

Turkey Tracts are unique turkey hunting areas across the Lower Peninsula that provide great hunting opportunities for a variety of hunters, including youth, adults new to the sport and seniors. The Allegan Turkey Tract will be open to turkey hunting in spring 2016, and additional locations will be available in the future. The Turkey Tracts program is patterned after the successful Grouse Enhanced Management Sites (GEMS), located in northern areas of Michigan.

The Allegan Turkey Tract – located on the Allegan State Game Area, off 126th Avenue – is over 4,513 acres with many miles of hunter walking trails.

"Working with the National Wild Turkey Federation and area contractors, we have improved habitat for wild turkeys and other wildlife through the oak savanna restoration activities that have been completed in this area," said Maria Albright, Department of Natural Resources wildlife technician.

Two of the DNR Wildlife Division's main goals are to manage sustainable wildlife populations and manage habitat for those populations. Turkey Tracts provide a venue to showcase these goals and also focus on hunter recruitment and retention.

"Picture a youngster learning the sport of turkey hunting by meandering through a Turkey Tract with a mentor, or someone with mobility issues having an opportunity to get deeper into the woods by following one of the rustic trails," said Art Pelon, Michigan State Chapter president of the National Wild Turkey Federation. "Turkey Tracts is a great new initiative that promotes hunter recruitment and also bridges that important gap between hunters, local communities and businesses."

Part of the Turkey Tracts initiative's aim is to help link hunters with area businesses.

"Hunting is an honorable and important part of our culture and tradition," said Chief Mason. "With the creation of the Turkey Tracts, we hope to connect local businesses and hunters, highlight local wildlife habitat management activities and work with partners to ensure that hunting traditions are maintained into the future."

Many turkey hunters will seek out supplies and accommodations, and area businesses can benefit by encouraging hunters to visit their communities. Several area businesses are offering discounts when hunters come in with a picture of themselves with a Turkey Tracts sign.

Bob's Gun and Tackle in Hastings is offering 10 percent off the regular price of any in-stock Vortex optic. The Village Inn in Allegan will give Turkey Tracts hunters a free coffee with any breakfast, and the Budget Host Inn in Allegan is offering 10 percent off a regular night rate. Remember to bring in a photo of yourself with a Turkey Tracts sign to receive discounts.

Businesses interested in connecting with hunters and offering discounts can contact Al Stewart at 517-284-6221.

Directions to the Allegan Turkey Tracts site:

Head west on M-89 to 49th Street and head north (turn right). Travel about a mile to 126th Avenue and turn left. The Allegan Turkey Tracts kiosk and parking lot area are on the left.

Michigan's spring turkey season starts Monday, April 18. For those who haven't gotten a license yet, there is still a chance to hunt in both April and May – check out the [list of available licenses](#). Spring turkey hunting licenses are \$15 and available anywhere DNR licenses are sold or [online at E-License](#).

For hunt units and season dates, see the [Spring Turkey Digest](#) and for frequently asked questions, watch the DNR's [2016 spring turkey hunting regulations video](#). For further assistance, call 517-284-WILD (9453).