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**From:**  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 06, 2013 1:09 PM  
**To:** FGC;  
**Subject:** CA Spring Turkey Hunting

June 6, 2013  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife Commission  
Upland Game Bird Program  
1416 9th Street, 12th Floor,  
Sacramento, CA 95814

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to you as a concerned California resident and sportsman about hunting safety and hunting ethical issues that I have observed while hunting wild turkeys during the past few spring turkey seasons here in California. I am an avid turkey hunter and have been hunting turkeys for many years now.

I would like to thank the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for the hunting opportunities that are provided each year. I would especially like to thank the Department for the limited entry turkey hunts that are provided. I've been fortunate enough to have been drawn on the limited entry hunts for Lake Sonoma and Daugherty Hill areas. Although I did not harvest a bird each time, every hunt was a high quality hunt with appropriate hunter densities where I felt safe during each and every hunt. I would also like to thank the Department for providing the two day junior only hunt the weekend prior to the general spring turkey season. I've been taking junior hunters out the past few years to teach safety and hunting ethics to them. We've had several quality hunts during the junior hunts.

Unfortunately, I do not feel comfortable during the general turkey season to take a junior hunter along with me on public hunting areas due to the several concerning safety issues that I've witnessed while hunting during the spring turkey seasons. I will discuss several of the incidents that I witnessed and propose possible solutions for the Commission to consider.

A reoccurring issue seems to be excessively high hunter densities in recent years on the public hunting areas. There seem to be some of the hunters that know how to hunt turkeys in the spring where they set up a decoy and call from a stationary position to try to bring the gobbler to them. There also seems to be many hunters that walk around and charge the sound of a gobbling turkey

looking to shoot while moving. Stalking turkeys during the spring season is very dangerous!

While hunting on Daugherty Hill Wildlife area after the limited entry period had ended, I witnessed two young men charge up to the area where several turkeys were roosted. A gobbler in the group had started to gobble. When the two hunters approached the trees they started shooting into trees at the turkeys roosted there. This was several minutes before legal shoot time. I heard them yell and then immediately leave the area. When I was walking back to the parking lot past the area that they had shot from, I observed a dead hen turkey that they had killed and left on the ground.

I also had a hunter come running to the sound of me calling with hen yelps to a gobbler while I was set up with a hen decoy out in front of me. When the hunter came running up and saw my hen decoy he immediately pulled up to shoot in my direction. I had to desperately scream for him to stop and it was a very close call.

It is unethical for hunters to try to run up to a turkey and jump shoot. It is extremely unethical and dangerous when individuals are charging birds in the dark and shooting into trees before legal shoot time which is currently ½ hour before sunrise. It is too dark to safely identify a target and there is no way that a person can verify that a turkey has a visible beard during the spring season.

Possible Solutions:

Add a regulation for the spring turkey season like some other states have such as “Hunting by calling only, no stalking.”

Change the spring turkey hunting time from ½ hour before sunrise to 4:00pm to from sunrise to 4:00pm. This would allow the turkeys to fly down from the roost and prevent people from shooting at them in the trees. It can be very dark and difficult to see in areas with trees at the start of the current shoot time, which makes for a very dangerous situation.

Enforce the parking restrictions on areas that have them such as Fremont Weir and Sul Norte properties. This would help prevent overcrowding of the hunting areas and prevent potential issues with the neighboring landowners.

Create a turkey stamp in addition to the upland bird stamp and charge a fee. Charge \$20 for a turkey stamp each year. This would help to eliminate unethical hunters that don't follow the existing game laws since many wouldn't want to pay an additional fee. This would also generate funds for the Department to be used for turkey management issues such as trapping and relocating nuisance turkeys in urban areas.

Create turkey harvest tags similar to deer tags where a tag must be attached to the turkey immediately after harvest. This would prevent unethical hunters from not following the current 3 bird season limit.

Start charging for the limited entry drawing applications the same way that there are charges for the duck hunting drawings. This would also help to eliminate the unethical hunters since they may not want to pay a fee and would also provide additional funds for turkey management.

Open additional areas for spring turkey hunting to decrease hunter densities and provide more hunting opportunities which would help to increase safety. An area to consider opening for spring turkey hunting would be Lake Berryessa Wildlife area. It is a large wildlife area and if hunting with shotguns is a safety issue at this location the spring turkey hunting could be limited to archery equipment only.

Thank you for your time and consideration.  
Sincerely,  
Joseph Chavez

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