Element

The participants indicated they began turkey hunting as a social element, which was something they did to be around others, something that was done where they grew up, or something they did because of a friend or acquaintance.

- Donald: “Hunting since I was 15 with friends and their dads, mainly deer hunting, but if opportunity with turkeys came then we would get a gobbler if we could.”
- Derrick: “I’ve been hunting for many years. I had a potential project in an area and contacted a real estate agent who had turkeys all over his walls and he pressured me to get involved in turkey hunting. I did not take him up at that time, but I got involved eventually and enjoy it.”

Personal Gratification

Personal gratification surfaced as the primary reason participants continued to turkey hunt each year. This was seen as enjoyable, exciting, personally pleasurable, or stress relieving.

- Derrick: “I hunt because I enjoy being outside and it’s good exercise. Hunting is secondary because I have always enjoyed being outside.”
- Donald: “I enjoy being out in the woods.”

West Palm

In the West Palm focus groups, personal gratification, family element, the kill, and kill does not equal success were the common themes that surfaced to describe how the participants first became interested in turkey hunting. The most common themes were personal gratification and kill does not equal success.

Personal gratification

Personal gratification surfaced as the primary reason participants continued to turkey hunt each year. This was seen as enjoyable, exciting, personally pleasurable, or stress relieving—pleasure beyond the kill.

- Ernest: “I’ve been turkey hunting since I could walk. I shot my first one at 12 in the wildwood area. I enjoy it.”
- Ethan: “I’ve been hunting deer since I was 20. I love the woods and getting away from people.”
- Felix: “Successful to get a quota/lease to hunt.”

Typical Season

After describing how they first became interested in turkey hunting, participants were asked to describe their success for a typical turkey-hunting season in Florida.

Gainesville

The themes that surfaced were the kill, social element, kill does not equal success, challenging, and personal gratification when describing a typical turkey-hunting season. Kill does not equal success was the most common theme.

Kill Does Not Equal Success

The participants in Gainesville often indicated that a kill did not equal success. Many participants said they had gratification beyond the kill and enjoyed just going out and being in the woods.

- Andrew: "To me, success is just getting out to the woods and calling in birds."
- Aiden: "Success is getting out and taking the kids."

Crestview

Participants in Crestview indicated they hunted both in and out of state, and the majority hunted with others. Kill does not equal success, the kill, similar hunting, and better local hunting were the common themes that emerged when discussing a typical turkey-hunting season. The most common theme was kill does not equal success.

Kill Does Not Equal Success

The participants indicated that a kill did not equal success. Many participants said they had gratification beyond the kill and enjoyed just going out and being in the woods.

- Bob: "Getting to go [turkey hunting]."
- Bill: "Doesn't matter if you shoot one, as long as I get out [to go turkey hunting]."

Orlando

The themes that surfaced in the Orlando focus groups to describe a typical turkey-hunting season were kill does not equal success and the kill. The most common theme was kill does not equal success.

Kill Does Not Equal Success

The participants often indicated that a kill did not equal success. Many participants said they had gratification beyond the kill and enjoyed just going out and being in the woods.

- Derrick: "Just being out in the woods. It's nice to see turkeys come off the roost when sun comes up and to be successful calling some in to see them and see how they act, I enjoy that."
- Donald: "I just enjoy it early in the morning and the turkeys come off the roost and they are trying to get back together. It's a really pretty sound. If I have the opportunity to take one, I will, but it's not the primary goal."

West Palm

To discuss a typical turkey-hunting season, the West Palm focus group participants primarily discussed the theme of kill doesn't equal success.

Kill Does Not Equal Success

The participants often indicated that a kill did not equal success. Many participants said they had gratification beyond the kill and enjoyed just going out and being in the woods.

- Felicia: "Just being in the woods."
- Farley: "As long as you make it to the woods, turkey hunting is successful."

Guiding & Mentoring

Next, the participants were asked to indicate the frequency they guided for other hunters and what role mentoring has in turkey hunting.

Gainesville

In Gainesville, some participants indicated they had guided for another hunter before. The themes that surfaced in the discussion included a family element, social element, personal gratification, and challenging. The most common themes were social element and personal gratification.

Social Element

The participants indicated guiding and mentoring served as a social element, which was something they did to hangout, be around others, and help others enjoy hunting.

- Alan: "Took my dad, my girlfriend, and my buddies."
- Anthony: "It's getting people to have a successful trip and see that turkey hunting is done right."

Personal Gratification

Personal gratification was a reason participants guided and believed mentoring was important. This was seen as enjoyable, exciting, personally pleasurable, or stress relieving.

- Aiden: "Mentoring is a plus you have to experience."
- Anthony: "Nice to show others the tricks."

Crestview

The majority of participants in Crestview indicated that they had called for others. The themes that surfaced from the discussion included social element, incentive, personal gratification, changes needed, and family element. The most common themes were social element, incentive, and change needed.

Social Element

The participants indicated guiding and mentoring served as a social element, which was something they did to hangout, be around others, and help others enjoy hunting.

- Brandon: "I like to watch how they act when they kill one."
- Chris: "I just take people in the military because you have diversity. I've taken a couple of friends that have never been in the woods and they wear Nikes; you've gotta wear boots and camouflage. Exposing people to that, it's better for them, because it's not something they would normally see if they didn't have a friend or family member that hunts."

Incentive

Participants felt that some type of incentive might help to promote turkey-hunting mentoring.

- Chris: "Maybe some kind of incentive on hunter's license. Maybe a discount or something like that. I think every hunter would become a mentor then."

Change Needed

The participants suggested modifications of the hunting time frame would promote turkey-hunting mentoring.

- Brad: “Longer season. There are only five weekends I get to hunt, barring the weather and anything else. Most people work Monday through Friday. Having an afternoon to mentor might help.”

Orlando

Some participants in Orlando indicated that they had called for other hunters. The most common themes for mentoring and why they call for others were personal gratification, social element, and informative session.

Personal Gratification

Personal gratification was a reason participants guided and believed mentoring was important. This was seen as enjoyable, exciting, personally pleasurable, or stress relieving.

- Derrick: “Calling for another hunter put a lot more confidence in my calling, because I didn’t think it would happen with a custom call, but I went by the book.”
- Debra: “I am being mentored too. There are more females than I expected in the sport, and I didn’t know what scat poop was. It is amazing how much I have learned from one season to another with people offering their advice.”

Social Element

Several participants specified that mentoring allowed them to be around others and help others enjoy turkey hunting.

- Derrick: “I’m still out there just walking and enjoying being outdoors. But then you have company. If there are other hunters then you get to come together and chew the fat and tell stories.”
- Donald: “I think mentoring someone, especially a younger person, is a good thing to get them involved, and get them to use the tools. That enthusiasm carries over to their adult lives. They get that interest to continue. It’s nice to be able to come in and see who got what and just to stand around and talk and just to lie to each other.”

Informative Session

The majority of participants suggested classes or programs to be organized as an effort to promote mentoring.

- Derrick: “I was wondering in the wildlife management areas, are there biologists assigned to an area? I don’t know if the biologists put on programs that would be available for the young people, or even the old people like us. Some of the biologists I’ve met are extremely helpful but others are put off by it. But most of them are helpful.”
- Donald: “You know like Bass Pro Shops does seminars. Maybe some of the other retailers could do seminars on turkey hunting because they also sell guns, just like bass pro shops. There are also some TV programs that show the turkey hunting in some prime real estate. I believe that helps too.”

West Palm

A few West Palm participants indicated they had called or guided for other hunters. The most common themes were social element and safety.

Social Element

Several participants specified that mentoring allowed them to be around others and help others enjoy turkey hunting.

- Ernest: “The satisfaction of getting a bird for another person. I do it mostly for my relatives.”
- Felicia: “I’m part of the youth hunting program all year long and take them hunting.”

Safety

There were several participants that suggested mentoring could help with some of the safety issues in turkey hunting.

- Ferris: "I've had an arrow fly by me. Know where you are shooting."
- Felicia: "For safety and conservation and teaching younger generations."

Cost of Sport

Focus group participants in Crestview were asked about their thoughts regarding the cost of turkey hunting. Due to time constraints not all focus groups were able to discuss the cost of turkey hunting.

Crestview

In the Crestview focus groups, the participants' discussion focused on the cost of turkey hunting being balanced.

Balanced

Participants believed that there will always be a cost, no matter where you are, and they believed current costs were fair.

- Bentley: "Our prices are okay."
- Brandon: "It's like this, if we go out of state, they'd charge us too."

Hunting Quality

The participants in Crestview and West Palm were asked to describe the turkey hunting quality in Florida. Due to time constraints not all focus groups were specifically able to discuss the quality of turkey hunting in the state.

Crestview

In Crestview, the two themes that appeared were poor quality and decent quality. The most dominant theme was poor quality.

Poor Quality

Several participants indicated that turkey hunting had decreased and they had recently seen fewer birds.

- Brandon: "Don't see hens on the side of the road like I use to. They're just not there."
- Bob: "Management areas are on the decline."

West Palm

In West Palm, the most common theme for the group was poor quality.

Poor Quality

Respondents indicated that the hunting in Florida was poor.

- Group: "Devote a lot of time and money to get the bird. Put in a lot of time and effort and not much out of it. Public land does not have much satisfaction."

Methods of Take

To conclude the discussion on hunting practices, participants were asked to indicate their opinions of the current legal methods of take.

Gainesville

In Gainesville, the themes that surfaced in regards to methods of take were unethical practice and safety. Safety was identified as the most common theme.

Safety

Safety was identified as the main concern regarding the current legal methods of take. This was characterized as the risk of being shot by another hunter, close proximity of hunters, and the risk rifles pose.

- Alan: "In the spring, I hate to know that people could shoot with a high power rifle, it makes me nervous when I set up decoys."
- Andrew: "I like bows, but I have a problem with rifles, but I do not have a problem with muzzle loaders. It is a safety issue though, and you have to know what is around you."

Crestview

In Crestview, the themes that surfaced regarding methods of take were satisfied and poor sportsmanship. The main theme regarding the current methods of take was poor sportsmanship.

Poor Sportsmanship

Participants suggested using traditional methods of take and believed hunters need to try harder.

- Brad: "I want to go back to shotguns, because I don't want no one hunting with large rifles. Shooting birds across the field and not taking the time to set up and figure the bird out is not turkey hunting."
- Brandon: "If you don't get close enough, then you have to come back."

Orlando

Regarding current methods of take, the most common themes in Orlando were unethical practice and safety.

Unethical Practice

Several participants believed that using high-powered weapons were a bad practice and not right.

- Donald: "I think if you shoot a turkey with a 30-06, there's not going to be much left. It would be better if you shot it with a 22 or something like that. But if you get into some of the larger calibers, you're just going to blow them to pieces. Pistols, I think it's the same problem, especially high power pistols it's the same problem. Even the muzzleloader might not do the same damage as a high power rifle, but a 50 caliber, you've got some good stuff coming out. It will mess up a bird. Bows are fine, shotguns to me are the way to go."
- Derrick: "Up until a couple years, I wasn't aware you could use a rifle to take a turkey. Kid took a turkey with a 30-06, on private property, and a headshot. The way he told me, it was a really iffy shot – dense brush. High power rifles, especially on public property, there are a lot of nuts out there."

Safety

Participants agreed they had safety concerns regarding the current methods of take and there was a risk of being injured by another hunter. Additionally, hunters had experienced conflicts that arise when addressing safety concerns with other hunters.

- Derrick: "High power rifles when there are too many people, it's just not good. I've had some conflict on public lands. Two weeks I had it marked. Then, boom boom boom, there are three people walking through. I shine my flashlight, and say can you move on? Then one person wanted to get in a big argument."

- Donald: “At least on private leases everyone has their area. Everyone kinds of respects everyone’s space. I remember when I went 4-wheeling on public land and someone got close to getting shot, we never went back up there.”

West Palm

When asked about current methods of take in West Palm, poor sportsmanship, safety and weaponry were the themes that surfaced. The most common theme was safety and weaponry.

Safety and Weaponry

Safety and weaponry were identified as the main concerns with the current legal methods of take. This was characterized as the risk of being shot by another hunter, close proximity of hunters, and the risk rifles pose.

- Edwin: “I think that rifles should not be on there, everything else is okay, but pistols also should not be out there”
- Felix: “Safety in heavily populated areas.”

Hunting Access

After discussing general hunting practices, the participants were then asked to shift the discussion and focus on discussing their access to hunting land. They discussed their accessibility to land, the environment of hunting lands, success, limited entry, and hunting opportunities.

Accessibility & Environment

Participants were asked to discuss the access they have to hunting lands and the environment on public lands.

Gainesville

In Gainesville, the common themes were challenging, safety, welcoming, strained, and lack of clarity. The themes that surfaced when asked for possible hunting access solutions were hunting structure. The most common themes were challenging, safety, and hunting structure.

Challenging

Participants described the accessibility to hunting land as challenging, which was identified as restricting, expensive, crowded, and inconvenient.

- Alex: “It is difficult to find land to hunt on.”
- Adam: “A lot of that management areas you have to buy quota and all that, and you have to pay a certain amount of fee to go hunt on that land. That restricts a lot of people.”

Safety

The environment on public lands was described as uncomfortable and risky.

- Albert: “Somebody always walks underneath you or grabs the stand next to you or something like that, which is why I always shied away from public land.”
- Anthony: “My wife would rather me hunt on private land than public because of the safety issue.”

Hunting Structure

Participants suggested structure as a method to overcome the barriers on public lands, which included adding zones.

- Alan: “Andrews [public hunting land] used to have different zones you could go into. They might be able to do something like that.”
- Anthony: “I went on a black powder hunt and again, they only allowed so many people in each zone, so at least they knew how big the area was and they limited it.”

Crestview

In Crestview, the themes that surfaced in regards to hunting access were challenging, safety, fortunate, and change needed. The most common themes were fortunate, challenging, and change needed.

Fortunate

Several participants indicated they were fortunate enough to have land available through a friend, organization, or acquaintance.

- Brandon: “I’m blessed. Timber Company has probably 4,500 acres, maybe more, plus, the land they lease in Alabama that I hunt is another 5,000.”
Chris: “I have a lot of accessibility. You just have to pay Jackson Guard for a separate hunting pass, and then you have access to hunt on all areas.”

Challenging

Participants described the accessibility to hunting land as challenging, which was identified as restricting, expensive, crowded, and inconvenient.

- Chris: “The amount of people that are actually out hunting in the public areas. This is a barrier because hunters are kind of funny, they don’t want to be close to other people. They scare off other people and even scare off their game, even though it’s public land.”
- Bob: “It’s a jungle. You get up at 2am to park at 3am and to get out there at 4am. You have to outhunt people, not the game.”

Change Needed

Many participants believed adjustments to the hunting period and removal of a season might improve the barriers to hunting on WMAs.

- Bob: “If you extended the season it would take off some pressure.”
- Bentley: “Get rid of the fall and extend the spring.”

Orlando

In Orlando, the most common themes that surfaced, regarding accessibility to hunting land, were challenging and safety.

Challenging

Participants described the accessibility to hunting land as challenging, which was identified as restricting, expensive, crowded, and inconvenient.

- Dan: “I enjoy getting out on the quota hunts. If it is a non-quota WMA hunt, you don’t know how many people are going to be there. It would be better if quota hunting was a little more managed, still tough.”

Safety

Several hunters identified safety as a concern on public lands, indicating hunting was uncomfortable and risky. They also specified certain acts of crime they had experienced from other hunters.

- Derrick: "I had the windows in my truck broken into. There were like four trucks broken into."
- Donald: "You're better off if you are in a draw, you are going to cut down on the bodies in the woods. Safety wise, it's safer. Ocala it's the Wild West. It gets a little hairy sometimes. People come in on top of you. They don't give a damn. You don't want to get in an argument—people have guns."

West Palm

In West Palm, the themes that surfaced regarding access to hunting land included challenging, rushed, circumstantial, change needed, and strained. The most common themes were challenging and change needed.

Challenging

Participants described the accessibility to hunting land as challenging, which was identified as restricting, expensive, crowded, and inconvenient.

- Farley: "In some places there are too many permits for the amount of land."
- Bill: "Public lands are getting really bad. People get the permits but do not necessarily use them."

Change Needed

Some participants suggested adjustments to the hunting periods, while others felt that would not be helpful.

- Ferguson: "Extending the hours. Seem to see more turkeys in the middle of the day. If they made it a little longer, at least you would see them in the afternoon."
- Felicia: "I disagree with all day turkey hunting. Turkeys are under pressure and you are not giving them time to rest. Population is not as great as we wish they were."

Success & Access

Participants were presented with two scenarios, which included the amount of access and success they could have.

- Scenario one: Increased hunting success with uncertain access to hunting land.
- Scenario two: Unlimited access to hunting land with some crowdedness and limited turkey population.

Gainesville

Participants in Gainesville agreed that increased hunting success with certain access to hunting land was the preferred scenario. Participants agreed the alternative scenario was what was already in place and would not be beneficial.

- Alex: "You wipe out your turkey population that way and then nobody would have any fun."

Crestview

In Crestview, some participants favored increased hunting success with uncertain access to hunting land.

- Bill: "You gotta take care of the population. You'd have to limit the hunt."

Orlando

In Orlando, all participants agreed that they would prefer increased hunting success with uncertain access to hunting land. The most common theme was management equals quality. Some participants expressed their concern for the alternative option as well.

Management Equals Quality

All participants believed that areas that were managed better produced better quality hunting.

- “Lake Monroe falls into that category. I’ve never seen the biologist. It seems like in some circumstances the biologist lives on the property and it seems like things run smooth. I don’t think there’s differences on the quantity of the game, but the quality is different.”
- “On the Mormon ranch, the biologist is employed by the ranch. They say what gets killed and doesn’t. I prefer the first option.”

West Palm

In West Palm, the majority of participants preferred increased hunting success with uncertain access to hunting land.

- Ethan: “Rather be successful one year. I rather good quality than over crowded.”
- Edwin: “Rather get a permit every other year than get out there and not have anything.”

Limited Entry

Next, participants were presented with two scenarios concerning limited entry.

- Scenario one: More quota permits with shorter hunts.
- Scenario two: Fewer quota permits with longer hunts.

Gainesville

In Gainesville, all participants agreed that more quota permits with shorter hunts was the preferred scenario. Alan was the first to respond to this question and everyone agreed with him.

- Alan: “If they did shorter hunts, everybody could at least get a chance to go. I still rather hunt it for two days than not at all.”

Crestview

In Crestview, all participants agreed that they would prefer fewer quota permits with longer hunts.

- Brad: “It’s aggravating to have a quota. Have a lot of stuff going on in June and I forget it.”
- Chris: “Fewer with longer hunts. I would say that not everyone that hunts has the time to spend in such a short amount of time. You don’t really need a whole lot of game to give a whole lot of time. To take a smaller amount of game would be better. Over a longer period would be better.”

West Palm

In West Palm, some participants preferred more quota permits with shorter hunts; however, some preferred fewer quota permits with longer hunts.

- Ethan: “I would rather have more quotas but with less days. I would not want to take off a lot of work time.”
- Evan: “Do not want the birds to be pressured for such a long time, would rather have the less periods of hunts.”

- Frank: “Give lesser number of people in a greater amount of time.”
- Felicia: “Why can’t they do it like alligator season? Only a certain number of permits, but do they have the manpower to survey it? They do feed stations.”

Hunting Opportunities

The participants in Crestview were asked to indicate how certain organizations and agencies could address hunting opportunities on public land. Participants in the other focus groups did not discuss hunting opportunities due to time constraints.

Crestview

In Crestview, the most common theme when discussing hunting opportunities was publicity.

Publicity

Participants indicated that these organizations and agencies could use awareness and certain educational methods to increase hunting opportunities on public land.

- Chris: “ Maybe by providing guided tours as part of a [Sportsman Group] membership or something. They could also use advertising through mail, gun stores, or shops, things like that.”

Population Status

In the next portion of the focus groups, the participants were asked to discuss the turkey population in Florida. Specifically, they were asked to discuss the overall turkey population, areas of high and low populations, population management, turkey subspecies, population threats, and population monitoring.

Overall Turkey Population

The participants were asked to describe the overall turkey population in Florida.

Gainesville

Gainesville participants described the turkey population as plentiful and carrying infectious risk. The most common theme was plentiful.

Plentiful

Participants described the turkey population as plentiful, indicating the population had improved and they had seen large amounts of turkeys everywhere, including developmental areas.

- Anthony: “I been on our property for 30 years and I never remember seeing the turkey. And now, driving back and forth to work, around that area, along 241, there’s gobblers and hens.”
- Adam: “I think it’s getting a lot better over the years. I see a lot more turkeys, a lot more gobblers, a lot of hens.”

Crestview

Participants in Crestview described the turkey population as stable and diminishing. The most common theme was diminishing.

Diminishing

The participants believed there are not enough turkeys and the population was declining.

- Brandon: “Definitely declining. They’ve got too many predators.”

Orlando

In the Orlando focus groups, the themes for the Florida turkey population were plentiful and fluctuating. The most common theme was plentiful.

Plentiful

Participants described the turkey population as plentiful, indicating the population had improved and they had seen large amounts of turkeys everywhere, including developmental areas.

- Dan: “There are at least the right amount [of turkeys], if not too many. I see them all over. One time in college we were fishing near UCF. This lady backed up and there were like 20 turkeys and she fed them with a bag of birdseed.”
- Donald: “I think the turkey population is solid. I haven’t been on public lands in a while, but I think it’s okay.”

West Palm

In West Palm, the themes that surfaced regarding the Florida turkey population were plentiful, diminishing, and predator impact. The most common themes were plentiful and diminishing.

Plentiful

Some participants described the turkey population as plentiful, indicating the population had improved and they had seen large amounts of turkeys everywhere, including developmental areas.

- Evan: “I think it is great. A month ago I saw several turkeys standing on the side of 95. Every time I have hog hunted during small game, I have run into a pack of hens.”
- Ethan: “The female population is about 90%-10%. The female population is doing great, all hens and maybe one Jake. Not a lot of good quality long beards on public land.”

Diminishing

Other participants believed there were not enough turkeys and the population was declining.

- Ernest: “Seems like this year we are loosing birds on the chain of lakes.”
- Ferris: “After Wilma, you couldn’t see turkeys for days. After the hurricanes, the debris was on the game trails, you couldn’t pass them and neither can the animals.”

Higher Populations

Continuing the discussion of the population of turkeys in Florida, participants were asked to indicate where they had seen higher populations of turkey within the state of Florida.

Gainesville

In Gainesville, the participants indicated they had seen higher populations of turkey in north Florida, the turnpike area, and Alachua area.

Crestview

In Crestview, participants indicated they had seen higher populations of turkey in the northern part of Florida as a result of fall turkey season not being allowed.

Orlando

In Orlando, participants attributed the increased turkey populations to adaptation and food availability.

Adaptation

Participants believed there were higher populations of turkeys because they had adapted to changes in the area to survive.

- “They’ve adapted to the development. Other areas – national wildlife refuges and WMA’s, they’re in their natural areas. But in the residential areas, they’ve adapted. They go to the wooded area to roost but then they’re walking in people’s back yards.”

Food Availability

Participants believed the availability of food has helped the turkey population.

- Donald: “Good food, the turkeys stay in the area.”

West Palm

In West Palm, the participants indicated they had seen higher populations of turkey in Okeechobee, Fish Creek area, north Florida, Kissimmee river, south Florida, central Florida, and green swamp. The most common theme for this increased population was limited access.

Limited Access

Participants indicated that higher populations of turkey were associated with private land, cattle farms, and quota areas.

- Ernest: “Private land and cattle ranches.”
- Ethan: “Where I hunt, they are all quota hunt. I only expect small game where you can walk and hunt. I always have been on quota-hunting areas and they maintain the flock.”

Lower Populations

Crestview

In Crestview, participants indicated they had seen lower populations of turkeys in city areas because of the increasing human population.

West Palm

In West Palm, participants indicated they had seen lower populations of turkey in the Corbett area, Tiger creek, Gardner marsh, South Shore unit, central to south Florida, south region. The themes that surfaced as a cause to the decrease in population were predator impact, human impact, hunter action, and environmental impact. The most common theme was predator impact.

- Felicia: “The panthers are so high right now. There are no hogs or turkeys- deer population has also decreased.”
- Ernest: “Every place I have hunted I have seen coyotes.”

Turkey Population Management

Participants were asked to discuss how the turkey population should be managed.

Gainesville

When discussing the management of the turkey population in Gainesville, the most common theme was stability.

Stability

Participants were satisfied with the current population and believed management practices should be focused on maintaining the population.

- Albert: "You would like to see the population increase, but at what point do you hit critical mass? I say maintain current management practices."
- Ashley: "I think it should maintain."

Crestview

In Crestview, the majority of participants believed that efforts should be focused on increasing the turkey population. The themes that surfaced were population management, change needed, and hunter action. The most common themes were population management and hunter action.

Population Management

Participants suggested several practices (i.e., planting, limited harvest, predator control, etc.) that would encourage the turkey population to increase and limit the amount of turkeys that can be harvested.

- Chris: "I think in areas where the population of hunters are higher, they should probably not allow as many turkeys to be harvested. Whether or not, just overkill."
- Bill: "Getting management areas to start planting areas."

Hunter Action

Participants showed interest in receiving permission in helping to control predators.

- Brad: "Check in a coyote before you kill another turkey. Get a predator."
- Bob: "Nobody hunts predators. We didn't have the coyote population before that we do now."

West Palm

In West Palm, participants believed that efforts should be aimed at increasing the turkey population. The majority of participants believed a tag system should be used to increase the population.

- Ethan: "Tag system and quota."
- Ernest: "Your tags would be used in your quota hunt."

Subspecies

The participants were asked to indicate their familiarity with the turkey subspecies within Florida and how it affects their decisions of where to hunt. The discussion of subspecies did not occur in the Orlando focus group due to time constraints.

Gainesville

Gainesville participants agreed that they were aware of all subspecies within the state of Florida: Osceola, Eastern, and Hybrid. The themes that surfaced regarding how subspecies affected their decision where they hunted were less important and important. The most common theme was less important.

Less Important

The majority of participants indicated that subspecies did not affect their hunting decisions, but they indicated that they might try to hunt a different sub specie if the opportunity presented itself.

- Adam: "I might like to go on a trip, try it out."
- Albert: "Not to me, a bird is a bird."

Crestview

In Crestview, the majority of participants displayed lack of knowledge regarding the subspecies of turkeys in Florida and specified that subspecies did not influence where they hunted. The most common theme was unfamiliarity.

Unfamiliarity

Participants appeared not to be aware of the turkey breeds in Florida.

- Brandon: "We don't have none. I just know they exist."
- Chris: "A turkey is a turkey."

West Palm

West Palm participants appeared to be familiar with the eastern and Osceola turkey subspecies, and several indicated that subspecies does not have an affect on where they hunt".

- Felicia: " Unless you are going for a grand slam, it doesn't matter."
- Farley: "You just want a turkey."

Current Threats

Participants were asked to discuss the greatest threats to the turkey population.

Gainesville

In Gainesville, the themes that surfaced were infectious disease, predator impact, inevitable presence, and counterproductive. The most common themes were predator impact and inevitable presence.

Predator Impact

All participants indicated that predators, such as coyotes and bobcats, were the greatest threat to the turkey population.

- Anthony: "One of the places I hunt, they been having major coyote issues. I hunted one morning and I found four areas were birds had got caught up against the fence [and caught by coyotes]."
- Alan: "To me, that's worse than hunters, these coyotes and bobcats."

Inevitable Presence

The participants agreed that illegal harvest and over harvest will always exist, but indicated it was not a major problem.

- Alan: "You are always going to have outlaws. Turkeys will make you do crazy stuff."
- Aiden: "I don't think that illegal harvest is so bad that it is curbing the population."

Crestview

In Crestview, the themes that surfaced were predator impact, human impact, population impact, and unawareness. The most common themes were predator impact and human impact.

Predator impact

All participants agreed that predators were one of the greatest threats to the population.

- Brandon: "Coyotes are terrible in the north end of this town. Probably the south end too, but I don't hunt there."
- Bill: "If I see a coyote, he's down."

Human impact

Participants believed human actions, illegal harvest, overharvest, and encroachment were some of the greatest threats to the turkey population.

- Brad: "Hunting too much and too many times. The general public might not know that fertilizers and pesticides put out in forest hurt the population. That's what happened to quail population."
- Bob: "Overharvest by legal hunters."

Orlando

In Orlando, the themes that surfaced for current threats to the turkey population were human impact, lack of enforcement, inevitable presence, and predator impact. The most common themes from all participants were human impact and predator impact.

Human Impact

All participants agreed that development, as a result of higher populations, was a major concern for the turkey population. While development itself might not affect the turkeys, poor planning on the developmental area results in disrupting or removing the turkey population. Participants felt the two could co-exist, but the current development is not taking the turkey population, and the animal population as a whole, into consideration with this development.

- Donald: "If I'm not mistaken, our governor came up with putting development for casinos on some of the prime land that Florida has. This was further south than Ocala. That would be a major error for putting anything up like that in those preserve areas [Indicating those areas are designed to protect the animals], it would be a major killer. You can't deny someone to have a new home or build a new house, but they need to put up the infrastructure [Ensuring the habitat around the development is preserved] before you put another 15,000 cars on the road."
- Derrick: "The large ranches are dwindling. Look at all the large ranching families that settled in central Florida. They're leaving. They can't afford to keep it. The state offers them to buy it and let them stay on the property for so long. A lot of them are moving out to Texas or move a big part out to Texas. Developers are coming. Florida is a development state. If the developing is done properly, then the turkeys will be able to find food. Disney is a good example. There is a lot of game on Disney. You'd be surprised. It is easy for turkeys to find food on the pastures. I'm not sure that dense development is bad, but if it is well enough planned, with green space set aside, then the turkey's will survive."

Predator impact

The majority of participants agreed that predators were one of the greatest threats to the population.

- Donald: "Coyotes are bad."
- Dan: "Hogs will mess up anything. They may not eat the turkey, but it messes up the environment."

West Palm

When discussing the greatest threats to the turkey population in Florida, West Palm participants identified human impact, predator impact, and environmental impact as common themes. The most common themes were environmental impact and human impact.

Environmental Impact

Participants indicated the environment, referencing habitat maintenance, was one of the greatest threats affecting the turkey population.

- Evan: “The water level changed in the area I hunt and that actually bottlenecked all the animals in 2012. They actually had to close the hunting area because everywhere was covered with water, so all you had to do was find dry ground and you found every animal, and that made it super easy to harvest them.”
- Ferguson: “Habitat, regulators need to maintain what they produce for them.”

Human Impact

Several of the participants agreed that illegal harvest and over harvest were affecting the turkey population.

- Floyd: “They need to limit the quota hunts, give areas some rest for some of the years and crack down on poaching.”
- Ferguson: “Poaching is some of it, those that go above the law, that hurts everybody.”

Future Threats

Participants were asked about potential future impacts on the turkey population and to indicate how they might be minimized. The discussion of future threats did not occur in the Orlando focus group due to time constraints.

Gainesville

Inevitable presence, hunter action, and infectious disease were the themes that surfaced in the Gainesville focus group. The most common themes were hunter action, and infectious disease.

Hunter Action

Participants showed interest in receiving permission in helping to control predators.

- Alex: “Making it easier to hunt predators if you have one destroying the wildlife.”

Infectious disease

Participants agreed that identifying and controlling diseases would help the turkey population.

- Ashley: “Recognizing diseases and eliminating those birds. They could kill a population.”

Crestview

The themes that surfaced in Crestview regarding future population threats were human impact, population management, hunter action, and basic education. Basic education and human impact were the most common themes.

Basic education

Participants suggested basic education to all hunters might help minimize future impacts on the turkey population.

- Bill: “Education is huge.”
- Bentley: “Education is the reality of what is needed. It would be good information to know. Some of these guys know from experience, but a lot of people don’t.”

Human Impact

Participants believed controlling development and overharvesting would help minimize future impacts.

- Brad: “Don’t overhunt.”

- Chris: “I think the wildlife management areas not allowing the population [human population] to build up in that area is what works. As in [the] human population, not building businesses, homes, roads and such.”

West Palm

In West Palm, the most common themes for minimizing future threats against the turkey population were hunter action and population management.

Hunter Action

Several participants showed interest in receiving permission in helping to control predators.

- Edwin: “Let us kill coyotes, open season.”
- Ethan: “Hunt coyotes year round at nighttime.”

Population Management

Several participants were interested in taking action and encouraging practices that would help the turkey population. Felicia suggested funds to help with volunteering and the group agreed with her.

- Group: “Funds, hunters will volunteer time. You are going to the woods anyway.”

Population Monitoring

Focus group participants were asked how they felt about the turkey population being monitored and what their role was in monitoring the population. Population monitoring was not discussed in every focus group due to time constraints.

Crestview

In Crestview, the common themes that surfaced in regards to population monitoring were population management, hunter action, and unintentional consequences. The most common themes were population management and hunter action.

Population Management

The participants agreed monitoring the population was a good idea, and suggested research and population counts as methods of monitoring the turkey population.

- Brad: “Surveys. Maybe like a survey when you renew your hunting license or when you get a new hunting license.”
- Brad: “Flyovers and count turkeys in fields. I don’t know how you’d do that like with duck hunting, but maybe a survey. Don’t know what tools FWC would use to gain this information.”

Hunter Action

Participants indicated that their role in monitoring the population was to ensure they stay within quota limits.

- Chris: “Not overtaking what I’m supposed to. Staying within my limit and not allowing others with me to overtake.”

Land Management Practices

In the next section of the focus groups the participants were asked to discuss land management practices and their familiarity with those practices.

Management Practices

The participants were asked to indicate their familiarity with current land management practices and to specify those that have been the most beneficial.

Gainesville

Overall, the Gainesville participants were familiar with current land management practices. Promotional practices, hindering practices, and unfamiliarity were the themes that appeared. The most common themes were promotional practices, and hindering practices.

Promotional Practices

Participants identified several practices that increased the turkey population and promoted positive outcomes.

- Alan: "I burn before turkey season because they love that burn. Burn allows you to see turkeys from farther away and it grows up nice for them to nest and hide from predators."
- Anthony: "They need to roost trees and a variety is good. Burning in blocks allows turkeys to move back and forth."

Hindering Practices

Participants identified land management practices that discourage turkey populations in certain areas and creates an undesirable atmosphere for turkeys.

- Adam: "We went to Cross Creek the other day and everything was leveled and there was no place for the turkeys to roost."
- Anthony: "The timber company came in and herbicide everything that wasn't pine trees. The guys on the lease are not happy because the deer and turkey are gone."

Crestview

Most participants in Crestview were familiar with the current land management practices. Themes that surfaced were enforcement, hunter action, promotional practice, unfamiliarity, and hindering practice. The most common theme was hindering practice.

Hindering Practice

Several participants discussed practices that discourage turkey populations in certain areas and does not promote a desirable atmosphere for turkeys.

- Bob: "In Blackwater forest they manage pine trees. You've gotta plant something for them turkeys to eat."
- Brad: "I've seen mature oak trees and they spray them to kill underbrush. It's killed some of the food sources. It's for the wrong reasons."

Orlando

In Orlando, participants appeared to be familiar with current land management practices. With regards to how those practices affected the turkey population, promotional practices and hindering practices were common themes. However, the most common theme was promotional practices.

Promotional Practices

Participants identified several practices that increased the turkey population and promoted positive outcomes. They also suggested some practices that might help increase turkey populations.

- Derrick: “Bring some northern turkeys in. I would like to see more food plots; you know, we do it for dove fields. Where I have seen it in the past they have put food plots in and turkeys took advantage of it, turkeys seemed to be very numerous. I don’t know if the program is widely used.”
- Donald: “I think burning is a key element to create new food sources.”

West Palm

West Palm participants were generally familiar with current land management practices. The themes that surfaced were promotional practices, hindering practices, and unfamiliarity. The most common themes were promotional practices and hindering practices.

Promotional Practices

Participants identified several practices that increased the turkey population and promoted positive outcomes. They also suggested some practices that might help increase turkey populations.

- Ferris: “Controlled burns are the most important.”
- Ferguson: “Education for those who do maintain.”
- Felicia: “Supervision and biologist, if they had fewer areas then they will be able to better manage it.”

Hindering Practice

Several participants discussed practices that discourage turkeys in certain areas and does not promote a desirable atmosphere for turkeys.

- Felicia: “Burning during turkey season.”
- Frank: “The citrus industry. My group of hunters I am out with are key holders for 10k acres of orange groves. Since the groves are no longer being maintained, because of the degradation of the orange, there are less turkeys. If you don’t have the babies coming out of the groves, the way that they were, they won’t migrate to other areas. They were brought up on private land and those private lands are not producing what they use to produce. A broader spectrum, of not only management lands, but properties surrounding management areas, is something that should be looked into. The habitat is going away.”

General Hunting Regulations

In the next section of the focus groups, participants discussed hunting regulations. The discussion included their familiarity with regulations, communication of regulations, compliance with regulations, impacts of regulations, suggested improvements, and discussion of specific regulations.

Regulation Familiarity

The participants were asked to describe their familiarity and the complexity of current hunting regulations.

Gainesville

In Gainesville, the most common theme regarding the participants’ familiarity with regulations was familiarity and simplicity.

Familiarity and Simplicity

Participants indicated that they were familiar with current regulations, and they were very easy to understand.

- Albert: “You get pretty familiar with them. It’s not worth losing your license or property over.”
- Anthony: “Pretty slam-dunk and simple.”

Crestview

In Crestview, the themes that surfaced were simplicity and unfamiliarity when discussing the familiarity of regulations. The most common theme was simplicity.

Simplicity

Focus group participants felt that the current turkey hunting regulations were easy to understand and not very complex.

- Chris: “It’s not complex.”
- Bob: “They’re not real complicated.”

Orlando

In Orlando, the most common theme regarding general hunting regulations was familiarity.

Familiarity

The majority of focus group participants appeared to be familiar with the current regulations, and some relied on well-informed hunters for regulation guidance as well.

- Donald: “I think what we have is adequate the way standards are set now. I’m familiar with how they have the seasons set up.”
- Debra: “My guy knows everything and how far he can push the regulations, so I just listen to him.”

West Palm

When discussing familiarity with regulations in West Palm, the most common themes were familiarity and unfamiliarity.

Familiarity

Several participants indicated they were familiar with current turkey hunting regulations.

- Farley: “You put in so much hard work turkey hunting and then you are following regulations.”
- Ferris: “Yes, I am familiar with regulations.”

Unfamiliarity

While many of the participants were confident in their turkey hunting regulation knowledge, several suggested they might not be as familiar with the regulations as they thought.

- Ernest: “Well I thought I was familiar, but I didn’t know you could use all those lethal methods.”
- Ferguson: “I was not aware, but now I am a little more nervous about using rifles while hunting.”

Regulation Communication

Participants were asked to indicate how well current regulation had been communicated and how the regulations might be improved.

Gainesville

When discussing the communication of regulations in Gainesville, lack of clarity, familiarity, and delivery preference were the common themes. Lack of clarity was the most common theme.

Lack of Clarity

Participants indicated hunters had to constantly be aware of regulation changes, read the fine print, and remember that regulations are not the same everywhere.

- Ashley: "I always keep a book because I'm afraid I will kill something out of season. I'll also text my husband and ask."
- Alan: "Make turkey hunting season align with deer season, not its own season, because it's hard to keep straight."

Crestview

Crestview participants discussed the accessibility and content when discussing the communication of regulations.

Accessibility

The majority of participants reported that regulations were communicated well. They believed regulations were accessible and stated in the literature provided.

- Bill: "It's in the books. I can read it."
- Chris: "For the people who hunt where I hunt, on the range, you have a range map that's given to you. All the limits are on the map and on the website for Jackson Guard. It's provided to you by Jackson Guard."

Content

All participants agreed that there were no real problems with the communication of regulations and there was no need for changes.

- Brandon: "It's pretty black and white"
- Bentley: "There's no problem."

Orlando

The Orlando participants believed the turkey hunting regulations had been communicated pretty well. The common themes were simplicity, delivery preference, and lack of clarity. The most common theme was lack of clarity.

Lack of Clarity

Participants indicated hunters had to constantly be aware of regulation changes, read the fine print, and remember that regulations are not the same everywhere.

- Dan: "The different zones get a little grey, but I get that you have to have that. But the one thing is that each WMA can have different bag limits or regulations based on the WMA. Like at [Tosohatchee] you could only use the shotgun. I know in deer season it was different. So those you gotta pay attention to."
- Derrick: "It's surprising that some people think it's the same wherever you go."

West Palm

In West Palm, the themes that were mentioned when discussing the communication of turkey hunting regulations were lack of clarity, accessibility, delivery preference, hunter responsibility, and overall compliance. The most common theme was accessibility.

Accessibility

Several participants indicated that regulations are provided and accessible to all hunters.

- Ferguson: "They try to give you all the information."
- Edwin: "Goes on their website a lot."

Regulation Compliance

The participants were asked to indicate how well they believed hunters comply with turkey regulations, and how their individual role contributes to compliance of regulations.

Gainesville

In Gainesville, when discussing regulation compliance the most common themes were overall compliance and hunter responsibility.

Overall Compliance

Participants indicated that hunters generally follow the rules with minor infractions.

- Ashley: "We only know good hunters and we let them know if they are not."
- Andrew: "I think they comply better than deer hunters,"

Hunter Responsibility

Participants suggested that it was up to the hunters to self regulate each other and seek out information regarding changing regulations.

- Ashley: "Just keep up-to date with the regulations, it's not hard. It is all out there and there are no real excuses to not keep a book on you, it changes all the time."
- Andrew: "FWC used to have bumper stickers that said report game violators, they are stealing from you, and that is what we should do."

Crestview

In Crestview, the most common themes when discussing regulation compliance were overall compliance and opportunity.

Overall Compliance

All participants agreed that hunters generally follow the rules with minor infractions.

- Chris: "I haven't seen anyone not comply with them. No one really knows how many turkeys someone really takes throughout the season. It's really based on the honor code, but I haven't seen anyone take more."
- Brad: "Most of your hunters are more honest for the most part. Most of your true hunters aren't going to shoot jakes no matter how much he gobbles."

Opportunity

Some participants believed hunters would break some rules if the opportunity presented itself and sometimes the kill outweighed the consequences.

- Bill: "A lot of it goes back to what we were saying earlier. If the opportunity presents itself and no one sees."
- Brad: "I know people that will kill a turkey anyway they can, and they do."

Orlando

In Orlando, the most common themes regarding hunter compliance with regulations were infractions beyond hunting and overall compliance.

Overall Compliance

Several participants agreed that hunters generally follow the rules with minor infractions.

- Dan: "A lot of people abide with the actual hunting."
- Derrick: "People who enjoy the woods will abide by it. But there are always that group that have no respect for anything and they're just out there to kill anything."

Infractions Beyond Hunting

A few participants specified simple rules, beyond those regulating hunting, commonly being violated.

- Derrick: "Litter! Oh jeez! I hate to see it. Again, at Lake Monroe they need to get control of that property. I think the regulations are clear though."
- Dan: "Seen other rules abused on WMA's like taking hunting stuff in no more than a day in before your hunt and take down by the day after. Some of those seen abused. The drinking and seeing beer cans upsets me."

West Palm

In West Palm, the themes that surfaced regarding hunter compliance with regulations were content, overall compliance, and enforcement. The most common themes were overall compliance and enforcement.

Overall Compliance

Several participants agreed that hunters generally follow the rules with minor infractions.

- Ernest: "Depends on where you are at and who is looking. Overall, most people follow the rules but there are always people not following."
- Evan: "20/80, we have seen people shooting a roosting a bird."

Enforcement

Several participants displayed concern with a lack of regulator presence and enforcement of the current regulations.

- Ernest: "Used to see one [officer] very often but now I don't see them any more."
- Ethan: "I do not think the laws are as enforced as they should be."

Individual Role

Focus group participants were asked to indicate the role of the hunting community, as well as their individual role, in the compliance of regulations. The individual role of hunters in the compliance of hunting regulations was not discussed in all focus groups due to time constraints.

Crestview

In Crestview, the participants identified hunter responsibility as a them to discussing their role in regulations.

Hunter Responsibility

Some participants believed all hunters should self-regulate and believed it was their responsibility to report violators.

- Chris: "I would say I would report them. I would hope other hunters would report them as well."

West Palm

In West Palm, the most common theme regarding hunter's individual role was hunter responsibility.

Hunter Responsibility

Participants believed they should be self-regulating each other and to lead by example.

- Ernest: "Report wildlife violators."
- Evan: "Set an example and abide by the rules."

Regulation Effects

Participants were asked how current turkey hunting regulation have both benefited and hindered hunters. The effect of regulations was not discussed in all focus groups due to time constraints.

Crestview

Overall, Crestview participants believed current regulations had not hindered hunters. The most common theme was population management.

Population Management

Participants felt that the current regulations help increase the population.

- Chris: "I think the regulations just manages the turkey population. It doesn't allow overhunting of turkeys. There are plenty of turkeys for everyone."

Regulation Improvement

Participants were asked to indicate how current regulations might be improved.

Gainesville

In the Gainesville focus group participants indicated that change was needed to the hunting regulations.

Change Needed

The participants suggested modifications to the hunting time frame.

- Ashley: "The spring season needs to be moved up two weeks. They are out hot and heavy a couple weeks before the season, but keep the length the same."

- Adam: “Where we hunt, they came out later in the year.”

Crestview

In Crestview, themes that surfaced regarding regulation improvements were content, change needed, specific regulations, and over regulation. Change needed was the most common theme.

Change Needed

Participants suggested that adjustments to the hunting time period might be a method to improve current turkey hunting regulations.

- Chris: “I’d probably say extend hunting season.”
- Bob: “Afternoon hunts on the management areas.”

Orlando

Participants in the Orlando focus group had already suggested banning high-powered weapons. The other themes that surfaced regarding how hunting regulations might be improved were enforcement, change needed, and content. The most common themes were enforcement and change needed.

Enforcement

A few participants believed there should be increased enforcement of the regulations to ensure hunters are abiding by current regulations.

- Derrick: “Enforcement, and I know that’s expensive.”

Change Needed

Participants suggested that adjustments to the hunting time period might be a method to improve current turkey hunting regulations.

- Derrick: “The hours you are allowed to hunt.”
- Dan: “Besides the hours, I don’t have anything.”

West Palm

In West Palm, the themes that surfaced regarding regulation improvements were content and enforcement. The most common theme was enforcement.

Enforcement

Several participants displayed concern with a lack of presence from regulators and enforcement of the current regulations.

- Ferguson: “The management of the property needs to be regulated more, not stricter regulations.”
- Felicia: “Not enough law enforcement in the woods.”

Feeding/Baiting

The participants were asked how they felt about feeding/baiting turkey and how fall or spring turkey season affected their decision regarding feeding/baiting. Feeding/baiting was not specifically discussed in all focus groups due to time constraints.

Crestview

The themes that surfaced in Crestview, regarding feeding/baiting, were content, unethical practice, and counterproductive. The most common theme was unethical.

Unethical

Several participants believed that feeding/baiting turkeys was unfair to both the turkey and other hunters.

- Bentley: "To shoot them over bait, it's like shooting them in a barrel."
- Brandon: "There ought not be any feed. I don't mind feeding, but come hunting season, cut it off. Give everybody a leading and fair chance."

Bag Limit

The participants were asked to share their thoughts on the current statewide season bag limit. Bag limit was not discussed in Orlando due to time constraints.

Gainesville

In the Gainesville discussion of the bag limit, content was the most common theme.

Content

Participants were content with the current bag limit and had no real problem with it.

- Adam: "I think it's good. Two is plenty for a person and usually one is plenty."
- Alan: "It is plenty for a person."

Crestview

The themes for bag limit in Crestview were population management, content, and change needed. The most common themes were population management and change needed.

Population Management

Most participants agreed that the bag limit should be lowered to help the population management.

- Brandon: "Right now, with the population we've got, we don't need it [Indicating the bag limit is too much]."
- Group: "Agreed that it could be lowered, just not in the spring."

Change Needed

All participants agreed that removing the fall season might help with the population.

- Brad: "Get rid of fall season unless incentives are added to kill coyotes."
- Group: "Do away with the fall season."

West Palm

In West Palm, the most common theme regarding the bag limit was content.

Content

All participants agreed that they were content with the current statewide bag limit.

- Ferris: "I think it is good and should not be changed."

- Ethan: “Four is fine. I would be happy if I could get one per year. Keep the bag limit, but I am not that lucky.”

Harvest Management

Given the current harvest management regulations, participants were asked whether they believed current regulations should be revised to allocate the harvest better. Harvest management was not discussed in Orlando due to time constraints.

Gainesville

In Gainesville participants were content with current harvest management regulations.

Content

Participants indicated that there was no need for a change and had not real problem with it.

- Aiden: “ I don’t think so, that is user error [Explaining why fewer than half of Florida turkey hunters harvest a single turkey during the spring season].”
- Albert: “Maybe if they wanted to decrease the population in an area then they could adjust it.”

Crestview

Crestview participants were also content with current harvest management regulations.

Content

All focus group participants believed there was no need to make changes to current harvest management regulations.

- Chris: “No, because it’s hunting and not shooting turkey in a barrel.”
- Bentley: “That’s part of the fun. It’s not supposed to be easy.”

West Palm

West Palm participants also discussed being content with current harvest management regulations.

Content

Focus group participants believed there was no need to make changes to current harvest management regulations.

- Ethan: “No I do not think so. You should not be expected to go out in the woods and kill something, and you have to put your time in. if you can shoot an Osceola on public land that is a real treat.”

Tagging System

The participants were asked to share their views regarding the use of a tag system.

Gainesville

In Gainesville, the most common theme regarding a tagging system was not helpful.

Not Helpful

Participants did not welcome a tag system and believed it would be more work. They also believed hunters would not abide by its implementation.

- Alex: “People are only going to report it if they are honest, just makes it harder for law abiding hunters to hunt.”

- Alan: "I don't like it. It is more paperwork and regulations."

Crestview

Inconvenience, not helpful, and content were the themes that surfaced in the focus group discussion in Crestview regarding a tagging system. The most common themes were inconvenient and content.

Inconvenience

Several participants agreed that a tag system would be a waste of resources and more work for both regulators and hunters.

- Brad: "There's always a gripe with it. You have to carry a pen or your phone doesn't work. When it comes down to it, the honest turkey hunter will do what he's supposed to."
- Chris: "I think it's a waste of money and resources for the state to produce the tags and manage the reporting, other than someone to take their harvest and just be honest about their limit."

Content

Some participants indicated they would not have any significant problems with a tag system.

- Brandon: "No real problem with it. Wouldn't hurt my feelings if they went to a tagging system."
- Bob: "Even if the hunter is not 100% happy with the rule, he'll do it."

Orlando

The themes that surfaced when discussing a tag system in Orlando were enforcement, beneficial, inconvenience, and content. The most common themes were no content, beneficial, and inconvenience.

Content

Several participants had no problem with the tag system and could see no disadvantages.

- Donald & Derrick: "Hey, I'm over 65 – I wouldn't care! I don't see any disadvantages to it."

Beneficial

A few participants believed a tag system would be helpful and result in a positive outcome.

- Donald: "Tagging lets you see what your population is so it could be useful if you need to give an area a rest."
- Dan: "It would help poaching. You gotta have the tag."

Inconvenience

Several participants agreed that a tag system would be a waste of resources and more work for both regulators and hunters.

- Debra: "It would increase your license fee."
- Dan: "It could cost a lot when you could use that money for more law enforcement. But I suppose we would have to pay for that."

West Palm

In West Palm, the most common theme for the use of tags was beneficial.

Beneficial

All participants agreed that a tag system would be a good practice to help with current turkey hunting problems.

- Frank: “If you are required to have a physical tag, and don’t have it, then you get caught and you are going to be stuck. If you are issued two then you are keeping everyone honest.”
- Evan: “It works for the alligators.”
- Ernest: “I think you could save a lot of headache with tagging systems. Two tags a year.”

Specific Hunting Regulations

Fall Hunting

The participants were asked to describe their opinions of the fall hunting regulations and how important it was to have the opportunity to hunt in the fall.

Gainesville

In Gainesville, the most common themes when discussing the fall hunting regulations were simplicity needed and secondary purpose.

Simplicity Needed

Participants suggested that the fall season should coordinate with other seasons to be easier for hunters to follow.

- Andrew: “In the spring you are only out there for turkey and you know it’s legal. It’s confusing with fall because there are too many season overlapping.”
- Alan: “It should be season to season with deer season or when rifle season starts—take the guessing out.”

Secondary purpose

Many participants specified that the fall season was not their main focus and was seen as a bonus.

- Aiden: “Most of the hunters are going to hunt lots of different things, very few hunt just one species.”
- Anthony: “I gave up fall turkey hunting and duck hunting.”

Crestview

In Crestview, the most common theme for fall hunting was secondary purpose.

Secondary purpose

Many participants specified that the fall season was not their main focus.

- Bill: “I’m more worried about deer in the fall.”
- Bentley: “I don’t think I’ve ever fall hunted. I always hunt in the spring.”

Orlando

In Orlando, the most common themes related to fall regulations were unfamiliarity and secondary purpose.

Secondary Purpose

The majority of participants indicated that fall season was not their main focus but it was a bonus if the opportunity presented itself.

- Derrick: "It's nice but it's not the major time for me [to hunt turkey]. But if the opportunity is there and it's a reasonable shot [, I'll take it]."
- Dan: "Fall turkey hunting is not important to me, but it's nice. And if it helps the population."

Unfamiliarity

A few participants indicated they had either never hunted in the fall or were unfamiliar with the fall season.

- Debra: "I haven't ever gone turkey hunting in the fall, only deer."
- Donald: "I don't know anything [about fall turkey hunting]."

West Palm

When discussing fall hunting regulations in West Palm, the themes that surfaced were weaponry, secondary purpose, and lack of opportunity. The most common themes were weaponry and secondary purpose.

Secondary Purpose

The majority of participants indicated that fall season was not their main focus but it was a bonus if the opportunity presented itself.

- Ethan: "Fall turkey hunting is really not that important to me. I am chasing deer during at that time."
- Farley: "You need to know what you are hunting for. If the opportunity happens then it is a plus."

Weaponry

Several participant suggested changes in the armament allowed in the fall season.

- Ernest: "It needs to be shotgun only in the fall, as well as spring. If you are going to an area you will see a bird, take a shotgun."
- Evan: "Too dangerous with a rifle."

Fall Either-Sex Hunting

The participants were asked how they would feel about limited fall either-sex turkey hunting in specified areas and the criteria that should be met in an area before either-sex hunting is allowed.

Gainesville

In Gainesville, the themes that surfaced in regard to fall either-sex hunting were fairness, no opposition, and sustainability research. The most common themes were no opposition and sustainability research.

No Opposition

Participants were not opposed to fall either-sex turkey hunting and would do it.

- Alan: "It is [Either-sex hunting] the same way with deer, a turkey should lay 14 eggs, so there should be enough."
- Anthony: "Based on biology, if [fall either-sex hunting] is not going to impact the population, seems ridiculous not to. The pressure is so great on gobblers and you have to have both."

Sustainability Research

Participants believed research should be conducted to make a decision on either-sex fall turkey hunting for information to support the decision.

- Alan: “Do a survey or something to see if you will get some kind of breeding out of it.”

Crestview

In Crestview, The most common themes for fall either-sex turkey hunting were not helpful and change needed.

Not helpful

All participants agreed that fall either-sex turkey hunting would not be helpful and indicated they already had enough problems with the turkey population.

- Brandon: “Don’t allow fall either-sex turkey hunting in Okaloosa County. We don’t need it here. Don’t kill hens; they already have enough predators as it is.”
- Chris: “I don’t think fall either-sex turkey hunting is really necessary. I don’t think opening up more would be good for the turkeys. Being able to go out and kill anything all the time, as much as you want, wouldn’t be good.”

Change Needed

The majority of participants believed the fall season should be removed when considering either-sex turkey hunting in the fall, with the overlap of deer season.

- Bill: “I won’t turkey hunt in the fall for that reason [Because fall turkey season and deer season overlap].”
- Brad: “No, unless he’s gobbling, I don’t care nothing about him.”

Orlando

In Orlando, the themes that surfaced when discussing either-sex fall turkey hunting were unfamiliarity, no opposition, lack of interest, disruptive, and sustainability research. The most common theme was sustainability research.

Sustainability Research

Participants believed research should be conducted to make a decision on either-sex fall turkey hunting so information would support the decision.

- Dan: “Do studies at each WMA and private land. Then select parcels [for either-sex fall turkey hunting].”
- Derrick: “Do trial runs [for either-sex fall turkey hunting].”

West Palm

In West Palm, the most common theme regarding either-sex fall turkey hunting was disruptive.

Disruptive

All participants believed that either-sex turkey hunting would be detrimental to the turkey population.

- Frank: “If either-sex fall turkey hunting were into play, then I think you would see many people harvest those birds. The population would then really fall.”
- Ethan: “There is no reason to shoot your breeding stock. You are not going to get much meat out of a hen. Not worth it.”

Fall Improvements

The participants were asked what changes they would make to the current fall turkey season. Due to time constraints, fall improvements were not discussed in all focus groups.

Gainesville

The most common themes in Gainesville regarding changes to the fall season were weaponry and sustainability research.

Weaponry

Participants suggested there be modifications to the armament used to hunt during the fall season.

- Adam: "Bow season should be able to shoot any sex, but gobblers only during gun season [Alan and Andrew agreed]"

Sustainability Research

Participants believed research should be conducted to ensure the population would not be affected and to ensure risks are known.

- Alex: "Need to make sure that a population has enough of each sex."
- Alan: "Do a survey at the end of the year and see how many hens were killed."

West Palm

When discussing changes to the fall hunting season in West Palm, the common themes were change needed, proceed with caution, satisfaction, no opposition, and weaponry. The most common themes were weaponry and proceed with caution.

Weaponry

Participants suggested there be modifications to the armament used to hunt during the fall season.

- Ernest: "Only shot gun."
- Ethan: "Do away from center-fire rifles."

Proceed with Caution

Some participants believed changes to the fall season should be addressed with caution and regulators should consider the location, as not every hunting area is the same.

- Farley: "It comes down to where are you hunting, you cant just change it all. The situation may be different in areas that have a lot of birds."

Spring Hunting

Focus group participants were asked about their opinion regarding spring turkey hunting season in Florida.

Crestview

In Crestview, the themes that surfaced in the focus groups were satisfaction and change needed. Change need was the most common theme for spring hunting.

Change Needed

Most participants agreed there should be some adjustment to the hunting period in the spring.

- Brad: "I think we're early with the spring season. If that's the case then, the hens are just now starting a good nest. Maybe a week before season."
- Bentley: "I'm in agreement. I'd like to see the spring be a little bit longer. The weather's been awesome. I'd like to see another week added. I haven't hunted this area a lot."

Orlando

In Orlando, the most common theme for spring turkey hunting season was satisfaction.

Satisfaction

Overall, all participants believed that there was no need to make changes to the current spring season.

- Dan: "I actually researched this a little. The research said there are 2 peak gobbling times. In those two peaks, the second ones they actually gobble more. They are trying to get more hens. I hunted the weekend before it ended and I got one to gobble. So, I'm okay with how it is now."
- Debra: "They're hornier then, so I'm good with the current season."

West Palm

In West Palm, the most common theme regarding the spring turkey-hunting season was change needed.

Change Needed

Several participants believed there needed to be an adjustment to the hunting period.

- Ernest: "This year was way too late. They were all bread and on the nests. This year was a wild card, in general, it has been pretty close."
- Ferguson: "I think the spring needs to be a little later; it is too early."

Spring Improvements

The participants were asked to indicate whether they felt spring turkey season should be changed. Due to time constraints spring improvements were not discussed in Orlando.

Gainesville

Satisfaction and change needed were the two themes that surfaced in Gainesville regarding spring season improvements. The most common theme was a change needed.

Change Needed

Participants indicated there should be an adjustment to the spring hunting period.

- Ashley: "Start spring turkey hunting season earlier and extend it."
- Andrew: "Spring turkey hunting season has always been the third week in March, and has never changed, maybe it needs to."

Crestview

In Crestview, the most common theme when discussing spring turkey hunting improvements was change needed.

Change Needed

Participants indicated there should be an adjustment to the spring hunting period. Some participants believed the spring season was early and should be delayed; however, some participants believed the spring season should start earlier.

- Bill: "A little early."
- Brad: "Delayed I would think."
- Chris: "As a hunter who hasn't killed much, I'd say earlier. They're more prone to not be aware of their surroundings, or on such alert. They're focused on mating and coming to the calls."

West Palm

In West Palm, the majority of respondents believed that the spring turkey-hunting season is in the middle of nesting and breeding activity. The most common themes were satisfaction, beneficial, and no opposition.

Satisfaction

Several participants indicated that the spring season should remain the same.

- Evan: "Remain the same. We do not have enough birds to sustain the longer hunting period."
- Ernest: "If you didn't close the deal in 5 weekends, you won't for any others"

Beneficial

Several respondents believed that adjusting the time of the spring turkey-hunting season would result in a positive outcome.

- Farley: "It would help the reproduction of turkeys."
- Floyd: "If adjusted correctly, then it will work."

No Opposition

Many of the participants indicated that they were not opposed to a change in the spring turkey-hunting season and that there could be several benefit to this change. Several

- Ethan: "If you let us go out there earlier, you could be more vocal with them. Being vocal with the birds, it would be better to just move up the time for more hunting days, but moving up keeping the same number of days."
- Edwin: "If you are moving the entire window, then I would rather have it the same time [remain the same]. But if you are talking about moving up the start time, and keeping the end time the same, that is a whole different discussion."