

COMMISSION MEETING AGENDA BRIEFING

Meeting Date: March 20, 2026

Agenda Number: 18

Presenter: Stewart Liley

Corroborator: N/A

Agenda Title: Subsequent Discussion on Barbary sheep, oryx, and Persian ibex Rule (19.31.12 NMAC) for the 2027 – 2030 hunting seasons.

1. Summary of Agenda Item

The Department will present biological data and proposed amendments to the Barbary sheep, oryx, and Persian ibex Rule (19.31.12 NMAC) based on public feedback, biological information, and management goals. We held 2 hybrid in person/virtual public meetings and have also received comments on the Rule.

The Department is proposing the following changes to 19.31.12 NMAC:

Barbary sheep:

- The Department has worked with McGregor Range to propose adjustments on barbary sheep draw licenses. This includes:
 - o Increasing the 2 ES hunts (1 military and 1 civilian hunt) from 10 to 20 licenses.
 - o Increasing F-IM hunts by 20 (from 130 to 150) and spreading the licenses out over, 1-month hunt windows. Hunters will be able to access the range over all weekends in that month when there is not a military mission occurring.
- Require a ranch registration process for purchase of private land Barbary sheep license.
- Split draw hunts in GMUs 29 & 30, maintaining the same number of total licenses but distributing hunters across the GMUs to address overcrowding issues.
 - o For hunts of 200 licenses, the split would be 75 licenses in GMU 29 and 125 in GMU 30
 - o For hunts with 75 licenses, the split would be 25 licenses in GMU 29 and 50 in GMU 30
- Adjust season dates where necessary. Including adjustments of hunt dates on military ranges consistent with access and military missions (Bliss). And shifting start dates to maintain hunts beginning on Saturday or adjusting to calendar day starts for consistency.

Oryx:

- Increase off-range licenses by 5%: harvest success rates for off-range oryx licenses are high suggesting there is more opportunity.
- Consider shifting the 70 years and older hunt based on public comment to allow hunters of any age to apply.
- Require a ranch registration process for purchase of off-range private land oryx license.
- Require purchase of private land license at least 1 day prior to the start of the hunt.
- Adjust season dates where necessary. Including adjustments of hunt dates on military ranges consistent with access and military missions (Bliss, WSMR). And shifting start dates to maintain hunts beginning on Saturday or adjusting to calendar day starts for consistency.

Ibex:

- Similar to bighorn sheep, shift ibex license numbers to be “up to,” allowing the Department to adjust draw licenses up or down depending on population surveys
 - o It is possible that the Department may draw zero licenses for certain hunts (for example, F-IM, based on population metrics).
 - o For once-in-a-lifetime hunts, we recommend up to 15 licenses
 - o For archery, we recommend up to 40 licenses (with two hunt periods)
 - o For F-IM, we recommend up to 40 (with 2 hunt periods)
 - o For muzzleloader, we recommend up to 15
 - o For youth-only, we recommend up to 5
- Adjust season dates where necessary and shifting start dates to maintain hunts beginning on Saturday or adjusting to calendar day starts for consistency.

2. Background Information

The exotics rule is re-evaluated every four years and changed based on biological data, harvest data, and management goals. In addition, the Department will receive public feedback and consider it in the context of the species biological and management goals. The Department has reached out to the public for input.

Exotic species in New Mexico are managed under different strategies. For ibex, the Department’s objective is to maintain a quality opportunity to hunt mature males. Additionally, the Department attempts to manage the ibex population so they remain isolated to the Florida Mountain range. A major concern is that ibex may spread disease to adjacent desert bighorn sheep herds, a species the Department is still actively trying to recover. In the past, there have been significant license swings ranging from 4-1,433 licenses sold annually. The Department is striving to move away from these large swings in license numbers, to a more stable population size and stable annual license numbers. The Department has made progress in the strategy for monitoring ibex in recent years, moving towards thermal imaging from aircraft.

Barbary sheep are managed for sustainable hunting opportunities in the southeastern part of the state. The Department discourages the expansion of Barbary sheep populations outside of these areas, so licenses are offered over-the-counter. The Department monitors Barbary sheep populations using hunter harvest indices.

Oryx are managed for sustainable hunting opportunities on White Sands Missile Range (WSMR). The Department works closely with WSMR personnel to develop hunt structures that fit within the mission of the Range as a military installation. Oryx hunts are unique and most either sex oryx hunts on range are offered as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Hunting also occurs off of WSMR, in these areas the Department offers hunting opportunities to discourage further expansion of oryx.

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 2 hybrid in person/virtual public meetings in Las Cruces and Albuquerque. Public comments will be presented at the Commission meeting. Proposed changes to the Exotics rule have been posted on the Department's website.

Suggested Motion

This is a discussion item and no motion is necessary, unless Commission discretion dictates otherwise.