Agency Name: Department of Natural Resources

Statutory Authority: 50‑9‑640, 50‑11‑300, 50‑11‑500, 50‑11‑510, 50‑11‑525, 50‑11‑530, 50‑11‑540, 50‑11‑544, 50‑11‑546, 50‑11‑580, and 50‑11‑2200

Document Number: 5259

Proposed in State Register Volume and Issue: 47/11

House Committee: Regulations and Administrative Procedures Committee

Senate Committee: Fish, Game and Forestry Committee

120 Day Review Expiration Date for Automatic Approval: 05/08/2024

Status: Pending

Subject: Turkey Hunting Rules and Seasons

History: 5259

By Date Action Description Jt. Res. No. Expiration Date

‑ 11/24/2023 Proposed Reg Published in SR

- 01/09/2024 Received President of the Senate & Speaker 05/08/2024

H 01/09/2024 Referred to Committee

S 01/09/2024 Referred to Committee

S 03/27/2024 Resolution Introduced to Approve 1216

Document No. 5259

**Department of Natural Resources**

CHAPTER 123

Statutory Authority: 1976 Code Sections 50‑9‑640, 50‑11‑300, 50‑11‑500, 50‑11‑510, 50‑11‑525, 50‑11‑530, 50‑11‑540, 50‑11‑544, 50‑11‑546, 50‑11‑580, and 50‑11‑2200

123‑51. Turkey Hunting Rules and Seasons.

**Synopsis:**

The Department of Natural Resources proposes to amend Regulation 123‑51 “Turkey Hunting Rules and Seasons.” The subject of the proposed action is to amend the regulations to prescribe seasons, dates, bag limits, and details of hunting and taking of turkeys on Wildlife Management Areas. The following is a summary of the proposed changes and additions:

The Notice of Drafting was published in the *State Register* on October 27, 2023, Volume 47, Issue No. 10.

**Instructions:**

Print the regulation as shown below. All other items remain unchanged.

~~Indicates Matter Stricken~~

Indicates New Matter

**Text:**

123‑51. Turkey Hunting Rules and Seasons.

1. Total limit of 3 turkeys statewide per person for resident hunters and 2 turkeys statewide per person for nonresident hunters, 1 per day, gobblers (male turkeys) only, unless otherwise specified. Total statewide limit includes turkeys harvested on Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs). Small unnamed WMAs in counties indicated are open for turkey hunting. Turkey seasons and bag limits for Wildlife Management Area lands are as follows:

A. Game Zone 1

1. Other WMAs

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 3 for residents and 2 for nonresidents, no more than one may be taken April 1 ‑ 10.

B. Game Zone 2

1. Other WMAs

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 3 for residents and 2 for nonresidents, no more than one may be taken April 1 ‑ 10.

2. Keowee WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 2, no more than one may be taken April 1 ‑ 10.

(c) Shotguns only ‑north of Hwy 123 and west of the Keowee Arm of Lake Hartwell and west of Hwy 291. Archery only on other sections.

3. Draper WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 2, no more than one may be taken April 1 ‑ 10.

(c) Thurs through Sat. only

4. Belfast WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 1

(c) ~~Hunters by drawing only~~ Thurs through Sat. only

5. Worth Mountain WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 2, no more than one may be taken April 1 ‑ 10.

(c) Thurs through Sat. only

6. McCalla WMA

(a) April 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag Limit 2, no more than one may be taken April 1 ‑ 10.

7. Fants Grove WMA

(a) April 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag Limit 2, no more than one may be taken April 1 ‑ 10.

8. Liberty Hill WMA

(a) April 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag Limit 2, no more than one may be taken April 1 ‑ 10.

9. Delta South WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Hunters by drawing only

10. Forty Acre Rock HP WMA

(a) April 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag Limit 2, no more than one may be taken April 1 ‑ 10.

C. Game Zone 3

1. Other WMAs

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 3 for residents and 2 for nonresidents.

2. Crackerneck WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 2

(c) Fri. and Sat. only

(d) Sign in and out at the gate required.

(e) Main gate opens at 4:30 am and closes at 1:00 pm.

3. Aiken Gopher Tortoise HP WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 2

4. Francis Marion National Forest

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 2

(c) Tibwin Special Use Area

(1) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(2) Bag limit 2

(3) Special hunts for youth or mobility impaired hunters as published by SCDNR.

5. Moultrie

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 2

(c) Thurs through Sat. only

(d) Bluefield WMA

(1) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(2) Bag limit 2

(3) Adult/Youth only

(e) Hall WMA

(1) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(2) Bag limit 2

6. Santee Cooper WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 1

(c) ~~Hunting by public draw only~~ Thurs through Sat. only

(d) Youth only

7. Webb, Palachucola and Hamilton Ridge WMAs

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 2

(c) All hunters must pick up and return data cards at kiosk and display hangtags on vehicles.

8. Donnelley WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 1

(c) ~~Hunting by public draw only~~ Thurs through Sat. only

9. Bonneau Ferry WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 1

(c) ~~Hunting by public draw only~~ Thurs through Sat. only

(d) Youth only

(~~d~~e) Closed to public access during hunts.

10. Santee Coastal Reserve WMA

(a) Saturdays only from April 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 1

11. Edisto River WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 2

(c) Thurs through Sat. only

12. Tillman Sand Ridge Heritage Preserve WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 2

(c) Thurs through Sat. only

13. Victoria Bluff Heritage Preserve WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 2

(c) Thurs through Sat. only

14. Botany Bay Plantation WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 1

(c) Youth hunting by draw only.

15. Wateree River HP WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 1

(c) ~~Hunting by public draw only~~ Thurs through Sat. only

D. Game Zone 4

1. Other WMAs

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 3 for residents and 2 for nonresidents.

2. Marsh WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 2

(c) Thurs through Sat. only

(d) Sign in and out at the kiosk required.

3. Sand Hills State Forest WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 2

4. McBee WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 2

(c) Thurs through Sat. only

5. Little Pee Dee Complex WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 2

(c) Thurs through Sat. only

6. Pee Dee Station Site WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 2

(c) Thurs through Sat. only

(d) All hunters must sign in and sign out at kiosk.

7. Woodbury WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 2

(c) Thurs through Sat. only

(d) All hunters must sign in and sign out at kiosk.

8. Great Pee Dee Heritage Preserve WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 2

(c) Thurs through Sat. only

(d) All hunters must sign in and sign out at kiosk.

9. Longleaf Pine Heritage Preserve WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 2

(c) Thurs through Sat. only

10. Manchester State Forest WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 2

11. Hickory Top WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 2

12. Oak Lea WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 2

13. Santee Dam WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 2

14. Wee Tee WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 2

15. Cartwheel Bay Heritage Preserve WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 2

(c) Thurs through Sat. only

16. Lewis Ocean Bay Heritage Preserve WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 2

(c) Thurs through Sat. only

17. Waccamaw River Heritage Preserve WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 2

(c) Thurs through Sat. only

18. Samworth WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 1

(c) Youth hunting by draw only.

19. Liberty Hill WMA

(a) April 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag Limit 2

20. Bobwhite Hills WMA

(a) Apr. 1 ‑ April 30

(b) Bag limit 1

(c) Thurs through Sat. only

E. Statewide Turkey Hunting Regulations and Youth Turkey Hunting Day on WMAs

1. The statewide youth turkey hunting day on designated WMA lands shall be the Saturday immediately preceding April 1

(a) The daily bag limit during the statewide youth turkey hunting day on WMAs is one (1) which counts toward the season limit.

(b) A person less than 18 years of age is considered a youth turkey hunter.

(c) Only includes WMAs designated by the Department.

2. The following regulations apply statewide. No turkey hunting permitted on Turkey Restoration Sites which have not been formally opened by the Department.

(a) During the spring turkey hunting season, only turkey gobblers (male birds) may be taken.

(b) Shotguns, muzzleloader shotguns, or archery equipment are permitted. All other weapons and methods of taking are prohibited including rifles, pistols, buckshot and slugs.

(c) Turkeys may not be hunted with dogs.

(d) Live decoys are prohibited.

(e) A tag issued by the Department must be placed around a harvested bird’s leg before the bird is moved from the point of kill and the tag must be validated by the hunter as prescribed by the Department. A valid tag must remain on the carcass until it is processed (cut up).

(f) On all WMA lands, it is prohibited to hunt or stalk wild turkeys while holding or using for hunter concealment any of the following items: a tail fan, a partial or full decoy with a tail fan, or a tail fan mounted to a firearm. Tail fans include those made of real or synthetic feathers or an image or likeness of a tail fan applied to any material.

3. Electronic Harvest Reporting of Turkeys on Private and WMA Lands.

(a) Methods of electronic harvest reporting include telephone, internet, and mobile device application. Applicable telephone numbers and internet addresses are as posted on the Department’s website and in the annual Hunting and Fishing Regulations Guide.

(b) Hunters must provide their Department issued Customer Identification Number to access the reporting system and provide the county of kill, whether the property on which the turkey was taken was private or WMA land including the name of the WMA, whether the turkey was an adult gobbler or juvenile (jake), and whether the turkey was taken in the morning or afternoon.

(c) As part of the reporting process a Department issued confirmation number will be generated. Hunters must document and maintain this confirmation number as prescribed.

**Fiscal Impact Statement:**

The amendment of Regulation 123‑51 will result in increased public hunting opportunities which should generate additional State revenue through license sales. In addition, local economies should benefit from sales of hunting supplies, food and overnight accommodations. Sales taxes on these items will also directly benefit government.

**Statement of Rationale:**

Rationale for the formulation of these regulations is based on over 70 years of experience by SCDNR in managing wildlife populations and establishing public hunting and recreation areas. SCDNR seeks to balance the objectives of resource protection and public use and access. Contractual agreements with the landowners provide guidelines for the use and management of the property. Wildlife Management Area agreements are on file with the Wildlife Management Section of the Department of Natural Resources, Room 267, Dennis Building, 1000 Assembly Street, Columbia.