

The International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA) suggested that further information be provided on the following topics.

The question of more public comment

In our staff review, there was consensus that you had adequately provided for public input. However, if you seek additional input, we recommend holding some small focus group sessions rather than town meeting style sessions. Our collective experience is that sometimes the town meeting venue is not always representative of the total perception pool that exists on an issue. Focus group sessions can be used effectively to validate and expand on what has been gleaned from earlier public input. This would be a low cost instrument to employ and might be expected to give you and your staff better decision-making data.

Habitat issues

Admittedly, to adequately assess habitat suitability, biologists generally look at the habitat during the seasons that are crucial to the species in question. However, in this case we would recommend that in addition to the winter assessment, a spring assessment would be reassuring because of the increased need for food resources at this time.

We also looked at the similarity of the vegetation and vertical structure between Nova Scotia and New England, an important consideration for you as you assess habitat information at hand and make your decision. There appears to be enough difference in latitude and other aspects that one cannot make a generalized assessment without carrying out accepted common scientific procedures for assessing habitat for turkeys. This is something that may need to be examined further and in fact may be addressed by the spring habitat review recommended above.

We would note that an up-to-date assessment of current distribution and supply of wild turkey habitat in eastern North America would be helpful in placing the consideration of this proposal in the context of opportunity for range expansion.

Disease Issue

We are inclined to recommend one more additional consultation with an expert in avian disease. It should be noted that the original proposal was reviewed, at our request, by Dr. Randy Davidson of the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study, which is located at the School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Georgia at Athens, Georgia. An additional consultation has been suggested during the review process. Accordingly IAFWA would be willing to fund an additional consultation by an individual or group of your choice. We would be happy to discuss this with you in more detail.

Climatological Considerations

There has been much discussion by both sides of this proposal about comparability of climate between those areas in the Province and in New England where turkey reintroduction programs have been successful.

With respect to average winter temperature (December, January, February), we compared average winter temperatures in Nova Scotia (-4 degrees C) with where recent successful introductions have occurred (Maine and southern Ontario - 6 to -8 degrees C). Average winter temperatures in Nova Scotia were shown to be milder than either of the other two areas. This would indicate that Nova Scotia winter temperatures would not likely be a limiting factor.

With respect to average winter precipitation, we made the same comparison. Nova Scotia does have higher winter precipitation, and we did not look into snow depth or time of snow cover. This information could be examined further but at this time we do not think snowfall or snow cover to be a limiting factor.