



DRAFT WILD TURKEY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE CITY OF GOLDEN VALLEY

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Plan Summary

The Golden Valley wild Turkey Management Plan is a reactive approach to problem areas that develop throughout the city and not an annual scheduled removal program. The plan is a tool to manage public safety issues, resident/patron property damage and human health issues. Wild turkeys can be very aggressive, become public safety issues and cause damage in high pedestrian use areas. The removal plan will only be implemented as needed when damage and safety issues become apparent and no other options are available. The proposed management plan is designed to utilize non-lethal removal strategies first and whenever possible. Lethal disposition techniques will be implemented if recommended by contractor and approved by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Wildlife Division. The plan also provides for city staff to support administratively both public and private property owners other than the city of Golden Valley to guide and implement wild turkey removal if requested.

1. City of Golden Valley Wild Turkey Management Concerns

1.1 Wild Turkey Habitat Use and Population Estimate

The city of Golden Valley encompasses approximately 6,720 acres of varied habitats. When Golden Valley was initially settled, the majority of the landscape was cultivated farmland and open fields, with remnant wetland, wet prairies, and floodplain forest. Today Golden Valley is fully developed, areas of habitat include 70% partially vegetated land cover, forests and woodlands comprise 10%, open grasslands, shrub lands, and prairies 5%. Open water and wetland habitat is about 5%.

Overall, developed land and cultural (non-native) vegetation encompass about 81% of Golden Valley's land cover while native-dominated plant communities comprise about 19%. This value has been relatively constant over the past few decades. Golden Valley continues to look long term to increase the quantity and quality of natural areas within the community.

Wild turkeys use various areas of the city. Nesting occurs in a variety of habitats including wooded and marsh areas, thick shrubbery, downed trees, in natural tall vegetation bordering open green spaces and in wildflower garden areas. Newly hatched broods tend to feed within the city boundary areas and in communities that border Golden Valley. After their flightless period of a few days, wild turkeys are more mobile and frequently use private and public property for dusting, roosting and feeding.

The city of Golden Valley does not monitor wild turkey populations annually. City protocol is to respond when an issue arises due to a large flock of wild turkeys or unique situations that create a public safety issue. Our habitat is conducive for flocks of wild turkeys to congregate in neighborhoods, parks and corporate properties in Golden Valley.

1.2 Visitation and Recreation Areas

Flocks of wild turkeys can be found in our parks, nature areas, picnic areas, playgrounds, roads, parking lots, hiking trails, wooded areas, ball fields, and other public and private property.

1.3 Concentrated Habitat Use and Human Safety Issues

Areas in which wild turkeys are causing damage or health and human safety issues include parks, picnic areas, roads, parking lots, lawns, golf course greens & tee boxes, private residential property and business property throughout Golden Valley. The turkeys tend to be extremely aggressive with people and are impacting daycare centers, religious facilities, schools, delivery services, traffic and recreational facility use.

1.3.1 Proximity Sensitive areas

Because our wild turkey removal plan is based on managing specific problem areas only and not an annual removal program, all property at any potential location will have sensitivity issues. Therefore, staff will not support the use of firearms for the removal of problem turkeys unless directed by Public Safety staff in very specific situations that have no other options. Generally a drop net process or baited traps will be utilized. Depending on the types of baited traps used, this process may attract non-target wildlife and domestic pets. Contracted services for wild turkey removal will employ strategies and systems that minimize the impact to all other domestic and wild animals.

2. Wild Turkey Management Recommendations

2.1 Goals and Measures

The city of Golden Valley is proposing a wildlife management plan for problem area response due to wild turkey issues when identified by residents and city staff. This is not a citywide annual removal process plan. The two primary areas of concern are public safety and property damage.

Staff has identified three goals for implementing a wild turkey management program.

The primary goal is to implement a removal when ongoing public safety and damage is identified.

The second goal is to develop and implement a communication process that informs both residential and corporate property owners about strategies to deter feeding and loafing wild turkeys. Information will include insight regarding the issues of feeding wildlife and options to make property areas unattractive for turkeys by developing natural barriers that deter turkeys from loafing on and around property.

The final goal will be to support other community public and private property owners, if requested, to develop plans to implement processes to reduce/remove wild turkeys on property not owned by the city of Golden Valley. This would also extend to all future property owned by the city of Golden Valley that has not yet been identified as a wild turkey population problem response area.

2.2 Geographic Scope

The removal goals are focused on an as needed basis throughout the city of Golden Valley. Wild turkey management techniques are not planned for any specific locations at this time or as a scheduled annual removal process. If in the future the wild turkey populations grow to a point a planned and scheduled

annual removal program is required, staff will work with the City Council and the Minnesota Department of Natural resources to develop and implement a process for the city of Golden Valley.

2.3 Management Techniques

The proposed techniques for wild turkey management for the city of Golden Valley will be varied in type and geographic area. Meeting the goals as outlined may require the implementation of a broad set of techniques. Any one management technique used alone will likely be ineffective for any significant length of time, since tolerance and habituation will likely occur. As a result, we propose the use of an integrated management approach, where a number of techniques, applied in varying ways, times and locations will provide the best outcomes.

2.3.1 Population Reduction

Animal Management

The plan recommended is not an annual population reduction management process. When a problem area is identified and action required, staff will request a Removal Permit from the DNR for the wild turkeys. Permit request will outline all issues, location(s) and conditions that will be followed as well as the reporting of any removal(s).

Trapping and Removal (Winter Period)

Capture and removal of mixed age groups of wild turkeys during the winter period is an effective way to reduce the localized population. The use of contractors for the capture, removal and disposition of wild turkeys from the city of Golden Valley is a management option. Such removal would need to be detailed as part of a removal permit application through the MN Department of Natural Resources Fish & Wildlife Division. The wild turkey removal and disposition will be conducted according to the permit conditions.

Lethal Wild Turkey removal

The city of Golden Valley does not plan to use on-site lethal removal of wild turkeys unless a specific removal need is dictated by the Golden Valley Public Safety Department and no other non-lethal options are reasonable based on the situation. Selective and occasional lethal removal of individual or small groups of wild turkey may be needed if other redistribution or hazing methods do not work. Lethal removal of wild turkeys by means of shooting wild turkeys on an occasional basis is a management option. Such removal would need to be dictated by the Golden Valley Public Safety Department. This type of removal would be included as part of a removal permit application through the DNR Fish & Wildlife Division, and wild turkey removal and disposition would need to be conducted according to the specific permit conditions. Such conditions would include the number of individual wild turkeys and the specific information about the methods to be used for the removal and disposition.

2.3.2 Tracking Management Activities for Future Adjustments

All management activities will be documented on the Management Activity Tracking Form in Appendix B. The city will keep a copy of all management activity forms on file at the Brookview Golf Maintenance office to help facilitate future management activities that might need adjustments or improvements.

2.3.3 Habitat Modification

There are some direct habitat modifications that may be beneficial for long term management of wild turkeys. Covering dusting sites with rock may deter them and encourage them to move to another area that has less public use. In some cases pruning of certain branches on roost trees may prove beneficial. In addition, the opportunity of being able to halt access, remove food sources, or altering other attractants can also be beneficial.

2.3.4 Temporary Physical Barriers

The use of temporary fencing, rocks and other natural barriers (botanical gardens - pollinator gardens) that limits wild turkey access to the high use pedestrian traffic areas during the various Minnesota seasons will be considered. Any fencing that may be installed would be established in a manner or distance that prevents wild turkeys from entering the fenced off area from the adjacent roost areas.

2.3.5 Permanent Physical Barriers

Completely excluding wild turkeys from a specific area is difficult based on their ability to fly. The use of permanent woven wire fencing or more residential aesthetically pleasing fence such as composite, wood or privacy lattice, or other options may be considered if it limits wild turkey access to high pedestrian traffic use areas. Staff understands this may help to deter but not completely prevent access. These fences can be blended into the area with tall flowering forbs, grasses or shrubs. Any fencing that is installed would need to be approved by the Area Wildlife Manager and will be established in a manner that prevents wild turkeys from entering the fenced off area from adjoining areas. Routine inspection of the fence will be done by city staff when installed on publically owned property.

2.3.6 Redistribution Techniques

Preventing large flocks of wild turkeys from roosting, feeding or dusting throughout Golden Valley and adjacent areas will be an ongoing process. We anticipate using a number of techniques, when needed, through independent contractors to remove wild turkeys creating public safety issues and property damage. Additionally, we plan to use multiple techniques at varied times and with subtle shifts in methods so that the wild turkeys do not become habituated to any one technique or become accustomed to a particular schedule of activity. Staff will also investigate any residential feeding which may be keeping wild turkeys in a specific area. Staffs' goal is to have very limited impact on residents and patrons, mitigating any disruption will be a priority. Some redistribution techniques require specific training, personal protective equipment and adherence to policies and procedures for their safe use. A thorough examination of all removal/relocation options will be reviewed prior to employing a particular technique. Depending on the method(s) utilized, if it is determined public notification is needed, city staff will implement a communication plan.

➤ **Human and mechanical disruption options that may be considered;**

- Disturbing roosting and feeding wild turkeys by individuals on foot so wild turkeys can be moved out of the public safety/nuisance area to a location that is more supportive of wild turkey habitat
- Sprinklers or water devices
- Drones over trails or open areas

- Remote control cars/trucks
- **Dogs or other trained animals**
 - Specially trained dogs that are capable of providing non-lethal hazing.
 - Use of trained dogs and handlers to move turkeys away from high used public areas.
 - Resident pets will not be allowed for this purpose.

- **Pyrotechnic Options**
 - Limited use of pyrotechnic options such as flares, bangers, crackers, popper shells, etc. can be temporarily effective in moving wild turkeys and dissuading them from returning to a given area. Special training, handling and storage considerations would need to be considered. Use restrictions and notification requirements would be required prior to the use of pyrotechnics. Safety will always be the number one priority when considering pyrotechnics for the relocation of wild turkeys.
 - Flash bangs from Orion Safety Products have been used on a sporadic basis with success to dissuade wild turkeys from using a particular area.

- **Options for Repellants for roosting**
 - Bird spikes in common roost areas
 - Spray on products that create unwelcome residues have been successful to slow down roosting. An example is Bird-X “4 The Birds Repellant” – product leaves a sticky residue on surfaces including tree branches, rooftops, asphalt, etc.
 - Remote and automated lighting systems.

- **Predator decoys**
 - The use of 2D or 3D coyote/dog decoys sometimes discourages area use by wild turkeys. The periodic use of decoys continues to be a management option. Decoys that are placed intermittently and exhibit periodic motion due to wind gusts can be effective at deterring geese however must be moved on a very regular schedule to be affective.

- **Feeding ban on wild turkeys**
 - No feeding ordinance for wild turkeys within city limits.
 - Enforcement of no feeding ordinance.

2.3.7 Deterrents in Roost Areas and Excrement Removal

At this point in time, the city of Golden Valley does not remove wild turkey excrement. City staff understands the primary goal to effectively redistribute wild turkeys away from high use pedestrian areas helps to reduce wild turkey feces. Large concentrations of wild turkeys on sand volleyball courts, softball fields, golf course sand bunkers and in park play areas with sand play spaces where excrement is deposited is vulnerable to E. coli due to the increased exposure to air and ultraviolet rays emitted by the sun. Staff would only remove wild turkey excrement from sand/aggregate athletic facilities and youth play areas with sand if the problem is extensive and persistent.

2.4 Public Information

Informing the public about wild turkey management activities is an integral part of a successful wild turkey management plan. Information and signage detailing some of the methods being used will be developed to provide background information for residents. Signage or posted notices may be developed for certain activities. Additionally, city staff and all contractors performing removal services will provide a copy of the removal permit to all residents and patrons upon request. All persons performing management activities should provide users with accurate and thorough information about wild turkey management objective, and inform users how the particular management activity being conducted fits into the larger wild turkey management plan.

The city of Golden Valley will promote resident reporting options of turkey complaints/safety concerns to appropriate staff via e-mail or phone. The city will also provide information on residential turkey management techniques in both the city newsletter and website.

2.5 Partner Relationships and Permit Requirements

Coordination of all wildlife management activities will be communicated with the Minnesota DNR, Parks & Recreation Department, Public Safety Department and the City Manager's office. Permitting and all contracted removal activities, dates/conditions for removals, permit possession while conducting activities, notification and involvement of Conservation Officers, Area Wildlife Managers, etc. will be the responsibility of city staff and all contractors employed to implement wildlife management services.

2.6 Communication Plan

Review of initial draft of plans sent to MN DNR staff for comment – Mid-September 2018

The initial draft of both the Goose Management Plan (GMP) and the Turkey Management Plan (TMP) will be available for hard copy review at the Open Space and Recreation Commission (OSRC) meeting Oct 22, 2018, 6:30 pm, at Brookview (316 Brookview Parkway – 763-512-2345).

Once the Commission's recommended changes have been included in the draft documents, electronic versions of both plans will be available for public review on the City website with the option to give feedback.

When the public comment period ends, the updated plan will be reviewed at the November 13, 2018, City Council/Manger work session meeting (Golden Valley City Hall, 6:30 p.m. – 763-593-8000).

The Open Space and Recreation Commission will host a final draft document review and public input meeting on November 26, 2018, 6:30 pm, at Brookview.

Final Goose Management Plan and Turkey Management Plan are scheduled to be presented to the City Council for approval at the January 2, 2018, City Council meeting.

If approved, both plans will be implemented beginning in 2019.

2.7 Staff Contact Information

Any questions regarding the proposed wildlife management plan or the communication plan can be directed to: Rick Birno, Parks & Recreation Director at 763-512-2342 or rbirno@goldenvalleymn.gov.

APPENDIX

Appendix A – Map of wild turkey management zone

Appendix B - Golden Valley wild turkey management activity tracking form

