

COMMISSION MEETING AGENDA BRIEFING

Meeting Date: August 21, 2026

Agenda Number: 11

Presenter: Stewart Liley

Corroborator: N/A

Agenda Title: Rule Making Hearing on Final Rule Changes on the Bighorn Sheep Rule (19.31.17 NMAC) for the 2027 – 2030 hunting seasons.

1. Summary of Agenda Item

The Department will present proposed changes to the Bighorn Sheep Rule (19.31.17 NMAC) based on survey information, management goals and public comment. The Department held two hybrid in-person/virtual public meetings and has also received comments regarding the Bighorn Sheep Rule.

The Department is proposing the following changes to 19.31.17 NMAC:

Rocky Mountain Bighorn:

- Opening the Manzanos (Game Management Units (GMUs) 14 & 18) for ram hunting under both public and private sections of the rule.
- Establishing two hunt periods for the Manzanos: October 1-15 and October 16-30
- Increasing the bag limit for private Rocky Mountain bighorn ram licenses from 6 to 10 to accommodate a new herd being opened for hunting (Manzanos)

Desert bighorn:

- Opening the Sacramentos (GMU 34) for ram hunting under (Dec. 1-15 hunt period)
- Shifting the hunt periods for both the Little Hatchets (GMU 26, west of NM 81) and Big Hatchets (GMU 26, east of NM 81) from September 15-30 and October 1-15 to December 1-15 and December 16-30

General

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

2. Background Information

The bighorn sheep rule (19.31.17 NMAC) is re-evaluated every 4 years and changed based on population data, harvest data, management goals, and public feedback. The Department has reached out to the public for input.

Bighorn sheep hunting in New Mexico is conservative and managed to produce older age class rams for harvest. Ram licenses are once in a lifetime (Rocky Mountain and desert) and are quite limited in number every year. In cases where bighorn populations

are large enough to be limited by winter range or issues involving dispersal behavior (i.e., some Rocky Mountain bighorn populations) the Department prescribes a conservative ewe harvest to maintain populations at appropriate levels. Currently there are no desert bighorn populations large enough to support ewe harvest and the Department is actively restoring desert populations to historical vacant range when surplus sheep are available.

3. Strategic Plan References and Possible Impacts of Agenda Item

The process as presented to the Commission meets the Conservation Services Program Objectives 1, 2 and 5 of the Department's Strategic Plan: FY 2019 – FY 2023

4. Considerations Regarding Duplications and/or Conflicts with Existing Rules or Statutes

None

5. Description and Summary of Public Involvement Process and Results

The Department held two hybrid in-person/virtual public meetings in Albuquerque and Las Cruces. Public comments will be presented at the Commission meeting. Proposed changes to the Bighorn Sheep Rule have been posted on the Department's website.

6. Suggested Motion

The Department respectfully suggests the following motion unless Commission discretion indicates a different course of action:

"Move to adopt the proposed changes to 19.31.17 NMAC as presented by the Department and allow the Department to make minor corrections to comply with filing this rule with State Records and Archives."

TITLE 19 NATURAL RESOURCES AND WILDLIFE
CHAPTER 31 HUNTING AND FISHING
PART 17 BIGHORN SHEEP

19.31.17.1 ISSUING AGENCY: New Mexico ~~department of game and fish~~ department of wildlife.

[19.31.17.1 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.17.1 NMAC, 4/1/2027]

19.31.17.2 SCOPE: Sportspersons interested in bighorn sheep management and hunting. Additional requirements may be found in Chapter 17 NMSA 1978, and Chapters 30, 31, 32 and 33 of Title 19 NMAC.

[19.31.17.2 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.17.2 NMAC, 4/1/2027]

19.31.17.3 STATUTORY AUTHORITY: Sections 17-1-14 and 17-1-26 NMSA 1978 provide that the New Mexico state game wildlife commission has the authority to establish rules and regulations that it may deem necessary to carry out the purpose of Chapter 17 NMSA 1978 and all other acts pertaining to protected mammals, birds, and fish.

[19.31.17.3 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.17.3 NMAC, 4/1/2027]

19.31.17.4 DURATION: April 1, ~~2025~~2027 through March 31, ~~2027~~2031.

[19.31.17.4 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.17.4 NMAC, 4/1/2027]

19.31.17.5 EFFECTIVE DATE: April 1, ~~2025~~2027 unless a later date is cited at the end of a section.

[19.31.17.5 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.17.5 NMAC, 4/1/2027]

19.31.17.6 OBJECTIVE: Establishing open hunting seasons and regulations, rules, and procedures governing the distribution and issuance of bighorn sheep licenses by the department.

[19.31.17.6 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.17.6 NMAC, 4/1/2027]

19.31.17.7 DEFINITIONS:

A. **"Department"** shall mean the New Mexico ~~department of game and fish~~ department of wildlife.

B. **"Director"** shall mean the director of the New Mexico ~~department of game and fish~~ department of wildlife.

C. **"Either sex" or "ES"** shall mean any one animal of the species.

D. **"Ewe"** shall mean any female bighorn sheep.

E. **"Game management unit" or "GMU"** shall mean those areas as described in 19.30.4 NMAC Boundary Descriptions for Game Management Units.

F. **"Ram"** shall mean any male bighorn sheep.

G. **"Wildlife management areas" or "WMAs"** shall mean those areas as described in 19.34.5 NMAC Wildlife Management Areas.

[19.31.17.7 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.17.7 NMAC, 4/1/2027]

19.31.17.8 ADJUSTMENT OF LICENSES: The director, with the verbal concurrence of the New Mexico state wildlife game commission chairperson or their designee, may adjust the number of bighorn licenses to address significant changes in population levels or to address critical department management needs. The director may change or cancel any or all hunts on military lands to accommodate closures on those lands; if changed, the season length and bag limit shall remain the same as assigned on the original hunt code.

[19.31.17.8 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.17.8 NMAC, 4/1/2027]

19.31.17.9 BIGHORN SHEEP LICENSE APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS AND RESTRICTIONS:

A. Rocky mountain bighorn sheep ram once-in-a-lifetime hunts: It shall be unlawful for anyone to apply for a Rocky mountain bighorn sheep ram license if one has previously held a license to hunt a Rocky mountain bighorn sheep ram in New Mexico, except those who have held a youth-only, private land-only (not obtained through the public draw), population management license for ram or ES that the director, with verbal concurrence of the chairperson or their designee, has decided does not qualify as once-in-a-lifetime, auction, and/or raffle bighorn ram license(s). A person that has received the youth-only ram license is eligible for this hunt only once as a youth (under age 18), but may apply for the other Rocky mountain and desert bighorn once-in-a lifetime hunts as long as they are eligible.

B. Desert bighorn sheep ram once-in-a-lifetime hunts: It shall be unlawful for anyone to apply for a desert bighorn sheep ram license if one has previously held a license to hunt a desert bighorn sheep ram in New Mexico, except those who have held a youth-only, private land-only (not obtained through the public draw), population management license for ram or ES that the director, with verbal concurrence of the chairperson or their designee, has decided does not qualify as once-in-a-lifetime, auction, and/or raffle bighorn ram license(s). A person that has received the youth-only ram license is eligible for this hunt only once as a youth (under age 18), but may apply for the other Rocky mountain and desert bighorn once-in-a lifetime hunts as long as they are eligible.

C. Rocky mountain bighorn sheep ewe hunts: This hunt is not a once-in-a-lifetime hunt. A person that has previously held a license to hunt Rocky mountain bighorn rams or ewes is eligible to apply for this hunt.

[19.31.17.9 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.17.9 NMAC, 4/1/2027]

19.31.17.10 SEALING OF RAM HORNS: A seal shall be affixed to a horn of every bighorn sheep ram head taken in New Mexico, imported into New Mexico, or found in the field in New Mexico subsequent to August 17, 1973. Bighorn sheep heads found in the field within New Mexico shall remain the property of the state until disposed of by permit from the director. The seal shall authorize possession and transportation of the head within New Mexico.

A. Such sealing shall be done within ten days after the bighorn sheep ram head is taken, imported, or found in the field and before the bighorn sheep head is exported from New Mexico. Bighorn sheep ram heads not so declared shall be seized. Only legally taken and possessed bighorn sheep ram heads from New Mexico shall be sealed.

B. Bighorn sheep ram heads legally sealed in other countries, states, tribal entities, provinces, and territories, and possessing a valid visible seal attached, are exempted.

C. It shall be unlawful to possess any bighorn sheep ram head which has not been sealed as described in this section.

[19.31.17.10 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.17.10 NMAC, 4/1/2027]

19.31.17.11 BIGHORN SHEEP HUNTING SEASONS: The 2023-24 through 2026-27 hunting seasons shall be as indicated below, listing the GMUs or areas open, eligibility requirements or restrictions, hunt dates, hunt codes, sporting arms, number of licenses, and bag limit. Additional eligibility requirements and restrictions are defined in Section 9 of 19.31.17 NMAC above.

A. Rocky mountain bighorn ram hunt for any big game sporting arms (BHS-1-201 BHS-RM-R-RAM-PUB). Hunters applying for BHS-1-201 BHS-RM-R-RAM-PUB will be allowed to select and rank up to three open areas/hunt dates. The number of licenses available for BHS-1-201 BHS-RM-R-RAM-PUB will be up to 60 with a bag limit of one ram.

open GMUs or areas for BHS-1-201	2023-2024 hunt dates	2024-2025 hunt dates	2025-2026 hunt dates	2026-2027 hunt dates
6	8/10-8/24	8/10-8/24	8/10-8/24	8/10-8/24

	9/1-9/15	9/1-9/15	9/1-9/15	9/1-9/15
14, 18	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
16B, 22, 23, 24: including Double E WMA	1/1-1/31	1/1-1/31	1/1-1/31	1/1-1/31
45	8/4-8/13	8/9-8/18	8/8-8/17	8/7-8/16
	8/18-8/27	8/23-9/1	8/22-8/31	8/21-8/30
45, youth only	8/18-8/27	8/23-9/1	8/22-8/31	8/21-8/30
53 south of NM 38 and east of NM 522	8/6-8/15	8/6-8/15	8/6-8/15	8/6-8/15
	9/1-9/10	9/1-9/10	9/1-9/10	9/1-9/10
53 north of NM 38 and east of NM 522; 55 south of NM 196/FS Rd 1950	8/4-8/13	8/9-8/18	8/8-8/17	8/7-8/16
	8/18-8/27	8/23-9/1	8/22-8/31	8/21-8/30
49, 50, 53 west of NM 522	8/10-8/24	8/10-8/24	8/10-8/24	8/10-8/24
	9/1-9/15	9/1-9/15	9/1-9/15	9/1-9/15
	11/1-11/15	11/1-11/15	11/1-11/15	11/1-11/15
55 north of NM 196/FS Rd 1950	8/15/2023-1/15/2024	8/15/2024-1/15/2025	8/15/2025-1/15/2026	8/15/2026-1/15/2027
58	8/15/2023-1/15/2024	8/15/2024-1/15/2025	8/15/2025-1/15/2026	8/15/2026-1/15/2027

Open GMUs or areas for BHS-RM-R-RAM-PUB	2027-2028 hunt dates	2028-2029 hunt dates	2029-2030 hunt dates	2030-2031 hunt dates
6	8/10-8/24	8/10-8/24	8/10-8/24	8/10-8/24
	9/1-9/15	9/1-9/15	9/1-9/15	9/1-9/15
14, 18	10/1-10/15	10/1-10/15	10/1-10/15	10/1-10/15
	10/16-10/30	10/16-10/30	10/16-10/30	10/16-10/30
16B, 22, 23, 24: including Double E, Glenwood, and Mimbres WMAs	1/1-1/31	1/1-1/31	1/1-1/31	1/1-1/31
45	8/6-8/15	8/11-8/20	8/10-8/19	8/9-8/18
	8/20-8/29	8/25-9/3	8/24-9/2	8/23-9/1

45, youth only	8/20-8/29	8/25-9/3	8/24-9/2	8/23-9/1
53 south of NM 38 and east of NM 522	8/6-8/15	8/6-8/15	8/6-8/15	8/6-8/15
	9/1-9/10	9/1-9/10	9/1-9/10	9/1-9/10
53 north of NM 38 and east of NM 522; 55 south of NM 196/FS Rd 1950	8/6-8/15	8/11-8/20	8/10-8/19	8/9-8/18
	8/20-8/29	8/25-9/3	8/24-9/2	8/23-9/1
49, 50, 53 west of NM 522	8/10-8/24	8/10-8/24	8/10-8/24	8/10-8/24
	9/1-9/15	9/1-9/15	9/1-9/15	9/1-9/15
	11/1-11/15	11/1-11/15	11/1-11/15	11/1-11/15
55 north of NM 196/FS Rd 1950	8/15-1/15/28	8/15-1/15/29	8/15-1/15/30	8/15-1/15/31
58	8/15-1/15/28	8/15-1/15/29	8/15-1/15/30	8/15-1/15/31

B. Private land Rocky mountain bighorn ram hunt for any big game sporting arms. The number of licenses available will be up to 6 10 with a bag limit of one ram. The hunt code shall be BHS-RM-R-RAM-PVT.

<u>open GMUs or areas</u>	<u>2023-2024 hunt dates</u>	<u>2024-2025 hunt dates</u>	<u>2025-2026 hunt dates</u>	<u>2026-2027 hunt dates</u>
55 north of NM 196/FS Rd 1950	8/15/2023-1/15/2024	8/15/2024-1/15/2025	8/15/2025-1/15/2026	8/15/2026-1/15/2027
58	8/15/2023-1/15/2024	8/15/2024-1/15/2025	8/15/2025-1/15/2026	8/15/2026-1/15/2027

<u>Open GMUs or areas for BHS-RM-R-RAM-PVT</u>	<u>2027-2028 hunt dates</u>	<u>2028-2029 hunt dates</u>	<u>2029-2030 hunt dates</u>	<u>2030-2031 hunt dates</u>
14, 18	10/1-10/15	10/1-10/15	10/1-10/15	10/1-10/15
	10/16-10/30	10/16-10/30	10/16-10/30	10/16-10/30
55 north of NM 196/FS Rd 1950	8/15-1/15/28	8/15-1/15/29	8/15-1/15/30	8/15-1/15/31
58	8/15-1/15/28	8/15-1/15/29	8/15-1/15/30	8/15-1/15/31

C. Rocky mountain bighorn ewe hunt for any big game sporting arms (BHS-1-202BHS-RM-R-EWE-PUB). Hunters applying for BHS-1-202BHS-RM-R-EWE-PUB will be allowed to

select and rank up to three open areas/hunt dates. The number of licenses available for **BHS-1-202BHS-RM-R-EWE-PUB** will be up to 150 with a bag limit of one ewe.

open GMUs or areas for BHS-1-202	2023- 2024 hunt dates	2024- 2025 hunt dates	2025- 2026 hunt dates	2026- 2027 hunt dates
45	9/16-9/20	9/21-9/25	9/20-9/24	9/19-9/23
	9/30-10/4	10/5-10/9	10/4-10/8	10/3-10/7
45, youth only	9/30-10/4	10/5-10/9	10/4-10/8	10/3-10/7
49, 50, 53 west of NM 522	10/14- 10/22	10/12- 10/20	10/11- 10/19	10/10- 10/18
	11/18- 11/26	11/16- 11/24	11/15- 11/23	11/21- 11/29
	12/9- 12/17	12/14- 12/22	12/13- 12/21	12/12- 12/20
49, 50, 53 west of NM 522, youth only	11/18- 11/26	11/16- 11/24	11/15- 11/23	11/21- 11/29
53 south of NM 38 and east of NM 522	9/23-9/27	9/21-9/25	9/20-9/24	9/19-9/23
	10/7- 10/11	10/5-10/9	10/4-10/8	10/3-10/7
53 south of NM 38 and east of NM 522, youth only	9/23-9/27	9/21-9/25	9/20-9/24	9/19-9/23
53 north of NM 38 and east of NM 522; 55 south of NM 196/FS Rd 1950	9/16-9/20	9/21-9/25	9/20-9/24	9/19-9/23
53 north of NM 38 and east of NM 522; 55 south of NM 196/FS Rd 1950, youth only	9/16-9/20	9/21-9/25	9/20-9/24	9/19-9/23

Open GMUs or areas for BHS-RM-R-EWE-PUB	2027- 2028 hunt dates	2028- 2029 hunt dates	2029- 2030 hunt dates	2030- 2031 hunt dates
45	9/18-9/22	9/16-9/20	9/15-9/19	9/21-9/25
	10/2-10/6	9/30-10/4	9/29-10/3	10/5-10/9
45, youth only	10/2-10/6	9/30-10/4	9/29-10/3	10/5-10/9
49, 50, 53 west of NM 522	10/9- 10/17	10/14- 10/22	10/13- 10/21	10/12- 10/20

	<u>11/20-11/28</u>	<u>11/18-11/26</u>	<u>11/17-11/25</u>	<u>11/16-11/24</u>
	<u>12/11-12/19</u>	<u>12/9-12/17</u>	<u>12/8-12/16</u>	<u>12/14-12/22</u>
<u>49, 50, 53 west of NM 522, youth only</u>	<u>11/20-11/28</u>	<u>11/18-11/26</u>	<u>11/17-11/25</u>	<u>11/16-11/24</u>
<u>53 south of NM 38 and east of NM 522</u>	<u>9/25-9/29</u>	<u>9/23-9/27</u>	<u>9/22-9/26</u>	<u>9/21-9/25</u>
	<u>10/2-10/6</u>	<u>10/7-10/11</u>	<u>10/6-10/10</u>	<u>10/5-10/9</u>
<u>53 south of NM 38 and east of NM 522, youth only</u>	<u>9/25-9/29</u>	<u>9/23-9/27</u>	<u>9/22-9/26</u>	<u>9/21-9/25</u>
<u>53 north of NM 38 and east of NM 522; 55 south of NM 196/FS Rd 1950</u>	<u>9/18-9/22</u>	<u>9/16-9/20</u>	<u>9/15-9/19</u>	<u>9/21-9/25</u>
<u>53 north of NM 38 and east of NM 522; 55 south of NM 196/FS Rd 1950, youth only</u>	<u>9/18-9/22</u>	<u>9/16-9/20</u>	<u>9/15-9/19</u>	<u>9/21-9/25</u>

D. Rocky mountain bighorn ewe hunt for bow only (BHS-2-203BHS-RM-B-EWE-PUB). Hunters applying for BHS-2-203BHS-RM-B-EWE-PUB will be allowed to select and rank up to three open areas/hunt dates. The number of licenses available for BHS-2-203BHS-RM-B-EWE-PUB will be up to 60 with a bag limit of one ewe.

<u>open GMUs or areas for BHS-2-203</u>	<u>2023-2024 hunt dates</u>	<u>2024-2025 hunt dates</u>	<u>2025-2026 hunt dates</u>	<u>2026-2027 hunt dates</u>
<u>45</u>	<u>9/1-9/10</u>	<u>9/6-9/15</u>	<u>9/5-9/14</u>	<u>9/4-9/13</u>
<u>49, 50, 53 west of NM 522</u>	<u>9/16-9/30</u>	<u>9/16-9/30</u>	<u>9/16-9/30</u>	<u>9/16-9/30</u>
<u>53 south of NM 38 and east of NM 522</u>	<u>9/11-9/17</u>	<u>9/11-9/17</u>	<u>9/11-9/17</u>	<u>9/11-9/17</u>
<u>53 north of NM 38 and east of NM 522; 55 south of NM 196/FS Rd 1950</u>	<u>9/2-9/15</u>	<u>9/7-9/20</u>	<u>9/6-9/19</u>	<u>9/5-9/18</u>
<u>53 north of NM 38 and east of NM 522; 55 south of NM 196/FS Rd 1950, youth only</u>	<u>9/2-9/15</u>	<u>9/7-9/20</u>	<u>9/6-9/19</u>	<u>9/5-9/18</u>

<u>Open GMUs or areas for BHS-RM-B-EWE-PUB</u>	<u>2027-2028 hunt dates</u>	<u>2028-2029 hunt dates</u>	<u>2029-2030 hunt dates</u>	<u>2030-2031 hunt dates</u>
<u>45</u>	<u>9/3-9/12</u>	<u>9/1-9/10</u>	<u>9/7-9/16</u>	<u>9/6-9/15</u>
<u>49, 50, 53 west of NM 522</u>	<u>9/16-9/30</u>	<u>9/16-9/30</u>	<u>9/16-9/30</u>	<u>9/16-9/30</u>

53 south of NM 38 and east of NM 522	9/11-9/17	9/11-9/17	9/11-9/17	9/11-9/17
53 north of NM 38 and east of NM 522; 55 south of NM 196/FS Rd 1950	9/4-9/17	9/2-9/15	9/1-9/14	9/7-9/20
53 north of NM 38 and east of NM 522; 55 south of NM 196/FS Rd 1950, youth only	9/4-9/17	9/2-9/15	9/1-9/14	9/7-9/20

E. Desert bighorn ram hunt for any big game sporting arms (**BHS-1-204BHS-D-R-RAM-PUB**). Hunters applying for **BHS-1-204BHS-D-R-RAM-PUB** will be allowed to select and rank up to three open areas/hunt dates. The number of licenses available for **BHS-1-204BHS-D-R-RAM-PUB** will be up to 60 with a bag limit of one ram.

open GMUs or areas for BHS-1-204	2023-2024 hunt dates	2024-2025 hunt dates	2025-2026 hunt dates	2026-2027 hunt dates
13, 17	12/1-12/15	12/1-12/15	12/1-12/15	12/1-12/15
	12/16-12/31	12/16-12/31	12/16-12/31	12/16-12/31
19	12/14-12/21	12/14-12/21	12/14-12/21	12/14-12/21
	12/27/2023-1/3/2024	12/27/2024-1/3/2025	12/27/2025-1/3/2026	12/27/2026-1/3/2027
20: south of NM 51	11/16-11/30	11/16-11/30	11/16-11/30	11/16-11/30
	12/1-12/15	12/1-12/15	12/1-12/15	12/1-12/15
20: north of NM 51	8/18-8/27	9/13-9/22	8/15-8/24	9/11-9/20
		10/11-10/20		10/9-10/18
20: north of NM 51, youth only	11/17-11/26		11/21-11/30	
26, west of NM 81	9/15-9/30	9/15-9/30	9/15-9/30	9/15-9/30
	10/1-10/15	10/1-10/15	10/1-10/15	10/1-10/15
26, east of NM 81	9/15-9/30	9/15-9/30	9/15-9/30	9/15-9/30
	10/1-10/15	10/1-10/15	10/1-10/15	10/1-10/15
27	11/1-11/15	11/1-11/15	11/1-11/15	11/1-11/15
	11/16-11/30	11/16-11/30	11/16-11/30	11/16-11/30

Open GMUs or areas for BHS-D-R-RAM-PUB	2027-2028 hunt dates	2028-2029 hunt dates	2029-2030 hunt dates	2030-2031 hunt dates

<u>13, 17</u>	<u>12/1-12/15</u>	<u>12/1-12/15</u>	<u>12/1-12/15</u>	<u>12/1-12/15</u>
	<u>12/16-12/31</u>	<u>12/16-12/31</u>	<u>12/16-12/31</u>	<u>12/16-12/31</u>
<u>19</u>	<u>12/14-12/21</u>	<u>12/14-12/21</u>	<u>12/14-12/21</u>	<u>12/14-12/21</u>
	<u>12/27-1/3/28</u>	<u>12/27-1/3/29</u>	<u>12/27-1/3/30</u>	<u>12/27-1/3/31</u>
<u>20: south of NM 51</u>	<u>11/16-11/30</u>	<u>11/16-11/30</u>	<u>11/16-11/30</u>	<u>11/16-11/30</u>
	<u>12/1-12/15</u>	<u>12/1-12/15</u>	<u>12/1-12/15</u>	<u>12/1-12/15</u>
<u>20: north of NM 51</u>	<u>8/20-8/29</u>	<u>9/8-9/17</u>	<u>8/17-8/26</u>	<u>9/13-9/22</u>
		<u>10/13-10/22</u>		<u>10/11-10/20</u>
<u>20: north of NM 51, youth only</u>	<u>11/19-11/28</u>		<u>11/16-11/25</u>	
<u>26, west of NM 81</u>	<u>12/1-12/15</u>	<u>12/1-12/15</u>	<u>12/1-12/15</u>	<u>12/1-12/15</u>
	<u>12/16-12/31</u>	<u>12/16-12/31</u>	<u>12/16-12/31</u>	<u>12/16-12/31</u>
<u>26, east of NM 81</u>	<u>12/1-12/15</u>	<u>12/1-12/15</u>	<u>12/1-12/15</u>	<u>12/1-12/15</u>
	<u>12/16-12/31</u>	<u>12/16-12/31</u>	<u>12/16-12/31</u>	<u>12/16-12/31</u>
<u>27</u>	<u>11/1-11/15</u>	<u>11/1-11/15</u>	<u>11/1-11/15</u>	<u>11/1-11/15</u>
	<u>11/16-11/30</u>	<u>11/16-11/30</u>	<u>11/16-11/30</u>	<u>11/16-11/30</u>
<u>34</u>	<u>12/1-12/15</u>	<u>12/1-12/15</u>	<u>12/1-12/15</u>	<u>12/1-12/15</u>

F. Private land desert bighorn ram hunt for any big game sporting arms. The number of licenses available will be up to 6 with a bag limit of one ram. The hunt code shall be BHS-D-R-RAM-PVT.

<u>open GMUs or areas</u>	<u>2023-2024 hunt dates</u>	<u>2024-2025 hunt dates</u>	<u>2025-2026 hunt dates</u>	<u>2026-2027 hunt dates</u>
<u>20: north of NM 51</u>	<u>9/15-9/24</u>	<u>8/16-8/25</u>	<u>9/12-9/21</u>	<u>8/14-8/23</u>

	10/13-10/22	11/22-12/1	10/10-10/19	11/20-11/29
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Open GMUs or areas for BHS-D-R-RAM-PVT	2027-2028 hunt dates	2028-2029 hunt dates	2029-2030 hunt dates	2030-2031 hunt dates
	9/10-9/19	8/18-8/27	9/14-9/23	8/16-8/25
20: north of NM 51	10/8-10/17	11/17-11/26	10/12-10/21	11/22-12/1

[19.31.17.11 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.17.11 NMAC, 4/1/2027]

19.31.17.12 SPECIAL BIGHORN SHEEP HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES: Bighorn sheep enhancement program:

A. Program description: The director shall collect all proceeds generated through the auction and lottery of special bighorn sheep permits, and such monies shall be deposited in the game protection fund. These monies shall be made available for expenditure by the department solely for programs and projects to benefit bighorn sheep and for costs incurred in carrying out these programs. These monies shall be used to augment, and not replace, monies appropriated from existing funds available to the department for the conservation, restoration, utilization, and management of bighorn sheep.

B. Requirements for issuance of special bighorn sheep licenses:

(1) The state ~~wildlifegame~~ commission authorizes the director to issue not more than four special bighorn sheep licenses in any one license year to take one ram per license. The director shall allow the sale of one Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep authorization and one desert bighorn sheep authorization through auction to the highest bidder, and one Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep authorization and one desert bighorn sheep authorization to a person selected through a random drawing of a lottery ticket. The drawing will be conducted by the department or an incorporated, non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of ~~bighorn sheep wildlife~~.

(2) Unless their hunting privileges have been revoked pursuant to law, any person is eligible to submit a bid for the special bighorn sheep auction authorization or purchase lottery tickets in an attempt to be selected for the special bighorn sheep lottery authorization.

(3) The special bighorn sheep authorizations issued through auction and lottery may be transferred, through sale, barter or gift by the successful individuals only to other individuals qualified to hunt.

(4) Special bighorn sheep licenses granted through auction or lottery, as described above, shall not be considered ~~once-in-a-lifetime~~ licenses.

C. Enhancement hunts: These licenses shall be valid for any big game sporting arms statewide where hunting is allowed. The bag limit shall be one ram.

(1) Holders of the auction licenses must declare their exclusive hunt area by June 30 annually to hunt the designated subspecies in one of the open hunt areas. Each holder of the raffle license must declare their exclusive hunt area by July 20 annually to hunt the designated subspecies in one of the open hunt areas not declared by the auction hunter.

(2) The remaining hunt units open to bighorn hunting not declared by the auction or raffle hunter as their exclusive hunt area, may be hunted by either the auction or raffle hunter.

(3) The hunt dates for the auction and raffle licenses shall be 8/1-12/31 annually, except GMU 53 south of NM 38 and east of NM 522 is closed 8/16 to 8/31 annually to all bighorn sheep hunters.
[19.31.17.12 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.17.12 NMAC, 4/1/2027]

19.31.17.13 BIGHORN SHEEP POPULATION MANAGEMENT HUNTS:

A. The director, with verbal concurrence of the chairperson of the New Mexico state **wildlifegame** commission or their designee, may authorize population management hunts for bighorn sheep when justified in writing by department personnel and must be based on biological information or a potential to compromise population viability.

B. The director shall designate the sporting arms, season dates, season lengths, bag limits, hunt boundaries, specific requirements or restrictions, and number of licenses to be issued.

C. In the event that an applicant is not able to hunt on the dates specified, the applicant's name shall be moved to the bottom of the list and another applicant may be contacted for the hunt.

D. In those instances where a population management hunt is warranted on deeded private lands, the landowner may suggest eligible hunters of their choice by submitting a list of prospective hunters' names to the department for licensing consideration. No more than one-half of the total number of licenses authorized shall be available to landowner identified hunters. The balance of prospective hunters shall be identified by the department.

E. The director, with verbal concurrence of the chairperson of the New Mexico state **wildlifegame** commission or their designee, may deem some ram or either **sex** population management licenses not once-in-a-lifetime; a person that has held a once-in-a-lifetime ram license(s) is not disqualified from this hunt.

[19.31.17.13 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.17.13 NMAC, 4/1/2027]