



**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, March 20, 2026

New Mexico Department of Wildlife Northwest Area Office
[7816 Alamo Rd. NW](#)
[Albuquerque, NM 87120](#)

9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Video Link: https://youtu.be/Q_erDx96qd0

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1: Meeting Called to Order

09:02:54 a.m. (00:00:00/00:00:16 on video)

Called to order by Chairman Richard Stump.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2: Roll Call

09:03:05 a.m. (00:00:11/00:00:27)

Present in person: Chairman Stump, Vice-chairman Clemente, Commissioner Harwood, Commissioner Lopez and Commissioner Witt.

Excused: Commissioner Fulfer

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3: Introduction of Guests

09:03:28 a.m. (00:00:34/00:00:50)

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

09:08:40 a.m. (00:05:46/00:06:02)

Motion: To approve the agenda for the March 20, 2026, meeting as amended, with Agenda Item No. 22 moved to the lunch break.

Motion by: Vice-chairman Clemente.

Seconded by: Commissioner Witt.

Approved: Unanimous - Chairman Stump, Vice-chairman Clemente, Commissioner Harwood, Commissioner Lopez and Commissioner Witt.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5: Approval of the Minutes from the Feb. 20, 2026, Meeting in Roswell (Action Item)

09:09:28 a.m. (00:06:34/00:06:50)

Motion: To approve the minutes from the Feb. 20, 2026, Commission meeting as presented by the Department.

Motion by: Vice-chairman Clemente.

Seconded by: Commissioner Harwood

Approved: Unanimous - Chairman Stump, Vice-chairman Clemente, Commissioner Harwood, Commissioner Lopez and Commissioner Witt.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6: Approval of Hunting and Fishing Privileges Revocations (Action Item)

09:10:01 a.m. (00:07:07/00:07:23)

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.

- 65 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.
- 25 individuals who failed to pay a penalty assessment citation within 30 days of the violation were suspended until they are in compliance.
- 5 individuals who have entered into a civil agreement or have a civil judgment.

The Department presented the three 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.

- 12 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.

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

Motion by: Vice-chairman Clemente.

Seconded by: Commissioner Lopez.

Approved: Unanimous - Chairman Stump, Vice-chairman Clemente, Commissioner Harwood, Commissioner Lopez and Commissioner Witt.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7: General Public Comment

09:10:39 a.m. (00:07:45/00:08:01)

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8: Approval of Huckabay Shooting Preserve Application (Action Item)

09:20:37 a.m. (00:17:43/00:17:59)

Under 17.3.36 NMSA 1978, the State Game Commission may issue licenses authorizing the establishment and operation of regulated propagated game bird shooting preserves on private lands when, in the judgment of the Commission, such areas will not conflict with any reasonable prior interest. Huckabay has applied for such a shooting preserve.

Motion: To approve a shooting preserve on 240 acres of the Huckabay Ranch property located in Otero County, as presented by the Department.

Motion by: Vice-chairman Clemente.

Seconded by: Commissioner Harwood.

Approved: Unanimous - Chairman Stump, Vice-chairman Clemente, Commissioner Harwood, Commissioner Lopez and Commissioner Witt.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 9: Request Recognition for New Mexico Desert Dogs, Inc., as a Qualified Non-Profit Organization to Receive Donated Licenses or Permits (Action Item)

09:28:22 a.m. (00:25:28/00:25:44)

The Department requested recognition of New Mexico Desert Dogs, Inc., as a qualified non-profit organization to receive donated hunting licenses or permits.

Motion: To approve New Mexico Desert Dogs, Inc., as a qualified non-profit organization to receive donated hunting licenses or permits.

Motion by: Vice-chairman Clemente.

Seconded by: Commissioner Harwood.

Approved: Unanimous - Chairman Stump, Vice-chairman Clemente, Commissioner Harwood, Commissioner Lopez and Commissioner Witt.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 10: Approval of the Fiscal Year 2025 Audit (Action Item)

09:30:18 a.m. (00:27:24/00:27:40)

A financial audit of the Department for fiscal year 2025 was conducted by Clifton Larson Allen LLP. The Department's Financial Statement received the highest possible opinion of "unmodified."

Motion: To approve the Department's audit report for fiscal year 2025.

Motion by: Vice-chairman Clemente.

Seconded by: Commissioner Harwood.

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

Commissioner Fulfer joined the meeting virtually.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 11: Rule Hearing: Proposed Changes to the Game and Fish License/Permits Rule 19.30.9 NMAC (Action Item)

09:45:32 a.m. (00:42:38/00:42:54)

The Department presented proposed changes to the Game and Fish License/Permits Rule 19.30.9 NMAC to increase the vendor fee from \$1 per transaction to \$2 per transaction and \$1 per tag issued.

Motion: To adopt the proposed changes to 19.31.9 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.

Motion by: Commissioner Fulfer.

Seconded by: Commissioner Harwood.

Approved: Chairman Stump, Commissioner Harwood, Commissioner Fulfer and Commissioner Witt.

Opposed: Commissioner Lopez.

Abstain: Vice-chairman Clemente.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 12: Appointment of Four (4) Members to the Citizen Advisory Committee of the Public Land User (Habitat) Stamp Program (Action Item)

10:00:40 a.m. (00:57:46/00:58:02)

The Department presented a list of individuals who applied for appointment by the State Game

Commission to the Citizen Advisory Committee of the Public Land User Stamp Program as authorized by 19.34.6 NMAC.

Motion: To appoint the individuals recommended by the Department to the Citizen Advisory Committee of the Public Land User Stamp Program, pending the results of a criminal background check, for terms to begin April 1, 2026, and end on March 31, 2031.

Motion by: Commissioner Lopez.

Seconded by: Commissioner Witt.

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

AGENDA ITEM NO. 13: Initial Discussion of the Biennial Review of State Listed Threatened and Endangered Species (Action Item)

10:03:24 a.m. (01:00:30/01:00:46)

The Department requested that the Commission approve the initiation of the 2026 Biennial Review of state-listed threatened or endangered species pursuant to the Wildlife Conservation Act (17.2.40 NMSA 1978).

Motion: To approve the initiation of the 2026 Biennial Review process of state-listed threatened or endangered species.

Motion by: Commissioner Lopez.

Seconded by: Vice-chairman Clemente.

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

AGENDA ITEM NO.14: Initial Discussion of the Pronghorn Rule 19.31.15 NMAC

10:06:31 a.m. (01:03:37/01:03:53)

The Department presented biological data and proposed adjustments to the Pronghorn Rule (19.31.5 NMAC). The Department held two hybrid in-person/virtual public meetings and has also received public comments on the rule.

Initial proposed changes included:

- Require purchase of a license a day prior to the start of a hunt.
- Evaluate a potential ranch registration process for purchase of private-land OTC pronghorn licenses, similar to the current registration process used for private-land elk hunting in secondary management zones.
- Consider a cap on private-land OTC licenses.
- Shift GMU 4 rifle hunt to muzzleloader hunt.
- Adjust season dates where necessary. For example, shifting start dates to maintain hunts beginning on Saturday or adjusting calendar day starts for consistency.
- Work with the military on hunts that occur on Department of Defense lands.
- Adjust license numbers to meet management strategies and reflect changes in pronghorn herd dynamics.
- Shift season dates in SW later to address a later breeding and fawning period.

AGENDA ITEM NO.15: Subsequent Discussion of the Javelina Rule 19.31.21 NMAC

10:51:27 a.m. (01:48:33/01:48:49)

The Department presented biological data and proposed adjustments to the Javelina Rule (19.31.21 NMAC). The Department held two hybrid in-person/virtual public meetings and has also received

public comments on the rule.

The Department proposed the following changes:

- Increases in licenses for OTC area (from 1,200 to 1,300 any-legal-weapon licenses and from 360 to 400 bow licenses)
- Allow bootheel draw hunters to hunt OTC areas also
- Eliminate GMU 28 McGregor hunt of 10 licenses based on discussions with Fort Bliss staff (over time, an average of only three of the 10 hunters show up for the hunt and it is logistically burdensome to organize for the military)

AGENDA ITEM NO.16: Subsequent Discussion of the Turkey Rule 19.31.16 NMAC

11:01:20 a.m. (01:58:26/01:58:42)

The Department presented proposed changes to the Turkey Rule (19.31.16 NMAC) based on recent survey information, management goals and public comment.

Proposed amendments focused on:

- Adjust hunts for calendar dates
- Increase up-to permit number for Gould's once-in-a-lifetime hunt in GMUs 26 and 27 to 15
- Increase the draw permits in GMU 8 from 15 to 20.

AGENDA ITEM NO.17: Subsequent Discussion of the Migratory Game Bird Rule 19.31.6 NMAC

11:15:54 a.m. (02:13:00/02:13:16)

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 proposed amendments focused on:

- Changes to regular waterfowl season dates based on public comments and calendar dates
- Change certain season dates to be later in the year because of calendar shift
- Based on population survey data, increase Sandhill crane permits in MRGV and SW draw hunts by 18 total, to be distributed among existing hunts

AGENDA ITEM NO.18: Subsequent Discussion of the Barbary Sheep, Oryx and Persian Ibex Rule 19.31.12 NMAC

11:27:07 a.m. (02:24:13/02:24:29)

The Department presented 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. The Department held two hybrid in-person/virtual public meetings and has also received comments on the rule.

The Department proposed the following changes to 19.31.12 NMAC:

Barbary sheep:

- The Department has worked with McGregor Range to propose adjustments on Barbary sheep dra licenses. This includes:
 - Increasing the two ES hunts (one military and one civilian hunt) from 10 to 20 licenses.
 - Increasing F-IM hunts by 20 (from 130 to 150) and spreading the licenses out over one-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 and 30, maintaining the same number of total licenses but distributing hunters across the GMUs to address overcrowding issues.
 - For hunts of 200 licenses, the split would be 75 licenses in GMU 29 and 125 in GMU 30
 - 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 one 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 by “up to,” allowing the Department to adjust draw licenses up or down depending on population surveys.
 - It is possible that the Department may draw zero licenses for certain hunts (for example, F-IM, based on population metrics).
 - For once-in-a-lifetime hunts, the Department recommends up to 15 licenses.
 - For archery, the Department recommends up to 40 licenses (with two hunt periods).
 - For F-IM, the Department recommends up to 40 licenses (with two hunt periods).
 - For muzzleloader, the Department recommends up to 15 licenses.
 - For youth-only, the Department recommends up to five licenses.
- Adjust season dates where necessary and shifting start dates to maintain hunts beginning on Saturday, or adjusting to calendar-day starts for consistency.

Commissioner Fulfer left the meeting during this agenda item.

AGENDA ITEM NO.19: Initial Discussion of the Hunting and Fishing Licenses and Applications Rule 19.31.3 NMAC

12:12:50 p.m. (03:09:56/03:02:14)

The Department presented initial discussion for rule changes to the Commission to change the eligibility requirements for the Mobility Impaired Certification. The amendment would make the mobility impaired provision permanent for those who qualify.

AGENDA ITEM NO.20: General Public Comment

12:18:00 p.m. (03:15:06/03:07:24)

AGENDA ITEM NO.21: Commissioner Comments

12:31:04 p.m. (03:28:10/03:20:28)

AGENDA ITEM NO.22: Executive Session

12:31:40 p.m. (03:28:46/03:21:04)

Motion: To adjourn into executive session, closed to the public, pursuant to section 10-15-1(H)(8) NMSA 1978, to discuss purchase, acquisition or disposal of property, and pursuant to section 10-

15-1(H)(7) NMSA 1978, attorney-client privilege, litigation update.

Motion by: Commissioner Witt.

Seconded by: Commissioner Harwood.

Approved: Unanimous - Chairman Stump, Vice-chairman Clemente, Commissioner Harwood, Commissioner Lopez and Commissioner Witt.

AGENDA ITEM NO.23: Action(s) from Executive Session (Action Item(s))

02:14:10 p.m. (05:11:16/03:22:10)

Motion: To approve the purchase of a property consisting of plus or minus 10,990 acres in Grant County, and to further authorize the Chair of the State Game Commission or their designee to execute and deliver any and all documents necessary to complete the purchase of said property.

Motion by: Vice-chairman Clemente

Seconded by: Commissioner Witt

Approved: Unanimous - Chairman Stump, Vice-chairman Clemente, Commissioner Harwood, Commissioner Lopez and Commissioner Witt.

AGENDA ITEM NO.24: Adjourn

02:15:11 p.m. (05:12:17/02:23:11)

Motion: To adjourn the March 20, 2026, State Game Commission meeting.

Motion by: Commissioner Lopez.

Seconded by: Vice-chairman Clemente.

Approved: Unanimous - Chairman Stump, Vice-chairman Clemente, Commissioner Harwood, Commissioner Lopez and Commissioner Witt.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Good morning, everybody. Welcome to the State Game Commission, and soon to be the State Wildlife Commission meeting here in Albuquerque. We have a large agenda today, so let's get going. Director Sloane, please call the roll.

Director Mike Sloane: Commissioner Witt.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Present.

Director Mike Sloane: Commissioner Lopez.

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: [inaudible 00:00:20]

Director Mike Sloane: Commissioner Harwood.

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: Present.

Director Mike Sloane: Commissioner Fulfer.

Director Mike Sloane: Vice-chair Clemente.

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente: Present.

Director Mike Sloane: Chair Stump.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Present.

Director Mike Sloane: You have a quorum.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, Director Sloane. Let's proceed to introduction of guests, and let's start with Commissioner Lopez.

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Commissioner Lopez from District 3, up in the Rio Arriba County area, Northwest Española, North Abiquiu, almost near the Colorado border, from Cebolla. Great to see you all here this morning, and let's get to work.

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente: Good morning, everyone. Thank you for being here. Fernando Clemente, Vice-chair of the Commission from Sunland Park, New Mexico.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Good morning, everybody. Thanks again for being here. Richard Stump, Chair of the Commission.

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: Good morning, Kyle Harwood from La Cienega outside of Santa Fe. Thank you.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Morning. Christopher Witt, representative from District 5 on the Commission from Bernalillo County. Welcome to my home county.

Director Mike Sloane: Good morning, Commissioners, members of the public. Mike Sloane, Director of the Department.

Stewart Liley: Morning, Commissioners, members of the public. Stewart Liley, Chief of Wildlife.

Paul Varela: Good morning, Commissioners, members of the public. Paul Varela, Chief of Administrative Services.

Stephanie Tapia: Good morning, Commissioners and public. My name is Stephanie Tapia. I am the senior accountant with the Department of Game and Fish.

Jane Tinker: Good morning, Commissioners, public. My name is Jane Tinker as part of the external audit team, and you'll be seeing our presentation later.

Charlie Trask: Good morning, Commissioners. My name is Charlie Trask. I'm just a citizen, hunter, and fisherman. Thank you.

David Heft: David Heft, retired wildlife biologist, hunter, trapper, Mayhill, New Mexico.

Lancee Whetman: Good morning. My name is Lancee Whetman. I'm with the New Mexico Department of Justice.

Garth Reader: Garth Reader, Los Alamos.

Kirk Patten: Good morning, Commissioners, members of the public. I'm Kirk Patten, Chief of Fisheries.

Jackie Hall: Good morning, Commissioners. Jackie Hall with the Carroll Petrie Foundation, based in Santa Fe.

Col. Tim Cimbal: Good morning, Commissioners, members of the public. Tim Cimbal, I'm a Colonel for Field Operations with the Department.

Lt. Shawn Carrell: Good morning, Commissioners and public. Lieutenant Shawn Carrell over Revocations.

Capt. Benjamin Byrd: Good morning, Commissioners, member of the public. I'm Benjamin Byrd, I'm the Captain of the Southeast area.

Annabella Miller: Good morning, Commissioners. My name's Annabella Miller, and I'm with the Western Landowners Alliance.

Lance Bernal: Good morning, Commissioners. I'm Lance Bernal from Vermejo Park Ranch.

Abby O'Connor: Good morning, Commissioners and members of the public. My name is Abby O'Connor, and I'm with the New Mexico Cattle Growers.

Roy Barr: Good morning, Commissioners. I'm Roy Barr, rancher from Catron County.

Jeremy Martin: Morning, Commissioners, members of the public. My name's Jeremy Martin. I'm the Department's General Counsel.

Brandon Wynn: Good morning, Commissioners, members of public. I'm Brandon Wynn. I'm just a normal old citizen from Albuquerque.

Jesse Deubel: Good morning, Commissioners, members of the public. Jesse Deubel, I'm the Executive Director of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation.

Richard Winn: Good morning, Commissioners. Richard Winn from SCBA.

Mark Garcia: Good morning, Commissioners. I'm a hunter instructor with the Department.

Darren Vaughan: Good morning, Commissioners. I'm Darren Vaughan. I am the Communications Director for the Department.

Miranda Twichell: Good morning, Commissioners. I'm Miranda Twichell, Senior IT.

Eric Arce: Good morning, Commissioners and the public. My name is Eric Arce, and I'm a photographer and editor for the Department.

Tristanna Carrell: Good morning, Commissioners and members of the public. Tristanna Carrell, I'm the Chief of the Information and Education Division.

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

Natasha Montoya: Good morning, Commissioners and public. My name is Natasha Montoya, and I'm the Assistant Chief of Information. We currently have 10 attendees online, and no one's raised their hand at this point. Oh, there he is. There's one gentleman who would like to introduce himself.

Mark Mattaini: Good morning, Commissioners.

Natasha Montoya: [unintelligible 00:05:10], go ahead.

Mark Mattaini: Good morning, Commissioners and members of the public. My name is Mark Mattaini, I'm from Paguate Village, Laguna--

Natasha Montoya: Mark, we can't hear you.

Mark Mattaini: Okay, let's see. I'm looking.

Natasha Montoya: Okay, we'll move on. It was Mark Mattaini.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: That's everyone?

Mark Mattaini: No, it's not.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Someone just came in. [laughs]

Mark Mattaini: There's nothing here.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Moving on, Agenda Item number 4, approval of the agenda. I'd like to note that Commissioner Harwood has a conflicting schedule today, so I'll be moving executive session from Agenda Item number 22 to our lunch period so Commissioner Harwood can participate in executive session. Is there any other discussion of the agenda, Commissioners? Again, moving Agenda Item number 22 to our lunch hour.

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente: I so move to make a motion.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Is there a second?

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Second.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: All in favor?

All: Aye.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Any opposed? Motion passes. Agenda Item number 5, approval of the minutes from the February 20th, '26 meeting in Roswell. Any discussion on the minutes, Commissioners? Is there a motion to approve?

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente: I so move to approve the minutes as presented.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Is there a second?

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: Second.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Discussion on the motion? All in favor?

All: Aye.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Any opposed? Motion passes. Agenda Item number 6 is approval of hunting and fishing privileges revocations. Commissioners, is there any discussion on the revocations as presented? Is there a motion to approve?

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente: I so move to approve the hunting and fishing privileges revocations as presented.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Is there a second?

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Second.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Discussion on the motion? All in favor?

All: Aye.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Any opposed? Motion passes. Agenda Item number 7 is the first of two opportunities for the public to make public on any topic. We do ask that if you comment at this time, you refrain from commenting during the general comment period near the end of the meeting. We also ask that you comment only on items not on the agenda, as we will have comment after each agenda item. With that, is there anybody present that wants to make public comment now? Jesse, did you?

Jesse Deubel: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, Commissioners. Jesse Deubel here, Executive Director of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation. I'm going to really quickly read to you from the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation as listed on the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies website. That's an association that this agency is certainly a member of, and I think all of the Commissioners here are very familiar with the North American model, which is comprised of seven specific tenets. I won't read all seven, but one I want to read says, "Every person has an equal opportunity under the law to participate in hunting and fishing."

The word I want to emphasize here is "equal," because throughout this whole rulemaking cycle, what this Commission has already heard and will continue to hear are the significant disparities between the way that hunters who rely on the public draw, average do-it-yourself New Mexico resident hunters, are treated compared to those hunters who are wealthy enough to buy those privatized tags. Just two days ago, we had the draw deadline, 5:00 PM on Wednesday. If you didn't get your applications in, you're not participating in this year's big game draw.

The other deadline that happened was the harvest report deadline. Any public draw hunter in this state that didn't submit their harvest report by 5:00 PM on Wednesday is not participating in the public draw, period. If I'm a wealthy individual who can afford to buy a private tag that deadline doesn't matter. It's irrelevant. I could buy a private tag tomorrow, or next month, or in September, or in October. Why? Because I have the money to buy the private tag, so why should I be inconvenienced by these pesky rules and regulations that are designed for the peasants, for the average do-it-yourself residents, opposed to the wealthy folks who can participate in the egregious privatized system that exists in New Mexico? I just wanted to point out one more example of how the rules are not the same. They're not equal for your average resident hunters, who you're all tasked to represent on this commission, compared to wealthy folks who get to choose their own season dates, choose their own weapon types. Not even have to abide by the harvest reporting deadlines that the rest of us have to abide by. As we work through this rule cycle, I'm encouraging you to please work to reduce the differences that exist in our system for the average do-it-yourself resident hunter compared to those hunters who participate in the privatized system that you've all created. Thank you very much.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, Jesse. Roy Barr?

[pause 00:11:08]

Roy Barr: I had a handful of things. **[unintelligible 00:11:24]** turn up the country with four wheelers. I normally **[unintelligible 00:11:33]** what can be done about it, but it's getting to be a nuisance, and also the horn hunting, which runs into the four-wheeler deal, too. They're already cutting our fences coming in.

I don't know. If we could get a season, that might get it closer where we could at least police it during the season. It's probably still going to happen the rest of the time.

My main deal was Catron County's in a terrible drought. I don't know the numbers of cattle that have been sold out of there, but we reduced our herd by two-thirds. We're going to drill \$200,000 wells where there's some grass left, so we can keep our genetics going. There's no reduction in any of the wildlife, that's just-- we're cutting back so we can keep our ranch going, and the elk are going to eat all that up. You can't manage anything that way, and something needs to be done there, I think, pretty bad. That's my comment. Thank you.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, Roy Barr. Abby O'Connor?

[pause 00:12:54]

Abby O'Connor: Good morning, Commissioners. Can you hear me okay? I just wanted to stand up and make a comment on behalf of the New Mexico Cattle Growers Association and remind you all about how cattle growers and ranchers in this state offer habitat and significant portions of New Mexico. We are a valuable partner to the wildlife in this state throughout the entire state, offering our wells as drinkers and continuing to maintain and manage the grasslands that not only our cattle feed off of, but also the wildlife benefit from. I wanted to remind you guys of that statement as you continue throughout your rulemaking process. Thank you.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, Abby. Brandon Wynn?

Brandon Wynn: I'm going to defer to the next. You said you need only one general, right?

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Yes.

Brandon Wynn: I'll wait [unintelligible 00:14:02]. Thank you.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Okay. Anybody online, Tristanna?

Natasha Montoya: Yes, we have Ted Albracht.

Ted Albracht: Good morning. Can you hear me?

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Yes.

Ted Albracht: Thank you. My name is Ted Albracht. I'm a rancher in Game Unit 56, the [unintelligible 00:14:30] Ranch. My family and I ranch there. We've been there for over 30 years now, and historically, we've always had enormous numbers of antelope, but lately, those have dried up, and it's, frankly, just been terrible. The problem has been the rural change that allowed ranches and outfitters to take an unlimited number of the antelope. We're a mid-sized ranch, and we're surrounded by large, tremendously big ranches.

There's been one outfitter that's contracted with two of the ranches, kind of form a C shape around us, and they've shot everything out. I mean, everything. Last year, I went hunting, and I saw one legal buck. There's a lot of fallout from this. I've stopped booking hunts. I know guides in the area that are responsible. They've stopped booking hunts and selling guns because they don't want to sell a hunt to somebody and take their money and not be able to put them on a buck.

I know cowboys that have historically relied on that information or the income from guiding, and it's damaged their livelihoods considerably. It's just grossly, horribly irresponsible to the antelope, and it's just piggish. Unfortunately, the rules, as they have been observed the last couple seasons, two, three seasons, have been just assuming that outfitters will be responsible and take a judicious amount of animals, not too many, and it doesn't account for the fact that a lot of ranchers view antelope as pests that should be wiped out. That's what's been facilitated on our region, and I'm sick of it.

I'll say this too, I'm here trying to participate in a civil discussion and help turn things in a better direction, but I think that New Mexicans and people in general, if you lose partici-- people don't believe that the system is working fairly, then they quit participating in it and they lose faith in it, and then they quit following the rules. This needs to be changed. It's bad. It's really--

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Your three minutes is up.

Ted Albracht: Okay.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Appreciate it. Thank you. That's it. That's all. Moving on to Agenda item number 8. Huckabay shooting preserve application, presented by Colonel Cimbal.

Col. Tim Cimbal: Chair, Commissioners, this morning, I have Captain Benjamin Byrd out of the southeast area. He works out of the Roswell office. I'm going to have him help with the presentations. This is his area down there that the shooting preserve application is for.

Capt. Benjamin Byrd: Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Commissioners, Mike. As Colonel Cimbal said, I'm Benjamin Byrd. I haven't been in front of you guys before, but I am the captain for the southeast area out of Roswell. Mr. Huckabay has filed an application for a shooting preserve. This shooting preserve was inspected by our local district officers, then I've also looked at it myself in person as well, so if there's any questions you guys have during the presentation, please let me know.

17-3-36, this is what gives us the authority to create a shooting preserve. The State Game Commission may issue licenses authorizing the establishment and operation of regulated propagated game bird shooting preserves on private lands when the judgment of the commission in such areas will not conflict with any reasonable prior interest. The commission shall govern and prescribe by regulation the following: Minimum size is 30 acres. Maximum acreage cannot exceed the continuous deeded acres owned by the applicant.

Hunters must use the same legal methods as all small game hunters.

Special seasons is from September 1st until March 31st; during legal hunting hours. The regular season for pheasant is December 10th through the 13th, and regular quail season is November 15th through February 15th.

Shooting preserves may release legally propagated pheasant, chukar, and quail on the property at any time, but cannot hunt outside of the shooting preserve season.

Fee for the shooting preserve permit is \$200 annually.

The Huckabay shooting preserve, this is located in Otero County, address is 23456 Highway 70, approximately 6 miles east of Tularosa, New Mexico, in Otero County, which lies within Game Management Unit 34. The property is 240 contiguous deeded acres.

Attached is a map just showing the property layout off of-- annexed you can see there it is surrounded on the west, north, and partially on the east side by Bureau of Land Management property.

The permit will allow for the release of up to 100 pheasants, 500 chukars, and 1,000 bobwhite quail.

The Huckabay Shooting Reserve conservation officers and biologists have inspected and found the property to be suitable temporary holding habitat for propagated pheasant, chukar, and bobwhite quail.

This shooting reserve, if approved, would provide increased hunter opportunity in the area.

The department's recommendation, based on inspections on the property and contacts with the applicant, New Mexico Department of Wildlife knows of a few concerns from neighboring properties. Neighboring properties have concerns regarding domestic animals being affected by the discharging of firearms. There is also concern about pollution into the Tularosa Creek from discharging of ammunition.

In regards to the first concern on domestic animals being affected, this property is almost completely fenced. The reason I only say completely is the Tularosa Creek does run through the property. Where the embankments from that creek have eroded over time, you've got 20, 30 foot walls in there that it's not possible to drop a fence down into. Is there a possibility a cow could end up in there? Potentially, but they have gone in and fenced the entire property except for just that little piece where the Tularosa Creek comes through.

In regards to the concern about pollution of ammunition into the Tularosa Creek, like I said, I went and inspected the property yesterday. This is also going to be a shooting range. They're putting up a sporting place course, two five-stand courses, and they also have a 1,000-yard rifle range in there. Regardless of whether this was a Class A park or not, there is going to be discharging of ammunition on the property. Where they're planning on doing all their shooting and their hunting is in a different drainage than what the Tularosa Creek is.

There's about a half-- not quite a half mile, but there's a ridge between, and it's two different separate drainages where the Tularosa Creek runs. Then, where all the shooting and the hunting will be, will be to the north of that in a completely different drainage. Any ammunition or projectiles that are fired are not going to be even into the drainage of where Tularosa Creek lies.

As far as any prior interest, we know of no possible conflicts with reasonable prior interest, as the operation is entirely on deeded property. I will stand for any questions.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Commissioners? Commissioner Clemente?

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente: How does the department control or keeps track [inaudible 00:23:08]? Is there or are they going to be introduced by other states? As a case, how does the department control so there is not any disease or anything brought into the state?

Capt. Benjamin Byrd: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner Clemente, they are not going to propagate game birds on their own property. They will be bringing them in from a game bird propagator. We do have several like in the southeast area. As far as where exactly their birds are going to come from, I couldn't answer that. I haven't had that discussion with where they're planning on buying them, but they will come from a certified propagator.

Col. Tim Cimbali: Chair, Commissioner Clemente, to add to that. Our permits program requires annual reporting of how many they brought in for that year. Then if they choose to renew, again, we'd come with how many they want to go that year. If they want to purchase and put more on the ground.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Anyone else? Commissioners? Commissioner Witt?

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Thanks, Captain Byrd. That was a nice presentation. I just wanted to know, since bobwhite are not native to that part of the state, which quail species are there currently and have we thought about how they'll be impacted?

Capt. Benjamin Byrd: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Witt, there is some gambles quail in that area and also some scale quail or blue quail also. Those are probably a little more prominent in that Tularosa Basin. There's not a lot of quail currently in or around that property.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Anyone else? Do we have any public comment for this online or in-- thank you for your presentation. I appreciate that. Is there a motion?

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente: I so move to approve the shooting preserve.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Is there a second?

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: Second.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Discussion? All in favor?

All: Aye.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Any opposed? Motion passes. Thank you, Captains. Appreciate it. Agenda item number 9, approval of the New Mexico Desert Dogs Incorporated as an organization approved to receive donated licenses pursuant to 19.31.3 NMAC. Presented by Chief Varela.

Paul Varela: Good morning, Commissioners. Agenda item number 9, a nonprofit organization is seeking approval to accept donated hunting licenses.

State law 17-3-7G, 1978, authorizes the director to transfer a hunting license to nonprofit organizations approved by the State Game Commission.

New Mexico Administrative Code 19.31.3.11 specifies that a nonprofit organization must demonstrate their history and ability to promote hunting, and fishing, and trapping in New Mexico and be approved by the commission to receive donated hunting licenses to eligible recipients, which are usually veterans or first responders.

The qualifying nonprofit organization is called New Mexico Desert Dogs, Incorporated. They have provided the necessary documentation to the department, demonstrating their history and ability to promote hunting activities in New Mexico. With that, I will stand for any questions.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, Paul. Commissioners, any questions? Is there a motion?

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente: I so move to approve the donation of licenses as presented.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Is there a second?

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: Second.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Discussion? All in favor?

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente: Aye.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Any opposed? Motion passes. Thank you, Paul. Chief, if you would introduce Ms. Tinker for the next agenda item, a physical year 2025 audit, we'd appreciate that.

Paul Varela: Mr. Chair, sitting with me today is Jane Tinker from CliftonLarsonAllen, which is our independent auditor. She will be presenting information for our 2025 audit.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Welcome, Ms. Tinker, and thank you and your team for all that work. It's a big job. Thank you.

Jane Tinker: There you go. All right, yes, nice to see you again. Good morning, Commissioners. What we'll be going over today is the scope of the audit, the overall audit process, the opinions that we rendered within the audit, as well as the audit results. The schedule of findings and question costs as well, that we'll have just some matters that we identified during the audit. There's going to be some specific governance communications that we have to hold with you today, and then just very high overview of the upcoming GASB standards.

The audit scope, what did our team do? We came in, and we did an audit of the department's financial statements as well as a compliance audit of its major federal programs. For this year, we looked at the fish and wildlife cluster. Generally, every year that will be something that we'll look at just because of the sheer amount of federal expenditures that go through that program. For this year, and we'll go into it a little bit later, you will see a difference. There's going to be two separate reports. In the past, it would have been a single issuance.

This year, there's going to be two reports. One is just going to be the financial statements that will contain our report, and within that report, our opinion on the department's financial statements. The other one is going to be the federal single audit report. That one is the report on the compliance audit that we conducted. Within that, we will have the report on the actual compliance and the department's compliance with the federal programs. During the audit and in the very beginning, we do have and we had internal control communications. We did hold an entrance conference in which we also had some very specific communications to governance at that moment.

The actual audit process. In the very beginning, with every audit, we do look at and we consider the significant risks. Naturally, there's going to be two that are just inherent in every single audit. The first one is going to be management overriding

internal controls. That is something that we always take a look at. Management is just general in the best position to circumvent and override any internal controls that are in place. The second one is going to be revenue recognition. This is going to be recognizing revenue, not in the correct period, making the financial statements look better than what they really are. As I said, those are going to be two significant risk that are going to be present in every single entity that we audit.

We do do a risk-based audit approach, so every single year we come in, we take a look at the environment, which the department is working in, and we'll adjust our audit procedures as needed to address any sort of risks that we identify. We do look at the significant estimates of the department every year. You'll see on this slide here, just gave you some overall big audit areas that we take a look at. I do, of course, look at the cash and investments. The investments are held within the state general fund investment pool for the department. We do look at the capital assets. We test any sort of significant additions, disposals during the year.

We look at the overall depreciation and make sure that it's reasonable. We do look at the payables and the related expenditures that go with that. The big thing here as well, we look at the leases, so that's your GASB 87, which is like your equipment and building leases. Before, it was just a footnote disclosure, but GASB changed that a few years ago, where it's now actually a recognition within the financial statements. Then the SBITAs is a subscription-based. That's anything that's going to be like your technology agreements, use of technology that is in the very same way, treated with your leases. Then, of course, we do the single audit. That's the other piece, that's a compliance audit.

There's two audit opinions that we're going to render. The first is over the financial statements. We did render an unmodified opinion, and that is the best opinion you can get from us. The federal awards was also an unmodified, and again, that is the best opinion you can get from us. As far as the specific audit results, the financial statements, and the federal awards, there were no material weaknesses noted during the audit. Specific to the financial statements, there was one significant deficiency that we noted, and then the federal awards, there were two significant deficiencies that we noted.

The schedule of findings in question costs. You'll see that within the federal single audit report. Within the financial statements, you are going to see a schedule of audit results. Because this year, we had to do a split issuance between the two, in your financial statements, you are not going to have any of the

significant deficiencies that were reported in the single audit. All of those are going to be within the federal single audit report. Your financial statements, the [unintelligible 00:32:51] I would say silent to the single audit. That's the difference you're going to be seeing. Anything for the compliance audit, you're going to have to go to that federal single audit report to take a look.

The first one that we noted, and this is your financial statement finding, was related to accounts payable. We perform what's called a search for unrecorded liabilities. We take a look at the subsequent disbursements of the department, and we look at those that are material according to our calculations. We look to make sure whether they were properly accrued at the end of the year, making sure that that expenditure was recognized within the correct period and the associated liability.

During our search, we noted that the department didn't record expenditures or that liability for services that were rendered in fiscal year 2025. I believe it was two vouchers, if my memory serves me correctly, and it amounted to approximately \$113,000. We did propose an entry, and the department did agree and post it to record the expenditure within the financial records as well as the related liability.

The two significant deficiencies you're going to see right here, these are for the major federal programs. Again, these are going to be both under the Fish and Wildlife cluster, the first one, and actually, both of them are related to allowable activities and costs. The first one in specific is related to payroll disbursements. When we test payroll, we take a look at the actual charges, and then we take a look at that time and effort. We're looking at the specific salaries that are charged to the program as well as the associated leave. During our testing, we noted that the department didn't allocate the leave in the grants according to the time and effort that the employees spent on the grant. We looked at 20 payroll disbursements. With that, we had a net undercharge of \$887 to eight grants.

Then the second deficiency for the major federal programs is going to be specific to cash disbursements. We actually found this during our matching testing. We noticed that the department processed a travel reimbursement twice that resulted in a duplicate payment of \$225 to a department employee. The employee was reimbursed twice for that. The employee did pay that second amount back to the department. However, the department didn't adjust its reimbursement request to reflect that credit, so pretty much got reimbursed from the federal government twice for one expenditure.

These are going to be the governance communications that we do have to have with you today. As I noted, we did have an entrance conference in which we did communicate some of this, but this is now going to be more of the concluding matters of the audit. Our responsibilities under generally accepted auditing standards are to provide those two opinions. The financial statements it's to provide an opinion on whether they're free from material misstatement, whether due to error or fraud. Then, on the compliance audit, it's an opinion on whether or not the department materially complied with the terms and conditions of its federal awards.

We provide reasonable but not absolute assurance. Again, that means we have a risk-based audit approach. We use materiality during our audit, and we apply that to again look at what we feel is necessary and significant but again, not everything within the department. If you don't hear from us during the audit process, and you only heard from us in the very beginning, it's like no news is good news. That means that our audit went as planned, as we expected. If we did feel that there was anything necessary to bring your attention sooner than later, we will do that during the process. We didn't, and felt just the communication today was sufficient.

As noted for the split issuance, just to explain this a little bit different, so the single audit, the thing that actually drives that single audit is the compliance supplement that comes from the OMB, the Office of Management and Budget. There was a lot going on in the White House. This last year, with the new administration, and unfortunately, that compliance supplement that guides our single audit and the testing of the federal awards did not come out in time for us to be able to do the single audit at the same time with the financial statements.

Our state auditor made an exception this year to be able to do what they call a split issuance to be able to go ahead and issue a report on the financial statements. Then, when that compliance supplement came out, we went ahead and did the single audit report. We had substantially completed most of the single audit testing. It was just a matter of waiting for that compliance supplement to come out. We can't actually issue the report until it comes out. I think we finished a few months ago for sure. I think we just a few

weeks ago got the final release from the state auditor for the single audit report. We're hoping this next year we can do it single issuance again, where you're not going to see the two reports. Again, it's just all dependent on the White House and when they get that compliance supplement out and released. For this year in particular, just to bring it to your attention, there was adoption of a new standard, GASB 101, related to compensated absences. It did require a restatement to the department's beginning net position, and it was a decrease of about \$1.9 million.

For the significant estimates, as I mentioned earlier, we do take a look at that. For this year, for the department, it was the depreciation related to its capital assets, the lease asset and liability, so that's releases in your SBITs and then your compensated absences. We did not find any management biases in those estimates. We do find them to be reasonable for the department, and of course, with any estimate, there is uncertainty, but that is disclosed in the notes to the financial statements. There were no difficulties during the audit. We had no disagreements with management about any sort of processes, procedures, any of the things that we performed. To our knowledge, there were no management consultations with other accounting firms.

Here, accounting policies of the department are outlined in note two to the financial statements. We found that the financial statements were appropriate for the department, and really none particularly sensitive to bring to your attention. They're pretty standard in what you would see in financial statements for a state agency. There were no audit adjustments, so that means that there was nothing that we had to-- just the one with the accounts payable, but there were no other audit adjustments, and then there were no past adjustments.

What that means is that sometimes, if there is something that we find in the audit because of the materiality and the amount, our management cannot post it to the financial records. For this year, there were no, we call them **[inaudible 00:39:53]** statements. There were no uncorrected misstatements for this year. The only one entry that was posted to the records as a result of the audit was the AP and the expenditure.

Just some upcoming GASB standards, it's going to be 103 and 104. I'm not going to go into too much detail here, but we have one more year with the Department, and so we do assist with the preparation of the financial statement. We'll be working with them hand-in-hand to get updated.

That's pretty much it. This is the 104. Again, not going to go too much into it, but they are going to be affected this upcoming fiscal year. Again, there was a team behind me, so not here today is Laura Beltran-Schmitz. She's the principal on the engagement and had some really wonderful staff working with me as well. I'll see if you guys have any questions for Paul or for me.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Ms. Tinker, thank you, and thank you to your team. A lot of work. All in all, looks pretty good. Commissioners, anything? Any questions or anything? Any public comment or anyone online?

Natasha Montoya: No, not at this time.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Is there a motion, please?

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente: Move to approve the audit as presented.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Is there a second?

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: Second.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Discussion? All in favor?

All: Aye.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Any opposed? Motion passes.

Jane Tinker: I just want to say a separate thank you. The Department, we've been, I think, this is going to be our 8th year. They've been great to work with, very pleasant. Just wanted to say we can't do what we do as the auditors unless they do what they do. Just please know how much we appreciate them and the pleasantness to work with them over these years.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you for that.

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente: Thank you to the auditors and the Department as well. I know I was part of the meetings prior to this, and it was very clear. It was really nice to be able to sit down and be able to ask questions and understand this audit before it was presented. I've been in a lot of organizations where it's just thrown right there. The audit is thrown to us in the day of today, and we don't understand

anything sometimes, so there's no time for questions. This time, it was really nice. Thank you. Really appreciate it.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Clemente. Moving on to item number 11, I'd like to welcome Commissioner Fulfer to our meeting. He has some problems getting online. Can you hear us, Gregg?

Commissioner Gregg Fulfer: Yes. I apologize. I haven't had good internet in a while.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thanks for being here. Item number 11, presented by Chief Varela, is proposed changes to the Game and Fish License Permits Rule 19.30.9 NMAC. Give me one second. All this paper. This hearing will please come to order. My name is Richard Stump, chair of the commission. I will be serving as a 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 Game and Fish License Permits Rule, Title 19, Chapter 30, Part 9, New Mexico Administrative Code, respectively, which will become effective on April 1, 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 with the Game and Fish Department. Public notice of this hearing was advertised in the New Mexico Register, the 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. 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 are 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, who you are affiliated with for the record each time you are recognized. Speak loud and clear to accurately record your comments.

After a person has 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. These hearings are 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.

In the preliminary matters of Hearing item No. 11, Game and Fish License Permits Rule 19.30.9 NMAC, this hearing is now open. Are there any exhibits for the rule hearing on the Game and Fish License Permits Rule 19.30.9 NMAC for the record?

Paul Varela: Chairman, yes. I'd like to submit five exhibits. Exhibit No. 1 is a copy of the rulemaking notice. Exhibit 2 is a summary of the proposed rule. Exhibit 3 is a clean copy of the final proposed rule. Exhibit 4 is a copy of the presentation. Exhibit 5 is a copy of Senate Bill 5.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Five exhibits are admitted into record. Paul, can you please introduce the proposed Game and Fish License Permits Rule?

Paul Varela: A summary of the proposed changes to 19.30.9.

The Department received public comments from July 11, 2025, to July 25, regarding three proposals. I'd like to recap those proposals in detail.

Proposal No. 1 is a \$2 transaction fee for licenses sold either by the Department or a third-party license vendor. Also, a \$1 fee for each carcass tag sold by the third-party license vendor and the Department.

Proposal No. 2 is a \$1 per transaction fee for licenses sold directly by the Department and a \$2 transaction fee for licenses sold by a third-party vendor. \$1 fee for each carcass tag is also provided by a third-party license vendor.

Proposal No. 3 is no transaction fee for licenses sold directly by the Department. A \$2 transaction fee for licenses sold by a third-party vendor, and \$1 fee for each carcass tag sold by a third-party vendor. Currently, the Department charges a \$1 vendor fee, and there is no carcass tag fee, and so that's what the increase is to \$2 for a transaction fee and also a \$1 carcass tag fee.

The results of the public comments that we received there was 43% were in support of Proposal No. 3. 22% were in support of Proposal No. 1. 12% were in support of Proposal No. 2. 22% were undecided. Sometimes people just gave comments, and they didn't really express which proposal they were in favor of.

The Department would like to recommend Proposal No. 1, an increase to license vendor fee to \$2 per transaction, and also have an additional carcass tag issuance fee of \$1. Since the last time we've met, we have received no public comments. With that, I'll stand for any questions.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Commissioner Harwood, do you have a question?

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: Thank you. How much money are you collecting under the current program? If I missed it, I apologize.

Paul Varela: Chairman Stump, Commissioner Harwood. In 2024, we received \$147,000 from vendor fees, and in 2023, we received \$134,000.

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: What do you expect the collections to be under the Department-recommended approach?

Paul Varela: In 2025, it would be similar to \$140,000, so \$2 per transaction would probably go up to \$200,000 in that area. A lot of the transaction fees that the Department collects are used to add to our IT infrastructure and things that we are working on, because all of our licenses are sold internally. Our IT Department has its own licensing system, which is very unique for the state.

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: If I understood you correctly, you're not expecting an increase in collections for '26 if this rule went into effect? Is that what you said?

Paul Varela: Commissioner Harwood, no, there would be a slight increase. My best estimate would be about \$200,000.

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: Oh, that's the \$200,000?

Paul Varela: Yes.

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: Thank you.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: I jumped the gun letting you in. I should have closed the hearing. Is there anyone from the public? You should follow the rules, Chair.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: I should. You're right. Did you register, Brandon?

Okay. That's right. Thank you. Brandon Wynn. Brandon, please identify yourself for the record.

Brandon Wynn: Yes, my name is Brandon Wynn. Is this on? Yes. Okay. Generally, I support especially nominal fee increases to help fund the department, because the department, as far as the wildlife management goes, does an excellent job. When I heard Chief Varela, is that right? Chief? Yes. When I heard you say that, so that money helps the IT department stuff, I really support it, because I apply in a lot of different states, and we just did our applications in New Mexico.

For a long, long time, since you started doing it electronically, your administrative services in the IT department, you literally have the best online application system in the west. It is one of the best-run government anything in New Mexico. You're top of the class. You guys really, really-- and that's really I wanted to comment. I wanted to thank you and congratulations for an unbelievably good job that you guys do on the application.

It is so easy to do it, so much easier in the other states, and there's no glitches. Once in a while, might go down a little bit, but you run a great thing over there, and it's all in-house. I'm really proud of that, because a lot of states farm it out, and they're horrible. You guys do an unbelievable job. Thank you.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, Brandon. Is there anyone? Those that registered and participated in the hearing will be included on the attendance sheet. At this time, the attendance sheet shall be marked and admitted as Exhibit 6. 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 9:55 AM.

[silence] Commissioners, any discussion?

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: I have a discussion.

Commissioner Gregg Fulfer: Chairman, I just have a comment.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: I was recognizing Commissioner Lopez first.

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: I'll yield to Gregg, commissioner.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Go ahead, Gregg.

Commissioner Gregg Fulfer: I'm sorry, I must have talked over you there. The department funds itself, more than any state department out there, I believe. I feel like this is probably a very good thing to what they're doing and trying to help fund ourself here, I totally support it.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Fulfer. Commissioner Lopez.

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Mr. Chair, members of the commission, I've spoken about this before, and I'll say it again. We drive down the road, and we see the price of gas going up to \$4. We go to the grocery store, and we see the price of milk going up, the price of eggs, the price of steaks. Thank you, cattle growers, for providing us with meat, but the prices are going up. Yet the department is still going to charge the public for the department doing their jobs. I don't mind the vendors charging the extra fee, but why is the department charging us to do our jobs?

I think the rules should say that the department itself offices, and would they use their own paper to print it out at their house. Why are we charging them when they come into our office the fee? I can see the vendors at Walmart, Big R, small vendors across the state. Again, I've said it, and there's been disagreement, but we're nickel and diming the public on this, when if the department employees are going to be charging them.

Again, I support small businesses in this fee increase, but I believe that the department should not be charging the fee. When they come into our office, they go outside the hall here, and they talk with Mr. Sandoval. We're going to charge them an extra buck to print out the tag and print out the paperwork. If they go to Raton, they go to Santa, we're still going to charge them, and I'm going to vote no on this again. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Commissioner Lopez, thank you. Any other commissioners have anything you would like to say? Commissioner Witt.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Thank you, Chief Varela, for the presentation. I really appreciate the comments by Commissioner Fulfer, and all respect to Commissioner Lopez for his comments, and I really understand the sentiment. I think that in this case, the amount is small. Keeping the fees equal between the department and the vendors actually will help the vendors. The importance of maintaining excellence in IT really makes this fee really appropriate, well justified, and I'm in favor of the proposal. Thank you.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Commissioner Witt, thank you. Commissioner Clemente.

Commissioner Fernando Clemente: I would like to publicly sustain up any comments or voting on this item, since I do own a business that it is a vendor for the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Clemente. Commissioner Lopez, I respect your views, and I understand, though I feel like it's not that much money; a person buys a Coke, and it's \$5 these days. I think that I agree with Commissioner Witt as far as IT goes. Brandon Wynn pointed out that our system runs really well compared to other states, so I respectfully disagree. With that, is there a motion?

Commissioner Gregg Fulfer: I move to approve Option 2, or is it 1? I'm sorry. I think it's option 1.

Paul Varela: It's option number 1.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Yes. Is there a second?

Commissioner 2: Second.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Director Sloane, please take the roll.

Director Mike Sloane: Commissioner Witt.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Aye.

Director Mike Sloane: Commissioner Lopez.

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: No.

Director Mike Sloane: Commissioner Harwood.

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: Yes.

Director Mike Sloane: Commissioner Fulfer.

Commissioner Gregg Fulfer: Yes.

Director Mike Sloane: Chair Stump.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Yes.

Director Mike Sloane: Motion passes.

Richard: Thank you, commissioners. Thank you, Paul. Next agenda item presented by Chief Liley. Appointment of four members to the citizen advisory committee of the habitat stamp program.

Stewart Liley: Good morning, commissioners. There's no formal PowerPoint presentation, but we have four members of the nine-member citizen advisory committee. The citizen advisory committee that oversees our habitat stamp program. That habitat stamp that we charge everybody to hunt or fish on public land, BLM, Forest Service. There's a committee of nine members that helps guide that program and provide recommendations to the department on funding and how that works.

Again, we have four members who terms expire at the end of this month, and we've recommended four new members for replacement. We received up to 18 applications for the replacements. You have in front of you on the agenda brief the applicants that we recommend from the department. That's the process that we've done in this is the department recommends individuals for those.

We are recommending Jordan Corliss for the District 5, which would be this, Bernalillo. Sharon Luna for District 2. Ben Mortensen for District 4. Then Larry Cordova, that would represent Fish and Wildlife habitat. Has a career at forest service employee that just retired out of the Lincoln National Forest. With that, I would take any questions that you all have.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Commissioners. No. I just like to thank our past members, Jeff Arterburn, Art Volmer, James Cain, and John Pierce, for applying and serving for the last four years. It takes a lot of their time, and we appreciate it. I'd also like to thank all the applicants and congratulate those four that are going to be working with us for the next four years. Is there any public comment at all, or Christine anyone online? No. Is there a motion?

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Mr. Chair.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Mr. Lopez.

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: I move to appoint the individuals recommended by the department to the Citizens Management Committee of the Public Land User Stamp Program pending the results of a criminal background check for the terms beginning April 1st, 2026 and the end of March 31st, 2031.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Lopez. Is there a second?

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Second.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: All in favor?

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente: Aye.

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: Aye.

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Aye.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Any opposed? Motion passes. Chief Liley, thank you. Agenda item number 13, presented by Chief Kirk Patten, is the initiation of the biennial review of state threatened and endangered species. Whenever you're ready, Kirk.

Kirk Patten: Good morning, Mr. Chair and Commissioners. Today, I am here to present to you the initiation of the biennial review process for threatened and endangered species in New Mexico as required by the Wildlife Conservation Act. The purpose of the biennial review is essentially a statutory and rule-based process wherein the department reviews the status of state-listed species. This is not federally listed species, species that are listed under state law as threatened or endangered.

In this process, it is not intended to add species to the list or remove species from the list. It is essentially a time for the department to collect information that we hold as well as is publicly available out there with interest groups that may warrant in uplisting a species from threatened to endangered or downlisting a species or maintaining the same status. Essentially today we're seeking your approval to move forward with the announcement of that review.

Then there's a process over the next few months that I'm going to go over of what to expect there. After today, we will announce the availability or the starting of the process. It'll be a 90-day comment period

where we will collate information, whether it's biological or ecological information. Our biologists will work internally to put that into one document. We will develop a draft for you.

If my timeline works out, we will be presenting that to you at your June meeting in a draft form. After that June meeting, there will be a 14-day formal public comment period on the draft, after which we'll take additional comments, and we will present that final document to you for formal approval at the August 2026 meeting. That's all I have for you today, and I'll stand for any questions.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Commissioners? Anybody? Is there a motion.

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Mr. Chair?

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Commissioner Lopez.

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Move to approve the initiation of the 2026 biennial review process of the state-listed threatened or endangered species.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Is there a second?

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente: I second.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: All in favor?

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Aye.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Aye.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Any opposed? Motion passes. Thank you, Chief Patten.

Kirk Patten: Thank you.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Agenda item number 14, initial discussion of the pronghorn rule 19.31.15 NMAC, presented by Chief Liley.

[pause 01:03:53]

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, members of the commission, this is the last of the big game rules to open these four years. Pronghorn is our last one. The rest of the rules have been open, and you've heard presentations on all of those except for pronghorn. Pronghorn was our last one. Part of that is we've been doing some work with pronghorn. More recently we've had some concerns, as you even heard in the first general topic on concerns about pronghorn in the Northeast, especially. We'll get into some of the details on that here in just a second.

We also have a new pronghorn biologist that's going to be starting at the end of this month. We wanted to have some opportunity for that individual to analyze a lot of the data that's required before we go into the rulemaking. We'll get into more of the data analysis throughout the rest of this spring into the summer before this rule is proposed for adoption later this spring or summer into the fall.

Just a little bit of background on pronghorn. Really, pronghorn, like most of our ungulates, survival and population growth is driven by definitely female survival, but really fawn survival. Of all of our species, we see some significant variability in survival of pronghorn fawns. We do see that they do see pretty large impacts by long-term drought as well, like all of our ungulates, but pronghorn probably more so than others.

One of the biggest things that I think we see too is predation pick up a lot during drought years where we have less residual hiding cover. Pronghorn really depend upon those first few days of life hiding cover in the prairie and grass. When there's no cover or other obstacles to obscure their hiding phase, we see predation rates significantly increase on them. Buck harvest really doesn't limit growth of the populations unless you get to below 15 bucks per 100 does, and then you could see breeding impacts. Above that, we really don't see that.

Our buck-to-doe ratio, that's a statewide for the average. Buck ratio is probably a little bit lower than actuality than what we're presenting here. That's part of we do our surveys out of a fixed-wing aircraft. Yearling males are pretty hard to detect from a female. You're really looking at a cheek patch at that time. We probably underestimate yearling males and overestimate females. It compounds that ratio issue a little bit.

When we go out there and do some winter follow-up surveys, we do get some better buck-to-doe ratios. This comes from our surveys are flown in August. We're really trying to get at fawn-to-doe ratios in those surveys is why we fly that. It's after the first pulse of that fawn mortality rate, and it gives us a pretty good representation of what to expect for recruitment for the following year.

Also, pronghorn are one of the fastest-growing ungulate species in the world in terms of reaching sexual maturity. A pronghorn female doe could actually breed at five months old. You have reached sexual maturity faster than any other animal, including males. What we see is the largest horn size in males is typically at 3 years old. We're not trying like elk, where largest antler size is about 10 to 12 years old. Pronghorn reach sexual maturity very fast.

In fact, the state record was probably a two-and-a-half-year-old buck. The state record is actually the world record too. Killed in the San Agustin plains. I think it was aged at two and a half years old. They can have very high pregnancy rates. Again, by a yearling, they're almost all becoming pregnant if conditions are right. Twins. The biggest thing with that is pronghorn populations can recover really fast if climatic conditions are right.

The other thing is because they reach sexual maturity so much and the males reach it really quick, you can harvest at a higher rate than most other ungulate species, more than others, and still maintain trophy quality. A really large study that was just completed two years ago in Wyoming verified that. We've all looked at that.

They went in an experimental design and actually looked at reducing some populations, and looked at harvest rates, and really found that trying to achieve an older age class had no impact on horn structure, or even higher buck-to-doe ratios had no impact on that. Again, fortunately for pronghorn, you could achieve a much higher harvest rate than other species.

As I mentioned, we fly out of a fixed-wing. That's the department's plane. We fly our surveys on a fixed wing. We do what we call distance sampling. We fly on a transect line, and then we count animals off of it. It's a double-blind observer. The front and the rear observer don't necessarily talk to each other. We're trying to figure out detections along a band. With that, it has some key assumptions that you're detecting every single animal along that survey route.

It also has an assumption that pronghorn are evenly dispersed across that landscape where you're trying to estimate populations. I think we violate those assumptions quite a bit. We've talked about with our ibex surveys, this thermal camera integration. The plane is actually getting that camera installed as we speak right now. We will probably be using that for our pronghorn surveys, too, to integrate that.

We should be able to get almost complete detection at that point with the thermal camera, so we'll know what our detection bias was and get us a better idea on population estimates. Again, I think because we violate some of those assumptions, we underestimate typically on our pronghorn populations than we do, and we'll most likely start having better detection rates and better population data after that.

Real briefly, Northeast pronghorn population is really probably seeing some of the biggest impacts in the state. I think it's drought and drought timing is really important, too. It's not necessarily just a drought or not that year. It's when the drought hits again, residual grass is important, but also it's really important during lactation periods for females that there's some kind of moisture and decent forage for them to maintain lactation status.

I think the Northeast was hit harder. We saw in the Southeast and the Southwest in some years, definitely in the Southeast where we had more moisture at the right times, that probably didn't see the decline in the pronghorn population that we saw in the Northeast. We did do a 20% reduction in licenses the last year and this upcoming year, based upon the reductions, trying to maintain that we will keep a buck-to-doe ratio above 20 to 100.

We thought we had to start reducing those license numbers. That's why you saw a mid-cycle reduction in the mature buck tags in the Northeast population, the core of the Northeast, and we eliminated the female immature hunts within the Northeast as well. Just a little bit of data that came from a study in Oklahoma, just over the line, right on the New Mexico, Oklahoma line. They were looking at fawn mortality and adult and female survival.

You'll notice female survival, even though this would have been the peak of when we were seeing the decline as well in our populations, you'll notice adult survival was pretty high if you exclude harvest out of the male and female, about the same. Above 80% on a pronghorn population that twins. 80% is a good survival rate for females, but you'll notice the, I'll say, abysmal survival of juveniles. That's what's driving this growth, I think, and the decline right now.

Luckily, this last year in 2025, we did see a much higher fawn-to-doe ratio than we have the previous four years. The timing of moisture last year was pretty decent. We had some early summer rains that probably also picked up right at the right time for pronghorn as well, but you'll see survival rates in 11%, 12%. Again, a lot of that was predation but most likely, again, that happened in the first 10 days of life. It wasn't really prolonged predation later in this year of the fawns.

Real quick, looking at harvest, this is a statewide harvest and licenses sold. You'll notice that drop in licenses in 2025. That's really because of the reduction in licenses in the Northeast that we did have. We did cap private land over-the-counter licenses in the Northeast as well. We capped it at 80% of the average of the previous two years' license sales, so a reduction in 20% in private licenses as well.

You'll look at the harvest. You'll see we harvested fewer as well, and that's mainly driven by the Northeast. The female harvest is in there still. That's mainly coming out of GMU-32 in the Roswell area. We have a female immature hunt in that area around more of the hayfields, where we do have some depredation issues. The remaining drop in females would have been out of the Northeast, where we were not harvesting females last year at all.

Satisfaction ratings really didn't change between the two years, and the average days hunted has not changed. I do want to note that that 2025 harvest data was pulled a couple weeks ago. We still had a lot of reports coming in as the draw deadline comes up. We get reports all the way to the draw deadline. We'll rerun the harvest report. It's probably going to change some as we get more reports in. I think we're at about a 63% reporting rate when we pulled this data.

Just going through the state a little bit, again, Northeast areas were our biggest concerns. It's a little hard to read for probably the public looking at the picture there, but we consider the Northeast primary, that blue in the very Northeast corner, and then the secondary in that greenish color. There's pronghorn in both of those. The largest population of pronghorn in the state exists in that Northeast primary. That's where we focus a lot of our survey efforts on, and that's where the biggest declines we saw.

The secondary didn't have as much in the Northeast, but the primary did. You will notice our 2025 survey data, like I said, buck-to-doe fawn ratios picked up in there, and the fawn ratios picked up significantly, up to 37 fawns per 100 does. Encouraging for last year. We'll see what happens this year. They had a lot of good fall moisture in there, so we'll see what happens for the spring. Secondary, you'll see we have a little bit higher ratios in the secondary as well, but it's probably within the confidence intervals and not significantly different.

Going to the Southeast area, you'll see that's from that purple area, Fort Sumner area down, we have multiple different what we consider core populations in there. It's not one contiguous, but the Southeast has remained fairly stable. Maybe even increased a little bit in the last four years. Our ratios have stayed very stable in the Southeast area as well. We've been conducting fence modifications in concert with the BLM and willing permittees.

The Southeast historically was a lot of domestic sheep grazing. There was a lot of woven wire fence in that area that has precluded passage of pronghorn. Pronghorn really tend to, not exclusively, but for the most part, go under fences, not over fences. When we have woven wire, it really precludes movement. We also put out 30 GPS collars a year ago in that area to help get us towards how to strategically do fence modifications.

You'll see in some of these other areas where we've done this, we actually can find sections of fence barriers that you could see the collar stop at the fence line and move to different areas. We've modified those in other areas of the state that help with movement. Pronghorn probably more so than a lot of our other species will, we say, chase the rain, if you will, in the summer if monsoons are spotty and you get these kind of green patches, you'll see pronghorn move to those green patches and chase those rain patterns. Barriers and fences could really be a problem with that.

Moving a little bit to the southwest area, the population status has remained stable. It is a smaller population overall. I think it's just the habitat drought conditions in general in the southwest through time have made that population smaller at long-term droughts. We did deploy some GPS collars in cooperation with the BLM. We also wanted to look at barriers, but also looked at breeding and fawning periods.

There is speculation that Southwest area fawning was occurring much later than the rest of the state, and we did find that. In fact, if you see here our fawning period in the Northeast and the Southeast, we're seeing that in the May time period for the most part, as early as April in some instances, but typically May into June, whereas you'll see those peaks in 2024 was about July 16th and 2025 was August 1st. A pretty significant difference in our fawning period than our other populations throughout the state.

Like I said, this is the map that we'll generate for the Southeast area once we get all the data analyzed.

This is a heat map of where we look at barriers, red being higher barriers and blue having more permeability, but still a little bit of a barrier. If you zoom in, sometimes you'll see specific segments of fence or specific roads or such that are barriers, you can actually see they are crossing I-10. That's I-10 just outside of Lordsburg. They're going under probably some arroyos there and getting that.

You can see where the crossings show it as a high barrier along the interstate, but then also where it's lower, where there's some permeability. There are definitely higher barrier fences within there that we'll work in concert with BLM and grazing permittees to see if we can modify some of that. We work with private landowners, willing private landowners too, if they want to modify fences and help provide some of that material as well.

Northwest area, a much smaller pronghorn population. There's just not the habitat, the grasslands as much in the northwest as the rest of the state, but we do have a population both on the L-Bar and North Mount Taylor area and then all the way up into the Farmington, General San Juan area. I guess that says that. There was a San Juan solar field that's been going in that area, and we worked with Wildlands Network.

They were a nonprofit organization that secured some funds to look at pronghorn movements in the northwest. This is their data. They share this with us. What you'll see there is the pink is the actual solar arrays. When they put those solar arrays up, there's chain-link fence that goes around them, so there's an impermeability across that. You'll see basically those dots go right up into the pink, but don't go on to it because of pure excluding.

Some of the other solar array research that's gone on in different areas, they actually see avoidance of the areas in general. We're not seeing that here. They do go all the way up to it, but in some other states where they've looked at it, you get complete avoidance of the areas. I think part of it is where these solar arrays went in, in that area are some of the best habitat for pronghorn, so you don't have the ability to do much avoidance in there. The bottom graphic just shows the core movements of that population as well, whereas the main graphic is each individual GPS point.

Then our unique population, probably one of the, if not the highest elevation pronghorn population in the world is up around Tres Piedras. It winters along the base of San Antonio Mountain all the way over into the Taos Plateau going to the Rio Grande Gorge, but the summer range is up in the Tierra Amarilla Land Grant, up in 4 and 52, higher country, and so you see east-west movements out of that population going up above 10,000 feet in the summertime and coming down again below 7,000 feet in elevation.

That herd has remained fairly stable, a little bit lower fawn to doe ratio for sure, and that was in those couple years. We don't fly this population every single year, but we will fly it again in the next couple cycles. We were focusing hard on the northeast because that's where a lot of harvest is. There's not as much harvest in this herd, and we had some GPS collars on that herd as well, so we're able to monitor it via GPS as well.

We did that analysis in this pronghorn herd too on looking at barriers, and you'll see there's some very specific fence segments that created barriers. We actually have gone in and modified a lot of these fences and those barriers go away. Some of these barriers are very short reaches of fencing as well too. Again, we're in the early stages of this. This is the first time the pronghorn presentation has come up.

We'll bring this back to you all with more firm recommendations at the next time you'll hear this, but as we're in the early phases, some of our early recommendations, like all species, and so I'll just repeat some of these, is requiring hunters to purchase a license the day before they go hunting. Right now, you could purchase that license, an over-the-counter license right now and go hunt that minute.

We would require you have to purchase the day prior to the start of the hunt, and we're looking at any hunt that's less than a six-day period, so five days or less. Once the hunt starts, you can't purchase the license. That's a proposal for all the species we have right now. Then like our other species we've

discussed, where we have private land hunts right now, over-the-counter hunts, we are looking to do a ranch registration process like we do for specifically secondary management zone for elk, where a landowner in that GMU who wants to hunt or have hunters or sell licenses, they're going to have to register with us to prove that they have property in that GMU.

It won't be as onerous as the full primary zone E-plus application. What we're looking at is they have to prove up ownership through a deed, tax rolls, records, something like that, give us an acreage amount, so it's something that proves acreage, and then also a central GPS location of where that property is so we have that on record. They then would get a ranch code that they could use, give that ranch code to individuals that want to purchase licenses, but it'd be registered in the system.

You heard even today at the general public comment, a concern that we hear is my next-door neighbor's hunting a lot more than I am, or this property is hunting too many or that many. We don't have a record right now on who's hunting what or not. We know how many licenses are sold across the GMU. This will let us really focus in on where licenses are sold, how many licenses are sold, et cetera.

We are also considering and looking at, and we'll do it through our analysis as we look at the population status and license numbers of potential private land cap on over-the-counter licenses across the state, like we did in the northeast. We're still trying to figure out what that would look like and how those licenses would be sold, but that would be at the next commission meeting. We will have more proposals on that. It's similar to what we are proposing for deer as well, is looking at potential caps on private land over-the-counter licenses.

One of the other proposals that we are considering as well, we had quite a few public comments on during this last rule cycle, is moving that GMU 450-52 rifle hunt back to a muzzleloader hunt in that area. Currently, it's the only rifle hunt in there, but that is the proposal that we have. We're also, like all, we'll adjust license numbers based off of biological data, our management goals, and then public input and adjusting season dates.

One of the biggest season dates that we're looking at adjusting is the southwest to a later date, given that we are having an archery season in mid-August in there. We could have fawns that are just being born, just disturbance to that. It probably could have population-level impacts. We're proposing moving that season later in the southwest as well, and then we'll adjust season dates to the hunt start on Saturdays as well.

Then all the pronghorn hunts that we have on military lands, like White Sands or Melrose Air Force Base, we'll continue to work with them to adjust hunts as necessary on the military rates. We have already hosted two hybrid virtual and in-person meetings, I believe it was last week where we had that. We had one here at the Albuquerque office and one in Las Cruces. We had 40 people in attendance in there. We've had 16 comments so far already on pronghorn, even though the rule hasn't opened. So far, there's the support for capping over-the-counter private land licenses, and then some of the frustration with the private land license system. I think that ranch registration will deal with some of that frustration and help get at a better aspect of that. Then we are getting support for that ranch registration. With that, I would take any questions you all may have.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, Chief Liley. Commissioners, any questions?
Commissioner Witt?

Commissioner Christopher Witt: That was a great presentation. Thank you, Chief Liley. I wanted to ask a couple of things. First, that shift in the fawning date between years in '24 and '25, that was really striking. Do you know more about the causation of that or the consequences of that?

Stewart Liley: I think, Mr. Chair, Commissioner Witt, I think it was the drought the previous year. I think what you saw is females going into the breeding season in poor condition and waiting until condition picked up. That shifted that fawning period. I don't think those does went into estrus the second year, whereas later, until they had enough nutritional capacity.

We see that a little bit in elk too. That's why in our elk proposals, we're proposing moving some of those start of that muzzleloader and first rifle season later, because I think we're seeing an extended rut period where elk are going into estrus later than they historically have, and most likely driven to female condition, bringing on when they go into estrus.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: That makes sense, because 2025 is a little bit wetter than 2024. I was surprised by that, but if it's a lag effect, then that makes all the sense. I wanted to say that at the State Fair this year, the department had a really beautiful video of the department working with pronghorn and rounding up pronghorn and moving pronghorn, but that wasn't really part of your presentation. I was wondering if you could just address where has the department moved pronghorn and why have we done that?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Witt, so our most recent translocation was from the northeast to the L-Bar. Shortly after the commission acquired the L-Bar, we translocated a herd of pronghorn on there. Why we do it is a twofold. One, to reestablish some populations that are either really low. That grassland had some pronghorn in there, but we're talking in the teens, and so we moved probably 50. They've actually done really well.

We radio collared those when we translocated them. Fawning is going well with them. That population is starting to expand and grow on that property. That was also in concert with some grassland restoration work we've been doing there as well. Why we move them is one, to translocate to lower density populations to recover, and two, is sometimes when we have depredation concerns on agricultural fields, pronghorn have a lot of times congregate on center pivots.

When we have populations that do that and we have opportunities to reduce depredation concerns on private land, it gives us an opportunity to translocate to those others. We have not translocated in the last, I believe, four years, three years, mainly due to the situation with the northeast pronghorn herd. I think if we get to a time where we see them start rebounding, we can get back to some translocations, but we've ceased all while that population has been on the decline.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: I have one more question, which is about the ratios of bucks-to-does, which you explained really well. We have a statewide average of 29, which is great. Then you mentioned that there's a threshold that we don't like to go below, about 15 bucks to 100 does. Can you explain how the hunt in any GMU would affect that buck-to-doe ratio and how you use the ratio to set limits?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Witt. I think there's two things that ratio at 29 is probably more in reality, 35 to 40, because you compound the problem. When you classify-- let's say you have a population of 150 out there. We'll say there's no fawns in it, but we classify 100 does, 50 bucks, the ratio is 50 to 100. What reality is if some of those bucks were misclassified as does, what we have going on is you inflate the doe number and deflate the buck number.

Where we find to test our ratios more than any is when we go and capture them and do these translocations. For example, we moved 500 pronghorn from the Cimarron area about eight years ago. Starting about 8, 10 years ago, our buck-to-doe ratios from the air were running about 35. When we actually handled them on the ground, it was closer to 66, 67. That's traditionally the case because the way we do our surveys.

We know it's a little bit low to begin with, artificially low, but the way we use that ratio, yes, hunts definitely-- because we are almost exclusively male-driven harvest. That ratio is going to change by when we have constant male and female survival outside of hunting, we could drive the ratios down. If we see that we're driving ratios down, we might adjust ratios back up or try to reduce licenses that would get a ratio back up, assuming parity at birth of male and female fawns, which is pretty decent assumption. We don't see a lot of that sex differentiation at birth, but we do look at that to reduce licenses if we see over that last four year, we're driving it down. We've never gotten to a point where we're worried biologically driving it down. It's more of a driving it down from a harvest standpoint. I do think going back to the biology of a pronghorn too, we could have a lower buck-to-doe ratio for larger horned males as well than you would in elk.

For example, in elk, we're going to look at a ratio of 45 to 100 or something like that, that we want to see when we get older age class animals, deer probably in the 40-plus to 100. Pronghorn, if you're above 30, you're still going to have larger horned males just because they reach sexual maturity so much faster than our other species.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you. Commissioner Witt, anything else [crosstalk]

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Chair.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Commissioner Lopez.

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Tell me about the rifle hunt.

Stewart Liley: In unit 450? Yes. Mr. Chair, Commissioner Lopez, we have had quite a few comments of people being frustrated with that being a rifle hunt and want to move it back to the muzzleloader hunt. That's why we're proposing moving it to a muzzleloader hunt. That rifle hunt is before all the muzzleloader hunts and just people want it back as a muzzleloader.

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: How many comments have you guys gotten?

Stewart Liley: Probably through the years, about 40 through the last three seasons.

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: All the comments coming from the local areas, or coming from out of state, or around the state?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Lopez, it's definitely coming from some of the local landowners in 52 as well, but also from public hunters that have drawn that hunt or drawn the muzzleloader hunts.

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: They're saying that the rifle hunt is impacting the muzzleloader hunt?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Lopez, correct. That the rifle hunt--

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: What if we move the rifle hunt after the muzzleloader hunt?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Lopez, the recommendation from the public and from us was to just eliminate the rifle hunt and make it a muzzleloader to go back--

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Would it affect the population?

Stewart Liley: Success rates have definitely gone up on those hunts. Yes, it affects the buck portion of the population.

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Can you provide the success rates at the next meeting?

Stewart Liley: Yes, we will.

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Can you provide all the public comments at the next meeting?

Stewart Liley: We will provide the public comments on that, yes, as well.

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Thank you.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: I'd like to address that. That's a hunt I used to go on. I was lucky to draw that a couple of times. That was a great hunt, muzzleloader hunt. The one question asked to me by hunters that I know, or I come across more than any other question, is that specific question, why that hunt got changed. I think it's something to look at and consider. Commissioner Harwood.

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: Thank you. Chief, can you speak to the youth hunting opportunities with pronghorn generally, and any recommendations the department might have for this cycle?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Harwood, yes, we definitely have youth hunting opportunities for pronghorn. They're typically the first hunts as well for that. When we have both a youth hunt and an adult hunt, there's some that are the same time, typically more youth hunters than the adult hunters. We historically have had youth female and mature hunts as well. Exclusively in the Northeast area was youth female and mature. I think if the populations rebound, we would have that come back up as options too. I don't know that we're there right now, but we would maintain our youth hunter opportunity.

In terms of license numbers, we did reduce all hunts by 20% in there. There's really not a difference in success rates between the youth and the adult hunts in there. We're going to be looking at, is the 20% reduction about right or not. Depends on where we are a little bit with fawn-to-doe ratios this year as well. Our goal is to maintain our youth license numbers in there, and potentially, if there's room, put back youth female and mature hunts as well.

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: Thank you for that. I think you already know this is a theme for me. If the department can identify any additional youth hunting initiatives for this part of the game, I'd appreciate it.

Stewart Liley: Yes, for sure. Commissioner Lopez, to answer your question on the success rates, that rifle success rate is about 67% the previous year where the muzzleloader success rates were 32%. It's a little over double the success rate.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Harwood. Any other? Commissioner Clemente?

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente: You guys asked all my questions. First of all, I want to thank you for the presentation, really good information. Is it possible for us to get a copy of this presentation?

Stewart Liley: Chairman Stump, Commissioner Clemente, yes, and they'll also be posted on the website as well.

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente: Then with that, I'm happy to hear about that you guys are thinking on the change of dates on the pronghorn, the Southwest especially. Then if you can explain a little bit more on the registration of the landowners for the pronghorn. Would it be something like the deer incentive program?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Clemente, no, it'd be more like secondary management. You could go into a department office and just show that you have proof of ownership in there. It's not a registration as much as an application. It's more of just showing proof. Once proof is shown, and they determined real quick at the area office, we'll have something set up in our system, just like we do for secondary elk, where they register that property right then and there.

It's just you're proving up ownership. Some of these that are already in secondary elk, where we have that known ownership, it'll be very easy to just transition to say, yes, they also have that property. It won't be an application period, a scoring, or anything like that. It's just showing proof of property.

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente: Would it be something that-- The reason why I'm asking this is because I believe one of the problems is migration with the antelope, a lot of interaction in between them by fences. A lot of it is because a lot of ranches, they have all fences or they're not standard for them to be able to cross. I don't know if there is some way that it can be implemented that give the incentive so those fences can be updated to wildlife fences.

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Clemente, we do have what we call a pronghorn incentive program, like the deer incentive, just for that exact reason, looking at, are there properties that are doing habitat or really fence modification, like you said, is a big thing for pronghorn. I think that's one of our biggest, where we've had some landowners do extensive fence modifications, lifting the lower wire and making a smooth wire for 10s to 20s of miles worth of fencing.

We do recognize that in our pronghorn incentive program. That is an application, actually, incentive program, just like the deer incentive program. We do recognize that and allow alternative hunt dates based upon that if they so select. It is application-based where we go out there, work with a landowner, and score those incentives as well.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Anything else, Commissioners? I have a couple of public commenters in the audience today. Katie DeLorenzo, start with you.

[pause 01:40:04]

Katie DeLorenzo: Good morning, Chairman Stump and Commissioners. My name is Katie DeLorenzo. I'm Western Field Director for Backcountry Hunters and Anglers. On behalf of our members and supporters here in New Mexico, but across North America, we support efforts that improve transparency, accountability, and long-term sustainability in pronghorn management. Can you guys hear me? It doesn't seem very loud. Okay.

The current structure in which private land opportunity can expand with limited visibility or constraint is increasingly difficult to justify, particularly in areas where herd conditions are changing significantly. Without clear tracking and accountability, the department's ability to understand and manage harvest at a scale is unnecessarily limited. In Northeastern New Mexico, we've seen declines in fawn recruitment, and as herd conditions change, it's critical the department management tools provide clear visibility into harvest and allow the department to respond effectively.

We support the department's evaluation of a ranch registration system and caps on private land licenses. These tools improve tracking, align harvest with herd conditions, and reinforce fairness between public and private opportunity. We also support adjustments to license numbers, season structures, and continued improvements to harvest reporting. Timely, reliable data is essential for responsive management and public trust.

I'd also just like to note BHA's ongoing investment in pronghorn habitat. We have two full-time habitat stewardship coordinators. One focused entirely on the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument in Taos. We've also done work on the L-Bar and in the Boot Heel. So far, we've removed seven miles of obsolete fencing. We've modified one mile to be wildlife-friendly, and we've inventoried over 35 miles to share that information with the department and BLM to help prioritize future work. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, Katie, and thanks for all the work you guys do. Brandon Wynn?

[pause 01:42:13]

Brandon Wynn: They said I could pull it out. Thank you, Chair Stump, Commissioners. On the presentation, as Chief Liley mentioned, that a lot of the pushback from the public, not surprisingly, is over the unlimited private land tags. One question that no one asked, or it wasn't in the presentation or anything, was none of the commissioners asked what that number is like, how many of our tags are private.

I know you will be shocked to find out. I actually know that number. I've calculated the number. 64% of New Mexico's pronghorn tags are private tags. That is such an unprecedented number for any other state, for any species. It's hundreds and hundreds of percent more than any other state prioritizes their game. What I would think that the commission, first of all, I would think that you would ask that question, that you would care enough about who gets to hunt in New Mexico to even ask that question.

In the future, I think that the commission should just tell the department as a matter of policy because we have so many private tags; let's put it out there and be transparent. Whenever they do a tag-type presentation, that should be in there, how much of our hunting is private and privileged, private for, frankly, very wealthy people. How much is it for the working-class New Mexicans?

On the pronghorn rule, what I would propose is there's about, what do you say, 55,000 something tags in New Mexico. Why don't we do something different here? Just make them all public tags and let the hunters and the ranchers and the organizations figure out where we're going to hunt out on the landscape. Just do what most states do, make it all public, or if you don't want to go that far and do what I think is the right thing to do, how about make all the private tags incentive tags.

If you want to issue a private tag, then it has to be in an incentive program. Because I'll tell you, the landowner incentive program is really good for the public and really good for landowners. It's one of the few things in our private tag systems that I really think is great. It's so small because the ability to just issue tags and sell as many and have as many outfitted hunts on any piece of scrap of land anywhere is so easy to do that it makes that it makes incentive program smaller than it should be.

At least make all the private tags incentive-only, like, "Okay, did you do wildlife-friendly fencing like we talked about," which is a critical thing for pronghorn? That's it. I'd like to see more public-- like 64% private, really? Is the commission proud of that? Does anyone in this room think that that's what we should have in New Mexico? 64% of our pronghorn tags are private. It's public wildlife. Thank you.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, Brandon. Anyone online? Yes.

[silence]

Natasha Montoya: Yes. Mr. Edwards, you can speak now.

Travis Edwards: Hello, can you guys hear me?

Natasha Montoya: Yes, we can.

Travis Edwards: Yes. Mr. Chairman, Commissioners, my name is Travis Edwards. I'm a lifelong New Mexico resident of New Mexico, 45 years hunting and fishing all my life. Love it here. I just wanted to comment that I'm in total favor of some of the moves the department's making to curb some of the abuse on the over-the-counter private land system, really for all species, but I know we're talking about pronghorn right now.

Not allowing over-the-counter license to be purchased once the hunt starts or at least one day makes total good common sense, makes it tougher for illegal activity to happen of shooting an animal and then buying a tag afterwards. Really appreciate the department doing that. Same with the registration of a property. Right now, anybody can just go buy a tag, no idea of where they're hunting, anything like that. It makes total sense to have that in there.

I know the department, they mentioned capping private land tags, which I'm in favor of that as well. Having that unlimited tags with no oversight just doesn't make good science-based management, I feel, for the department to see how many pronghorn they can take on private land. I do think that, along with just the caps for overall, and I think is a good thing, but I think there also needs to be-- When that registration happens, with how many acreage you have, having a cap there as well, that makes sense.

I know it's a lot of work for-- I'm not proposing or saying we should have like a scoring system like we do on the E-plus program, but just something that makes sense. If you have 1 acre to 100 acres, maybe you should be capped at one tag or two tags, whatever makes sense to have some guardrails there. It not only would keep some of that abuse happening, I think there was a gentleman earlier in the meeting talking about 56 to curb some of that abuse around, particularly one landowner selling a bunch of tags. Also, if there's a cap for the species and a bunch of small properties buy all the tags, and it caps out some of the bigger ranches that have a lot of animals to hunt, wouldn't be able to buy those licenses because they've already been sold. I encourage the commission to have the department look at setting those, not only the cap for the species, but at an actual property as well. Appreciate your time. Thank you for taking my comment.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, Travis. Okay, that seems to be it for public comment. This is not an action item, so no motion is necessary. Moving on to agenda item number 15 is a subsequent discussion of the Javelina Rule 19.31.21 NMAC. Whenever you're ready, Stewart.

[pause 01:48:45]

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, members of the commission, as you mentioned at the start, this is our second time hearing the Javelina Rule proposals. Just for a procedural aspect of this, once we finish this hearing today and taking any direction the commission has, if it's different than the department's proposal, we'll draft the rule and post it on the department's website for public comment, and then we'll come back, I believe, in May for Javelina for adoption of the rule.

Again, this is the second time. There's a couple of other proposals today. Other species will be the second time, but unlike pronghorn, which was the first, this is our second and last, if you will, bite at the apple before the hearing. Real quick, and I'm not going to go through as much on the biology stuff that we did the last time. You'll see that in most of my proposals because we already went through that the previous commission meetings. If people are interested, like I said, these presentations are online and also recorded and then put on there. Just real quick, we ran the 2025 harvest data. We pulled that data on March 2nd. We still had a lower reporting rate. We'll run that harvest data again and post it on our website here with all the species. Typically, late spring, early summer is when we post the previous harvest season dates. You'll see it's fairly similar to the '24 harvest data as well.

Success rates, you'll see we split it out between the Bootheel. Again, that Bootheel, I refer to that. That's really just those units in GMU 19, 23, 24, 25, 26, and 27. Those are the draw hunts where we have the rest of the statewide hunts over-the-counter, first-come, first-served with caps. Real quick, in terms of our proposals, we are proposing increasing the number of licenses for our over-the-counter hunts, the over-the-counter cap from 1,200 to 1,300. Right now, we do have a bow hunt as well, but we're not proposing increasing those. Some years, those licenses are not fully sold out. They're sometimes left over, but we are proposing increasing that rifle hunt.

We've seen expansion, like I mentioned last time, of javelina throughout the state, and actually some establishment of populations in new areas, and again, more pronghorn in general. Then one of the other proposals that we are having is right now the youth hunters that draw tag can hunt that draw area plus anywhere in the state, but the other hunters that draw that are only restricted to that draw area. We're proposing allowing them to hunt the draw area or anywhere else in the state if they so choose as well. Similar to what we do with Barbary sheep.

Then GMU 28, that is McGregor Range, that's military-controlled land. We only are seeing about 30% of the hunters that draw that hunt actually show up to the hunt, and their success rates are really low. In cooperation with McGregor, we're proposing just eliminating that hunt in there of the 10 licenses. We did hold, like I mentioned, the two public meetings so far. There was some opposition and support in allowing the draw area to go to the over-the-counter areas. I think the reality of that is I don't think many people that draw the hunts are going to go to those over-the-counter areas. It just has that ability to happen. We see that in Barbary sheep, too. You can hunt over-the-counter areas if you draw, but we see less than 10% of the hunters actually hunt the over-the-counter areas as well.

We did see mainly support for increasing licenses. Some people were commenting that javelina densities are just too high in general. More of nuisance complaints, probably, and we've seen that more in the TRC area, et cetera. We're even seeing some more javelina established in Capitan, in that area. We had what

I'd say, 11 other comments. Some of that's just not referring to even the javelina rule, or some of those comments are out of the purview of the commission or statutory. For example, the wanton waste, javelina is not included in there. There have been some bills in the legislature to include bear, lion, and javelina as having to require the meat taken out of the field, but that is statutory-driven. A lot of those comments, again, didn't fall within the purview of the commission. It's more at the legislature.

If you all maybe you did or didn't notice, we ran some kind of hunter surveys this rule regulation cycle that we haven't done historically. We've received 127 responses from that. We're actually getting a lot more general comment on it. It was a survey just to feel what javelina hunters thought about it. You'll see, most of the responses that we're javelina hunters, they just like the unique experience of javelina hunting. Just it's a different kind of experience. Then you'll see a lot of our respondents are happy with javelina hunting in general. Again, we asked if you were dissatisfied, why you were dissatisfied. Again, it wasn't a lot of dissatisfaction in there, but the people that were dissatisfied was just a low javelina density was their top reason for being dissatisfied. With that, I would take any questions.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Commissioner Clemente?

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente: I have gotten calls regarding javelina population increasing around the Las Cruces area, around there. Has the department looked into that?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Clemente, I think we've seen it through a lot of our urban areas more recently, where there's water. I think you're seeing just the conflict that's starting to happen, is javelina coming into lawns, javelina coming into towns in general. I don't think hunting is going to be the tool that necessarily deals with that. I do think we're seeing growing populations. I do think we're seeing more of that movement just in that urban interface. I do know a lot of our officers are-- we've seen an uptick in our depredation complaints on javelina, too, over the last few years.

I don't think it's unique to Las Cruces. I think as we have more drought years, we see that with deer a little bit, too, in some of these other urban areas. This is just a movement shifting into those towns. I think we're definitely getting some populations that are establishing and within. We do do some movements out of town with them as well.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Clemente. Commissioners, anybody else? No. Thank you, Chief Liley. We do have a David Heft who would like to comment today.

[pause 01:56:32]

David Heft: I'm absolutely opposed to giving people who already have the privilege of having a permit in the so-called Bootheel units more areas to hunt in. If we have that resource that can sustain greater hunting pressure, let's issue more licenses to more New Mexicans so they can have that opportunity also in those statewide areas. I looked at some of the numbers from the department, and if the department gets what they want, which is allow those Bootheel hunters to hunt in the statewide areas, you could potentially have up to almost 900 additional hunters in the statewide area. Hunters that have not filled their tag.

The department's only proposing an increase of 100 additional licenses. Well, let's issue another 800 additional licenses to new people in those areas. That's my main concern here. We have an opportunity to use a viable, sustainable resource, a native species that's doing well, which most of our others aren't. I'd really like to see us give more respect to javelina. We're one of only three states that have javelina that can be harvested. We ought to recognize that. It's more unique. Boone and Crockett just recognized a trophy category for javelina. Hopefully, that'll bring some more respect to this species. That's my primary comment. Thank you.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, David Heft. Nobody? Okay. Thank you, Chief Liley. Not an action item, so no motion necessary. Let's move on to agenda item number 16, which is subsequent discussion of the Turkey Rule, 19.31.16 NMAC. Whenever you're ready, let's do it.

[pause 01:58:40]

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, members of the commission, as you stated, this is the second discussion on the turkey rule. After this, just like the previous, we'll go draft a rule, post it on the website after the presentation today. [clears throat] If there's any change in direction given from the commission today, we'll take that into account as well and post that as well. Real quick, just so like the javelina rule, I won't go

through all the biology that we went through at the previous presentation. Just for reference, I do want to put this up there as the different subspecies of turkey we have in the state.

Mainly Merriam's, that's the orangish color, and then we do have Rio Grande's along the Pecos and the Rio Grande river valleys and then also in that Tucumcari area. Then you see a little bit of hybrids of Rios and Merriam's in the east. In the south, what you see there, southwest as in the Bootheel, are Gould's turkey. Really unique in terms of only found in Arizona, New Mexico, and then throughout Mexico. Largest of the subspecies and a really unique population that we worked years and years to recover. Finally started hunting at the last cycle.

Again, you see a lot more probably variation with environmental conditions than you do with the birds, than you do with ungulates, and that's especially true in turkeys as well. Survival really is driven probably by production of poults in the summer and the survival of those poults. Spring harvests is basically males. You can't shoot a bearded hen. It's very rare. It doesn't happen a lot, but our harvest in the spring is primarily males, and our harvest seasons are such that timing allows for incubation of eggs, and we don't see that as an issue for population.

Fall hunting, as I mentioned the last time, has the potential for added mortality on hens and could impact populations here. In a second, we'll go through the analysis that we said that we would do to look at our fall hen harvest to see if we saw disproportionate harvest across any specific GMUs and recommend any limitations on that. I'll let you know that we didn't, but I'll show some of the data too. This is just looking at license sales through time, both fall and spring. You'll see the majority of those licenses, they're over-the-counter licenses, but definitely the majority driven by resident license sales on both fall and spring, more so on fall than spring.

Then you'll look at our harvest rates, et cetera. I think the important aspect of this, and this is some of the comments we did here, was to reduce the bag limit from one, excuse me, two birds to one bird in the spring. From a biological standpoint, we really just don't think it's necessary. You'll also notice, though, that bottom right graph, the bottom line is the actual second bird harvest. That second bird harvest is much smaller than obviously the first bird or the total harvest. It's a small portion of the total harvest out of our birds, that second bird bag limit. It's really not a lot of people that are harvesting two turkeys in the spring.

Fall harvest. I think one thing to point out on fall harvest that I didn't mention the last time is, fall harvest, we say sex being hen, but I do think there are birds that are juveniles, young-of-the-year poults that haven't grown beards that are males too. Just because they don't have a beard, I think people are thinking they're hens. It's the stage of maturity that they're at in the fall to where they don't have a beard. Some of that fall hen harvest is actually probably young-of-the-year males that had low survival rates. Anyway, you'll see our un-bearded harvest in the fall, when we look at this next slide, is fairly low across the state.

You'll look at our 5-year and 10-year averages. The first columns are 5-year average, followed by the 10-year, and those are the different GMUs. These GMUs are the top GMUs, top 11 GMUs where hen harvest occurs. If GMU is not listed here, it falls below 10 hens being reported harvest in the fall. We analyzed that and looked at these. Some of the data would suggest if you're harvesting less than 10% of your females in the fall harvest, it has no population-level effect. If you look at 34, our highest harvest of 105 hens, again, some of those are probably young-of-the-year males, we don't see that being anything to where we would be concerned from having a level impact on the birds.

That would mean you need a population of a minimum of 1000. We definitely have over 1000 birds in that area. Again, 34 was our highest. Drops precipitously across there, and most of these units have virtually no hen harvest. Some of them are very low. We are not recommending changing the bag limit in the fall for any birds, just given the lower harvest that we are seeing. Our proposed changes are to adjust calendar dates. I'll show you, it's mainly the youth season where we adjust that. We tried to get that to fall on a weekend, and so we'll adjust that youth season, so it will fall on the weekends. It happens before the adult hunt.

Then, increasing our Gould's turkey permits. Those Gould's turkey permits are up two numbers. We determine that on an annual basis based on population status. We still maintain a lot of GPS collars on those birds and are monitoring that. Right now it's up to five. We're saying up to 15 during this rule cycle. I

don't know that we'll get there. It really depends on what climatic conditions are. They had some interesting winter rains down there this year that actually were really beneficial, and we're seeing that in some of the GPS data so far already this winter.

Again, I don't know that we'll get all the way up to 15. We're also proposing increase the GMU 8. This is here in the Sandia, basically. Draw tags from 15 to 20. That population we think could withstand that harvest as well. Then, like I said, we conducted that hen harvest, and they're not proposing any adjustments to the fall hen harvest. Here's our proposed season dates for the youth for the next following four years. Again, that would fall before the general season opener. Real quick, we held those two public hybrid meetings. Again, we had 20 comments, and we had a virtual meeting with National Wild Turkey Federation as well.

Comments were all across the board. Some of that reduced hen harvest. A lot of those comments came in before we did that analysis, and so the public didn't have the opportunity to see this hen harvest analysis prior to making those comments. Again, we'll put this on the website and have that analysis available. Then we had some comments on reducing spring bag limit to one. Again, we don't think that's a biological issue in the harvest in there, and a small portion actually do harvest four, excuse me, two hens in the spring. Just a range of comments throughout there.

Some, definitely in support of some of the proposals. Some, "Get rid of youth hunts," "Keep youth hunts." We get at that with all of our rule changes, comments, opposition, and support. With that, I would take any questions you all may have.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Commissioners? Nobody? None? I do have a question regarding the youth hunts [unintelligible 02:07:27]. Are those all draw hunts?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair? No, they are not. The season dates for youth hunting in the open GMUs-- There are some GMUs that are closed that are draw, but the ones that are open to the public, the youth does have the weekend prior to the start of the rest of the hunts, and that's been the historic pattern.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Okay, thank you, Chief Liley. Commissioner Lopez?

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Steward, are you ever going to let us hunt turkey in 22 like you do javelina, other than Manner and Method?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioners, that's your prerogative. That's a rule that you guys could or couldn't do. It's not up to us. The Manner and Method rules are your prerogative.

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: You think there'd be a biological aspect of change in Manner rule and Method?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Lopez, I do on hens in the fall. I think our hen harvest is low. I think it's harder to hunt turkeys with a shotgun in the fall, for sure. I think our harvest levels are low because of that. I think if you allowed a rimfire or even a different cartridge, you're going to see increased harvest, and I think you potentially would increase your hen harvest. There is the potential for a biological impact of that.

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: What about in the spring?

Stewart Liley: Again, I think you would see increased success for sure. Whether that relates back down to such an increase that has a biological impact, it's hard to say. I do think you would see increased success rates just because, closing that gap, the effective range of a shotgun is so much smaller than the effective range of a centerfire or a rimfire.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Oh, Commissioner Harwood.

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: True to what I promised earlier, do you have any other initiatives to support youth hunting with this rule?

Stewart Liley: Yes, Mr. Chair, Commissioner Harwood, again, I think that's why the youth hunt dates are in there, to continue to have those prior to the start of the general season. It's over the counter. It only is in the same areas where it's closed, where we just don't have turkey hunting, where we close. I think we're still continuing on proposing keeping those. We do. You'll even see, in some of the comments, some people wishing that the commission would no longer have youth hunting opportunities. It's not necessarily expanding because it's over the counter, but it's not reducing and maintaining that youth opportunity prior to the start.

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: As you can imagine, I have little patience for the comment that we would eliminate [inaudible 02:10:07]. Thank you.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Harwood. How about David Heft? Come on up.

David Heft: Chair, a little background first. This will be my 47th year. Also did extensive during my career at BLM Forest Service. A lot of interaction with turkey chapters throughout the state, the National Wild Turkeys Federation. Received National Habitat program awards, both as a biologist, Forest Service BLM, from the National Wild Turkeys Federation. I don't know it all, but I think I know maybe a little bit about turkeys. I live in 34. I own property in 34. We have turkeys all the time. Our turkey numbers are half what they were five years ago. We monitor numbers every year.

Quite frankly, if it wasn't for private landowners in that unit, you'd probably see a dramatic decline in turkey numbers because the Forest Service isn't doing any work for them, and no one else is doing habitat work for them. What we do still have is sustained by the private property owners like ourselves. I'll be very blunt. I've worked with the department since I finished military service in the '70s. There is not a single bit of public comment that's been incorporated into this rule. The department is summarily dismissing public comments. Unfortunately, that seems to become more of almost standard operating procedure.

If you look at what the department initially proposes and what they bring you as a final rule, that's the way it is almost all the time anymore. I think that needs to change. I was in the virtual meeting as a public meeting, and we all talked about this, us old timers that have been around long time, the decreased public interaction with the department. I think that's a big part of it. There's some arrogance anymore. You have some really good people in the department, don't get me wrong, but there's an attitude there. They're not listening to the people anymore, and that needs to change.

Two specific comments. Enforcement-wise, we have a roost prohibition. I think we need to go to a sunset shooting time closure. I know Colorado and Oklahoma do it. It'd be easier for our officers to enforce. The other one is, and I don't know if it's environmental related, we're seeing more gobblers in the spring that do not have beards. I don't mean jakes, I mean mature birds. Those birds aren't legal to shoot under the current definition because we have to take only a bearded turkey. At the same time, we can shoot a hen standing next to it if it's got a two-inch beard.

I think biologically, we need to somehow change that so we can take a gobbler, period, even if it doesn't have a beard in the spring. End of my comments. Thank you.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: All right. Thank you, David Heft. Not an action item, so no motion is necessary. Moving on to agenda item number 17, the subsequent discussion of the Migratory Bird Rule, 19.31.6 NMAC. Stewart, whenever you're ready.

[pause 02:13:11]

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, members of the commission, this is the subsequent discussion, so after this, we'll draft the rule as well. Unlike the other rules, this is an annual rule, as you all know, because we work in consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Service. Fish and Wildlife Service sets the frameworks, working through the flyway process that gives us the frameworks that we could devise a rule under. It sets what we can and can't do. There's a little bit of adjustments that can happen within there. Just as for the most part, bag limits are not going to change, and season date length will not change from last year, so we won't see what we had historically as pintails going from two to one, one to two, back and forth. I think the bag limit will stay at three this next year.

We are proposing a couple of changes. One is our sandhill crane allocation of the Rocky Mountain population. The Rocky Mountain population doesn't migrate as far to the north, but they migrate up into the Rocky Mountains, just like it says. A lot of that entire population winters in New Mexico, some into Mexico, you get some in Arizona as well, but our allocation is going up this year as well. We are proposing increasing the draw hunts in the Southwest by 18 licenses. We're probably in the middle of Rio Grande at the point where we just are getting 100 densities, even if we get a higher allocation that I don't know that we could increase licenses much more without having just too many hunters out there at once in places to hunt.

We do run check stations for the middle Rio Grande, so we hear from every hunter. That's one of the big things that we hear from hunters, is even if we were getting higher allocations, not to increase in the middle Rio Grande because of hunter density. They are draw hunts. One of the other proposals that we are doing is we have a sandhill crane hunt in the Estancia Valley that also can be made up of Rocky Mountains. What we've found is it's mainly been made up lately of midcontinent cranes, so cranes that go a lot longer migrations all the way across middle of the continent.

What we do see is we historically have had that hunt earlier because of the concerns about take-on RMPs being high and going above our allocation, but because we're seeing more midcontinents, we think we can move that hunt later. We're proposing moving that hunt into mid-December time frame. Again, those are our changes. It's mainly in cranes. The rest of it will follow the federal frameworks. You'll see some of the public comments there. There are some comments that some hunters want us to reduce that length. You could always be more restrictive than the federal government, but you can't be more liberal. Somewhere like the [unintelligible 02:16:52] Mesilla Valley hunting request would be more liberal, having more exposure days than we're allowed.

We did get the, "Move the Estancia Valley crane hunt later comment," too, and we looked at that, and that did come through public comment on some of that. We have a Middle Rio Grande Valley dark goose, Canada goose hunt that's restricted, and it's in the frameworks for next year as well. We'll have to wait till 2027, but we're looking at eliminating that as a restrictive and just go as the entire package of letting central flyway goose seasons to occur in the Middle Rio Grande. We're getting more dark geese, specifically, Canadas in there.

Then there's been some discussion about youth duck hunting. Right now, we have a youth duck hunt on the quagmire portion of Bernardo. There's been some that they would like to potentially see where we do a draw for those blinds. That's something that we could look at. It probably could be done outside of the rule process because it wouldn't be like a draw hunt. Youth have to buy a waterfowl license. They get a license. It's not like it's limited, but we could look at if we want to have that. It's called the Quagmire Unit B to where we do selective blinds.

The biggest issue we're having with that, everywhere in the Middle Rio Grande Valley, and probably going to be this year and next year, too, is water and lack of water. I think that comment came about. We don't have the water and winter water that we've had historically, and that's probably caused that more of a consternation. When we have good water years, we have more of those ponds filled up. That's not as much of an issue. On these drought years where we just don't get the water, I think that's the bigger issues that we have there.

Then this is just the proposed hunt dates for both Central and Pacific Flyway. You'll notice, as always, we split the Central Flyway from north to south. We always have the Central Flyway zone open sooner and closed sooner as well. Then the south open later, close later. That's due to freeze-out. This year, we didn't have freeze-out conditions in the north. We really didn't see probably as big a migration this year as we did because, in general, it was a warm fall across the continent. When we do have a more typical season, we see that birds move through the north to the south and then stay in the south throughout the winter. Excuse me, that was the Pacific Flyway. Thanks. With that, I'll take any questions.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Commissioners? Nobody online? Excuse me. Commissioner Witt, I'm sorry.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: I was wondering something about birds, but I wanted to ask first about that youth hunt at the Quagmire. I don't know what the dates are. It seems the water's been arriving really late, so that by the end of the waterfowl season, there's finally water. Is there any chance we could move the youth hunts later to give them a better chance at getting water?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Witt, they go all the way to the end of the legal exposure dates to January 31st, so by federal Congressional law, we can't hunt past January 31st.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Okay, thanks. I want to state first that I'm definitely in favor of eliminating the MRGV dark goose restrictions, which I had asked you about previously, and discovered that there's really no scientific reason for this restriction in the first place. They added a layer of complexity to our regulations in the state that's just totally unnecessary from any population standpoint. I'd be in favor of eliminating that. I want to make a comment on the cranes. I would think it's good that you're expanding

licenses. My impression is we never reach our quota or haven't in recent years for the harvest of the RMP. Is that correct, generally?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Witt, yes, that's correct. Part of that is, like I said, hunter density. Part of it is if we actually reach it the way it works, we have to shut down the season, so you can't actually go above it. It's a hard limit, so we never want to get to that limit because our biggest concern would be we have draw hunters that, if we reach that limit early, like an early migration, we would have to tell the rest of the hunters, "Sorry, you can't even hunt because we reached that limit." That's the process that we've done. We offer the opportunity through draw, so everyone has a chance, but we know we're not probably going to reach that limit.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Related to that, I wanted to ask you, how do you get the information about the composition of cranes that's being hunted in the Estancia Valley?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, it's bill cards, so bill length is how we normally do that. We used to have a check station that we had to run on that. That was a requirement of Fish and Wildlife Service as an experimental area. They were really concerned about RMPs. I think through time, if we keep getting bill cards, especially if we move this season later, we're still not RMPs and more mid-continent, we will try to work with the service again to eliminate that as an area of concern for RMPs. Just put it into our mid-continent areas, like we have along the Pecos Valley, where it's open during the season with set bag limits and not a draw hunt type of a situation.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Okay, thanks. The last thing I want to do is just a comment kind of self-promoting our research on sandhill cranes. I've mentioned before we have genomics research on cranes across the continent that has a lot of New Mexico birds in it. That's going to be presented tomorrow morning at 10:00 AM at the meeting of the New Mexico Ornithological Society, which is here at the Rio Grande Nature Center. Anybody can come. They do charge to register. I think it's \$35, but it goes to a good cause. What we're going to present there is a really neat story about how the genetics of the lessers and the RMP are connected.

It's a little bit complicated, but there's a major gene that affects body size that's jumped from the lessers into the Rocky Mountain Population. What it does is it causes a lot of size variation within the Rocky Mountain Population, so that there's actually some smaller cranes that just have that gene that's jumped over from lessers that are part of the Rocky Mountain Population, so it might have some implications. They'd be minor implications, but there may be some smaller birds that look like they're mid-continent birds that are actually Rocky Mountain birds, but have that gene that's jumped over. Tomorrow at 10:00 AM. Thanks.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Witt. Anyone else? No one's online, right, Tristanna? Okay, not an action item, so no motion is necessary. Item number 18, subsequent discussion of the Barbary Sheep, Oryx, and Persian Ibex Rule, 19.31.12 NMAC.

[pause 02:24:23]

Stewart Liley: Okay, Mr. Chair, members of the commission, as you said, this is the subsequent, so this is the second discussion on this. This won't be an action item in June. I believe it'll be the July commission meeting when we have the hearing, but we are at the stage where this is the last time you'll hear it before the hearing. We, I guess just diving into ibex first real quick, our management strategy is to keep ibex on the Florida Mountains and try to get a population of between 300 and 700. We're much lower than that. We're at about 100 and some animals right now.

We did, and I'll get to this in a second, a mid-season change based off of recent data that we just got. You'll look here at 25 license data, again, we ran that report just a few days ago. It's not complete. We'll probably get a few more, but the harvest success won't change much. You'll notice the estimated harvest is 16 males, 4 females, so not a lot of female harvest. Again, in the last 4 years, we've harvested under 15 females in the last 4 years. Female harvest isn't driving population dynamics. That said, the population, we flew a survey, and I'll show the transect lines from the survey. We flew another thermal imaging survey in the first or second week in February.

The results of the previous one was at about 187, is what they detected. They detected 101. A lot of people probably saw the email. Within the rule, there is the ability to adjust licenses up or down whatever percent based off the significant changes of the population. With the concurrence of the chair of the

commission, we proposed moving hunts down right before the draw actually happened for this current license year that we're in right now. What you'll see is we had two archery hunts of 100 a piece. We proposed moving those down to 20 a piece.

I think those archery hunts, we've harvested about two ibex in the last couple of years, so they're really, really low success. That's why you don't see us eliminating those. It still provides some opportunity. We did eliminate the muzzleloader hunt. There is some success in that, but we just don't feel like we could have that high of harvest pressure on this population right now. We moved the once-in-a-lifetime hunt from 5 to 15 and the youth hunt from 5 to 1. Just the amount of ibex on the mountain to maintain any quality, we had to move those licenses down significantly for this license year. That already happened. We worked with hunters that had already applied to refund, or let them have the opportunity to withdraw their applications and refund all that as well if they did.

Real quick, this is the survey. What this is, is the plane with the infrared camera flew the straight transects lines across there. We did full coverage of the mountain. Then, what they did afterwards is contour back around the mountain, starting at the top and working their way down to make sure they didn't miss anything. They had their detections of where they had ibex in numbers. They found one ibex group on the contour detections in a cliff-cutting crevasse area that they felt like they wouldn't have been seen on the overhead. They did detect one on the contour lines.

Real quick, this is what the camera looks like. You'll see what it is. They're flying at an altitude at 8200 feet where the elevation on the ground is 66. You're fairly high above them. You're not moving the ibex. It's really coming out to be a really nice tool for detections. We think we have very high detection rates, whether it's-- I don't know that it's 100%, but I don't think it's much lower. That's that same exact ibex.

Oops. If you look at that picture, this is when they toggle back and forth from the camera. You go from the thermal to the camera, same exact ibex group. You could actually pin down to see what they are.

I guess coming back to our proposals for ibex this year, we are proposing for the four-year rule cycle to move ibex license similar to what we do with bighorn sheep, where we make a determination on an annual basis. The population's at about the level when we do this for bighorn sheep, too. We would propose these be all up-to licenses and rule with an annual deciding what that is. You'll see what we're proposing is up to 15 once in a lifetime, up to 40 bow with 2 hunt periods, up to 15 muzzleloader, up to 5 youth only, and up to 40 female immature. I would say that there's probably going to be periods where those up to is a zero if we don't see population improvement in there.

I think we've been looking at trying to understand better what's going on in that population, because it's not being driven by harvest. I think the issue that we're dealing with a lot of times on these other species, we would go put radio collars on them, put a GPS collar on them, and try to figure it out. I have exposed an interesting risk for helicopter crews and for the ibex themselves, just the safety aspect of them. Where they live in the cliffs for the most part, trying to get a helicopter in there to capture safely for a human crew, and also for the ibex to where-- we can't really tranquilize dart them because they will fall probably off cliffs once the drug goes in, and net gunning them poses a huge risk for cliffs and stuff too.

We're looking at ways that we could try to monitor the population. I think you'll see us, once the camera gets put on the plane, flying multiple surveys through time to look track and changes. Especially right after they give birth to their kids, look at change in youth ratios through time to see if that's what's driving our population demographics or something else, because we can actually detect, now with the thermal, those kids will really stick out as small thermal dots, and so we could really kind of count it. That's been the hard part through the helicopter surveys. It's very difficult to classify kids through time, and actually differentiating between a yearling male from a female is very hard, too, from the air. When we get, in this camera, when you're not disturbing them and not running them, we can get a little bit better classification. Like I mentioned in the javelina, we did run the kind of public hunter surveys on ibex. A lot of people are really dissatisfied with the low ibex density, and understandably so. Most of the people that do draw a hunt, or have drawn a hunt, we asked the question, "Have you drawn ibex hunt? If you have, what matters the most to you?" and the number one response was [unintelligible 02:32:08]. You'll see that's a function of cutting licenses a lot on the males to try to do more older age class males, too. Moving on to Barbary sheep.

Our management strategy is to maintain Barbary sheep in the Southeast, and then we have over-the-counter hunts the rest of the state. You'll see the 2025 harvest data. Again, that will be updated and put online once we get all the reports post the draw, but about similar to the 2024. Around 885 estimated males and 403 females harvested last year. Some of proposals for Barbary sheep, just like we have for deer and pronghorn, we are proposing a ranch registration for the over-the-counter private land tags for Barbary sheep as well.

The other thing that we didn't bring up last time, but came through some public comments, and also through the local area, was splitting right now, GMU 29 and 30. If you draw that hunt, it's a combined hunt. You can hunt either unit. The concern is a lot more people are hunting 39. They're not even hunting 29. Even though we have a fair amount of Barbary sheep in 29 we're just seeing everyone hunt 30. We're proposing splitting those out as individual draw hunts. We're not proposing changing licenses, but for example, those hunts that have 200 licenses will move 75 over into 29, and 125 in 30. There definitely are more Barbary sheep in 30, but there is in 29. Now the hunting pressure shouldn't be as great in 30. Then, working with McGregor Range, we have some either sex hunts and female immature. We're proposing increasing the either sex hunts from 10 to 20. Then one of the things that we do have is the female mature hunts right now are a single weekend on McGregor Range. What they're proposing is the hunt be drawn valid for a month, but hunt on McGregor when it's on the weekends and non-mission days, is what they're allowing. Allow more length to try to hunt, and more extended windows, and also increasing those licenses.

Barbary sheep, similar to javelina and ibex, people really value the experience and also the uniqueness of being able to hunt. Most of the people in Barbary sheep, there's 425 respondents in that survey, it's pretty high respondent, most of the people are satisfied. Greater than 50% have a very satisfied or satisfied. Some of the reasons for dissatisfaction was low density. The one thing we didn't ask in that survey that we might want to go back out to some of those, is if they were hunting the over-the-counter areas or the draw areas. We didn't differentiate in that to get at if it was there.

Right now we asked the general opinions on our over-the-counter versus draw structure split, and trying to get on that. There was no clear direction one way or another. Some people really like it, and some people really hate it. It wasn't one kind of consensus on their structure, one over the other. Moving to oryx, you'll see our harvest rates, those are pretty similar to the 2025, high harvest success. Still high harvest success off range as well, too. Greater than 50% success range off range as well, and just under 1000 males and 770 females. Satisfaction range remain really high.

Our WSMR population, White Sands Missile Range population estimate, range-wide, is about 3,000 to 3500, but the main core of that's in Rhodes Canyon and Stallion Range. You'll see there. It's about 2,200 to 2,400, between those two ranges. We have collaborated with WSMR and Fort Bliss on military lands, and that's how the restrictions on getting on, but I think we're doing well. We're not proposing any changes to the licenses or structure on either of those military. One thing we're proposing, like I said, the ranch registration process. One of the things that we are proposing is there was you heard it at the last commission meeting, when this came up too, but also in public comments is moving this 70-year-old-plus hunt from 70-year-old-plus to anybody could draw it, we're proposing that as well.

Then we want to clarify-- Right now, our broken horn oryx definition has been maybe confusing. We're not trying to change the legality of what you can kill as a broken horn but just to clarify that definition. What we're proposing is it shall mean an oryx of either sex that has at least one horn missing at least 25% of its normal growth, or any oryx which has no horn or horns shall be considered a broken horn oryx. Just clarifying that. That definition, I think, has confused some people through time. They were wondering, "If it doesn't have a horn at all, can we harvest it or not?" It's more of just a clarification there.

Oryx hunter surveys was interesting. The number one thing that they appreciate with oryx hunting was the meat. Unlike the other surveys, this ranked out as the top. People, meat was the number one priority in the tasty meat for oryx. High satisfaction range, 66% satisfied or very satisfied. Some of the people that were dissatisfied, the reason for dissatisfaction was more on the low oryx densities. Again, we had the two hybrid meetings. On Barbary sheep, majority in support of our current structure. They were in favor of the splitting out the 29, 30 units as well. Some were proposing that we expand Barbary sheep ranges throughout the state. We're not proposing that.

We're still recovering desert bighorn sheep. Barbary sheep compete with desert bighorn sheep also for forages, but it's a big disease concern as well, too. Barbary sheep can carry *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* that can infect bighorn sheep and have whole herd die-offs. We're not proposing expanding ranges of Barbary at all. Then ibex, most of our comments were in favor of the proposed license reductions, and in general, most people commented that they were very supportive of us doing that mid-season, right now, license reductions.

A lot of discussion about lion predation brought up that they would like to see us do lion work in there. Again, we don't know exactly what is the cause in predation or if predation is the leading cause in there. I think we'll start looking more heavily into what potentially is the cause of decline of the ibex population, and see if there's something that we can do from a management standpoint on that. Then off-range oryx, we heard a lot of comments about just general opposition to increasing off-range. We did have some support in that, too. I think it's important to note that came in before we actually listed the license numbers that we're proposing. We're not proposing significant amounts of license numbers. It's six per month hunt. Right now, it'd be an increase of one youth license per month in each one of our month off range statewide tags and an increase of five in the regular hunt.

Each period would have six more hunters. I don't think that it would go from, again, 96 draw licenses to one-on-one. I don't think that's a 100 density issue that we had. Some of those comments that were opposed to the increase was more worried about 100 density. It's anywhere off state. I don't think that's going to affect that. Again, youth license is going from 24 to 25 per month. With that, I would take any questions.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Commissioners? Commissioner Witt?

Commissioner Christopher Witt: I'll start. Thanks for the great presentation, Chief Liley. I would like to ask specifically about the oryx off-range, because I also heard from a number of people that were opposed to increasing off-range licenses, but I see the numbers that you present, 58% success rate, and you presented a number that's 4.1 for satisfaction. Was that combined off-range, on-range, or can you address the off-range component of that specifically?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, that is correct. Commissioner Witt, it was combined off-range, on-range, but I do have success rates differentiation between off-range and on-range. Just let me get to it in a second. [silence] Satisfaction ratings, on range, if you split it, is 4.2, off range it's 3.7. A little bit lower, but it's higher than the average of all other species. Like elk, it's 3.4 on average. Still pretty high satisfaction ratings in those ones.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: It seems the numbers are in support. They justify your very modest increase. A measured increase seems appropriate. The other question I have is, with such consensus right now around reducing the ibex hunt, have we reduced it enough with the numbers that you're proposing? It seems that a drastic measure is called for right now. I think we're going far now.

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Witt, yes, I think we did. We looked at those numbers and that harvest. I do think we went drastic enough. I don't think we had it. We're going to be at six rifle hunts in there this next season in the draw five, in the once-in-a-lifetime one youth. We harvested an estimated 18 ibex last year. Between those, there was five youth, 15 once-in-a-lifetime, so those 20 once-in-a-lifetime. I do think we'll see that, and I think we'll be okay in terms of the harvest. I think we'll, again, reassess. I see us flying in the next year multiple surveys in there to help set again our proposal for the 2027 season. Will be an up-to number, so if five is sufficient or not, or too much, we'll adjust that down following season. For this current season, given that they saw 101 with a higher male ratio in there, I think that it's sustainable.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Witt. Commissioner Clemente.

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente: If you can go to the department suggestions for the ibex, please. I'm going to continue the conversation, Commissioner Witt. You have female immature up to 40 in two hunts, correct?

Stewart Liley: It would be up to most likely zero.

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente: Oh, okay.

Stewart Liley: It would be like in our bighorn sheep ranges, we have ewe hunts in rule. In case we have a population that goes and does well, we could have ewe hunts, but we don't issue that for a lot. This would

be similar that those female mature hunts potentially are in rule. Because they twin, if we start seeing a big growth, we could issue some. I would suspect that we're going to see, definitely 2027, probably zero. 2028, I could probably see zero. Depending on if we actually see some growth, we potentially could start issuing female immature to start stabilizing.

The issue that we've seen with ibex is a really big fluctuation in populations through the last 40 years, where you're almost down to where we're at, and then up at 1,000. We're trying to prevent this cycle where it's really high, really low, and trying to get a more maintained, a stable growth, and then a stabilization of that population. I think just their capacity to increase is so much greater than, say, elk or deer, that we want to ensure we have female immature hunts to be able to stabilize if we're seeing that growth pattern. We're not there right now, and so we would not be proposing female mature during that.

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente: That is good. If it's going to be managed that way, that is good. Like you said, that population has increased drastically and decreased, but the actions have made that population decrease. That's the reason why I'm asking if it's going to be utilized correctly. That's my comment.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Clemente. Commissioner Harwood.

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: Thank you. Pardon if this is a remedial question. On this slide, when you're asking for these up to numbers, is it a department decision or a commission decision to set the numbers for the year?

Stewart Liley: It is the commission by rule allowing the department to make that decision on an annual basis.

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: Is that the same consultation with the chair that you used to do the mid-season reduction?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Harwood, no. For bighorn sheep, that's how we do it as well. For example, after we do surveys, look at the previous year's harvest, we make that decision right before basically the annual RIP comes out. We make that pretty quick. We get all of our surveys done for bighorn sheep, and then the biologists make that determination on what's the harvest would be. We can't go above that number without going back to the commission, but we could go from that number, anything less, on an annual basis, based on department biologists.

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: Thank you. Can you go to the oryx recommendations? Thank you. I'm curious. Have you gotten any public feedback on the 70-year-old and older preference?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Harwood, yes, we've gotten feedback that people would like to see that be eliminated.

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: By inference, a few comments in support?

Stewart Liley: It's been about split, about three and three, support and oppose.

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: I see. Can you just talk for a minute about what your perspective is on moving those into youth hunts as opposed to putting them back in the general?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Harwood, the way we structure those statewide hunts off-range is we have same hunting period. It's a month-long hunting period. Right now, on all those hunts, like I said, I think we have, I believe-- where did I put it? 24 youth and 96 anyone can apply. We're just proposing moving each one of those hunting periods up one, like five licenses, four in the anyone can apply, one in youth.

The potential would exist. That 70-plus hunt is in just one month's time frame. It's in, I believe, the February or March hunt period. We do have a youth hunt during that period as well already. No, we didn't look at moving that to there. I do know right now it's highly subscribed on all those hunts. We don't have an under-subscription either on youth or adults. Our proposal was, on the increases, to increase both the youth proportionately and the adult.

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: My last question is, what are the success rates for, if you know them-- I know this is in the weeds, but do you have a sense of the success rates for those youth hunts?

Stewart Liley: I do. [silence] It's 58% roughly off range in general. Youth and adult, for example, month of January off-range, previous year was 79% on the anyone drew, 76% on youth, so fairly similar. We do see differences in success rates depending on months. Some months we see higher success, some months lower. In general, the youth success rates are very similar to the other hunts.

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: I'll just renew my request that you continue to identify places where we can further encourage youth hunting. Thank you.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Harwood. Of course, now that I'm about 70, they want to get rid of public or the 70-year-old hunts and above. [chuckles] Thank you, everyone. Anybody else? Let's have Brandon Wynn come up.

Brandon Wynn: I'm starting to see that 70 limit, too. When they originally put that in rule last-- In the 2022 quadrennial rule cycle, they put that 70 thing. I'm opposed to that, too. I think that you ought to eliminate that, too. The reason being is people my age and older than me, a little bit older than me, the prime of our lives, tags were easy to get. We did lots of hunting back then. It just seems weird now that it's so hard to draw anything to give us tag advantages now. That's the thing. I just don't think it's fair. When I was in my 20s, I drew elk tags every year, premium elk tags. I'd get rid of that. Thank you.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, Brandon.

Brandon: Yes, sir.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: David Heft.

Brandon Wynn: I knew you were coming. [laughs]

David Heft: Chair, commissioners, you're going to hear something a little bit different from me. I'm an avid hunter, so is my wife. You walk in our house, you'll know it right away. As a professional biologist, I'll be very blunt. These non native exotic ungulates on public lands across the landscape are an absolute ecological disaster. I've been virulently anti-exotic my whole career. I'm going to primarily make some comments about aoudads, or Barbary sheep, as we call them here in New Mexico, and also the Persian goats, which are not ibex, on the Florida Mountains. Both species, major disease threats.

Some of the research coming out of Texas is showing that not only are they a disease threat to our native bighorn sheep, they're a disease threat to mule deer. The competition factor has long been known.

They're on the landscape for one purpose and one purpose only in this state, targets. That's all. That's all they're there for. My recommendation has been on the aoudads. As you all know, some of you know, I've been heavily involved in some of the information efforts we had over in 34 when we had some of our bighorn shot by over-the-counter aoudad hunters.

I've recommended to the department in writing and at public meetings that that hunt go to a unlimited draw hunt primarily so we can control those hunters a little better, get information to them, so maybe we can reduce some of those mistaken identity shootings. We have to remember, for every shooting we know of, there's multiple others we don't know of, so they've had a bigger impact than we're aware of right now.

On the goats on the Floridas, and they are goats, they are not ibex, Mother Nature's handed us a golden opportunity here. That population is low enough that using licensed hunters to max this as possible, we ought to be trying to eliminate them and put desert bighorn sheep back in that range. That's the right thing to do. The term I've used my whole career is that population of goats is a dagger in the heart of historic desert bighorn sheep habitat. The department said they're a disease threat. They're right in the last part of our desert bighorn sheep habitat that's considered disease-free at the moment. That can change.

Those goats have been documented all the way to the San Andres, and down in the Hatchets and the Alamo Huecos. At any time, we could have one of those things spread. I would certainly hope that there's some disease testing going on right now to see if that's part of the problem with that population decline, like a lot of others. I think we've got something else affecting them. Anyway, little different viewpoint.

Thank you for your consideration.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, David. Anyone online?

Natasha Montoya: Yes, we do. Mr. Thorning, you may speak now. [silence] Are you there, Mr. Thorning?

George Thorning: Hello?

Natasha Montoya: We can hear you now.

George Thorning: I am a 72-year-old hunter. I can tell you I was on the 70-year-old hunt this year. There were many seniors out there. I think just the number that the seniors are applying for the hunt justifies that the seniors are interested in that hunt. A handful of hunters three and three is certainly not a survey of all the people that I saw out there hunting. We are at a disadvantage. Our hunting times are not very long.

Opportunities in this state for all species are very difficult to get, only a few percentage points to be able to even be drawn.

When I was out there during the weekdays, almost everybody was a senior who was going to hunting. I can tell you, the whole time we were out there, actually, we saw no one take an animal. I saw one coming off the range in the back of a truck with a Texas plate. Me, myself, I advocate that we have opportunities for 70-year-olds. When they used to have the leftover youth tags for seniors that probably aren't even being used now, I used to see a lot of older hunters, some of them in their 80s, certainly approaching their last hunts, the people who I saw out there hunting.

We are handicapped, whether people want it or not. We can't track 5 or 10 miles, or pull an animal out 2 or 3 miles. We're out there just to enjoy ourselves in the sport that I participated in since I was a youth. Certainly would appreciate that we have further opportunities in this state for our senior citizens, because that's what we are. Senior citizens are given a lot of privileges.

Natasha Montoya: I believe we lost our connection. We're going to move on to Jesse Deubel. Jesse, you can speak now.

George Thorning: I can't see why we can't the privilege in this area also. Thank you.

Jesse Deubel: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and Commissioners. Jesse Deubel here, executive director of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation. Just want to get on the record that the New Mexico Wildlife Federation does, in fact, support the elimination.

Natasha Montoya: Jesse, can you hear us?

Jesse Deubel: Yes, can you hear me? Hello? Hello?

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Just then, I kicked something down here. I don't know if that has anything to do with it. Shouldn't.

Jesse Deubel: Mr. Chair, can you hear me? Can you hear me, Mr. Chair?

Natasha Montoya: Jesse, we can't hear you. We will come back to you during public comment.

[pause 02:58:28]

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Was that it? Dennis Kaufman's here. He'd like to comment. Go ahead, sir.

Dennis Kaufman: Thank you for allowing me to speak. I have a lot of ibex experience. I'm not going to go into that. I like what we're doing. The only suggestion I should make or would like to make is Game and Fish has a new heat-sensitive survey device. I would propose that we use that every year late in the year just before the printed rule book comes out, and see what the population makeup is right now just before we try to set the seasons that don't even start for another year.

I like the up-to numbers, except we should probably set them higher. We can't predict what the weather is going to be, how the cougar population is going to be, how the vegetation is going to be, how successful or unsuccessful the predation is going to be on the kids. Let's set that number high, and let it be an up-to-number, so that we can look back at what we did last year, and maybe the year before, and see how what we've been doing has affected the population, keeping in mind that the weather and the predation may have influenced the population as well.

If it's an up-to-number, it doesn't matter how big it is. If it was 1,000 in each category, if it's still an up-to-number, we can set that number based on the most recent survey. If the number is too small in any of the categories, and we're limited by the four-year rule, then we're limited. We can't control what would otherwise be a bad choice. Thank you.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, Mr. Kaufman. Oh, we're able to get Jesse back? No? Okay. This is not an action item, so no motion is necessary. Stewart, thanks for all those presentations. That was a lot of work putting that together. We're at a place where we could keep going and finish, or go for lunch. Commissioners?

Director Mike Sloane: [unintelligible 03:01:40]

Commission Chair Richard Stump: I'd like to keep going. It'll be ready in an hour. [laughs] Let's take a five-minute break so we can hit the bathroom and then continue. Sound good?

Director Mike Sloane: You forget get the batteries?

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Agenda item number 19, initial discussion of the hunting and fishing licenses and applications rule 19.31.3. NMAC, presented by Chief Paul Varela. Go ahead, Paul.

Paul Varela: Chairman and commissioners, agenda item 19 is similar to the proposed changes to 19.30.3.11. This is the mobility-impaired provision. Currently, the mobility-impaired provision provides to hold a mobility-impaired deer, elk, oryx, or pronghorn license, a person must submit verifiable documentation on the proper department form that is attested to by a certified medical physician, and the individual demonstrates a permanent mobility restriction which limits their activity to a walker, wheelchair, or crutches, or one or more permanent disabilities or conditions which substantially limit the individual's ability to walk.

The department proposes adding the word permanent and eliminating the last sentence, which says every person qualified as mobility-impaired shall have their card or eligibility expired 48 months from the issuing date, and must resubmit their application every 48 months, which is the current way this rule reads. We'd like to eliminate that and make this provision permanent for mobility-impaired hunters. With that, we'll stand for any questions.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Commissioners? Harwood, go.

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: Thank you. Can you explain the feedback you got that drove this rule suggestion?

Paul Varela: Commissioner Harwood, so this is the initial discussion, we haven't sought feedback yet-

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: I see.

Paul Varela: -from the public. We will going forward.

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: Did you get some feedback outside of the rulemaking sequence for this suggestion, or is this a department initiative?

Paul Varela: Commissioner Harwood, we have received input from guests during commission meetings, which have advocated to make this rule permanent. I'm not exactly sure why the rule was intended for 48 months, that was a previous commission's decision, and so it just makes sense to make it permanent for people that qualify.

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: Thank you very much.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Commissioner Witt.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: I just want to say I support the change. I think it's the right direction, so thanks, Chief Varela.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Commissioners?

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente: Just for clarification, it will be a permanent mobility-impaired certification.

Paul Varela: Commissioner Clemente, yes, that would be permanent. You wouldn't have to reapply every 48 months.

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente: I'm in favor of that.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: [laughs] Permanent for specific individuals, correct?

Paul Varela: Mr. Chairman, yes, that's correct.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Of course, I'm in favor of this as well. It looks like we have some public comment from Charlie Trask.

Charlie Trask: I'm a lifer. I'm a native. I was advocating this rule change because of my experience as a mobility hunter. I really appreciate the department's stance, I guess you could say, a mobility or advocating mobility-impaired hunting set-aside, and whatever you can do with in terms of access. I ran into this rule having to re-up. As you all probably know, in New Mexico, it's very difficult to get a doctor, or to get a doctor's appointments and to get transportation to the doctor, and all those kinds of things. I suggest that this is a real change for that reason.

Also, it will take some of the burden off the department because the department has to process all these things. They only have to do it once, and you're done. [chuckles] I'm very grateful that you all have listened to that and that we can go forward and get this rule changed. I appreciate the opportunity to stand in front of you. Hopefully, I can continue to do that in the future. [chuckles] Thank you very much.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, Mr. Trask. Anyone online? Not an action item, so no motion is necessary. Thank you, Paul. Here we are. Second general public comment period. As a reminder, if you spoke in the first session this morning, we ask that you refrain from speaking again. We have quite a few, actually. Let's start with Annabella Miller.

Annabella Miller: [silence] Thank you. Good afternoon now. My name is Annabella Miller, and I'm with the Western Landowners Alliance. I represent the alliance as our New Mexico resource coordinator. I think I'm a little tall for the microphone. [chuckles] I'd just like to start by saying that landowners are not a monolith. Many landowners in New Mexico are working-class people who manage their land specifically for wildlife. By doing so, they contribute significant personal investments, including time and money. A lot of these investments include restoration, water conservation improvements, fencing for wildlife.

The thing that landowners do have in common, regardless of their wealth or the size of their acreage, is they're managing for wildlife specifically, many of these at least, and specifically the ones that I represent in the WLA. We have thousands of people that are part of our organization. It's, I think, over 30,000 across the West that are specifically part of our members because they want to learn the newest science and management tools in order to support wildlife on private lands.

We know that you, the commission, and the people here today understand the contribution that private landowners play in supporting New Mexico wildlife. We just continue to ask that you continue to consider them in your decision-making process and view them as partners. Thank you.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, Annabella. Lesli Allison.

Lesli Allison: [silence] Let's see. Can you hear me there? Hi, commissioners. My name is Lesli Allison. I'm the chief executive officer of the Western Landowners Alliance, lifetime New Mexican hunter, family hunts, both public and private land. What I wanted to say, and it will reinforce what Annabella just said, is that private lands play an enormous role, as you all know, in New Mexico. It's about half of the land and the habitat in the state. That comes at a tremendous cost to someone, and that someone is the private landowner.

I don't know if you all have seen yet. There's a new New Mexico State University study out on the costs of sustaining elk on the private lands. The figures are impressive. \$230 an acre has been the cost in forage to sustaining elk populations. \$20 an acre for the fencing damage and the other maintenance. That right there is \$250 an acre. On top of that, they've got \$97 million in property tax being paid from farms and ranches in New Mexico. That equates to about \$2.20 an acre.

Then we just finished a study with Southwick Associates out of Florida and found that landowners are contributing about \$5.18 an acre out of pocket to habitat conservation as well across the west, including New Mexico. You've got about \$262 an acre coming from the private land contributor to these things. We know and respect very much what the sportsmen contribute through Pittman-Robertson, Dingell-Johnson, and license fees. All totaled, that comes out to less than \$1 an acre in New Mexico. Most of that goes on to the public land, not to the private land.

When we talk about fairness and a future for wildlife, we've got to keep that in mind, who's contributing when we talk about those things, and how we continue to incentivize that contribution and support that into the future, because as Aldo Leopold said, we don't have wildlife without habitat. It's the private land habitat that's at risk and is diminishing rapidly. We lost 1.5 million acres of farms in the last agricultural census from 2017 to 2022. If we want a future for elk, for wildlife, for hunting, we've got to be working with and not against the private land owners. Thank you all.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, Lesli. Brandon Wynn?

[pause 03:11:55]

Brandon Wynn: Thank you, Chair, Commission. I'm going to talk about two things real quick. First of all, on the private land, everything that Ms. Allison just said about private land is true all across the West. For instance, no other game commission or legislature comes even close within an order of magnitude of privatizing many tags. We have the same situation, same contributions. The other commissions and legislatures have honored their public trustee obligations to all the people of the state, not just landowners and wealthy hunters.

I want to talk about something else. Based on the way all the drafts and rules are written, it doesn't appear that the game commission is going to touch private tags at all this year again for the 10th rule cycle in a row. One thing that you could possibly do to create just a tiny fraction more of non-privatized public resident tags is in the way the department interprets the outfitter set aside for the resident-only tags. I'm talking about wildlife management area tags and the cow elk tags.

I was at the legislature in the committee room when the current quota law was passed. It started out as a straight 90, 10 quota law with no outfitter set aside like most states. You call it a compromise, but just the public got freight-trained. One thing they did to ease the pain of having the outfitter set aside at all was they made cow elk tags and wildlife management area tags resident only. What I think the commission should direct the department to do is to quit interpreting the outfitter set aside, if it's a resident that applies within that pool, that that makes it a resident-only tag.

If you look at it, there's no other instance where the outfitter pool has a residency standard. The commission and the department have pushed the limits of the law to apply a residency standard for only one purpose. As far as I know, in all the rules and interpretations where they dole out tags. Just this one instance they did that to make it to where 10% of the supposedly resident-only unguided. Resident-only in every other interpretation means unguided resident pool. I think that the law actually dictates that the more proper decision would be not to do that. It's being pushed to take tags away.

What am I talking about? There's about 136 hunt codes that are cow elk or wildlife management area hunts. There's only 136. We have about 900 [inaudible 03:15:09]. It comes out to 178 tags that you would make it to where residents don't have to pay a private individual. There's no private paywall to get what's supposed to be a resident-only public tag by a reasonable interpretation of law. That's something you could do. Can you just give us less than 200 tags back to the real resident public? Thank you.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, Brandon. Kerrie Romero?

Kerrie Romero: Can you hear me? Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the commission. Kerrie Romero on behalf of the New Mexico Council of Outfitters and Guides. I'm going to talk really fast because I've got five things, and they're mostly general, but I want to squeeze them into three minutes. First and foremost, in case you didn't know, you are in the presence of Florida Mountain ibex royalty. Dennis Kaufman is probably the one person on the face of the earth that knows more about that mountain and about that ibex herd than anyone else on the planet. He spent more time there on that mountain. He has more years, more historical context of what goes on with that ibex herd. When he stands up and says he's in favor of the rule change, you guys know you're doing something right because he knows a lot about ibex.

Secondly, in terms of policy, just mostly for Commissioner Harwood's benefit, although I know you know a lot about the Open Meetings Act, so you probably already know this, but your opportunity as the commission to give feedback to the Department to add anything that you want to change that they have not proposed already changing is during the subsequent meeting. Once the issue goes to the actual hearing, you do not have the ability to change anything. You have no flexibility. That rule has to be on the register for 30 days unchanged before it is approved.

If you get to the hearing and you decide you want to change something, it's way too late. You have to make sure that you understand all of the proposals that are given by the department and give them feedback on any additional things that you want to change. That's something that, like Dave Heft was saying earlier, has changed over time. I don't think it necessarily is impeding public comment, but it's something that the public, we've had to change our strategy. I'm just communicating with you that our opportunity to communicate with you guys is between the initial and the subsequent. After the subsequent, public comment doesn't really matter anymore.

In general, and you guys got my letter the other day, we're in favor of everything that has been proposed, and we appreciate the department's working with us on some things to get some things added. We are in favor of registering ranches on the private land side. We are in favor of having to purchase a license a full day in advance before the hunt. All of those things are great. We're really glad to see that happening.

Then going to the buzzword that I just hate to my core, which is privatization, which you hear it over and over and over again, just want to remind you guys that while I fundamentally disagree with some of the definition of what privatization means to some people in this room, these tags are licenses sold that are being hunted on private land. That is not privatization. This is an access fee that is being charged.

It's not even outside of the EPLUS program. I will go back and say, just on pronghorn, we were in favor of EPLUS. We were the one group that did not like the fact that we were going to go away from EPLUS. EPLUS worked for us. We would love to go back to EPLUS. Actually, it was the other groups that were

proposing unlimited over the counter. Here we are 10 years later, and they're almost proposing to go back to EPLUS. It's a trespass fee. It's your access to hunt on private land. It's not privatization. Thank you.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, Kerrie. Nobody? Sure. Jesse submitted a comment by photograph because he can get through from-- I can't remember what agenda it was, but we'll go ahead and read it for agenda item.

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: I've offered to read Jesse's comment, which starts with, "I don't know why the audio doesn't work," [chuckles] but goes on to say, "NMWF supports the elimination of the 70-plus year old oryx hunts." Got that in the record.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Harwood. Commissioners, does anybody have any comments in general?

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: I want to compliment the chair for running a great meeting today.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Unnecessary, but thank you. I would like to thank everyone here today for being here and participating in our wildlife of New Mexico. Thank you for being civil with everyone and we appreciate you being here. Our next meeting, because of a commissioner's scheduled conflicts, will be on May 28th, and that will be held in Socorro. The next agenda item is executive session. Is there a motion to enter into executive session?

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Yes. I'd like to move to adjourn into executive session close to the public pursuant to Section 10-15-1 H(8) NMSA 1978 to discuss property purchase acquisition or disposal pursuant to Section 10-15-1 H(7) NMSA 1978 to discuss attorney-client litigation matters.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Is there a second? Second. Director Sloane, please call the roll.

Director Sloane: Yes. Commissioner Lopez?

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Yes.

Director Sloane: Commissioner Harwood?

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: Yes.

Director Sloane: Commissioner Fulfer is not here. Vice Chair Clemente?

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente: Yes.

Director Sloane: Chair Stump?

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Yes. Motion passes. We are now adjourned to executive session. This commission had adjourned into executive session closed to the public.

[Pause]

Commission Chair Richard Stump: During the executive session, the commission discussed only those matters specified in its motion to adjourn, and it took no action as to any matter. Are there any motions, commissioners?

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente: Yes, I have a motion. I so move to approve the purchase of a property consisting of plus or minus 10,990 acres on Grant County, and to further authorize the chair of the state game commissioners or designee to execute and deliver any and all documents necessary to complete the purchase of said property.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Is there a second?

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Second.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Discussion on the motion? All in favor?

All: Aye.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Any opposed? Motion passes. Thank you all for joining us here today. Our next meeting is May 28th in Socorro. Is there a motion to adjourn?

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: I'll make a motion to adjourn, Mr. Chair.

Commission Chair Richard Stump: Is there a second?

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente: Second the motion.

Chair Stump: All in favor?

All: Aye.

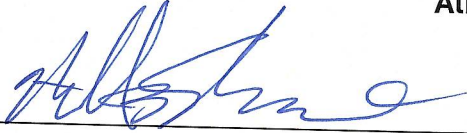
Commission Chair Richard Stump: Any opposed? Motion passes. We stand adjourned.

[03:23:13] [END OF AUDIO]

DRAFT

APPROVAL OF MINUTES
NEW MEXICO STATE GAME COMMISSION

March 20, 2026
New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
7816 Alamo Rd NW,
Albuquerque, NM 87120



Michael B. Sloane, Director

5/28/2026

Date



Richard Stump, Chair

New Mexico State Game Commission

5/28/26

Date