

**Tall Timbers is submitting public comment in response to the following proposed amendments in 7 DE Admin. Code 3900 Wildlife. Specifically, section 4.0(e):**

*“Numerous changes are being proposed to adjust seasons or create new seasons for game species, nearly all of which would provide hunters and trappers with more opportunities; however, season closures are proposed for wild bobwhite quail and diamondback terrapins. Both species have experienced population declines and can no longer support harvest. In an attempt to continue to allow wild quail hunting, the Division is proposing a permit and expanded season framework for which hunters that release pen-raised quail may hunt those on birds registered with the Division. Additionally, if landowners with sufficient acreage to implement habitat management practices that benefit and support wild bobwhite quail, they may request a permit allowing them to hunt wild bobwhite quail on their property. This permit would be free. The Division will reevaluate the wild bobwhite quail season closure every three years...*

*... e. Close the wild bobwhite quail season but allow landowners who have sufficient habitat and are implementing management practices to support quail to obtain a permit from the Division to hunt on their lands. Establish a season for which pen-raised release quail may be harvested. The Division will reevaluate the wild bobwhite quail season closure every three years.”*

- 1. Wild quail populations have been on the decline over the last several decades, due to landscape level habitat loss and land use changes, not as a result of hunting. Delaware has isolated populations of wild quail with the potential to expand populations. This should be motivation to maintain the notion that Delaware is one of the last remaining quail strongholds in the Mid-Atlantic Region. Conceptually, it seems like the main goal/objective of 4.0(e) is to enhance quail habitat and populations to the point where it can sustain harvest and create more opportunity for quail hunters in the future. Tall Timbers emphasizes the importance of the following in support of the Division’s commitment to wild quail expansion and hunting opportunity:**
  - a. Assessing habitat and populations every three years emphasizes the intention of creating future hunting opportunities in the form of quota or lottery hunts to ensure sustainable harvest.**
  - b. The importance of building a monitoring program, for both habitat monitoring and population monitoring for wild populations, is critical to achieving this objective.**
  - c. Delaware is one of the few states that possesses the potential opportunity for wild quail hunting on public land in the east. The Division has partnered with organizations such as Tall Timbers and other NGOs in its commitment to support wild quail restoration, with the hope that these public land opportunities will support huntable densities in the future.**