

JULY 1, 1993  
LCMR FINAL STATUS REPORT

I. Partnership for accelerated wild turkey management - wildlife 42.

Program Manager: John R. Beard  
Minnesota Chapter  
National Wild Turkey Federation  
701 East Lake Street  
Wayzata, MN 55391  
(612) 475-4127

- A. M.L. 91 Ch. 254, Article 1, Sec. 14, Subd: 9(m)  
Appropriation: \$50,000  
Balance: 0

This appropriation is to the commissioner of natural resources to increase wild turkey stocking. This appropriation must be matched by \$50,000 from the National Wild Turkey Federation.

- B. Compatible Data: Not applicable

- C. Match Requirement: \$50,000  
Funds Raised to Date: \$50,000

Appropriations that must be matched and for which the match has not been committed by January 1, 1992, must be cancelled. Amounts cancelled to the Minnesota Future Resources Fund are appropriated to the contingent account created in subdivision 15.

II. Narrative

- A. The native turkey was eliminated from the wild in Minnesota very early in our settlement history. Between 1926 and 1968 numerous attempts were made to reestablish turkey populations by releasing pen-reared birds obtained from various states, but all attempts failed. Starting in 1971, however, wild trapped birds were obtained from Missouri and released in southeastern Minnesota. This release was successful and became the parent flock for the reintroduction program in Minnesota. The Wild Turkey Management Program has been funded by the DNR and State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation for over 15 years. Unfortunately, a limited funding base has prevented an acceleration of the program beyond its baseline level.
- B. Wild turkey hunting and viewing opportunities are highly sought after by Minnesota citizens and currently generates in excess of \$500,000 annually. When a population goal of 25,000 wild turkeys is reached, economic activity would increase to \$3.5 million annually.

- C. Neighboring states such as Iowa and Wisconsin recognized this importance and accelerated their reintroduction program several years ago. Nearly all their vacant range has now been repopulated. The opportunity to receive funding would enable an acceleration of Minnesota's program.

III. Objectives

A. Trapping and Transplanting Minnesota Wild Turkeys

- A.1 Narrative: Accelerating the wild turkey reintroduction program will require increased effort for trapping and transplanting Minnesota turkeys to vacant habitat. At least 250 birds annually will be trapped and relocated.

- A.2 Procedure: The DNR wild turkey specialist will assemble the necessary trapping equipment, field vehicles and seasonal personnel prior to January of each year. Trapping crews will identify flock locations, establish trap sites and use rocket nets to capture wintering flocks. Trapped birds will be examined, banded and immediately transported to be released at predetermined sites in accordance with a priority list established by the Wild Turkey Committee.

- A.3 Budget:
- |                     | <u>LCMR Funds</u> | <u>Matching Funds</u> |
|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| a. Amount Budgeted: | \$37,000          | \$37,000              |
| b. Balance:         | 0                 | 0                     |

- A.4. Timeline for Products/Tasks:

	July 91	Jan 92	June 92	Jan 93	June 93
Assemble Equipment and Personnel	*****		*****		
Trap/Transplant Birds		*****		*****	
Final Report					*****

- A.5 Status:

The partnership for Accelerated Wild Turkey Management Program resulted in a total of 931 wild turkeys trapped in southeastern Minnesota during the winters of 1991-92 and 1992-93. This trapping effort resulted in transplanting 882 wild turkeys into 43 new release sites previously identified in Minnesota's wild turkey range.

During the winter trapping season of 1991-92, 336 wild turkeys were trapped resulting in the release of 315 birds into 15 release sites.

Overall, winter trapping conditions were considered poor due to above average temperatures and lack of snow.

The second winter trapping season of 1992-93 resulted in 595 birds being trapped, and subsequently the release of 567 birds at 28 release sites in Minnesota's wild turkey range. With above average snowfall and below normal temperatures, trapping conditions were considered good; combined with experienced trappers, a record number of turkeys were trapped and released during the winter of 1992-93.

Without the funding support provided by the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources, National Wild Turkey Federation, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the MN Chapter of National Wild Turkey Federation, this accelerated effort would not have been possible. Although we were able to complete 40 percent of our identified transplant goal in the two-year accelerated effort, it will now be more difficult to complete the remaining transplant with the reduction of funds available. This will be primarily due to the number of seasonal trappers which we will be able to hire over the trapping period and also the possibility of having to shorten their seasonal work period to account for the decreasing funds.

We will be looking for outside funds which could include further assistance from the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources.

A.6 Benefits: The transplanting of wild trapped Minnesota turkeys to unoccupied range would allow the DNR to meet their population goal of 25,000 wild turkeys much sooner than the current program allows. A larger turkey population would increase economic activity and meet increasing recreational needs.

B. Exchanges of Minnesota wildlife for wild turkeys from other states.

B.1 Narrative: Other states are interested in receiving Minnesota wildlife, such as ruffed grouse, gray partridge, Canada geese, prairie chickens, etc., for their restocking programs. In exchange for supplying these species, Minnesota could receive wild turkeys for transplanting.

B.2 Procedure: Wildlife exchange requests from other states would be monitored by the DNR Turkey Specialist. When appropriate, turkeys would be requested in exchange and exchange rates and time tables would be coordinated. Where necessary (eg. ruffed grouse and gray partridge exchanges) the Turkey Specialist would be responsible for trapping and delivering Minnesota birds before turkeys would be received from other states.

B.3 Budget:

	<u>LCMR Funds</u>	<u>Match Funds</u>
a. Amount Budgeted:	\$7,000	\$7,000
b. Balance:	\$ 0	\$ 0

B.4 Timeline for Products/Tasks:

July 91 Jan 92 June 92 Jan 93 June 93

Development of Trades \*\*\*\*\*  
Trap Trade Species \*\*\*\*\*  
Final Report \*\*\*\*\*

B.5 Status:

Over the two year period, July 1, 1991 - June 30, 1993, we were able to obtain 88 wild turkeys for release in Minnesota from the states of Illinois and Wisconsin in exchange for prairie chickens and pine martens, respectively. In addition, we secured exchange agreements for wild turkeys with Missouri and Oklahoma when trapping conditions are suitable in their respective states. These exchanges require Canada geese and ruffed grouse from Minnesota.

B.6 Benefits: Coordinating the wildlife exchange program with the wild turkey program will provide for a fair exchange value for Minnesota wildlife sought by other states, accelerate the turkey transplant program and provide for genetic diversity among transplant populations.

C. Monitor Transplant Success

C.1 Narrative: Censusing wildlife populations is difficult at best and especially so with a wary creature such as the Wild Turkey. However, identifying appropriate transplant sites and monitoring transplant success will require surveys that will be able to detect changes in turkey population density and range expansion. This objective will expand existing surveys to new and unoccupied range.

C.2 Procedures: The most promising wild turkey survey currently being used is a mail survey of antlerless deer hunters. Survey areas are chosen and questionnaires are sent to a statistically valid sample of deer hunters. After data entry and statistical analysis, the survey can provide population trend and range expansion information for each survey area.

C.3 Budget:

	<u>LCMR Funds</u>	<u>Match Funds</u>
a. Amount Budgeted	\$6,000	\$6,000
b. Balance	0	0

C.4 Timeline for Products/Tasks:

	<u>July 91</u>	<u>Jan 92</u>	<u>June 92</u>	<u>Jan 93</u>	<u>June 93</u>
Conduct Mail Survey	*****		*****		
Compile Data		*****		*****	
Analysis and Report			*****		*****

C.5 Status:

With funds from the accelerated trap and transplant wild turkey program, we have been able to expand our fall wild turkey survey to all current and potential wild turkey range in Minnesota. This information is critical in determining wild turkey range expansion through our accelerated trap and transplant program. In addition, the survey will be used to monitor Minnesota's wild turkey population long after we have completed our transplanting efforts. We have also been able to develop an innovative Geographic Information System (GIS) which will improve our ability to model Minnesota's wild turkey population. Attached are two range maps which were GIS generated from our fall survey (1990, 1992) results that document the rapid range expansion of the wild turkey in the two years of our accelerated effort.

- C.6 Benefits: Monitoring population increases and range expansion will provide necessary information on transplant success and help identify future transplant priority sites.

IV. Evaluation:

The success of the accelerated transplant program can be measured simply by the number of wild turkeys transplanted to vacant sites. The transplant goal for this program is 500 birds in 25 new sites. Progress of the overall restoration effort will be monitored by analysis of turkey population surveys.

V. Context:

- A. The Wild Turkey Management Program has successfully established a huntable population of wild turkeys in a small portion of the suitable habitat

in Minnesota. Although population growth within the transplant areas has been good, expansion of the occupied range by transplanting has been slow due to lack of funds. Missed economic opportunities and meeting increased recreational demand necessitates an acceleration of the management program.

- B. This project would supplement the existing wild turkey management program by providing State and private matching funds specifically for the expanded transplant program. No other funds are currently available for this increased effort.
- C. For the last 15 years the Minnesota Wild Turkey Management Program has been funded by the DNR and the State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, and no LCMR funds have been used. The DNR has funded a wild turkey specialist and provided program support. The State Chapter has provided additional program support in the form of equipment, vehicle lease, seasonal personnel and research funding.
- D. Not applicable.
- E. Biennial Budget System Program Title and Budget, FY 92-93: Not available at this time.

VI. Qualifications

1. Program Manager

John Beard  
Board of Directors, Minnesota Chapter  
National Wild Turkey Federation

Mr. Beard is past-president of the Minnesota Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation and is currently serving on the Board of Directors. Mr. Beard's primary role will be to act as Program Manager and be the liaison to the National Wild Turkey Federation when securing matching funds.

2. Major Cooperators

Kevin Lines, Farmland Wildlife Program Leader  
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

VII. Reporting Requirements:

A final status report will be submitted by June 30, 1993.

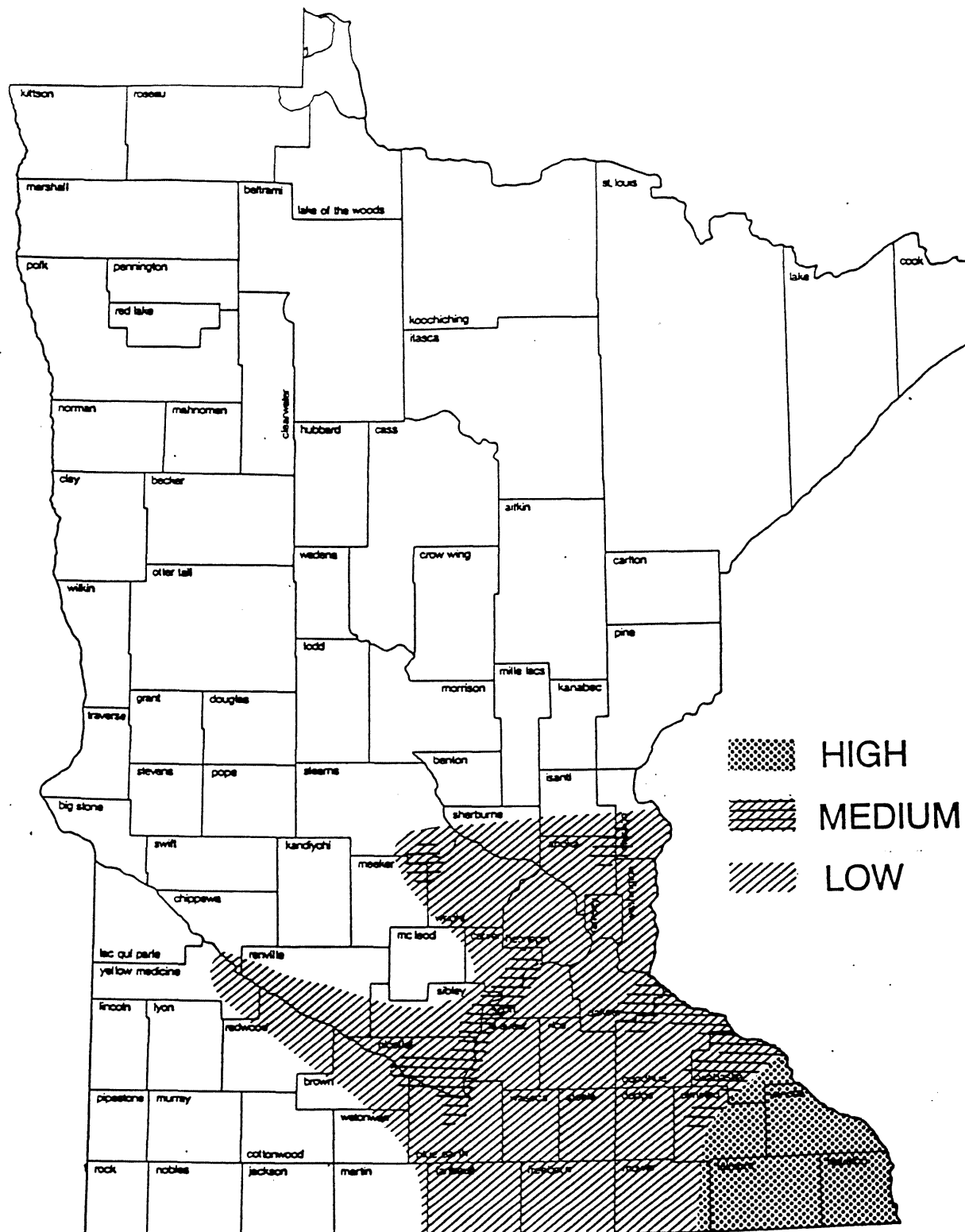


Fig. 1. Distribution and relative population densities of wild turkeys, Minnesota, November, 1990.

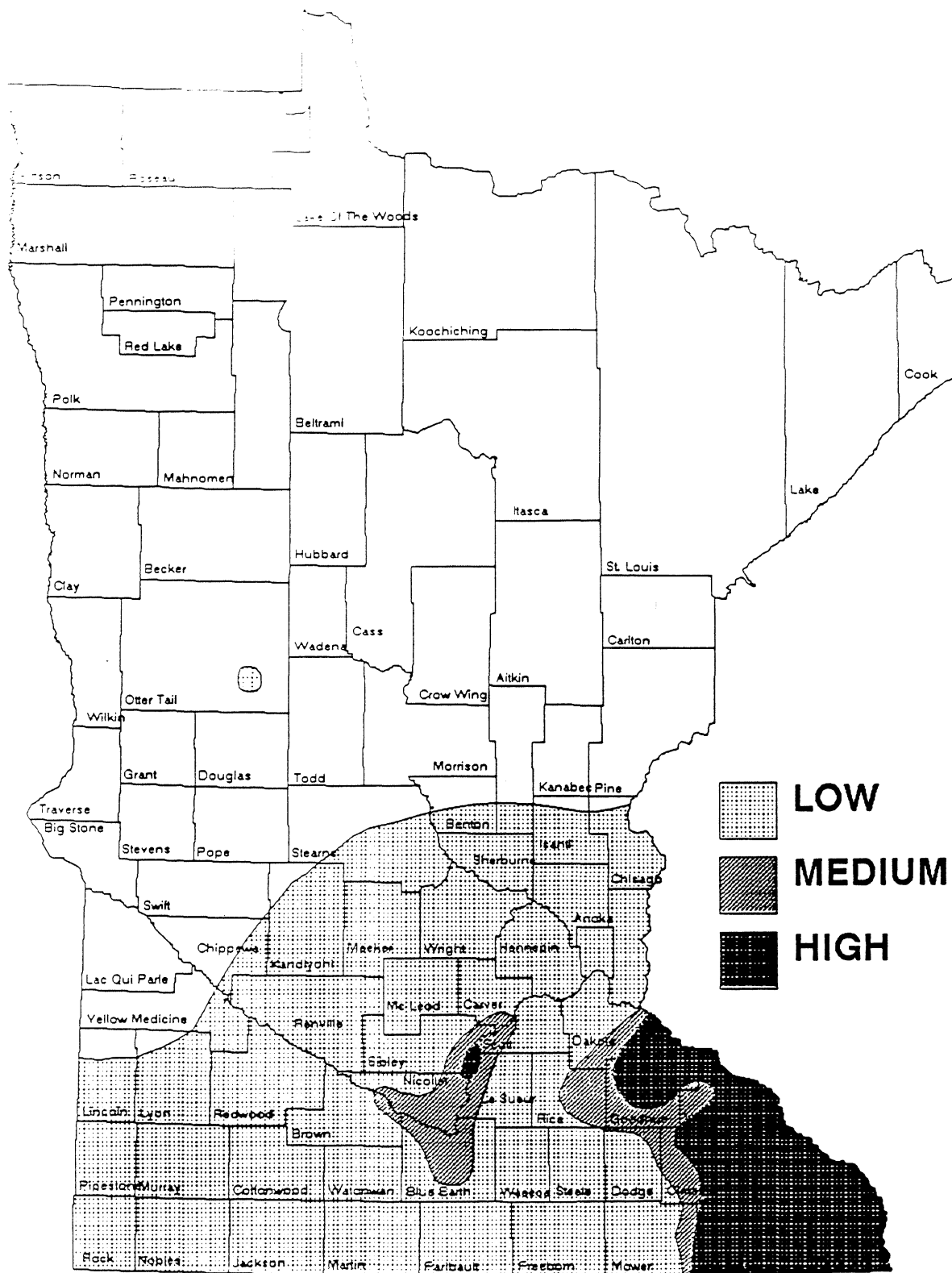


Fig. 4. Distribution and relative densities of wild turkey, Minnesota, November-December, 1992.