



**New Mexico State Game Commission
New Mexico Department of Game and Fish**

**MINUTES AND TRANSCRIPTS
NEW MEXICO STATE GAME COMMISSION**

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Friday, Jan. 9, 2026

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[Santa Fe, NM 87507](#)**

9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Video Link: <http://youtube.com/watch?v=hpSkEgCPW7I>

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1: Meeting Called to Order

09:05:41 a.m. (00:00:00/00:00:16 on video)

Called to order by Chairman Richard Stump.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2: Roll Call

09:06:10 a.m. (00:00:29/00:00:44)

Present in person: Chairman Stump, Commissioner Clemente, Commissioner Lopez and Commissioner Witt.

Present virtually: Commissioner Fulfer.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3: Introduction of Guests

09:06:23 a.m. (00:00:42/00:00:57)

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4: Approval of Agenda (Action Item)

09:10:29 a.m. (00:04:48/00:05:03)

Motion: To approve the agenda for the Jan. 9, 2026, meeting as written.

Motion by: Commissioner Clemente.

Seconded by: Commissioner Witt.

Approved: Unanimous - Chairman Stump, Commissioner Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer, Commissioner Lopez and Commissioner Witt.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5: Election of Chair and Vice Chair (Action Item)

09:11:00 a.m. (00:05:19/00:05:34)

Motion: To elect Commissioner Richard Stump as chair and Commissioner Fernando Clemente Jr. as Vice Chair of the Commission.

Motion by: Commissioner Lopez.

Seconded by: Commissioner Fulfer.

Approved: Unanimous - Chairman Stump, Commissioner Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer, Commissioner Lopez and Commissioner Witt.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6: Approval of the Minutes from the November 7, 2025, Meeting in Los Alamos (Action Item)

09:13:36 a.m. (00:07:55/00:08:10)

Motion: To approve the minutes from the Nov. 7, 2025, Commission meeting as presented by the Department.

Motion by: Commissioner Lopez.

Seconded by: Vice Chair Clemente.

Approved: Unanimous - Chairman Stump, Vice Chair Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer, Commissioner Lopez and Commissioner Witt.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7: Approval of Hunting and Fishing Privileges Revocations (Action Item)

09:14:05 a.m. (00:08:24/00:08:39)

The Department notified the Commission of the revocations or suspensions carried out pursuant to the Parental Responsibility Act, those who have failed to pay a penalty assessment citation within 30 days, those who have entered into a civil agreement or have a civil judgment, and pursuant to the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact.

- 146 individuals certified by the Human Services Department as being out of compliance with the Parental Responsibility Act [40-5A-1 NMSA 1978] were suspended until in compliance.
- 43 individuals who failed to pay a penalty assessment citation within 30 days of the violation were suspended until they are in compliance.
- 7 individuals who have entered into a civil agreement or have a civil judgment.

The Department presented the 50 individuals who meet established criteria for the revocation or suspension of their hunting, fishing, trapping, guiding and outfitting privileges or other privileges or authorities granted by an agreement, license or permit issued by the Department.

- 16 individuals accrued 20 or more points in a 3-year period. They were mailed a notice of contemplated action and did not request a hearing.
- 4 individuals accrued 20 or more points in a 3-year period. They were mailed a notice of contemplated action, and a hearing was conducted.
- 1 individual was denied a guide license. They were mailed a guide denial letter and requested a hearing. A stipulated agreement was signed.

Motion: To approve the revocation recommendations as submitted by the Department.

Motion by: Commissioner Witt.

Seconded by: Vice Chair Clemente.

Approved: Unanimous - Chairman Stump, Vice Chair Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer, Commissioner Lopez and Commissioner Witt.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8: Approval of the 2026 Open Meetings Act Resolution (Action Item)

09:15:07 a.m. (00:09:26/00:09:41)

Motion: To adopt the Open Meetings Act Resolution for 2026.

Motion by: Vice-chair Clemente.

Seconded by: Commissioner Fulfer.

Approved: Unanimous - Chairman Stump, Vice Chair Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer, Commissioner Lopez and Commissioner Witt.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 9: Proposed Commission Meeting Dates and Locations for 2026

09:18:33 a.m. (00:12:52/00:13:08)

The Commission determined preferred meeting dates and times for the upcoming year. Department proposed dates and locations were: Jan. 9, Santa Fe; Feb. 20, Roswell; March 20, Albuquerque; May 29, Farmington; June 25, Portales; Aug. 21, Las Vegas; Nov. 13, Socorro; and Jan. 15, 2027, Santa Fe. Commissioners discussed the relocation of the meetings originally scheduled for Feb. 20 in Roswell and May 29 in Farmington, with Deming, Las Cruces and Lordsburg discussed as potential alternative locations. The relocation of the meeting originally scheduled for Nov. 13 in Socorro was also discussed, as well as the meeting scheduled for Aug. 21 in Las Vegas, with Chama discussed as a potential alternative location. Final meeting dates and locations are:

- Jan. 9, 2026 (Friday) — Santa Fe
- Feb. 20, 2026 (Friday) — Roswell
- March 20, 2026 (Friday) — Albuquerque
- May 29, 2026 (Friday) — Deming
- June 25, 2026 (Thursday) — Portales
- Aug. 21, 2026 (Friday) — Las Vegas
- Nov. 13, 2026 (Friday) — Las Cruces
- Jan. 15, 2027 (Friday) — Santa Fe

AGENDA ITEM NO. 10: Rule Hearing: Manner and Method Rule 19.31.10 NMAC (Shed Hunting) (Action Item)

09:28:14 a.m. (00:22:33/00:22:48)

The Department presented proposed changes in the Manner and Method Rule 19.31.10 NMAC related to shed hunting to take effect on April 1, 2026.

Motion: To adopt amendments to the Manner and Method Rule, 19.31.10 NMAC, related to shed hunting as presented by the Department with an effective date of April 1, 2026, including potential minor edits as required by State Records and Archives.

Motion by: Vice Chair Clemente.

Seconded by: Commissioner Witt.

In favor: Chairman Stump, Vice Chair Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer and Commissioner Witt.

Opposed: Commissioner Lopez.

Motion passed by 4-1 majority vote.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 11: Revocation Trends

09:46:36 a.m. (00:40:55/00:41:10)

The Department presented information to the Commission related to resident and nonresident

license sales, citations issued and revocation trends over the past five-year period.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 12: Initial Discussion of the Javelina Rule 19.31.21 NMAC

09:56:49 a.m. (00:51:08/00:51:23)

The Department presented biological and background information on the javelina rule (19.31.21 NMAC). The Department is currently compiling and analyzing data.

Preliminary proposed changes included:

- Possible increases in licenses for OTC area
- Allow bootheel draw hunters to hunt OTC areas also

AGENDA ITEM NO. 13: Initial Discussion of the Turkey Rule 19.31.16 NMAC

10:12:37 a.m. (01:06:56/01:07:11)

The Department presented proposed changes to the Turkey Rule (19.31.16 NMAC) based on recent survey information, management goals and public comment. The Department is currently analyzing data and reaching out to turkey hunters to evaluate alternatives and help inform the rule development process.

Preliminary proposed changes included:

- Adjust hunts for calendar dates
- Increase up-to permit dumber for Gould's once-in-a-lifetime hunt in GMUs 26 and 27

AGENDA ITEM NO. 14: Initial Discussion of the Migratory Bird Rule 19.31.6 NMAC

10:55:19 a.m. (01:49:38/01:33:20)

The Department presented proposed changes to the Migratory Game Bird Rule (19.31.6 NMAC) based on public comment, the latest information from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), recent survey information and management goals. Season selections and bag limits are determined in conjunction with the USFWS working through the Central and Pacific Flyway Councils. The Department is currently analyzing data and reaching out to migratory bird hunters to evaluate alternatives, and to help inform the rule development process.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 15: Initial Discussion of the Barbary Sheep, Oryx and Persian Ibex Rule 19.31.12 NMAC

11:23:40 a.m. (01:56:59/01:40:41)

The Department presented biological and background information on the Exotics Rule (19.31.12 NMAC). The Department is currently compiling and analyzing data.

Preliminary proposed changes included:

Oryx:

- Potential increases to off-range hunts
- Adjusting season dates where necessary. For example, shifting start dates to maintain hunts beginning on Saturday or adjusting to calendar day starts for consistency.

Ibex:

- Decreasing licenses as a result of smaller ibex population and low success rates
- Adjusting season dates where necessary.

Barbary sheep:

- Adjusting season dates where necessary.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 16: General Public Comment

11:44:37 a.m. (02:38:56/02:22:38)

AGENDA ITEM NO. 17: Commissioner Comments

11:54:10 a.m. (02:48:29/02:32:11)

AGENDA ITEM NO. 18: Executive Session

11:54:34 p.m. (02:48:53/02:32:35)

Motion: To adjourn into executive session, closed to the public, pursuant to section 10-15-1(H) 7 NMSA 1978, attorney-client privilege, litigation update.

Motion by: Vice Chair Clemente.

Seconded by: Commissioner Witt.

Approved: Unanimous - Chairman Stump, Vice Chair Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer, Commissioner Lopez and Commissioner Witt.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 19: Action(s) from Executive Session (Action Item(s))

01:02:24 p.m. (03:56:43/02:33:33)

No action was taken during the Executive Session

AGENDA ITEM NO. 20: Adjourn

01:02:55 p.m. (03:57:14/02:34:04)

Motion: To adjourn the Jan. 9, 2026, State Game Commission meeting.

Motion by: Commissioner Lopez.

Seconded by: Commissioner Fulfer.

Approved: Unanimous - Chairman Stump, Vice Chair Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer, Commissioner Lopez and Commissioner Witt.

Transcripts

Director Mike Sloane: Hopefully, he can hear us. Commissioner Clemente?

Commissioner Fernando Clemente: Present.

Director Sloane: Chair Stump?

Chair Richard Stump: Yes.

Director Sloane: You have a quorum.

Chair Stump: There's Gregg.

Commissioner Gregg Fulfer: Can you hear me now? I'm here.

Chair Stump: Next order of business is introductions. I'll start with Commissioner Witt, and we'll go through the commissioners and go through the audience.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Hey, I'm Christopher Witt. I'm the commissioner representing Bernalillo County. A professor at UNM and ornithologist.

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Good morning. I'm Commissioner Lopez, District 3. Good to see you all. Happy New Year, and let's get to work.

Chair Stump: Hi, I'm Richard Stump. I'm Chair of the Commission, lifelong resident of New Mexico, and proud to be here.

Commissioner Clemente: Fernando Clemente from Sunland Park, New Mexico. I am a Commissioner-at-Large and wildlife biologist.

Director Sloane: Mike Sloane, Director of the Department.

Chair Stump: Commissioner Fulfer?

Commissioner Fulfer: Gregg Fulfer, Commissioner, District 1.

Stewart Liley: Good morning, Commissioners, members of the public. Stewart Liley, Chief of Wildlife, New Mexico Game and Fish.

John Crenshaw: Good morning. John Crenshaw, with New Mexico Wildlife Federation, and from long time ago with Game and Fish.

Julian Gonzales: Julian Gonzales, cattle permittee, New Mexico Wildlife Federation.

Jesse Deubel: Good morning, Mr. Chair, Commissioners. Jesse Deubel, Executive Director, New Mexico Wildlife Federation.

Charlie Trask: Happy New Year, Commissioners. I'm Charlie Trask. I'm just a private citizen. I like to hunt and fish. Thank you.

Matthew Lovato: I'm Matthew Lovato, I'm a private citizen that just wants to get involved with Game and Fish.

Tom Paterson: Howdy. Tom Paterson, cattle rancher from Catron County, live at Luna. I serve as President New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association.

Pat Block: Mr. Chair, Commissioners, good morning. I'm Pat Block, just appearing on my own behalf this morning, and also formerly with Game and Fish, just not quite as long ago as John.

Garth Reader: Good morning, all. Garth Reader, Los Alamos, New Mexico.

Kirk Patten: Good morning, everyone. I'm Kirk Patten, Chief of Fisheries for the Department.

Maj. Colin Duff: Good morning, everybody. Colin Duff, I'm a Major for our Field Operations with the Department.

Paul Varela: Good morning, Commissioners, members of the public. My name is Paul Varela, I'm the Chief of Administrative Services.

Col. Tim Cimbal: Good morning, Commissioners, public. Tim Cimbal, I'm the Colonel with Field Operations with Department of Game and Fish.

Kerrie Romero: Good morning, everybody. I'm Kerrie Romero, Executive Director, New Mexico Council of Outfitters and Guides.

Lt. Shawn Carrell: Good morning, Commissioners. Shawn Carrell, Lieutenant of Revocations.

Jeremy Martin: Good morning, Commissioners, members of the public. I'm Jeremy Martin, I'm the Department's General Counsel.

Dela Joyner: Good morning, everyone. I am Dela Joyner, and I'm the Northern Public Information Specialist for New Mexico Game and Fish.

Darren Vaughan: Good morning, Commissioners. I'm Darren Vaughan, I'm the Communications Director for New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.

Curt Coffman: Good morning, Commissioners, and public. I'm Curt Coffman, I'm the Assistant Chief of Education.

Natasha Montoya: Good morning. My name is Natasha Montoya, I'm the Assistant Chief of Information.

Isaac Romero: Good morning. I'm Isaac Romero, Systems Administrator, Game and Fish.

Eric Arce: Good morning, everyone. My name is Eric Arce, and I'm a photographer and editor.

Rebecca Archuleta: Good morning. I'm Rebecca Archuleta, HR Director for the agency.

Tristanna Carrell: Good morning, everyone. Tristanna Carrell, I'm the Chief of the Information and Education Division. We currently have 12 people online, but nobody has expressed interest in introducing themselves yet.

Chair Stump: Thank you, Tristanna. Thank you, everyone. [clears throat] Excuse me. We need to approve today's agenda. Is there any discussion on the agenda, Commissioners? Okay. Is there a motion?

Commissioner Clemente: I so move to approve the agenda as presented.

Chair Stump: Is there a second?

Commissioner Witt: Second.

Chair Stump: No discussion. All in favor?

Commissioners: Aye.

Chair Stump: No opposed. Motion passes. Agenda item number five. Annually, we elect chair and vice chair, but before we do that, I'd like to thank all of our commissioners for all the hard work you've all done. It takes a lot of time, a lot of sacrifice, and I appreciate all the help you've all given me in the past year. I'd also like to give a shout-out to Sharon Hickey, who most of you probably know, she resigned this week. I'm going to miss her in particular, and I think we all are. She was very helpful to me in the past years. She's off in a big adventure with her husband. We wish her the best of luck, and Godspeed. On that note, is there a motion to nominate chair and vice chair? [silence] He would like for you to lead the election.

Director Sloane: Okay. As you just said, is there-- we can do it two ways. We can do motion for the chair and a motion for vice chair, or we could do it all as one. Whichever way you're comfortable with. Is there a motion for chair and vice chair, or either?

Commissioner Lopez: Mr. Secretary, I'd like to nominate Richard Stump for chair of the State Game Commission, and Fernando Clemente for vice chair of the State Game Commission.

Director Sloane: Thank you.

Commissioner Fulfer: Second that.

Director Sloane: Second from Commissioner Fulfer. Thank you. Do we want to just do a voice vote, or do you want to do roll call?

Chair Stump: I think a voice vote would be appropriate.

Director Sloane: Okay. All in favor?

Chair Stump: Aye.

Commissioners: Aye.

Director Sloane: Any opposed? Motion passes unanimously. Congratulations, Chairman Stump and Vice Chair Clemente.

Chair Stump: Thank you, everyone. I would like to welcome Fernando Clemente as our new vice chair taking Commissioner Hickey's place. Commissioner Clemente is another very helpful individual. Anytime I've needed any help or any meetings anywhere in the state, he's been available and made himself available. I'd like to commend you in all the work you've done and looking forward to working with you this coming year, as all the rest of you. Item number six. We need to approve the minutes of our Los Alamos meeting. Any discussion of the minutes? Is there a motion for approval?

Commissioner Lopez: Motion to approve, Mr. Chair.

Chair Stump: Is there second?

Vice Chair Clemente: I second the motion.

Chair Stump: No discussion. All in favor?

Commissioners: Aye.

Chair Stump: Any opposed? No. Motion passes. Moving right along. Item number seven. Approval of the hunting and fishing privileges, revocations. Commissioners, we all received the information on this item. Are there any questions for Col. Cimal or any discussion? [silence] Okay. Is there a motion? [silence] I guess we're looking at it.

Commissioner Witt: I move to accept the revocation recommendations as submitted by the Department.

Chair Stump: Is there a second?

Vice Chair Clemente: I second the motion.

Chair Stump: Any more discussion? All in favor?

Commissioners: Aye.

Chair Stump: Aye. No opposed. Motion passes.

Commissioner Lopez: Short and sweet, fellas.

Chair Stump: [laughs] Thank you, fellas. Annually, we must adopt an Open Meetings Act resolution. Director Sloane, can you give us a summarize of that resolution, please?

Director Sloane: Mr. Chairman, as you just stated, the Open Meetings Act requires that you adopt a resolution that spells out how you will notice meetings, the timelines, and that sort of thing. We have the 2026 draft in your packets. It lays out public notice must be posted promptly, emailed to broadcast stations and newspapers, emailed to individuals who have requested it. Meetings and agenda must be posted as soon as practicable, but not less than 72 hours prior to a meeting.

Again, posted prominently on the website. Regular meetings, public notice should be provided as soon as practical, but not less than 10 calendar days. Special meetings, again, as soon as practical, but not less than 72 hours. Emergency meetings, reasonable efforts should be made to provide public notice before, when possible, and after an emergency matter is considered. Including an explanation at the next meeting of any action taken and the circumstances creating an emergency. Discusses the inadvertent quorum and noticing those, discusses Americans with Disabilities Act, that we provide notices that are accessible. Finally, it allows for remote participation when it is difficult or otherwise impossible for a member to attend in person. That's the brief summary. Every public body is required to adopt an Open Meetings Act resolution. This is same as it was pretty much every year before this, just changed the dates.

Chair Stump: Any discussion with commission?

Commissioner Lopez: I have some discussion, please. Looking at our meeting location and dates, I wondered if we would consider having a meeting in Las Cruces, in the-

Director Sloane: Mr. Chairman, I don't think we're on-

Chair Stump: That's our next item.

Commissioner Lopez: Okay.

Chair Stump: We're still in the Open Meetings Act. Anybody else? Anything?

Commissioner Witt: Yes. A couple people have mentioned to me that the agendas are posted late, for planning purposes. I'm wondering if you could just address when you typically post the finalized agenda, and whether it's possible to post a draft agenda earlier than we normally do.

Director Sloane: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner Witt, we try very hard to get them posted as soon as practicable. Often, it boils down to figuring out what notices have been put out for rulemaking, and then coordinating with the Chair to ensure we've got all the items. I think we've been pretty good about meeting that 10-day here recently, but I think we can certainly try to get them out a little bit earlier this year. With all the rulemaking, I think we'll get them out pretty promptly, so--

Chair Stump: We typically have them at least 10 days before, right? Okay. Any more discussion? Is there a motion?

Vice Chair Clemente: I so move to approve.

Chair Stump: Is there a second?

Commissioner Fulfer: Second.

Chair Stump: All in favor?

Commissioners: Aye.

Chair Stump: No opposed. Motion passes. Now item number nine. Proposed commission meeting dates and locations. We're going to have a full year of meetings this year as we will be doing a lot of rulemaking.

Director and staff have developed the schedule of meetings that gets us through the rulemaking as efficiently as possible. Director Sloane is going to present the proposed schedule.

[pause 00:13:31]

Director Sloane: I'm looking right now.

[pause 00:13:52]

Director Sloane: As the chairman just noted, we have a full year of rulemaking, so there are a lot more meetings this year than there have been in previous years. The dates of these meetings were selected because of the publication dates in the New Mexico Register to ensure that we could efficiently get hearings noticed. The dates are very much inflexible. The locations, we tried to pick places around the state that we haven't been, and places where we could have meetings with relative ease. Certainly, I think Commissioner Lopez has a suggestion about changing a location. We're certainly open to that, but this was where we were thinking.

We have January 9th, all of them are on Fridays, February 20th, except for the June meeting, which is a Thursday. Again, that's because of location dates, making sure that we can get stuff processed and out to records and archives put into New Mexico Register in a timely fashion. It's pretty straightforward.

Chair Stump: What were you thinking?

Commissioner Lopez: Chair, members of the commission, I was thinking of having a meeting in Las Cruces, New Mexico, and possibly Lordsburg or Deming, in the Bootheel. We do have a lot of stakeholders in the Bootheel. We haven't had a meeting there in, I don't know, a while. Maybe we--

Director Sloane: Four or five years.

Commissioner Lopez: Yes, four or five years.

Director Sloane: I met in Deming at one point.

Commissioner Lopez: Las Cruces, we do have a vice chair down there now. Congratulations, Mr. Vice Chair. Try to spread around between the districts. I don't know if the commission would consider moving the February 20th meeting from Roswell to Las Cruces, and maybe the May 29th from Farmington to Lordsburg.

Chair Stump: Well, then that puts a majority of the meetings in the southern part of the state, doesn't it?

Commissioner Lopez: One in Santa Fe, Albuquerque, we still have Vegas in the north, Socorro, central, and then in '27. I'm not concerned about '27 anymore.

Chair Stump: Yes. How would you guys feel about going ahead and adapting this and then talking about that? That we'll keep the dates and then talk about the places. Should we do that now?

Director Sloane: Mr. Chairman, I think from a public perspective, probably there are folks who would like to know whether they have to drive all the way to Lordsburg or whether they're going to Roswell in February. I would point out that Lordsburg is a long way. We have had a meeting there during my career, but I don't think we've had more than one. Deming is a little closer. Might be splitting the difference between Las Cruces and Lordsburg by going to Deming. It's at your discretion.

Vice Chair Clemente: I hope. I think either Las Cruces or Deming, I think it will be very beneficial. Especially for what is coming out for this year. I agree. I think it will be better Deming than Lordsburg on this case, or Las Cruces.

Commissioner Lopez: I'm okay with Deming. Good onion soup.

Commissioner Fulfer: Deming would be good. [silence]

Director Sloane: Is that for the February meeting, you're thinking?

Commissioner Fulfer: No, the May meeting.

Vice Chair Clemente: We will be replacing Farmington for Deming.

Chair Stump: The May 29th meeting? I'm good with that. Everybody else? All right, let's adopt that. So, Deming on May 29th.

Director Sloane: We'll have Santa Fe today, Roswell February 20th, March 20th will be in Albuquerque, May 29th in Deming, June 25th in Portales, which is a Thursday, again. August 21st in Las Vegas, November 13th in Socorro, January 15th, back here in Santa Fe.

Chair Stump: Commissioner Clemente, would you desire to have a meeting in Las Cruces?

Vice Chair Clemente: I would like to have a meeting in Las Cruces, of course, but at the same time, I think it is important to hear from everybody. Having a meeting in Deming, I'm sure that will cover some

people that want to go and speak, from Las Cruces. To them it is not that far, but if the possibility is there, I'm always for it.

Commissioner Lopez: Could we move Socorro, on November 13th, to Las Cruces, quail season?

Chair Stump: If we're going to change locations, that would be the location I would recommend. Anyone else? Go ahead, Gregg.

Commissioner Fulfer: I like the Las Cruces on November 13th.

Chair Stump: Okay. Let's go ahead and change to that.

[silence]

Director Sloane: With the May 29th and the November 13th Deming and Las Cruces changes are-- everybody's good?

Chair Stump: Yes.

Director Sloane: Excellent.

Chair Stump: Thank you, Director Sloane. Is there any public comment on that? No?

Tristanna Carrell: Mr. Chair, I apologize. We did get one comment in the chat that said Española and Chama or Cuba sometime as well for the north.

[silence]

Chair Stump: Commissioners, how do you feel about the northern locations that we currently have? We have Santa Fe, Las Vegas, Santa Fe. Santa Fe is the last meeting next year, or the first meeting next year. First meeting today, first meeting next year.

Commissioner Lopez: I think by statute, we're required to meet one year annually in Santa Fe. Is that correct, Mike?

Director Sloane: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner Lopez, that's been the interpretation, yes.

[silence]

Commissioner Lopez: We move Las Vegas to Chama or Española.

[silence]

Chair Stump: Tell me about Las Vegas. Is it we've been there very often or occasionally?

Director Sloane: I'm being told about four years ago we were there.

Vice Chair Clemente: Five years ago.

Director Sloane: Or five years ago. I think that's probably about the frequency that we've been there. I think three or four times during my career.

Chair Stump: Well, I'm good in leaving Las Vegas. That represents Northern New Mexico and there's a lot of activity there. Anybody else? [silence] Shall we just leave it as is? We'll call it good?

Vice Chair Clemente: Well, I would recommend leaving this. That's how we change it, I mean. I mean, no more changes.

Chair Stump: No more changes. Okay. Let's adopt this.

Director Sloane: Great. Thank you.

[pause 00:22:37]

Chair Stump: Okay, item number 10. This is a rule hearing. Manner and Method rule 19.31.10 NMAC Shed Hunting. [silence] This hearing, please come to order. My name is Richard Stump, Chair of the Commission. I will be serving as hearing officer and be advised by the commission's counsel. The purpose of this hearing is for the commission to receive public comment on amending the Manner and Method rule Title 19, Chapter 31, Part 10, New Mexico Administrative Code, respectively, which will become effective on April 1st, 2026. This hearing is being conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Game and Fish Act and the State Rules Act.

This hearing is being audio taped and video recorded. Anyone interested in a copy of the audio tape or video recording should contact Darren Vaughan and the Game and Fish Department. Notice of this hearing was advertised in New Mexico Register, New Mexico Sunshine Portal, and on the Department's website. Copies of the proposed rules have been available on the Department's website. Those wishing to comment here today must have registered to submit public comments. The rule hearing will be conducted in the following manner. A staff will present pre-filed exhibits.

Exhibits submitted into evidence are available for review by the public on the Department's website. After all exhibits are entered, we will proceed to the presentation of the proposed rule after which testimony will

be taken from the audience. Participants are asked to wait until they're called upon to speak in order to ensure that the hearing is accurately recorded. Only one person at a time shall be allowed to speak. Any person recognized to speak is asked to identify yourself by name and who you're affiliated with, for the record, each time you're recognized.

Speak loud and clear to accurately record your comments. After a person is offered comment, they will stand for questions from the hearing officer. The audience may also ask questions of anyone offering comments after being recognized by me. This hearing is not subject to judicial rules of evidence. However, in the interest of efficiency, I reserve the right to limit any testimony deemed irrelevant, redundant, or unduly repetitious. The commission may discuss the proposed new rule after the public comment portion of the hearing.

Final commission action, including adoption of the rule may occur after the conclusion of the presentation and public comment period of the hearing. Hearing item number 10, Manner and Method 19.31.10 NMAC. Attending the exhibits to enter into record.

Col. Cimbal: Chair Stump, Commissioners, yes, I do. I have 10 exhibits. The first one is the notice of proposed rulemaking. The second, summary of proposed changes. Third is the technical information relied upon. Four and five are from the public meetings that were held in person. Six is all of those comments that we received. Seven is a proposed changes copy from October of '25. Eight is a clean copy from November of '25. Nine is a proposed changes from the 11/'25 meeting that we had. We changed a few things. That's in here. Then 10 is the presentation.

Chair Stump: Okay. 10 exhibits are admitted into the record. Colonel Cimbal, please introduce the Manner and Method rule.

Col. Cimbal: Sure. Good morning, Chair, Commissioners. Agenda item number 10 is the rule hearing as discussed for the Manner and Method 19.31.10.9E, possession of game animal parts found in the field. A little bit of background for this. During the 2025 legislative session, new legislation was passed, and that included a change in 17.3.2 in the classes of licenses. It added a shed hunter license. The wording of that shed hunter license is that it entitles the licensee to shed hunting, provided that a shed hunter license shall not be required for shed hunting by a resident.

It also added, in 17.3.13, which are our license fee, it put a \$200 fee for that non-resident shed hunter license. The proposal that I'm proposing this morning in front of you is highlighted here. Residents do not need a shed hunter license. That was very clearly written out in statute. Non-residents require a shed hunter license to possess more than two shed antlers found in the field. All shed antlers collected in violation of commission rule remain property of the state and shall be seized.

The entirety of the clean version that I would be looking to get approved this morning would be 19.31.10.9E, would read, "Possession of game animal parts found in the field. It is unlawful to possess heads, horns, antlers, or other parts of protected species found in the field without an invoice, permit, or license from the Department. With the exception of obviously shed antlers for residents, and no more than two obviously shed antlers for non-residents. For any non-resident, it is unlawful to possess more than two obviously shed antlers found in the field without a shed hunter license.

Residents do not require a shed hunter license. All shed antlers collected in violation of commission rule, in violation of any state or federal land closure, in violation of criminal trespass, in violation of the Habitat Protection Act, while driving off-road on public land or on a closed road on public land, remain property of the state of New Mexico and shall be seized." This is just a summary of the public outreach that we did. Also included in the exhibits. We held two public comment meetings. One was in Albuquerque on July 17th of 2025, the other in Las Cruces, a week later on July 24th, 2025.

For the total of those both meetings, we had two and two for a total of four. We received 38 written comments, and we did and posted that the rulemaking notice November 18th, 2025. During that period, we received two additional comments. With that, I'll show you a wonderful picture of the field operations division and stand for questions.

Chair Stump: Commissioners, any questions for Colonel Cimbal? [silence] I'd just like to say thank you for all your hard work. Getting this done takes a lot to do and you and your team, once again, appreciate that. We do have a-- Tom Paterson would like to make a comment today.
[silence]

Tom Paterson: Thank you, Commissioners. Tom Paterson. President, New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association. I was at your reserve meeting where you discussed the shed rule. We didn't offer comments in because we didn't have policy. We try to address issues where we have formal policy. We have considered the issues significantly since that time. During our December meeting, we did adopt policy. I forwarded a copy of that shed resolution to Director Sloane, to Chairman Stump, and to Mr. Liley earlier this week. The conversation that we had is that we certainly support the recommendation from the Council of Outfitters and Guides to establish a shed hunting season from May 1 through December 31st. The reason that was given by our members who are out on the landscape as part of their living is that during shed season, folks go in there with ATVs and side-by-sides, especially during March and so forth, when snows are melting, and they beat up the country. They're making two track roads throughout our country and that is devastating. To erosion, to trying to maintain the integrity of our landscape. There are other issues. When they go through the country, they often, not always, but often, shed hunters throw down our gates, they cut our fences, but they just make it a lay-down fence. They go over the top. Their side-by-side.

The cattle that we have in those pastures, that are typically calving in the spring, are now getting out of those pastures and going into other pastures, which means now we're going to be in violation of our rotational grazing rules with the forest service or the BLM or the state land office. There is another issue, too. It's just elk. Talking to our local outfitters and guides in Catron County, they say, "The elk never get a break. They're chows year round. Whether it's from shed hunters, or scouts, or the hunters. Give them a break."

Our policy reads, "Whereas elk and deer shed their antlers beginning in March, which is when many range cows are calving or have young calves, whereas antlers have significant monetary value, and whereas the demand for antlers leads many commercial businesses and hunters to seek them, and whereas gathering sheds may harass wildlife, stress cattle, involve cutting fences down, gates, and rangeland degradation due to use of ATVs and side-by-sides, and whereas livestock producers are committed to wise stewardship of the land, livestock, and associated wildlife, therefore be it resolved, cattle growers supports state rules or regulations to implement a shed hunting season.

The appropriation of state funding provide meaningful enforcement of those rules and regulations. We'd respectfully request, whether it's now when you revisit the rule, which you indicated you would in reserve, you'd be willing to do down the road when you see how this works, we would urge you to adopt a season from May 1 through December 31st, and to have meaningful law enforcement to back it up." Thank you very much.

Chair Stump: Thank you, Mr. Paterson. I believe that this is the first time we've had this in our state, so it is going to be a period of discovery. Hopefully, it all works out in a positive manner. Appreciate that and all your work. Again, thank you so much. I guess that's it for any comment. Any more comments.

Commissioner Fulfer: Chairman, I had a couple of questions.

Chair Stump: Go ahead, Gregg.

Commissioner Fulfer: Tim, what's the possession for the resident?

Col. Cimbal: Chair, Commissioner Fulfer, it was pretty clear in the legislation and the intent of it as well as clearly the way they wrote it, that they didn't want to require any sort of license for residents. There is no limit for residents of the state of New Mexico.

Commissioner Fulfer: If somebody is out of state, they can hire a resident to do their collection?

Col. Cimbal: Chair, Commissioner, I suppose one could, yes.

Chair Stump: Mr. Chair, Commissioner, the challenge might be that when the transfer occurred from the resident to the non-resident, they would still have to have a permit.

Commissioner Fulfer: Okay. I was just wanting to clarify that to see how that worked. Thank you.

Chair Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Fulfer. Commissioner Lopez has a comment.

Commissioner Lopez: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the commission. I can sympathize with President Paterson. Congratulations on your new office, sir, of the Cattle Growers. In Northern New Mexico, we have the same problems that they're having in the South. We have numerous, maybe groups, of ATVs and side-by-sides that do go tear up the landscape. I don't know if you all know this, but the

Carson National Forest actually closes. They're closed right now, actually, in Unit 51 for any type of hunting or activity until May 31st due to elk calving.

With that closure, that pushes a lot of the ATV use towards our state land leases, our BLM leases, our private property and the 51(B), and they just damage everything. There's cutting fences, they are making the two-track roads, and of course, if you want to make extra money, just walk by any weekend and pick up all the beer cans and bottles they're leaving, because you fill up three or four trash bags on a weekend and take it to get the recycling done. I strongly encourage us that we should consider, and as I have before, a shed hunting season.

Of course, legislation did not allow us to charge residents a nominal \$5, \$10 fee for shed hunting, but I think we should have some type of season to restrict that, because they do damage the landscape and the benefit of wildlife and erosion. In our stakeholders that have livestock and sheep, it does cause problems. I do commend the field operations division for all the enforcement that they have done.

They have done great targeted enforcement areas for ATVs, but in the spring, as we all know, now we're getting some snow. Thank God. Hopefully, we get some more. Our roads are just torn apart, the fences are torn apart. I wish there was a BLM range con here that can tell you the damage they do all over the northern part of the Farmington field office. That's all I have, Mr. Chair.

Chair Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Lopez. I agree with all your sentiments. Commissioner Clemente, did you have something you'd like to say?

Vice Chair Clemente: Just for clarification, the resident does not need a commercial license, correct? They can pick as many as they want.

Col. Cimbal: Chair, commissioners, that is correct.

[silence]

Chair Stump: Was that [unintelligible 00:38:10]? Okay.

Commissioner Lopez: I have a question, Chair.

Chair Stump: Go ahead.

Commissioner Lopez: What's the going rate now per pound on antlers?

Col. Cimbal: Chair, commissioners, when it's at around its highest, because it fluctuates depending on demand and other things, but around the highest I've seen it in the last 5 to 10 years is about 19 a pound. It's fluttering right around 15 to 16 a pound right now.

Commissioner Lopez: That's for a complete set by?

Col. Cimbal: Just per pound.

Commissioner Lopez: Per pound. For complete set [crosstalk]-

Col. Cimbal: You can fetch more for a complete matching set. Sure. Yes. You're not going to sell that by pound. You're going to sell that for the worth of what it really is when it's a trophy size.

Commissioner Lopez: Go ahead.

Chair Stump: Okay. I'm going to close the hearing, unless there's any more comments. No more. Those that registered and participated in the hearing will be concluded on the attendance sheet. At this time, the attendance sheet shall be marked and admitted as Exhibit Number 11. The comments submitted and testimony heard during this rule hearing will be reviewed by the commission and discussed during the open session of today's meeting. The commission will vote on the proposed rule at that time.

I would like to thank everyone present for their participation today. Let the record show that this rulemaking hearing was adjourned at 9:45 AM. [silence] Is there a motion or any more discussion?

[silence] Is there a motion, please?

Commissioner Clemente: I so move to adopt amendments to the Manner and Method rule 19.31.10 NMAC, related to shed hunting and presented by the Department with an effective date of April 1st, 2026. Including-- excuse me. Including potential minor edits and required by the state records and archives.

Chair Stump: Is there a second?

Commissioner Witt: Second.

Chair Stump: No more discussion on the motion. All in favor?

Commissioners: Aye.

Chair Stump: No opposed. Motion passes.

Commissioner Lopez: Nay.

Chair Stump: You opposed? I think, Director Sloane, would you call the roll, please?

Director Sloane: Commissioner Witt.

Commissioner Witt: Aye.

Director Sloane: Commissioner Lopez?

Commissioner Lopez: No.

Director Sloane: Commissioner Fulfer?

Commissioner Fulfer: Yes.

Director Sloane: Vice Chair Clemente?

Vice Chair Clemente: Yes.

Director Sloane: Chair Stump?

Chair Stump: Yes.

Director Sloane: Motion passes.

Chair Stump: Okay. Moving on to item number 11, revocation trends. Pursuant to a commission request, the Department has developed a presentation on revocation trends for earlier information. Thanks for doing that, guys. I believe Commissioner Hickey requested that, and I think it's a good idea. Please proceed with your presentation.

Col. Cimbale: Chair, commissioners, thank you. Yes, I think we find some interesting information in this. Agenda Item 11, revocation trends. We've got a few slides that we'll go through here. This is basically, we did the last five years, is what we took for it. So, 2020 through the completion of 2025. This is a synopsis to the license sales. Your blue are resident license sales, and your orange are non-resident license sales. You can see there's between roughly 25% to 30% that goes to non-residents in license sales. If you have any questions throughout it, just stop me.

This is a citation trend. Again, the number of citations is on the left side there, starting around the 2,400 mark, 2,307, so in 2020. The blue represents the percentage of citations written to residents, the orange represents the percentage of citations written to non-residents. You can see a slight rise. Obviously, the COVID dip in the 2020-ish, 2021 time frame, things were a little bit slow, and it has been picking up at a pretty drastic rate, which is something that I like to see. Officers are doing wonderful work out there and mentoring one another and really making a difference for New Mexico's resources.

Here's our revocations of residents versus non-resident. Once again, blue is your resident, orange is your non-resident. What you see here is roughly between 10% or 8% and 12%, a little dip in '23, but the blue is your non-resident revocations, and the total numbers by year. For instance, 2020, there were 77, 2023, 62, and 2025 and 2024 have quite a rise. As you saw from the previous graph, we also have quite a rise in citations written. The more citations you write, obviously, the more people are likely to get revoked. This is just the total revocations over the years. Then the average revocation time is on the bottom, slightly hovering above the three-year mark.

Three is typically the most common recommendation. That can change when it's second, third violation of revocation. You can see just the total numbers. Little dip there after COVID time, because there's a little bit of tail end, the citations written and the points accrued, it's about within a year that they're actually going to be revoked. There's a little dip after the pandemic, and then again, curving up as we increase the number of citations that we are writing. These are the enhanced revocations throughout the last five years. The blue is, again, resident and-- no, no. Oh, yes, just-- okay, this is the enhanced.

In 2020, there were 11 enhanced revocations. Then, during that year, the max time of revocation period was somebody got revoked for 10 years. You can see that carried throughout to 2024. Then in 2025, we had an individual that was revoked for 20.

Chair Stump: Explain enhanced again, please.

Col. Cimbale: Enhanced is generally going to be anything over the three years. If we go in front of a hearing officer and the hearing officer requests longer, if we bring it in front of the commission and you request longer, or if the Department. If it's 40 points or more, and we therefore request longer, like we did at the last commission meeting, that would be an enhanced one. This is suspended for not paying penalty assessment. Resident versus non-resident. In 2020, there were 215 people that got caught doing something illegal, chose the penalty assessment option, where they [unintelligible 00:45:54] and they agree to pay via mail that did not. Kind of concerning. Obviously, it's on a rise.

The more citations you write, the more people are not going to send the payment, but what this ultimately does is it suspends their hunting and fishing privileges until they pay it. Then, as you've seen in multiple commission meetings, those folks that are getting 5, 10 years for fishing, because they just keep getting caught fishing without a license and are on revocation, and they just kind of won't change, you've seen a lot of those. Those are the people that fit in this category. These are for the PRAs, the Parental Responsibility Act suspensions. Pretty steady throughout the years. These are the people that are not caught up on their child support. Resident versus non-resident.

This one's pretty interesting. This is civil assessments. Within statute, when an individual unlawfully kills one of New Mexico's wildlife, protected wildlife, most of them, if not all, have a civil assessment, which is replacing the cost of that animal to the state. Around the time I came on, I visited with our director, and we really wanted to start pushing towards collecting these civil assessments, so we worked with our legal team. We'll ask for either voluntary civil, and if they won't do that, we can go through the court process. Our legal team has been very helpful with that, filing the motions, filing stuff in civil court, so we can chase these down.

You can see, in 2023, when that direction kind of changed, a drastic number of civils collected. That's money back to the Department of Game and Fish when we collect that from somebody unlawfully killing one of our animals. Civilized, this is the total amount assessed. 2020 was a big year. There was a pretty big case during that one that led to that being a lot. Otherwise, '21 and '22, and then you'll see your spikes in '23, from when we had officers pursue civil, and had support from our legal team to do so. The next slide is just that wonderful picture again. If you want me to go back on any.

Chair Stump: Could you go back to the last slide, please? Just to get an idea of how many people we're talking about that are paying these fines, let's go with 2023. How many people total to come to that total of \$49,300?

Lt. Carrell: It was 40 individuals.

Chair Stump: 40 individuals. It's an average of 10,000, 1,000, to 100,000. Yes. Okay, thank you. All right, commissioners, anybody else have any questions or discussion? Commissioner Witt?

Commissioner Witt: Chief Cimbal, you mentioned the COVID dip a couple of times. Can you explain what caused that? Because it seemed like it was present in certain data, like the citations, but not in the licenses.

Col. Cimbal: Chair, commissioners, yes. During that time, we had a different colonel at the time. There was some direction to be a little more lenient with things, as far as violations. Not saying that we were looking the other way or anything. We were absolutely out there enforcing the violations, but sometimes maybe education or a warning was the tool appropriate for the situation rather than a citation.

Commissioner Witt: If we look back before 2020, which you didn't show in the slides here, would we see citations higher or steady or--

Col. Cimbal: Chair, commissioners, they're slightly higher before that. It pretty much goes in-- let's start with 2010. You're going to have one of these. Your pandemic, it lowers a little bit, and then it goes up. Now we're at a higher rate. Our officers have written more citations in 2025 than any other year in the last decade. Officers are getting out there, they're motivated. We have a great team and they're doing great work. We have written more citations this year than in any other year.

Commissioner Witt: That's the impression I got from the data. I want to commend you and your division for that work. It's a lot of work.

Col. Cimbal: I appreciate that, Commissioner. Thank you.

Chair Stump: Commissioner Witt, thank you. I also would like to commend you. I know so many hunters that are so pleased to see more officers out in the field. I know it can be very dangerous, and we appreciate you people and your group so much. Thank you, guys, for all your hard work.

Col. Cimbal: Chair and commissioners, I will point out, just starting the other day, we did start four brand new officers that are starting their career with us. They'll be headed off to the academy shortly. Hope to see them about November of next year hitting the ground.

Chair Stump: Great. Keep up the good work. Anybody else? Gregg? Okay. Thank you for that presentation.

Commissioner Fulfer: I'm good.

Chair Stump: Okay. Item number 12. Actually, the next four items are initiating the rulemaking process on a number of species. These initial discussions are the first of at least three times, including the hearing, that will be heard. It is important for the public and the commission to comment early in the process so we can develop the best rules possible. Let me say that again. It is important for the public and the commission to comment early in the process so we can develop the best rules possible. On that note, Chief Liley was going to give us the initial discussion of the javelina rule. Chief Liley.

Stewart Liley: Good morning, commissioners, members of the public. As you said, this is a pretty big year for the commission in terms of big game rulemaking. Some of you were on the commission prior, the previous four years when we did this. It's a pretty intense year of trying to go through all the big game rules, go through the discussions of all the different potential changes that either the Department recommends, comments from the public, and recommendations from you all, recommendations from the public, and trying to engage early. We're last rule cycle.

We try to come forth with the Department's initial recommendations right away from the start of the rulemaking, so people have an idea of what we're proposing, so they have more time to formulate public comments, either for or against, or comments in a different direction, or comments that help us to make a better rule. These aren't fully fleshed out from the Department, obviously, when we first come up with the initial proposed ideas. Some of it is still in data analysis mode, so we're still looking at.

We just finished the third season of the four-year rule cycle, so we haven't even gotten harvest reports in totality for some of that, so we're going to have to add some data analysis. By April, we get that all done, and we're still flying surveys, but the point of the matter is it's a pretty intense data analysis to get to some of the license recommendations, et cetera. Some of the bigger conceptual ideas we'll put forth to you all early on, and then we'll move through the process.

We are starting to have some of our meetings with groups that have shown interest, that want to have meetings. We'll continue to do that, some one-on-one meetings. We'll invite other individuals. We ask members, or if there's organizations that would like to sit down with the Department and hash out and go through the recommendations in more depth and detail, and it can be hard at a commission meeting, we welcome that. Get in touch with myself or anyone within our section to go through some of those changes. Jumping straight into it, I'm going to go into javelina. We're opening four rules today. Javelina being one of them. Just a little bit of background on javelina. Historically, the core of the population of javelina has been centered in the southwest and that Bootheel. We have seen expansion through time, of javelina, across the state, especially to the east and also to the north. As far north as we have, javelina almost on an annual basis reports in the Santa Fe County. Not necessarily probably residents, but we see them push up during warm months and maybe retract during the cooler months, but we are seeing definite expansion of javelina across the state.

Again, like I said, especially in the east, along the Texas border, northern all the way Capitan, that area, where we're starting to see actual resident populations. Really, with javelina, we might get them cursory to secondary surveys like for desert bighorn sheep or mule deer in the desert, but really, the best way to monitor trends that we've found is through our mandatory hunter harvest. We could track the trends in harvest, and it correlates fairly well with population size, success rates, et cetera.

When we see a "metric" that we look at catch per unit effort, so we ask how many days you hunted, were you successful? It gives us an idea when you're looking across long-term periods. It doesn't get as great as your annual variations, but a longer-term trend it gets us. Real quick, just showing the 2024 harvest data. Again, we'll be analyzing 2025. Those harvest reports aren't due until February 15th mandatory harvest reports, and then we see a big uptick in harvest reporting as people are applying. Either they get reminded, "Hey, you haven't submitted your harvest report," et cetera, and so that's when we get a lot of those.

We'll get more data as we get that for the 2025, but you'll see they're selling about 3,000 javelina licenses statewide. Success rates between the Bootheel, the core region, again, and the rest of the state is pretty similar in our success rates and are pretty well parity in our harvest, a little bit more male than female. Satisfaction ratings you'll see right there. Just real quick on a trend in applications. This was something we saw more at the last rule cycle. This is going back to almost Commissioner Witt's comment on that COVID bump in license sales, interest in hunting in general, and you see that in 2020 to 2021.

Our 2021, we saw a big jump in the applicants, and then it stabilized, more or less, in the number of applicants in javelina. We didn't know if that trend would stay or not, but just to show that we did see that jump in 2020 to '21, and it's more or less flattened since that time. Probably see more of a flattening trend in time. In terms of licenses and harvest, we did at the last rule cycle. You'll see '23 was the start of the last rule cycle. So '23 season, '24, we're just getting ready to finish the '25 season. As you know, the season runs from April 1st to March 31st, so we still have a little bit of time left in the '25/'26 season. We'll get some data there.

We did increase license sales over the last rule cycle. A lot of that was in our over-the-counter with caps and the rest of the steady-- outside of the Bootheel region. We've been pretty steady in the Bootheel region, but we did increase those over-the-counter with caps outside of the Bootheel region. Harvest is maintained fairly steady through time. It's hard on this graph because the license sales differential masks some of that change in the lower part of that graph, so looking more at success rates and the success rates across weapon type. You'll see they've been fairly consistent.

Statewide, you're seeing on the archery, it's interesting. Statewide archery, you saw a pretty decent increase over this rule cycle from the previous. You had a bump in 2018, but overall, fairly consistent success rates across time. We are starting to see an increase in the success rates on that rifle hunt in our core units, and whether that continues through in the '25 season or not, we'll see. In general, what we're looking at for proposals from the Department is increasing those over-the-counter license caps as well. Like I said, we're seeing an increase in javelina outside of our core areas in new places.

We're not saying that this will be a tool to help us with depredation issues, but we are seeing more nuisance issues with javelina, especially in towns, Truth or Consequences, Capitan, Cloudcroft, Silver City, those areas where we're getting more calls, we're seeing an uptick. Again, I don't think we're going to see this hunting be a resolution to it, but it's just incidental new areas becoming depredation areas where we're seeing javelina start to concentrate. The one thing that we do for barbary sheep, for example, but we haven't done for javelina is those individuals that draw those core units, when I say the Bootheel are core units, that's 19, 23, 24, 25, 26, and 27.

If you have that draw hunt, you're restricted to just that area. You can't hunt anywhere else. What we're proposing during this rule cycle would be to allow those individuals that draw that hunt to be able to hunt that core area and anywhere else in the state if they so choose to. It wouldn't focus just in that area, it would allow them to hunt the rest of the state. Again, in terms of actual license numbers that we're looking at for the over-the-counter areas, we don't know. We're looking at the data still. We'll analyze that. By the next time you hear this presentation, we will have firmed up license numbers for the recommendations. I should also note for all these rules, once we get through the initial, you're going to see a summary of proposed changes on our website. That's updated very frequently. When we get to a point where we know what our proposed license changes is, we'll update that online. That might be before even a commission meeting happens, but we are continually updating that. I guess for members of the public, just to always follow the commission tab under proposals under consideration. Read those summaries, because we do adjust that based off the public comment, based off the commission direction, and also based upon any new data analysis that we've done. Those may be updated up to 10 times for a certain rule, four or five times for other rules, so it's important to watch that. Once we get to that, right before the hearing, we come to you all with our final recommendations, and that's what it is. At that time, the commission has that ability to say, "Yes, you're on the right track," or "No, go do this, do something else." Then we publish in the register. By the time we publish in the register, it really is kind of 'adopt or not adopt.' It really would take going back out. Again, it's important for early engagement. We're happy to engage with individuals that have questions as well.

Real quick on public outreach too, we will host multiple public meetings throughout the state. Also, all the meetings are hybrid now, so it gives the opportunity for individuals that can't necessarily go to a place to go hybrid on them. It might be multiple species or rules that we cover in one of these public meetings, but it is another opportunity for individuals to hear what our proposals are and give comments to that. We do a dedicated comment email address for every single one of these rules. It will again be under the summary of proposed changes on the website under the 'commission' tab. You'll see that they have their

own unique email address, so we could track comments specific to each one of these rules. With that, I would stand for any questions you all may have on the javelina rule.

Chair Stump: All right. Commissioners? Go ahead, Chris.

Commissioner Witt: First, I wanted to ask a clarification just about the sex, because I thought-- I didn't know that hunters had to report the sex on javelinas. You have good data on the sex breakdown, so how did you get that?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Witt, we do ask that question, was it a male or a female that you harvested during the harvest reporting? It is not a requirement to determine the sex prior to harvest, but we're wanting to know what that was at the time of harvest so we could track the trend in male/female harvest.

Commissioner Witt: Okay, that makes sense. I guess what I wanted to ask is, for javelinas, there's this complicated dichotomy between the draw hunts and the statewide. You have the species expanding, so you would think this is probably something that needs to be looked at and maybe updated. I was surprised, particularly that your data shows that the harvest success rates are really similar across the statewide versus the draw hunts. Do you think we need to look closely at potentially shifting the GMUs that are subject to the draw versus the statewide?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Witt, I think a javelina is an interesting species. In some ways, you probably could go almost over-the-counter on some of it. Just the way the biology of them is you could-- as you get more hunters on the ground, success rates are going to drop. They probably are going to be a little bit more less susceptible to harvest population reductions because they have large litters, et cetera. I think part of the draw hunts has just been a function of people wanting to make sure there wasn't overcrowding within those units. The over-the-counter is not as much. It's a bigger dispersed area, and really, they came about when we took advantage of new populations setting up. We really didn't have an ability to say, "Oh, let's determine license numbers for GMU 30, for example, in the Guadalupe Mountains."

Maybe over time, if there's more of a desire to have a strict draw, to create new draw areas. I think that would be the potential, is if we want to go into new draw areas, rather than saying like, let's maybe stay with our core. Where historically, range of javelina was in that Bootheel, we've always drawn there. Do we now create new draw areas in Guadalupe or somewhere else, and then do a different over-the-counter area where it's very sporadic?

I think we don't want to have a draw hunt in an area where there's very few javelina, and create an expectation that-- especially for someone that doesn't know the state, doesn't know the density. You might be able to get a javelina in Santa Fe County, but the reality of finding that, we don't want to put a person at 10 draw hunts and then have the ability to not. I think that there is the chance to look at is, should we create new draw areas or units? But overall, I think that's why we've stuck with that over-the-counter outside the core.

Chair Stump: Commissioner Clemente?

Vice Chair Clemente: The core area is the Bootheel?

Stewart Liley: That is correct.

Vice Chair Clemente: And that goes from, I'm assuming, I-10 South?

Stewart Liley: Chair, Commissioner Clemente, it also goes to the north a little bit. It's 23, 24 as well, so up to Silver City, basically, up to the boroughs. More or less that southwest quadrant of the state, south of the Gila wilderness. The Gila would be including it because 24 is a GMU in there, and 23.

Vice Chair Clemente: Pretty much, that is draw hunts only, correct?

Stewart Liley: Sure.

Vice Chair Clemente: Okay, thank you.

Chair Stump: Do you attribute the expansion up north to warmer environmental conditions, or is this just based on big numbers moving?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, I think definitely some of that. I think especially, what we see is some of these javelina come up in the summertime, especially to the north. When we get cold snaps long enough, I think we see them retreat, so if you have consistent warm winters, you're going to see more expansion of javelina. I also I think you just had it coming out of Texas too, coming up out of West Texas, coming up

through there that we just didn't have historically. I don't think we had a lot of javelina moving from Western New Mexico east. I think we had javelina moving from Texas north, if that makes sense-- Guadalupe Mountains, et cetera, expanding through there. We definitely see javelina more common in even the Gila National Forest, moving further north, all that area, but we'll probably get some contractions if you have colder long winters. When we're not having [inaudible 01:06:51], I think we'll see expansion.

Chair Stump: Thank you, Chief Liley. Is there anyone for the public or online that wants to comment on javelina? Okay. Thank you, Chief. Item number 13 is the initial discussion of the Turkey Rule 19.31.16, NMAC. Chief Liley?

[pause 01:07:21]

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, members of the commission, again, as you mentioned, this is the Turkey Rule Initiation. Just a quick little background: New Mexico does have three subspecies of turkeys, which is kind of unique-- not very many states have two subspecies, let alone a state having three subspecies. You'll see that green area too, that's where we get some hybridization between Rio Grandes and Merriam's. You could see the majority of the state is Merriam's turkeys, that's that yellowish-orange color. Gould's turkeys down in the Bootheel as the blue, and then you have your main Rio Grandes running that purple along our river drainages, is what you'll see. Then along Tucumcari, that area is where we also see more of our Rio Grandes. But of course, along the Rio Grande Corridor and the Pecos Corridor is our main Rio Grande populations.

Just a little bit of biology: A lot of the turkey populations trend with environmental conditions. Hunter harvest can be additive, but hunter harvest is mainly additive probably when it's hens in the fall. Those are a lot of times-- especially if it's adult hens in the fall coming into the winter, pretty decent survival rates. But if you have high hen harvest in the fall, it can have the potential to impact populations. Overall, male harvest in the spring or in the fall has less of an impact on the population, and also multiple males can breed females.

The other thing that's important and being looked at more across the country is timing of harvest in the spring to make sure that we're not killing males before insemination of females, to make sure that they could still lay eggs and incubate eggs, and the timing of that is important. The department historically has relied upon this 1980s gobbling study. That's in your lower right-hand corner, looking at what we thought was hen nest initiation. The thought was, and that came from the '80s, really that peak egg laying was occurring in mid-April, but the onset of incubation really was kind of in that mid-May.

What you'll see in that left-hand graph, we just recently have started a large-scale turkey study where we're putting GPS backpacks on females to get-- GPS satellite transmitters, where we could actually now tell when they're doing incubating nests. And we'll know when nest incubation starts, it gives us an idea when egg initiation laying starts as well. What you'll see there is the peak that we found this last year, really running from about May 16th to the 25th-- excuse me, from the 8th to the 28th, which is consistent with the previous study that was from about the 16th to the 25th.

Again, that's a one-year study, about 42 hens. We're going to do this for multiple years, but the good part from that is it looks like our peak of incubation has remained the same, so our season dates-- I think this goes into the importance of our season dates. Starting about April 15th is probably well past the peak of when insemination/fertilization of the egg starts, so we're not killing males before fertilization occurs, and that gives the ability for those hens lay the eggs, incubate, and not have an impact on that.

There has been some discussions in previous rules of trying to move the season earlier to capture some of the early gobbling. We've been a little bit resistant to that based upon the old studies on when peak initiation starts, so that's why we wanted to really look at that. I think right now, we're still going to say that that April 15th is appropriate. Some states are actually finding that-- and mainly to the east, not in the Rocky Mountains, not necessarily on Merriam's, mainly on Eastern turkeys, that that peak incubation period is getting later in the season, so they're moving their season dates a week later. Again, we're not really seeing that from the data that we have right now, so we're not proposing any changes to the seasons. We think they have a pretty good structure on that given some of this early data.

I see it's a little bit hard for the public on the screen right in front of me. Maybe on the right, you can see this a little bit better. This is spring license sales, so looking at the differentiation between resident and nonresident license sales. Spring and fall licenses are over-the-counter for both residents and

nonresidents. The average nonresident license sales over the last four years was about 1,900 licenses-- 1,940. Resident license sales were 9,482, so definitely a lot more resident license over-the-counter sales. Fall is even more resident than nonresident. Average over the last four years in the fall for residents is 4,464, nonresidents, 211.

Just looking at harvest through time, and this is going back a long time, back to the 1960s. We've got to also understand there are some biases inherent in there because how we collected harvest information through time has changed, from voluntary [unintelligible 01:13:13] hunter to voluntary mail-ins, to where we went mandatory in more recent years. We went to mandatory turkey harvest reporting in 2013, so the last 10 years or so, we have a lot more confidence in the data. But what you'll see obviously, when we were trying to rebuild turkey populations back into the state, our number of hunters or licenses and harvests started to increase as the populations have increased.

There's noise around that early 2000s, that's when we were shifting from kind of card voluntary tear-off to figuring out when we would go into mandatory. 2006 is when we did mandatory big game, and we saw an uptick in our reporting rates for turkey at that time. People would report their big game and their turkey at the same time. And then again, 2013 is when we shifted to mandatory harvest. I guess the point of that being, our harvest, if you look at that kind of 2000-ish-- excuse me, 2010 on has been fairly stable. A little bit of fluctuations in there, but overall more stable. I'll get into a little bit more clear graphics in time, but this is also-- I'm not expecting anyone to go through each individual of this. What this is really looking at is, the success rate has really not changed much in the last 10 years. We're looking at about 20% to 25% success rate. Some years we bump up almost to 30%.

This is also overall success rate. Like, if you harvested one bird, that's that first column. The number of spring harvest, that's the actual harvest estimate, and then the success rate. Then the next column is the second turkey, so you'll see column 3 is how many second turkeys are harvested on an annual basis. That column that says 'second turkey success', that's the percent of the hunters that actually harvested a first bird that went in and harvested a second bird, so you're looking at about 20% to 27% of hunters that harvest a first bird also kill a second bird. I think the point is, the majority of the people are not harvesting two birds. Less than 70% of our hunters actually harvested two birds on the two-bird bag limit in the spring. Then looking over on the break, that's looking at our fall harvest. Our fall harvest is much lower, as you can see, and fluctuates a little bit more than the other.

Then the other point being that, that third column in that fall harvest is our hen harvest, so we're taking a close look at that hen harvest. We don't have a recommendation to-- Again, as I mentioned earlier, hen harvest is probably the one that can impact populations more than anything. We're looking to see if we should be limiting hen harvest in areas or limiting hen harvest at all. It's pretty low-- that's the statewide. We're taking a deeper look right now to say, is that proportional across the state, or are there areas within the state where it's higher density hen harvest than others? And if so, we might come back with a male bearded only, or a bearded turkey only recommendation for fall in some of these, but right now we're just in the early data phase of it. Not an official recommendation right now, but something that we're looking into to see if that fall hen harvest is still sustainable.

Looking at this, this is going back to the spring season. This is looking at our reported numbers between residents. Nonresidents, again, on that first, and then success rates between nonresidents and residents. On those two right graphs, those are split out. You'll see the nonresidents have a significantly higher success rate than residents. Resident success rate varies right around 20% to 30%, whereas resident, you're looking all the way up to almost a high of 55% at one point in time, but between 40% to 50% on that.

Again, I think the important thing on this, we've heard comments about we really need to not have a two-bird bag limit. We're looking at-- in terms of success at getting a second turkey, on average, 22% of residents harvest a second turkey, so 78% of people that have a license are not harvesting their second on residents, and then nonresident, it's 36%. So we do see a little bit higher, but not the proportional higher-like difference between first bird success rates. Then in terms of the proportion of harvest, when we look at that too, the proportion of the second turkey bag limit, 26% of that is nonresidents, and 74% of that is residents. Even though nonresidents have a higher success rate, because licenses sales are

skewed more towards residents, residents have a much larger proportion of that second bird harvest, so 75% roughly compared to 25%.

Just want to go through some of the research that we've done during the last rule cycle and ongoing. I mentioned briefly about these GPS marking hens across New Mexico. We're going to continue that during this rule cycle. We marked 42 hens last year. We're hoping to get up into the hundreds to multiple hundreds, 300 turkeys through the next four years, really looking at reproduction. Not only initiation of incubation, but also all the way to brood success. We could actually tell from the GPS backpacks if they failed or not, if they walk away from the nest, if we saw incubation, and then you could start seeing some movements where they're just [unintelligible 01:19:14] not movement as much versus a wide-ranging, we could speculate it was a failed nest type of a thing.

Then there's this bigger national turkey brood survey that National Wild Turkey Federation is putting on across the nation that we're participating in, as well as volunteers through the state. Kind of more of a citizen science to get brood counts in July/August, see what we're getting at. We're participating in that, and I'll be documenting those turkeys again in July/August to get more brood survival, brood success. Then one of the bigger ones that we have done through time, this was part of Gould's delisting. We delisted Gould's turkey four years ago, and really, these are GPS backpacks on Gould's. We've had hundreds of GPS backpacks on there we're continuing to monitor. It really helps us to be able to get a population size, because these GPS backpacks have really changed our thought process on what is roost habitat. We really used to do roost surveys in the [unintelligible 01:20:24] kind of habitat type. We're finding that there's a lot of other roost sites, and when we get these GPS backpacks, we could go straight into them, and we're able to get better estimates of population size, at least minimum counts on there. I think the other thing that's really interesting in this, if you look at that lower graph, like the lower two, we're seeing international movement of these turkeys, and we're seeing some of these turkeys set up in Mexico, including crossing Highway 2. If you all are familiar with Highway 2 in Mexico, it's a major interstate, if you will, running east-west across Mexico. We're seeing movements way far south of Highway 2, which is good. We're also seeing movements into the Animas Mountains as well.

This GPS data has actually allowed us to work cooperatively with a landowner in Mexico that has a lot of interest in Gould's turkey conservation and restoration. They're going to start actually marking birds in Mexico with GPS collars too, so we could see if we have movements back north as well too. Again, just looking at-- these GPS backpacks have given us everything, from helps with population counts, brood success, but really also movement, and movement and habitat use has been very helpful for Gould's. Some of our proposed changes for turkeys really, I kind of mentioned we're looking at that fall-- the one we're really looking at is fall hen harvest. We're not proposing any changes at this time. We'll come back to you at the next meeting if we do have any proposed changes. But the ones that we are, we just adjust hunt dates based on the calendar shift, where you have a Saturday start or whatnot on our draw hunts. Then we're also proposing increasing our once-in-a-lifetime Gould's tags. That's the GMU 26, 27. Right now, it's up to five. We make a determination on an annual basis, kind of like we do bighorn sheep, but we're going to propose up to 15. Doesn't mean we're going to hit 15. I think it's important to recognize that just because it's an up-to, we won't hit 15 during this rule cycle, but if we have a good year, we have the potential to really get into more. Looking at this, we try to offer about 10% of the licenses of our known male population. What you'll see-- the colors is a little bit hard on the middle screen, but maybe on the other-- males in there running anywhere from 50 to almost 100 at one point in time.

We did have a dip this year. This year was bad drought down there. You'll see that even the total was bad, but turkeys do rebound pretty quick. You'll see that kind of dip in 2022 drought, back to-- a good monsoon season hit, and we had a pretty big increase. Hopefully, if we get some winter moisture down there this year or some decent monsoons, we could get there. I guess the point of that being is there is a chance to get up closer to the 15, we'll continue monitoring with our GPS collars. A lot of that 'unknowns', there's going to be a proportion of that as males too. Again, that's minimum males in there, it's not known males. There's a fair amount of unknowns. If we get that better classified, it might get there, but we're about 10% of our known male is what we offer for licenses on an annual basis. With that, I'll take any questions.

Chair Stump: Commissioners?

Vice Chair Clemente: On the data that you presented, on the harvest data, it's all three subspecies into one data?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Clemente, that's correct, except for Gould's. We exclude Gould's a little bit because it's such a small number. It's less than five, but that would be all the three subspecies-- excuse me, two subspecies of Rios and Merriam's.

Vice Chair Clemente: And Merriam's, okay. I would like to see, if it's possible-- I don't know if you can divide and separate the data. That would be very interesting to see the subspecies, how they're--

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Clemente, the harvest report question asks-- because your license is valid across the state, it asks if you harvest or not in the GMU, so we could kind of get at it by the GMU, but we do have some Merriam's, Rios, and hybrids in some GMUs. So, we don't specifically ask a hunter, "Did you harvest a Rio Grande or a Merriam's?" We even get some people thinking that they're harvesting Easterns. We could look at it by the harvest, by GMU, especially along the Rio Grande Corridor where we don't have Merriam's. I think that'd be easier to look at, like what's our Rio Grande harvest. Also on the Pecos too, we still get some Merriam's in there, but the majority of our harvest is Merriam's overall. We could look at that from a-- try to get at not an exact split, but an estimate of what's more Rio Grande harvest than Merriam's.

Vice Chair Clemente: Okay. If you go to the slide where you have the harvest report, the percentage, and then you have the second harvest, the percentage of the second bird. I think it was-- right, there you go.

Stewart Liley: This table right here?

Vice Chair Clemente: On the second turkey success, it's 20% of total hunters, or 20% of the hunters that actually harvested that 26% and went back and harvested the second turkey--

Stewart Liley: It's 26% of the people that harvested one bird.

Vice Chair Clemente: 20% of the 26%?

Stewart Liley: Right, so it's much smaller. So, you have an initial spring harvest of-- let's just use the number, 26% of people saying, "I killed at least one bird," and then you have 26% of those people killing a second bird.

Vice Chair Clemente: The reason why I'm asking, because that is a lot smaller number than if you put it out of the total.

Stewart Liley: Correct. For sure.

Vice Chair Clemente: Okay, just for clarification. I'm glad to hear that, because I have worked on the Bootheel with private properties, and I've seen the turkey population we monitor actually roosting on private properties. We kept seeing an increase in population, and I'm happy to see that actually, you guys might propose, increase the tax for the Gould's turkey. I think that will be a great move. Thank you.

Chair Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Clemente. Commissioner Witt?

Commissioner Witt: Just a couple of quick questions. That was a great presentation. I wanted to know specifically about the Gould's turkey a little bit more. Why is the spring season shifted later than for the other subspecies? Starts May 1st.

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Witt, good question. I didn't mention that, I apologize. That came from our GPS stuff looking at when peak initiation and nest was, or incubation, and it is later. It's almost 10 to 15 days later than our Merriam's. That's why our season is later, is we're trying to make sure that we get insemination, that we're not killing those males prior to that, so they are later by almost a week to 10 days on our nest initiation.

Commissioner Witt: That's fascinating. A little counterintuitive. Maybe it's shifted to take advantage of monsoon rains in the summer or something like that.

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Witt, it's really hard to say. Our turkey biologist might have a little bit better, but I don't think there's been tons of work on Gould's turkeys' GPS collar work. It's kind of some of the first where we really get hard data on nest initiation. Arizona's done a little bit, not a lot, and Mexico on the GPS backpacks. I think it'll be interesting as we continue to see if we get-- Merriam's is probably tighter than that. We've been doing this for about seven years now, [unintelligible 01:28:13] we build a database for if that's a lot of inter-annual variation or if it's consistent through time, it'll just be interesting to see.

Commissioner Witt: Yes. I also think the international connectivity is fascinating. Do you know, is there any kind of seasonality to those movements, or are they kind of stochastic dispersal?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Witt, I don't know what the temporal scale on that is. I definitely could ask our turkey biologist if that was more just quick stochastic events or if it's-- is it for roosting? I know we have had birds that have actually gone down there and stayed and not returned as well too, so I don't know if that's a dispersal event. It very well could be dispersal events of younger birds that they caught. I don't have [inaudible 01:28:57].

Commissioner Witt: One last question. You talked about concern about potential over-harvesting in fall of hens as being potentially problematic. Going forward, how are you going to assess that across New Mexico?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Witt, I think the biggest thing is what you saw up there was statewide numbers, and so we want to look to see, are we having areas where we're seeing higher hen harvests than others [unintelligible 01:29:27] GMUs? Because we do ask that question in the harvest report, what GMU did you harvest in? And so, if we see, for example, high harvest in an area where we know densities aren't as high, that might be where we're going to look at that. Whereas if it's proportionally spread, kind of our known densities of turkeys across the state, if hen harvest is less in those areas, we're not as concerned. It's really trying to look at more proportionality, like is that hen harvest over-represented in some of these areas, underrepresented, or about the same? If it's pretty widespread and not a concern, I don't think we'll come with that proposal, but if it's very pointed in certain areas, we might say certain GMUs that we recommend going to a bearded turkey only in the fall. That's the approach that we're looking at right now.

Commissioner Witt: Okay, that sounds good. I mean, it should be correlated. The numbers should be correlated with the spring success rates, because they're both tracking density. If they were out of whack or somehow negatively correlated, that would be a big concern.

Stewart Liley: Right. Exactly.

Chair Stump: You're going to have that data possibly next meeting?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, yes, we will bring that back next year. If we're going to recommend, if we see something, we'll definitely-- Like Commissioner Witt said, if that's not correlated, if we see some definitely heavier pressure in some areas, we'll bring that back. We're in that analysis phase right now, and we'll be at the next time we come.

Chair Stump: Great. That was a great presentation, sir. Thank you. Anybody else have anything?

Vice Chair Clemente: Just one question. Has the department thought on relocating Gould's turkey to other areas in the state?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Clemente, historically they would've only been in Sky Islands along the Arizona-New Mexico border. I think habitat-wise, we've discussed like, were they historically present in the Hachets? That would probably be the only mountain that we would think about that they maybe were in there. I think if we get a population a lot higher and we have excess birds-- I don't think we have tons of excess birds right now to move, but the Hachets would be one that we would maybe attempt, kind of at the peak of the Hachet Mountains, as it gets better habitat in there.

We do see them in the Animas Mountains, running up the Animas, so there is some connectivity. It's almost a U-shape. As you know, that mountain range has the valley in the middle, but you have a continuous habitat down into Mexico, coming back into the United States. If you actually look at this graphic-- let's see, it would be-- Yes, the bottom graphic, you almost could kind of see that connectivity coming back, that habitat range coming back, moving south. If you go southwest, south into Mexico, and then the mountain ranges going to the northeast into Mexico, back into New Mexico, that's probably where our connectivity is.

Hatchet Mountain Range is going to be over in this area, and so that would probably be the only-- Let's see. It's maybe not showing up when I do that. Yes, basically in that northeast portion of that bottom graphic, that would be the one place where we would potentially look again to start a population. It takes quite a few birds, and I don't think this current population in New Mexico could withstand it. Potentially, cooperation with Mexico for additional birds, but that would be the one we would look at.

Vice Chair Clemente: I think I can make that connection with Mexico to get birds. [chuckles]

Chair Stump: Thank you, Stewart. Anyone on that note?

[silence]

Chair Stump: Okay. Is everybody good? Do we need to take a break real quick? Let's take a 10-minute break.

[silence]

Chair Stump: Thank you, everybody. Let's move on to agenda item 14, which is the Initial Discussion of Migratory Bird Rule 19.31.6 NMAC. Stewart?

Stewart Liley: Commissioners, this is an annual rule, as you all know, so we hear this every single year. We work in conjunction with the Fish and Wildlife Service and their frameworks that are allowed, we work through the flyways. Fish and Wildlife Service actually has not published the preliminary frameworks yet. Normally, they're published by now. They're delayed in publishing the preliminary, but we've been working through the Fish and Wildlife Service more or less. Probably going to have frameworks that are unchanged from last year, and so a three-bird pintail bag limit again. Again, once the proposed frameworks are published, we'll make sure that our rules are developed within that. We're not expecting any changes in the overarching season length and/or bag limits for any species from a change from the '25 to the '26 season.

We will potentially look at-- we'll go back out to public comment like we always do, make sure that people are happy with the way we set our seasons. We only get so many exposure days, so we set-- in the north and the central flyway, we start the season earlier, end a little bit before the last potential day. So January 31st is the last day we could harvest ducks, period. We try to move the north to start a little bit sooner. If we have a cooler fall, we get freeze-out, and those birds move south. But this fall, we definitely did not have the freeze-out conditions. As you know, December was in the 60s, so we didn't have freeze-out to the north. Migratory birds are still even holed up further north. We didn't get the big migrations in.

Sandhill crane is the one that we probably adjust, and that's the Rocky Mountain population of sandhill cranes, we adjust the most. We are allocated a certain harvest limit that we cannot exceed, and that's based on surveys that will be held in the spring, so we won't know that allocation until about April or so. If we get an increased allocation, we'll see if we increase our draw permits. We're hovering right at a point where we might be kind of max. Even if we get an increased allocation, just the hunter density in the Middle Rio Grande, putting more hunters out there just creates a challenging hunt for some of those areas. Just not tons of areas to hunt, but it might be a place where we could look at. The southwest, that's a draw area too for Rocky Mountain population of cranes that we could potentially increase.

We'll hold our public meetings in February or March, hybrid as well. Right now, we're looking at this as kind of a staying-to-the-course of our typical proposed hunt dates. That's for the central flyway. As you could see, like I said, the north zone, we start a little bit sooner, end a little bit earlier because of the potential freeze-out conditions. South zone, we run all the way to the latest that we can because we don't have those freeze-out conditions as much.

In the Pacific flyway, there's longer exposure, longer allowable exposure days, so we are starting those south and north zones a little bit earlier. Scaup, it does have a shorter season just because that's the regulatory framework that we work within. Scaups do not have the full exposure days that we have with other birds, and then you'll see the geese season.

With that, I'll take any questions. Again, this is an annual rule that we do every year in concert with Fish and Wildlife Service. I would say one thing that we will look at maybe as we move into the future, South Dakota and Nebraska started what they call an experimental two-tier season. Two-tier being that they created this process to try to recruit more duck hunters, reactivate to the three Rs, but really where it is-- instead of having bag limits by certain species, by hens versus males, it was a three-bird bag limit, period, and just trying to get people in.

Some of the survey data showed that entrance into migratory bird hunting, some of the walls there was bird identification, and hunters being really nervous about killing the wrong bird or overgoing in the bag of certain species. So they started this, just kind of a three-bird kill, whatever you want, but you're done. A lot of the rest of our bag limits are six, with no more than three pintails, or no more than one canvasback. They're finding the data that was experimental, the Service let them go into experimental status for about five years. They're coming out of the experiment right now and showing success at getting more hunters

involved in migratory bird, and you're actually seeing some of those early on two-tier hunters graduating into not selecting two-tier anymore. They've started bird recognition, and they're moving in too. The Service is contemplating allowing that for other states in the coming future, whether that's '27, '28, what it is. I think it's something that would be valuable to assess if New Mexico wanted to go into this potential two-tier. I think there's value in that, and value in trying to get more people involved in migratory bird hunting. It's one of the largest declining hunting sectors that's been there, and so I think this is a way to make it less. We'll keep the commission posted on that when the Service will allow for that to maybe go operational across the country, or if they'll let it go operational, but we do continue to push with the flyways and the Service to have more states be able to potentially go operational with that.

Chair Stump: Are those tiers seasonal, different seasons?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, it's the same exact season, so you have to hunt the same season dates. It's just, the Service decided to call it a tier in terms of the tier of the hunter, like the hunter-- You go with the normal bag limits or a reduced tiered bag limit, is basically why they call it two-tier. It really is just you're going to an overall reduced bag limit on birds, on a daily bag.

Chair Stump: By choice?

Stewart Liley: By choice, yes.

Chair Stump: All right. Commissioners, anything?

Commissioner Witt: Well, I just wanted to comment with respect to scaup. I don't know any New Mexico duck hunters that I know that I would trust to identify scaup from a redhead duck, or other similar, so it's a little concerning to have their season slightly offset from other species.

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Witt, that's a federal rule that we have to follow. I agree, the amount of-- we do participate in wing return. The amount of scaup in New Mexico is pretty low when they look at harvest dates on that. There's a lot of times when those individuals that get mailing cards or envelopes to return their wings, they ask the hunter to say what they think the wing is, and there definitely are times where it's off, and scaup is just a low-harvested bird in New Mexico for the most part.

Chair Stump: Thank you, Stewart. Moving on to item number 15, the Initial Discussion of the Barbary Sheep, Oryx, and Persian Ibex Rule 19.31.12 NMAC.

[pause 01:40:52]

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, members of the commission, looks like this presentation is having issues loading. Let's see if-- it's just taking a second. Maybe try to load it from a thumb drive.

[pause 01:41:28]

Stewart Liley: Okay. As stated, this rule consists of three different species; ibex, Barbary sheep, and oryx. I'll go through each one of those separately on our proposals, background data, et cetera, starting with ibex. A little bit of history on ibex: We've seen huge population fluctuations in time since the '80s on ibex, all the way up to probably well over 1,200 ibex to 1,500 ibex on the mountain, down to lows in the 80-type numbers in recent history, and we've really been trying to get at stopping these population swings. There's two management strategies with ibex. One is to keep ibex on the Florida mountains, that's an agreement we have with the BLM, and also to protect desert bighorn sheep.

Ibex do carry mycoplasma ovipneumoniae. Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae is thought to be the leading cause of basically secondary pathogens like pneumonia entering desert bighorn sheep, Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, and basically killing off populations. Ibex can carry it and not show impacts, or they don't have a survival or show secondary pneumonia, whereas once our bighorn get it, we see die-offs of up to 90%. So our strategy is to keep ibex on the mountain and prevent expansion.

The other thing is we've worked with the BLM through time to try to establish a population goal if you will on there, and that's really between 350 and 700 ibex. We're still trying to build ibex back to that goal, but we're trying to maintain that we don't overshoot that goal, so it's a balance of trying to-- because they do twin, it's trying to make sure that we control it so it doesn't go so fast, and we'll get into some of the data. We've had these huge pendulums, and we're trying to move away from that.

In terms of the last rule cycle, we're averaging about 300 licenses sold, success rates all the way from 0 to 50% depending on the license type. We're really not harvesting very many. This was last year's harvest, 2024 harvest. You'll see we harvested 10 males and one female across the whole mountain during last year's hunt. Satisfaction ratings are dropping. We recognize the population is down. We were

hoping in the last four-year rule cycle-- we've harvested in the last two years-- This is two years because our female harvest happens right now, but really, two females in the last couple years. So female harvest isn't driving the slowed, protracted increase of ibex on that mountain, something else is. What that is exactly, we don't know, but we're trying to still build back that ibex population.

The other thing that's really important is we've historically flown helicopter surveys on the Florida mountains. That picture in the right, that graphic in the right is a survey route from a helicopter survey. What we do is start at the bottom of the mountain and work our way up. I think through time, especially when populations were high, those were very successful. You'd catch ibex movement-- They're very fast on the mountain, climb cliffs as fast as a helicopter almost can climb a cliff, to be honest with you. When the population was high, we were seeing group sizes in the hundreds of animals, and all you needed to do was catch movement from a helicopter. **[unintelligible 01:45:09]** one or two ibex, and all of a sudden you find 100, or a group of 50. Our group sizes moved to about five, and so trying to catch those individual groups has been a lot harder. I think our detection rates are a lot less, and our surveys are just not working out real well. We're in less than 100 in the surveys.

Two years ago in 2024, we contracted a company named Owyhee Air that has a forward-looking infrared and also a high digital forward-looking camera too that could toggle between infrared and real-time camera. They could fly at about 1,000 feet AGL, so they're well above 1,000 to 1500 feet AGL in a fixed-wing aircraft, and you can get a much better survey. You're detecting those small groups much better. Hopefully, this video will play next slide. You'll be able to see some clips from that survey. That survey was-- we did a conjunction flight. These two flights were done a week apart. Our helicopter saw about 80, the Owyhee Air detected 198, so we were way under our detections. If this video will play, that'd be great. If not, I do have some slide clips we'll see. I was afraid of that-- That's what's holding up on this computer, is the video. Well, you can't see it. It's corrupted on this computer, so--

Anyway, it's not going to play. I'll try to get it to play maybe at a break, I have it on a flash drive, but what we're looking at-- and I'll go through the next slides. You could see it on the right graphic. You can see, this is a group that the camera picks up. You can see the two ibex that are circled in red right there. As it zooms in-- again, it toggles. The plane is flying a fixed line on it until they find ibex, and then the camera toggles back and forth to where you could even get classification. Those two ibex are the actual two ibex that the heat signatures were, so I'll toggle back and forth from the two. You can see the one heat signature, and then you could actually toggle too to actually classify what that ibex was, and I'll go through it.

Unfortunately, the video was about two minutes of the full survey. You could even get at the-- we're able to classify age of males even from this, which is very hard in the helicopter because they're moving so fast. Whereas in this, they don't even recognize the plane is there, and the video really shows that they just go about feeding even when the plane is overflying. You could see those same two ibex on that video. Again, I'll try to get this video to play on a separate later.

This is the 185 ibex they observed on that flight. You'll see there the red dots represent a different location where they found it, and then also, the size of the red dot corresponds to the size of the group that they found. They were finding even singles. That camera was able to actually pick up a golden eagle nest with two eggs in it. The female was off, but the heat signature from the eggs, the camera even could pick up. It was pretty impressive to see what it could do. We actually are in the process of installing the same exact camera in our plane. It's taking a lot of time to work through the FAA to get a different modification to the plane, but we're looking to use this technology for a lot of other surveys, just kind of what we were able to see.

That said, again, we will fly this next survey in March. We do have another contract to come down to repeat the surveys to get a better idea of what's going on since the last April 8th survey of 2024. Again, we haven't had any female harvests really, maybe two in terms of hunter harvests since 2024, but we want to repeat the survey, see what happened. This shows license numbers through time, going back from when we first started hunting it until recent. Going back to the star, we are trying to get rid of this pendulum swinging, these high license numbers, low license numbers, and building back. It would be nice to get something constant in there, and trying to maintain a constant license, a constant population.

The star represents the most recent, kind of where we're at right now. I think what you'll look at right here, this is a more recent harvest, but again, female harvest has basically been virtually nothing since 2021, and so male harvest has declined. That's purposeful, we've decreased those licenses, but we're still probably looking at this full rule cycle before we see many increases. And again, trying to get rid of the pendulum where you go from-- If you look at 2013, 2015, where you see from 60 to 0 to 140, we had a huge jump in the population during those times too, and different strategies trying to maintain that. Satisfaction rating through time. We were pretty steady until we had that larger population decline, and that was driven by hunter harvest. We purposely tried to decline the population from 1,200. It overshot what we were hoping, and that population has been lower than desired in the last six years. We're trying to, like I said, build back population success rate by-- Bow success rate's always been very low, almost single digits. It's just a really hard hunt. Our rifle success rate and our once-in-a-lifetime has gone down significantly.

We're looking at the directions forward. I think we've had some discussions with some outside groups on Ibex management. We've had some discussions internally. We are going to propose cuts. What those cuts look like, it's hard to say, but probably pretty significant cuts. For example, the bow licenses, we've killed two Ibex. There's 200 bow licenses. That opportunity is there, but you're killing two on a year, so it's this question about do you offer an opportunity that's having not an impact but really not a good hunt? The satisfaction ratings have decreased a lot. I think we're looking more at--

The other thing is it gives this unmanaged expectation that there's more Ibex out there than there is when we're offering up to 200 bow licenses. Whether we're down to our proposals of 50 bow licenses total over 2 hunts or what it is, we haven't determined the exact license numbers, but we're looking at significant cuts, I guess is the point on that. Same on our once-in-a-lifetime hunts, we're looking at cuts at those two either sex, both on the muzzleloader, once-in-a-lifetime end use. Everything is going to probably come down to a cut. What that exact number is, we have not determined yet but we will come back at the next time you hear this with some proposed numbers, but pretty significant cuts.

Female immature, there's been people asking for us to completely shut down female immature hunts. There's two things there. One is it is female immature male for a reason. When we reduce the population, we reduce the female segments so much that we've skewed the sex ratio more towards males. There's more males in the population than females, which is we created that issue and we need to try to get some kind of parity, hopefully, back. Especially in an ungulate species, it is very unusual to have a male-skewed sex ratio. Last rule cycle we increased the size of immature male allowable and that female immature harvest up to 20 inches.

It used to be 15, and we've moved it up to 20 to try to target 1 and 2-year-old males to skew that sex ratio back. There was some success in this female immature hunts where they were killing those younger males. I think we want to maintain that license type in the rural structure but I think we would prefer to do it like we do with Bighorn sheep, where we do an up-to number and determine on an annual basis what the licenses numbers would be rather than a set number over the four years. If the population starts growing at a faster speed, we can go up to those numbers. I think we do want to set a cap so everyone knows what that cap would be but have the ability to not harvest if we want to in that year.

One intake it would be post survey analysis, and post-harvest determine next year's licenses. I think we're looking at that in our female immature licenses rather than having a set number and rule that we draw every year. We are seeing right now with our female immature licenses, a lot of people that are drawing it are just not even going out on the hunt. They draw the license, don't even go out on the hunt. I don't know if that's because they do research posts drawing the license on what the hunt looks like or what, but again, trying to go into the have the ability to harvest if need be if the population grows, but probably at the start of this, not be very small, depending on again, what some of these surveys say.

We'll soon again be switching to that forward-looking infrared-based survey, and it'll get us better data. That is the biggest thing that I think you'll see. Again, coming back to you all at the next commission meeting, we've had some initial discussions on that. I think everyone is pretty much in agreement that reduction in license is necessary. That exact number we'll come back next time with you all to get what we're actually proposing, but we're looking at pretty significant cuts on Ibex. We could go through all three species, or we could take a break in between on species.

Chair Stump: Commissioner Lopez has a question.

Commissioner Lopez: [unintelligible 01:55:07] They're just cutting down the unit for X amount of years for the [unintelligible 01:55:14] population to renew?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Lopez, again, because our harvest has been two females, the population's going to be driven by females, and we're seeing one to two females a year for the last three years. We virtually shut it down, and yet it's not rebuilding, or maybe not rebuilding as fast as we hope. That's why we're proposing going to that up two licenses that would potentially allow zero female harvest. We're looking at still a male harvest, one, because we want to get sex ratios back closer to parity, and two, there still is some older-age-class males on the mountain.

It might be that you see during the next rule cycle that we've offered zero licenses for female immature that year if our population's not doing well or if the surveys show that the girl is not there, or it might be 10, 15. I don't know what it is. We're still in that data analysis. We will definitely be helped out by this next year's survey from the forward info looking red but absolutely a potential that we will not harvest female immature in a year if the population we don't think will sustain it. In all actuality we have not been killing females over the last four years, and we just don't see the population [unintelligible 01:56:27].

Vice Chair Clemente: Thank you for the information and thank you for admitting that the population is very low. My concern is this word in the comments is so important. Four years ago, five years ago, six years ago, seven years ago, I was sitting there. I was part of the public. I was not a commissioner. I brought this to their attention. I brought this exactly, that the population was declining very fast. What I was told it was the population will bounce out quick because they have twins because they reproduce fast. My concern is how did it get into this point where I can show you an email that I received days ago where they're telling me that they shot three [unintelligible 01:57:33]

How much does it cost, this hunt? Not only the tag. How much does it cost to go find an Ibex? The time that is spent to be able to harvest it. This is where I want this rule and the management to be clear what is the goal. How many individuals should be within the population because I don't think we have that. How many individuals should be there? What is the goal? Where are we trying to get? These surveys are great, and you guys are searching for the technology, but what are we doing, and where are we getting to? That's what I would like to see. That way everybody understands what is the goal and how are you going to get them there.

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Clemente, like I said, I think our goal is between 350 and 700. That's been our goal the last eight years. Our harvest was nothing on females, and so something else is driving population dynamics. What's driving population dynamics? I don't think we have that understanding right now. I think there's some things in terms of definitely the helicopter surveys show that we are missing at least 50%. I think they've become, the animals that are on the mountain, a lot smarter. Even though we saw almost double, more than double, not at their survey, is that 100 [unintelligible 01:59:09]

In terms of harvest management, it is not driving population dynamics because we have been harvesting less than five animals a year. Is it golden eagles? There's some speculation to that. Is it mountain lions? What is it? Is it in a population standpoint where the female numbers are so low that any amount of offtake is impacting the growth rates? For example, we saw in the desert Bighorn sheep, once we hit about 80 ewes, 90 ewes, we started seeing populations increase pretty significantly. Is that something that in the Ibex population, when they're at a certain level, at your sigmoid curve growth on a typical angular population, we're not at exponential growth during the last four years. What does it take to get to that?

I don't know where we're at at that point. I think historically we'd seen these huge bounce backs. If we would have been harvesting females a lot in the last three years and said we're still stable, then you would say harvest is probably driving it. Harvest is not the dynamic driving this. Something else is driving the dynamic. In terms of what the public wants, maybe we haven't heard it yet this session, but in previous, there's some people that want us to kill every Ibex off that mountain and start Bighorn sheep too. There's some of this dichotomy of some people really want Ibex.

There's a lot of people that want Ibex, there's some people that don't want Ibex, and so, trying to balance that and that's why we've stuck with just one mountain range. I think the department is recommending we continue with Ibex and maintain it. That's why we're also proposing the female immature to go basically to

a 2B so we have to be determined so we could have years where it's zero if we were seeing that the harvest was driving it. I think there was the biggest thing that happened, and that's why we're talking about substantial cuts in licenses, is an expectation.

When we had more licenses out there, there was an expectation from hunters that drew it that it'd be a good hunt. Whether that was the case or not, I think the biggest is for us to manage that expectation maybe, and that's managing it through licenses as well too. Of not having as many licenses on the mountain with the expectation that reduced is probably a function of the lower population size, even though female immature licenses did not drive population dynamics.

Chair Stump: Anybody else have--

Commissioner Witt: I'd like to follow up on Commissioner Clemente's question and ask. First of all, I'll tell you that the numbers and your intention to reduce the number of licenses makes total sense. That's clearly [inaudible 02:01:55] licenses. I'll ask about the predators. Doesn't this infrared survey give us good data on mountain lions in the Florida mountains as well?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Witt, when they flew that, they didn't see any mountain lions. What I think you have, especially we've seen this in other desert mountain ranges, the Sky Islands, you have transitory lions through there. We've seen it with our desert Bighorn sheep populations, where you get two or three in there for a while, maybe have an impact, then they move off the mountain, and so I don't think you have a big core range of established territory mountain lions in there. It could have been just that day they didn't fly.

They did pick up mountain lions on other surveys that camera. In fact, it picked up a female with kittens that were hidden that we would've never seen in a helicopter survey because it had two heat signatures of hidden kittens that the female left way away from. Yes, it does, but I don't think you have a huge core population of mountain lions that just live solely on that mountain. I think they're all, for the most part, transitory, and that's what we see in those desert ranges with mountain lions. In terms of golden eagles, there definitely is a lot of golden eagles on that mountain. That's some of the great perching habitat for the Ford Golden Eagles. There is some predation from that, probably more on kids than anything.

Chair Stump: Thank you, commissioner.

Commissioner Lopez: [inaudible 02:03:25] ask the question regarding mountain lions. What about jaguars? Do they ever come out of Mexico and affect that population at all?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Lopez, in recent history, we haven't documented a jaguar in that mountain range. The only jaguars documented in New Mexico, being the [inaudible 02:03:46] in recent history. [silence] No, I still have two species. If we're ready to move off of Ibex, we can go to those.

Chair Stump: Yes.

Stewart Liley: Okay. Moving to Barbary sheep, we made some pretty big changes to Barbary sheep in the last rule cycle of creating multiple hunts across the southeast in our dry area. Just in a general, the Barbary sheep, we try to maintain populations in the southeast, and then we have over the counter where we're trying to prevent range expansion. Barbary sheep is another one from a disease standpoint with desert bighorn sheep.

Texas has really done a lot of research in the last few years on mycoplasma ovipneumoniae being present in the Barbary/bighorn interactions, showing that they are carriers and have infected bighorn herds and had some impact. We're really trying to maintain them in the southeast. We don't really have any desert bighorn sheep populations in that southeast quadrant.

Also, we have Barbary sheep moving throughout different portions. We have drawn hunts in the southeast over the counter on the rest of the state. You'll see the 2024 harvest data about 3,500 licenses sold, 33% success overall, but that over-the-counter hunt, excuse me, decreases that success rate. Some, you'll see the draw hunts of an average of between 35% and 43%. Definitely a little bit more male-dominated harvest, pretty decent satisfaction range.

I think overall, we're looking at maintaining that hunt structure. I think it has worked really well. We've heard good things about it. I don't think we'll be looking at any changes to license numbers. One of the things that did occur in the last rule cycle, we do have desert bighorn sheep in the Sacramento Mountains, and we do have Barbary sheep that do reside there as well, so there's been a campaign in that area to make sure you know the difference between Barbary sheep, bighorn sheep. That's been a big

one that we've worked with, Wild Sheep Foundation and the local people down there to put up a bunch of signs, the trail heads, et cetera, letting people know the difference between the two species. Real quick, just on the number of licenses sold through time, you'll see the drawer and over-the-counter licenses draws predominant licenses. We get upticks in over-the-counter some years over the others, but overall, pretty consistent through time, and then success rates are fairly consistent, really 36% to 32%, so not much variation on an annual basis on success rates on Barbary sheep. Harvest has been pretty stable through time as well. A little bit of a dip in male harvest, but fairly stable through time. We did, in the last rule cycle, implement female immature hunts on McGregor Range in concert with Fort Bliss. We're working with Fort Bliss to basically say are we at the right number? Should we implement more? We're working with the military on that to determine if those hunts are addressing the issue of expanding Barbary sheep on there, and if there's the potential to increase that or where we're at, so we're working with them. Then like all the rules, we'll adjust the hunt dates for the calendar shift. I could stop here if there's questions about Barbary sheep, or I can move into Oryx, if you would.

Chair Stump: Commissioners? No?

Vice Chair Clemente: Unit 34, that's where the Bighorn sheep and the Barbary sheep connect, correct? Have they been very successful? Has Barbary sheep been in decline? I believe that's over the counter.

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Vice Chair Clemente, yes, I think Barbary sheep have declined some. Our bighorn are doing well. We actually translocated some more bighorn into the Sacramentos this year. When we get to the Bighorn rule, we're probably going to propose opening that area for hunting this next rule cycle, whether we hunt in there or not the ability, but I think it has been successful in reducing that population. Some Barbary sheep, they're like bighorn in rugged areas. I think we definitely reduced early on when we started over the counter. People targeted males, but we definitely see some female harvest in that over the counter as well too.

Vice Chair Clemente: Okay, thank you.

Chair Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Clemente.

Stewart Liley: Moving on to Oryx. This is going to be a general thing we look at for, and I apologize I didn't mention this at the start of this presentation, but for some of our big game species, we're looking at, right now, you have the ability to buy a license from your phone and select e-tagging. You can actually buy a license and harvest the animal right then.

We're proposing for all of our big game species to move that to where you have to buy the license prior to the start of the hunt, especially with the e-tagging aspect of it. You all saw a case, I believe, of where someone actually was caught that they bought the license after they harvested the animal and then e-tagged it. There's some trends in the data that show that there's a lot of licenses that bought that have a tagging within a couple of hours, so there's questions on did they really buy the license before they were hunting, or were they hunting, bought the license, and then killed?

We're going to propose for all our big game species that you have to buy that license prior to the start of the season, especially if you're going to select e-tagging as an option. There's discussions on some of these longer seasons where it's a 30-day season, 15-day season that maybe they didn't know they were going to come on an over-the-counter hunt that's a 30-day season. If they could buy the license during the hunt, maybe potentially making it what we're thinking is if they do that, they're going to have to come in physically, either at an office or a vendor, and buy the license and select a physical carcass tag, so it prevents someone from buying the license while they're hunting, basically. You're going to have to come to a vendor to buy it.

Trying to curb that, I don't think it's huge issue, but overall I do think we have some of those issues on that where people are buying the license, they're out there quail hunting or something else, they see an animal that's an over-the-counter license, buy it, select e-tagging and they do it at once versus buying the license ahead of the season. That's going to be general proposal we're making. The other, and why this reminded me when we pulled up Oryx, is there's also private land over-the-counter hunts where you can buy those licenses. That's another species where we see people buying the electronic license and e-tagging on the same day.

The question is, do we have people potentially buying a private land license but actually harvesting on public land? We've made some cases on that, but it's a lot easier with the e-tagging if you have the ability

to buy the license while you're looking at that animal and tag it and move it off of public land right away before being caught. One of the things that we do for secondary management for elk is we require private land to register their property. Just show proof that you have property within the GMU. We don't do allocations, it's not a formula set for license numbers, but it is that you have to prove that you have private property in that GMU before you or your hunters can buy a license for that.

We're looking at registering ranches on these, where we have private land over-the-counter licenses for two reasons. One we want to be able to track, is a 10-acre parcel. We hear this a lot, and whether it's hearsay or reality, we hear people saying, "Well, that 10-acre parcel or 30-acre parcel, they'd had 30 people come to hunt Oryx on their property." Is that really true? We don't know because we know how many over-the-counter licenses we sold but we don't know where those licenses what property that's aimed towards. We're looking to do that for all of our over-the-counter species that we have for private land, where it's just a registration process.

It's a one-time registration basically, and then we automatically update a new ranch number for those properties every year or not ranch number but authorization number that they get allow themselves or hunters to be able to do it. It's not to apply every single year. It's a one-time but it will allow us to track where harvest is occurring, et cetera. That's another one with Oryx. We're seeing the amount of private land over-the-counter licenses increase. Whether that's because Oryx are increasing on private land or it's because of potentially other issues, this will allow us to track where licenses are being sold and where it's increasing.

Overall, for Oryx too our management strategy is really trying to maintain the Hannibal population on White Sands Missile Range, working with the military to maintain that. It's a lot of our once-in-a-lifetime hunts. We're working with White Sands right now to determine license numbers but as it looks right now, we're probably going to be a constant stable, not much changes in license numbers on White Sands Missile Range. We are looking at potentially some increases to over-the-counter. I'll get there in a second. We may not go that route. We're still in the data analysis but if it is, it would be a slight increase in the over-the-counter.

You'll see here our success rates and license numbers for the 2024 season, still pretty high success and pretty high success on the over the counter, 58% on our off-range. Excuse me, that's not over the counter for all those. Those are also some off-range draw hunts. We were suspecting we did increase the off-range hunts the last time. We thought that success rate would drop because of that increase. We were trying to get at that but our success has stayed stable.

Now, whether that's because the population's growing on White Sands Military Range or we have some more pockets of off-range Oryx that are growing, it's hard to say, but we thought that success rate would drop during this rule cycle, and it has not. That's why we're looking at potential increases for some off-range, some opportunities. On the range, we're estimating anywhere from 3,000 to 3,500 Oryx on range with the two main- there's the two main hunting areas, Stallion and Rhodes Canyon. We think between Stallion and Rhodes Canyon, 2,200, 2,400, and then additional animals, obviously off-range. We'll collaborate with the two military bases, Fort Bliss and White Sands, on those specific draw hunts.

We're working with them now, as we said. Again, probably not much changes on-range licenses, just general harvest trends through time maintained. Again, '23, '24 is the more recent through the rule cycle. We'll be analyzing '25 here pretty soon. We saw a pretty decent increase from '15 to '19. That was a function of numbers being down on White Sands Missile Range around 2013, a little bit before '13, until we really saw a population increase into about the '19 era. Satisfaction ratings on that top graphic, that's broken down by the different hunt areas, McGregor off-range, the broken horn hunts, et cetera.

Maintaining pretty at the same level. We just haven't seen it change much.

Same with our success rates, you'll look that top line is success on the once-in-a-lifetime hunts and that bottom line is the success rates on the off-range. That's the one where I mentioned before, we did have just a peak in 2020. It just must have been a year that more Oryx were moving off range. We really did think under this rule cycle we'd see a drop in that as we increase licenses but did not. We increased licenses of, I think, about 15% to 20%, depending on the hunt month, and still maintain that higher success.

Again, like I said, maintaining some of the early discussions with our military bases and then looking at that off-range potential increases, and then the registration for the over-the-counter private land licenses. I think you'll see that proposal come for deer and pronghorn too, just on registration on the private land over the counter licenses. Then, for all these species, like I said, we'll host multiple public meetings throughout the state that will be hybrid and then come back to you all with more further refined recommendations in terms of actual license numbers and our recommendations. With that, I'll take comments on that.

Chair Stump: Commissioners, does anybody have any discussion or questions Chief Liley? Looks like I have a couple people from the public. How about Logan Magara?

Logan Magara: Logan Magara with the Southern New Mexico Chapter of Safari Club International. Members of the commission, Director Sloane, Chief Liley, my primary comments today will be focused on Ibex in particular. We certainly commend the department on their updated population survey techniques. Our members are quite concerned about the Ibex population, and we would agree that at this time, we would strongly advocate for ending the nanny hunts, at least, in light of some of this new information in this very detailed population survey we're able to do now.

One thought that comes to mind is potentially, as Commissioner Clemente said, have a very detailed policy where if we, for example, have 500 total Ibex on the mountain and 300 nannies, we will issue 50 nanny tags that year as an example. Perhaps consider that as part of your proposal, if we don't just shut the nanny hunt down for this whole rulemaking cycle. Another proposal that we would urge the department to consider would be on those what we now call a billy tag, what's considered a billy tag. The bag limit is actually either sex. We would advocate for changing that to a mature billy, which we would propose to be defined as any Ibex over 20 inches. Currently, for the female immature tags, it's a female, any female, or a male under 20 inches. We feel it would be very easy for a hunter to make that distinction in the field. Shouldn't be hard. With that, I thank you for your time.

Chair Stump: Thank you, Mr. Magara. Kerrie Romero.

Kerrie Romero: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Kerrie Romero, on behalf of the New Mexico Council of Outfitters and Guides. First, I just want to say thank you to Chief Liley. Earlier this week, he and his staff hosted the Council of Outfitters and Guides Boards of Directors. We had a several-hour meeting to go over each rule individually, and discuss our concerns, and hear our thought process on each one. We really, really appreciate that opportunity. We know that it's not required, and so we really appreciate that. I think what was great during that meeting is we are on the same page for over 90% of everything that's going to open this year. That was really encouraging. I think the one area in the exotics where we diverge is with off-range Oryx.

Outfitters tend to feel that off-range Oryx hunt. While I understand that the department is not really managing that off-range Oryx hunt because they're focused on the on-range Oryx hunt, that Oryx hunt has really become a great opportunity for both resident and non-resident hunters. There is a decline in the off-range Oryx right now and the trophy quality. If we could keep those numbers stable and not increase the off-range. Then also the changes that are going to be made to the private land Oryx and across the board on the over-the-counter landowner tags is great. We're in agreement with that. Hopefully that helps to solve some of what we're seeing in off-range Oryx.

In terms of Ibex, we completely agree, and actually I agree with what Logan said about changing it to be mature billy rather than the either sex. First, I want to go back and just remind the commission that anytime there is a hunt code for the draw for any species that's under seven tags, that means there is no non-resident opportunity, and we're fine with that. The Ibex are in a free fall. We understand that probably hunters are not responsible for that population decline at this point, but it's definitely something that we can't market.

The trophy quality is gone, the Ibex are just not there. We're totally fine, and that includes the enhancement tag. We are totally fine with suspending-- I understand you can't suspend the program completely. It's difficult to re-establish a hunt code once we disappear it, but going down as low as we possibly can on the Ibex numbers is what we would prefer. Thank you.

Chair Stump: Thank you, Kerrie. Chief Liley, those are really great presentations. Thank you very much for all your work with you and your team. Any more questions from commissioners?

Vice Chair Clemente: I just want to say thank you. Thank you for how clear you have put the information and how transparent the department has been with this. Thank you.

Chair Stump: Okay, let's move on to item number 16, which is general public comment. We're going to allow three minutes for each commentator. I'll just start with you, Kerrie. [laughs]

Kerrie Romero: Thanks again. For the record, Kerrie Romero, on behalf of the New Mexico Council of Outfitters and Guides. This wasn't really a presentation, but Chief Liley alluded to it, and so I just wanted to give our input on the change to the manner and method that will basically require that you purchase a license a certain number of hours in advance before the hunt starts. I think the original thought process was to do 48 hours, which is the way we do bear and cougar, but that is problematic for the outfitting industry from the standpoint of we have a lot of non-resident hunters that come in on a Friday, and the hunt starts on Saturday.

What we talked about earlier this week is just doing the day before, not putting an hour cap on it, and that's workable for us. We're fine with that. Like Chief Liley was saying, some of the ones that are month-long hunts, that's a different conversation. If you have a hunter call you and it's January 8th, and they want to hunt January 9th or whatever, then that's going to be something where maybe the conversation changes a little bit. Maybe going to a vendor will solve that problem. It gets a little bit difficult in areas where you have a long distance between the hunting area and where the vendor is located at.

If you've got Walmart in Socorro and you're in Magdalena, that might not be doable, but we can have that conversation later on in the rulemaking process. Then the other thing that I just wanted to say, which I alluded to earlier, that we are in favor of is to have an authorization code associated with anything that is a landowner permit, essentially, just like we do in secondary elk. Everything can be tracked, the ranches can be monitored, and then we know where those over-the-counter landowner permits species are being harvested. Thank you.

Chair Stump: Thank you, Kerrie. Jesse Deubel.

Jesse Deubel: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and Commissioners. Jesse Deubel, New Mexico Wildlife Federation. The Wildlife Federation is very appreciative of all the presentations that were done today, but especially, very much like Ms. Romero did, I'd like to commend Chief Liley for contacting the Federation. He and his team spent the time to meet with us and go through each of these recommendations and proposals, and potential recommendations in great detail.

We had a wonderful dialogue, had the opportunity in a close-knit setting, have conversations about the pros and cons of different approaches, and a lot of questions were answered. I think it makes this entire process much more efficient, much more comfortable, much more positive. I think that's going to also be reflected in the outcome. Thank you very much, Chief Liley. Thank you very much, Commissioners.

Chair Stump: Thank you very much, Jesse. Tom Paterson.

Tom Paterson: Thank you, Chair Stump, Commissioners. Tom Paterson, President, New Mexico Cattle Growers Association. We've got four topics which I'll run through. The first, again, has to do with elk. We know that we're facing a four-year elk rule this year. We'd remind you that the Department of Game and Fish does not have range scientists on its staff. We would support such an endeavor for funding purposes in the legislature. We don't know how you're going to manage elk populations if you don't know what the land and water resources can tolerate. We would re-urge you in the four-year elk rule, as we go into that, to consider multiple-use management, which includes highway safety, includes livestock.

Please don't leave just the crumbs for the livestock industry, because if you do, you will be hurting local hunting opportunities, and you will be hurting our local economies. On gray wolves, we know that gray wolves, one gray wolf, at least, has penetrated into New Mexico. The Department was successful in capturing it and taking it back to Colorado. We appreciate that. We are very concerned about what happens when we have uncolored gray wolves penetrate into New Mexico. What is the plan? Who's going to compensate our ranchers for livestock depredations from gray wolves?

If you need, again, our support for funding on either of those to capture them, or for funding, please, we'd be delighted to work with you on that. On Mexican wolves, HR 4255, Representative Gosar's bill to de-list the Mexican wolf and to de-link recovery in the United States from Mexico, may be heard in the House this month. If it were to pass, questions that we have, what has the Department of Game and Fish been doing since the meeting we had in reserve about management of Mexican wolves, because it's coming

where the Department will be charged with that responsibility. It's going to be a complicated process. Is there a plan? Are you willing to work with the Fish and Wildlife Service on a plan?

Please, we would be delighted to work with you to coordinate any sort of plan with them, with the ranching industry, with our local law enforcement, all of whom have a stake in this.

Finally, New World screwworm. As soon as the temperatures go up this spring, it's not a question of whether, it's a question of when, and what wildlife are going to be the most likely vector to introduce New World screwworm into the United States. It will have devastating impacts on our wildlife populations and on our livestock industry. If you don't have a plan for dealing with it, we urge you, please, get one. Thank you.

Chair Stump: Thank you, Tom. Charlie Trask.

Charlie Trask: Hi, thank you for this opportunity. My name is Charlie Trask. I live in Los Alamos. I'm a native New Mexican, and that tells you how old I am. I've been hunting and fishing forever, it seems like. Unfortunately, I became mobility impaired, well, about 15 years ago, and because of that, I've dealt with the mobility impaired rules and regulations. I appreciate the opportunity that the Game Department has offered in terms of mobility set-aside hunts. Those are terrific, and I would advocate that y'all keep those in mind when you're setting seasons and hunt codes, but I did run into a snag, and that's a requirement that I have to re-up every four years.

I went to the Los Alamos meeting and requested the commission take an action to delete the last sentence of the regulation that requires a mobility person to re-up. It's getting more and more difficult to find doctors. The other thing is a mobility-impaired person has a lot of difficulty just getting to the doctor and that thing. It's a tremendous pain for most of us that have to deal with it. Well, if I could, I'm trying to get an advocate on the commission that will push for this rule change.

It's very simple. You can delete one sentence in the regulations and it's done. Once you become mobility, the rule says permanently disabled, it doesn't say permanently for four years, and it's a silly thing actually to ask us to cut back in and re-up that. I would ask for your consideration in this. I did get Commissioner Witt answer by email and Chair Stump, and for some reason, Commissioner Lopez said, I don't think your email works. I can't seem to get an email through to you, but I appreciate the opportunity. Thank you, guys.

Chair Stump: Thank you, Charlie. Do we have anyone online? No one online today. Commissioners, do you have any comments or anything you'd like to say? No? I'd just like to say, thanks again for all the work we've done in the past year, you guys, and I'm looking forward to this coming year of a lot of hard work with you all. On that note, let's move on to executive session, which will be closed to the public. Can I have a motion to enter executive session, please?

Vice Chair Clemente: I so move to adjourn into executive session, closed to the public, pursuant to section 10-15-1(H)(7) NMSA 1978 to discuss attorney-client privileges, litigation update.

Chair Stump: Is there a second?

Commissioner Witt: Second.

Chair Stump: Director, please call the roll.

Director Sloane: Commissioner Witt.

Commissioner Witt: Aye.

Director Sloane: Commissioner Lopez?

Commissioner Lopez: Yes.

Director Sloane: Commissioner Fulfer.

Commissioner Fulfer: Yes.

Director Sloane: Vice Chair Clemente?

Vice Chair Clemente: Yes.

Director Sloane: Chair Stump?

Chair Stump: Yes.

Director Sloane: Motion passes.

Chair Stump: We are adjourned to executive session.

Chair Stump: Gregg, thanks for being online today. Thank you. Thank you. I appreciate you being online.

Commissioner Fulfer: Appreciate you being patient with me here and letting me do that.

Chair Stump: Hope to see you at the next meeting.

Commissioner Fulfer: Yes, sir.

Chair Stump: This commission had adjourned into executive session closed to the public. During the executive session the commission discussed only those matters specified in its motion to adjourn. It took no action as to any matter. Can I have a motion to adjourn?

Commissioner Lopez: Mr. Chair, motion to adjourn the January 9th, 2026, State Game Commission meeting.

Chair Stump: Is there a second?

Commissioner Fulfer: Second.

Chair Stump: All in favor.

Commissioner Clemente: Aye.

Commissioner Lopez: Aye.

Chair Stump: Aye. No opposed. We stand adjourned.

Commissioner Fulfer: Y'all take care, and we'll see you in the next one.

Chair Stump: Okay, Gregg, be safe out there.

[02:34:34] [END OF AUDIO]

DRAFT

APPROVAL OF MINUTES
NEW MEXICO STATE GAME COMMISSION

January 9, 2026
New Mexico State Library, Piñon Room
1209 Camino Carlos Rey, Santa Fe, NM 87509



Michael B. Sloane, Director

5/28/2026

Date



Richard Stump, Chair

New Mexico State Game Commission

5/28/26

Date