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Washington Department of
FISH & WILDLIFE

Spring youth turkey hunt canceled, bear season to remain closed for now

ARCHIVED NEWS RELEASE

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Stay Home, Stay Healthy actions to reduce the spread of COVID-19

OLYMPIA - The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) today announced a decision to cancel the youth turkey hunt previously scheduled for April 4-5. In addition, six game management units (GMUs) that were scheduled to open on April 1 for spring bear hunting will now be closed pending further evaluation and could reopen if conditions allow.

The Department is taking these steps to limit the spread of coronavirus/COVID-19 per Washington Gov. Jay Inslee's order to [Stay Home, Stay Healthy](#).

Many in the public have shared disappointment tied to previous public land and resource closures, pointing to exercise as an exemption. WDFW Director Susewind understands the need to spend time outdoors but notes that while hunting itself can be a solitary activity, many people have to travel from urban to rural areas to enjoy it.

"Every stop for gas, food, or a restroom break can introduce the virus to areas it hasn't yet reached," said Susewind. "It was a tough decision, but we want to ensure that people are properly encouraged to stay home at this time."

The Department had previously canceled mentored turkey events, but the youth special hunts hold a special place in staff's and hunter's hearts.

"Aspiring hunters often experience their first successful hunt over this weekend," said Susewind. "It's disappointing, but this is a serious situation, and we want our communities and the hunting public to successfully protect themselves."

Youth who were planning to hunt on April 4 or 5 may still use their tags in the regular spring or fall turkey seasons, pending further impacts. The spring turkey season is scheduled to run April 15 through May 31.

On April 6, WDFW will reassess its ability to open the impacted hunting areas, as well as several other upcoming hunting seasons. The most notable upcoming seasons include spring turkey and additional spring bear hunts currently scheduled to open April 15.

Nearly 90 percent of spring bear permit holders in northeast Washington would be traveling from outside the area.

A limited number of open hunting seasons that are winding down or have limited participation that does not create the same public health concerns remain open. Hunters participating in those seasons are reminded to renew their license for the 2020-21 hunting license year.

For the latest updates on WDFW's coronavirus response and harvest season updates, visit wdfw.wa.gov/about/covid-19-updates (<https://wdfw.wa.gov/about/covid-19-updates>).

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is the state agency tasked with preserving, protecting, and perpetuating fish, wildlife, and ecosystems, while providing sustainable fishing, hunting, and other recreation opportunities.

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