

Good morning everyone. I'm Brandon Houck, The National Wild Turkey Federation's director of conservation operations for the Midwest and West. I grew up in the Flint Hills of Kansas, and call the Sunflower state home, so it's a pleasure to be with you on this first morning of the meeting and to welcome you to Kansas. Jared McJunkin, our conservation field supervisor, is also here and I hope many of you have a chance to meet him and speak to both of us this week.

I hope you've enjoyed your breakfast. If you're not finished please keep eating as we begin a brief video that highlights the NWTF.

SHOW VIDEO

As NWTF approaches our 40th Anniversary in 2013, we're celebrating the many accomplishments we've made in partnership with state and federal agencies. Since 1973, the NWTF and our members have assisted state wildlife agencies in restoring wild turkey populations throughout North America, spending more than \$372 million to conserve nearly **17 million acres of habitat**.

Our mission has been connected to the hunting heritage from the beginning, and we understand and promote the significance of hunters to the success of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. Through our outreach programs like JAKES, our volunteers introduce around 100,000 people to the outdoors, hunting and the shooting sports each year. The NWTF has teamed up with the U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance and the National Shooting Sports Foundation to strike down barriers to youth hunting since 2004. To date, Families Afield has helped bring positive legislative change to 33 states, resulting in more than 782,000 new hunters! Our new JAKES Take Aim program has put shooting trailers in every state in the Midwest through our partnership with the Midway USA Foundation.

While we're proud of our past successes we recognize the many challenges facing the future of conservation and the hunting heritage in the Midwest and throughout the country. Challenges like declining hunter access, shrinking hunter numbers, and disappearing habitat threaten our ability to maintain quality wildlife populations and provide quality hunting experiences.

NWTF is focused on the future and is developing strategies to complement and leverage the conservation work of our state and federal partners. Across the U.S., we are working to enhance **habitat** for wild turkeys and other upland wildlife while providing hunters with more opportunities to hunt and increased access to public and private land. Specific to the Midwest, our habitat work is primarily geared towards forest health and early successional habitat and includes focal areas such as:

- Oak savanna restoration
- Managing early successional forest openings
- Developing forest management plans for private landowners
- Riparian forest restoration
- and

Native grassland restoration

This work benefits not only wild turkeys, but species as diverse as Karner blue butterflies, northern bobwhite and moose. For example, in 2012 NWTF stepped up as the first NGO to provide financial support for the new Kansas Quail Initiative.

Our focus on **hunter access** is driven through NWTF's More Places to Hunt Initiative which assists partner agencies with land acquisitions, funding walk-in hunting access programs and access easements, along with support on legislative issues that maintain public access or provide funding for access related programs.

Our conservation programs are delivered by our field staff that works closely with agencies to ensure that our programs deliver where they're needed most in your states. NWTF has 9 biologists and 3 foresters in the Midwest, with plans to add an additional biologist and an additional forester in 2013. All our conservation field staff positions are funded in partnership with state and federal agencies.

I'd like to recognize and thank the following state and federal agencies that currently provide direct financial support for NWTF field staff:

Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism
Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources
Missouri Department of Conservation
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
North Dakota Game and Fish
Ohio Division of Wildlife
South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks
US Forest Service

On behalf of NWTF, thank you for the work that your agency does to ensure the future of wildlife and hunting in the Midwest. Let us know how we can partner with you. Enjoy the rest of the meeting and your time in Kansas.