



## Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage

### *Wild Turkey Donations 2015 Assembly Bill 107 April 1, 2015*

Good morning Chairman Ott and committee members. My name is Scott Loomans, Wildlife Regulation Specialist in the Bureau of Wildlife Management in the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Thank you for the opportunity to testify for informational purposes on Assembly Bill 107 which adds turkeys to the current deer donation program, a program which currently pays for the cost of processing donated venison which is then distributed to food pantries.

The deer donation program is funded by a \$2.00 surcharge on the sales of most hunting licenses (\$4.00 from a conservation patron license) and from the cost of each bonus antlerless deer hunting permit. This is also the funding source for the Wildlife Damage Abatement Claims Program.

The program is authorized to spend up to \$600,000 in a biennium to reimburse licensed meat facilities for the cost of processing deer and to administer the program. Actual expenditures have been lower in recent years, closer to \$150,000 in 2014 only, reflecting lower deer harvests.

Publicizing the program and the distribution of funds is done by the department. Local partners at the county level recruit licensed meat facilities for participation in the program. In 49 counties, the local partners are USDA-Wildlife Services and the remaining 21 counties have a county employee administer the program or hire an independent wildlife damage specialist. These are the same people who administer aspects of the Wildlife Damage Abatement Claims Program locally.

The meat is distributed by charities such as:

- Hunt for the Hungry ( <http://www.huntforthehungry.com/> ) in the Northeast,
- Southwest Community Action Program, Dodgeville
- Community Action, Inc., Janesville
- Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin, Madison
- Central WI Community Action Coalition, Wisconsin Dells

Since the program began in 2000, hunters have donated over 85,000 deer which were processed into over 3.8 million pounds of ground venison.

Thank you again for the chance to speak with you regarding wildlife donations. I'd be happy to try to answer any questions you may have.



# JOEL KLEEFISCH

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 38<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

## **Assembly Bill 107: Relating to authorizing reimbursement to counties for the costs incurred in processing and donating certain wild turkeys**

*Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage*

Thank you Chairman Ott and members of the Committee on Natural Resources for holding a hearing today on Assembly Bill 107 which expands Wisconsin's existing *Venison Donation Program* to include Wild Turkey.

Wisconsin's *Venison Donation Program* has existed for many years and has been successful at facilitating the charitable donations of harvested deer meat. All a hunter has to do is field dress and register the deer, then take the deer and the carcass tag to a participating processor. The processor, in turn, processes the carcass and distributes the meat to a local nonprofit for distribution within the community.

County Land and Water Conservation Departments, food pantries, charitable organizations, Hunt for the Hungry, USDA - Wildlife Services and participating processors all help implement and administer the program in 57 counties.

Counties are eligible for the full reimbursement from the state for the costs associated with processing and donating meat through the donation program. The reimbursement is funded in part by a \$2 Wildlife Damage Surcharge on resident and non-resident small game, deer, bear, elk and turkey hunting licenses.

Assembly Bill 107 expands the existing program, establishing the *Venison and Wild Turkey Donation Program*. Under the bill, hunters and processors who want to donate wild turkey will have an opportunity to do so in much the same manner as currently allowed. The new program will be funded by the same \$2 license surcharge; no new funds will be allocated, and no new fees will be assessed.

It is important that Wisconsin help facilitate the donation of harvested game meat, it is a great way to put healthy meals on the tables of needy families. This legislation is supported by the majority of the Wisconsin Sportsmen's Caucus, and has already received widespread bipartisan support. Thank you for considering Assembly Bill 107, I am happy to answer any questions.