



MEMORANDUM

To: City of Saint Anthony Village Parks & Environmental Commission
From: Charlie Yunker, City Manager
Date: September 13, 2021 Parks & Environmental Commission Work Session
Request: Proposal to Adopt Wild Turkey Management Plan

BACKGROUND

In the fall of 2020 staff was contacted by residents that were encountering difficulties in managing wild turkeys on and near their property. The turkeys were causing a nuisance to the residents and the neighborhood, and deterrence techniques were not effective in relocating the flock.

Staff took some time to research options for removal of the turkeys and found that residents do not have options for professional removal services for turkeys. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is currently the only organization able to perform removals, and they will only do so if a city has a formal management plan in place. This plan allows for a city to request a removal permit for public property, or on behalf of a resident/business owner of private property, to have the USDA perform removal if determined to be necessary. To date, wild turkeys have not presented a significant problem on any city-owned property.

Staff received guidance from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources on implementing a Wild Turkey Management Plan, and was provided with a template plan and a workflow document that detailed the steps needed for adoption of a plan. A draft plan was presented to the City Council at their May 11, 2021 Work Session, and direction was given to staff to proceed with drafting a final plan to present for approval.

Staff subsequently received feedback on the draft plan from Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and incorporated those comments into the current draft.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff is recommending the adoption of a Wild Turkey Management Plan in order to give private property owners an option for wild turkey removal when all other avenues for deterrence have been exhausted. There is a cost associated with removal, and staff is recommending that cost be the responsibility of the property owner. Staff recommends not implementing a fee for the City permit, as the staff time to process is anticipated to be minimal. The permit fee and removal cost can be re-evaluated at any time.

This also gives the City an option for removal should wild turkeys present an issue on publicly-owned property in the future.

DISCUSSION ITEMS FOR COMMISSION FEEDBACK

Below are the specific items for discussion and feedback for the City Council:

- Does the Commission support the adoption of a Wild Turkey Management Plan?

NEXT STEPS

1. Staff will bring the final draft and Parks & Environmental Commission comments to a future City Council meeting for consideration to adopt and implement.
2. If adopted, information on wild turkey management will be added to the City website and included in an edition of the City newsletter

ATTACHMENTS:

- Draft Wild Turkey Management Plan



A WILD TURKEY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR
THE CITY OF SAINT ANTHONY

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1. City of Saint Anthony Wild Turkey Management Concerns

1.1 Wild Turkey Habitat Use and Population Estimate

The City is fully developed with areas of public recreation and pockets of open space that are conducive to turkey populations, so wild turkeys are found in areas of the city. Nesting occurs in a variety of habitats including wooded and marsh areas and thick shrubbery public and private property. Newly hatched broods tend to feed within the city boundary areas and in communities that border Saint Anthony. After their flightless period of a few days, wild turkeys are more mobile and frequently use private and public property for dusting, roosting and feeding.

The City of Saint Anthony does not monitor wild turkey populations annually. City protocol is to respond and assist residents when an issue arises due to a large flock of wild turkeys or unique situations that create a public safety and/or public health issue.

1.2 Visitation and Recreation Areas

Flocks of wild turkeys can be found in our parks, playgrounds, roads, parking lots, wooded areas, and other public and private property.

1.3 Concentrated Habitat Use and Human Safety Issues

Areas in which wild turkeys can cause damage or health and human safety issues include public property, private residential property and business property throughout the city. Turkeys can be difficult to deter and can become aggressive with people.

1.3.1 Proximity Sensitive areas

Because our wild turkey removal plan is based on managing specific problem areas only and not an annual removal program, all property at any potential location will have sensitivity issues. Therefore, staff will not support the use of firearms for the removal of problem turkeys unless directed by Public Safety staff in very specific situations that have no other options. Generally a drop net process or baited traps will be utilized. Depending on the types of baited traps used, this process may attract non-target wildlife and domestic pets. Contracted services for wild turkey removal will employ strategies and systems that minimize the impact to all other domestic and wild animals.

2. Wild Turkey Management Recommendations

2.1 Goals and Measures

The City of Saint Anthony's Wild Turkey Management Plan is designed for problem area response due to wild turkey issues when identified by residents and city staff. This is not a citywide annual removal process plan. The two primary areas of concern are public safety and property damage.

Staff have identified two goals for implementing a Wild Turkey Management Plan:

1. Develop and implement a communication process that informs both residential and business property owners about strategies to deter feeding and loafing wild turkeys. Information will

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include insight regarding the issues of feeding wildlife and options to make property areas unattractive for turkeys by developing natural barriers that deter turkeys from loafing on and around property.

2. Support other community public and private property owners, if requested, to develop plans to implement processes to reduce/remove wild turkeys on property not owned by the City of Saint Anthony. This could also extend to removal when ongoing public safety and damage is identified.

2.2 Geographic Scope

The removal goals are focused on an as needed basis throughout the City of Saint Anthony. Wild turkey management techniques are not planned for any specific locations at this time or as a scheduled annual removal process. If in the future the wild turkey populations grow to a point a planned and scheduled annual removal program is required, staff will work with the City Council and the Minnesota Department of Natural resources to develop and implement a process for the City of Saint Anthony.

2.3 Management Techniques

The management techniques for wild turkey management for the City of Saint Anthony will be varied in type and geographic area. Meeting the goals as outlined may require the implementation of a broad set of options. Any one management technique used alone will likely be ineffective for any significant length of time, since tolerance and habituation will likely occur. As a result, we propose the use of an integrated management approach, where a number of techniques, applied in varying ways, times and locations will provide the best outcomes.

2.3.1 Population Reduction

Animal Management

The plan recommended is not an annual population reduction management process. When a problem area is identified and action required, staff will request a Removal Permit from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for the wild turkeys. Permit request will outline all issues, location(s) and conditions that will be followed as well as the reporting of any removal(s).

Trapping and Removal (Winter Period)

Capture and removal of, mixed age groups during the winter period is an effective way to reduce the localized population of wild turkeys. The use of contractors to capture, remove and disposition of wild turkeys from City of Saint Anthony is a management option. Such removal would need to be detailed as part of a removal permit application through the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and wild turkey removal and disposition would need to be conducted according to the permit conditions.

Lethal Wild Turkey removal

The City of Saint Anthony does not plan to use on-site lethal removal of wild turkeys unless a specific removal need is dictated by the Public Safety Personnel and no other non-lethal options are reasonable

based on the situation. Selective and occasional lethal removal of individual or small groups of wild turkey may be needed if other redistribution or hazing methods do not work. Lethal removal of wild turkeys by means of shooting wild turkeys on an occasional basis is a management option. Such removal would need to be dictated by the City of Saint Anthony Police Department. This type of removal would be included as part of a removal permit application through the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and wild turkey removal and disposition would need to be conducted according to the specific permit conditions. Such conditions would include the number of individual wild turkeys and the specific information about the methods to be used for the removal and disposition.

2.3.2 Tracking Management Activities for Future Adjustments

All management activities will be documented on the Management Activity Tracking Form in Appendix B and keep a copy of this on file to help facilitate future management activities that might need adjustments or improvements.

2.3.3 Habitat Modification

There are some direct habitat modifications that may be beneficial long term for wild turkeys. Covering dusting sites with rock may deter them and encourage them to move to another area that has less public use. In some cases pruning of certain branches on roost trees may prove beneficial. However, being able to halt access, remove food sources, or altering other attractants will be beneficial.

2.3.4 Temporary Physical Barriers

The use of temporary fencing, rocks and other natural barriers (botanical gardens - pollinator gardens) that limits wild turkey access to the high use pedestrian traffic areas during the various Minnesota seasons will be considered. Any fencing that may be installed would be established in a manner or distance that prevents wild turkeys from entering the fenced off area from the adjacent roost areas.

2.3.5 Permanent Physical Barriers

Completely excluding wild turkeys from a specific area is difficult based on their ability to fly. The use of permanent woven wire fencing or more residential aesthetically pleasing fence such as composite, wood or privacy lattice, or other options may be considered if it limits wild turkey access to high pedestrian traffic use areas. Staff understands this may help to deter but not completely prevent access. These fences can be blended into the area with tall flowering forbs, grasses or shrubs. Any fencing that is installed would need to be approved by the Area Wildlife Manager and will be established in a manner that prevents wild turkeys from entering the fenced off area from adjoining areas. Routine inspection of the fence will be done by city staff when installed on publically owned property.

2.3.6 Redistribution Techniques

Preventing large flocks of wild turkeys from roosting, feeding or dusting throughout Saint Anthony and adjacent areas will be an ongoing process. We anticipate using a number of techniques, when needed, through independent contractors to remove wild turkeys creating public safety issues and property damage. On City owned property, multiple techniques will be utilized at varied times and with subtle

shifts in methods so that the wild turkeys do not become habituated to any one technique or become accustomed to a particular schedule of activity.

Following is a list, though not necessarily exhaustive, of redistribution techniques recommended by Minnesota Department of Natural Resources the City will follow on publicly owned property and resident and business owners will be advised to follow before requesting a removal permit:

- **Human and mechanical disruption options that may be considered;**
 - Disturbing roosting and feeding wild turkeys by individuals on foot so they can be moved out of the area to a location that is more supportive of wild turkey habitat
 - Sprinklers or water devices
 - Remote control cars/trucks
- **Dogs or other trained animals**
 - Specially trained dogs that are capable of providing non-lethal hazing.
 - Use of trained dogs and handlers to move turkeys away from high used public areas.
 - Resident pets will not be allowed for this purpose.
- **Pyrotechnic Options**
 - Limited use of pyrotechnic options such as flares, bangers, crackers, popper shells, etc. can be temporarily effective in moving wild turkeys and dissuading them from returning to a given area. *Special training, handling and storage considerations would need to be considered. Use restrictions and notification requirements would be required prior to the use of pyrotechnics. Safety will always be the number one priority when considering pyrotechnics for the relocation of wild turkeys.*
- **Options for Repellants for roosting**
 - Bird spikes in common roost areas
 - Spray on products that create unwelcome residues have been successful to slow down roosting. An example is Bird-X “4 The Birds Repellant” – product leaves a sticky residue on surfaces including tree branches, rooftops, asphalt, etc.
 - Remote and automated lighting systems.
- **Predator decoys**
 - The use of 2D or 3D coyote/dog decoys sometimes discourages area use by wild turkeys. The periodic use of decoys continues to be a management option. Decoys that are placed intermittently and exhibit periodic motion due to wind gusts can be effective at deterring geese however must be moved on a very regular schedule to be affective.
- **Removal of food sources for wild turkeys**
 - No feeding wild turkeys on private property
 - No feeding of wild turkeys on city property

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2.3.7 Deterrents in Roost Areas and Excrement Removal

At this point in time, the City of Saint Anthony does not remove wild turkey excrement on private property. The primary goal is to effectively redistribute wild turkeys away from these areas, with the goal being a reduction of feces in these areas. Staff would only remove wild turkey excrement from public owned property if the problem is extensive and persistent.

2.4 Public Information

Informing the public about wild turkey management activities is an integral part of a successful wild turkey management plan. Information and signage detailing some of the methods being used will be developed to provide background information for residents. Signage or posted notices may be developed for certain activities. Additionally, city staff and all contractors performing removal services will provide a copy of the removal permit to all residents and patrons upon request. All persons performing management activities should provide users with accurate and thorough information about wild turkey management objective, and inform users how the particular management activity being conducted fits into the larger wild turkey management plan.

The City of Saint Anthony will promote resident reporting options of turkey complaints/safety concerns to appropriate staff via e-mail or phone. The City will also provide information on residential turkey management techniques in both the city newsletter and website.

2.5 Partner Relationships and Permit Requirements

Coordination of all wildlife management activities will be communicated with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Parks & Recreation Department, Public Safety Department and City Administration. Permitting and all contracted removal activities, dates/conditions for removals, permit possession while conducting activities, notification and involvement of Conservation Officers, Area Wildlife Managers, etc. will be the responsibility of City staff and all contractors employed to implement wildlife management services.

APPENDIX A: City of Saint Anthony Context and Land Cover Map

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