



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

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

**Friday, April 25**

**New Mexico Department of Game and Fish  
1615 W. College Blvd.  
Roswell, NM 88201**

**9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.**

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 1: Meeting Called to Order**

09:01:21 a.m. (00:00:00/00:00:13 on video)

Called to order by Chairman Richard Stump.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 2: Roll Call**

09:01:29 a.m. (00:00:08/00:00:21)

**Present in person:** Chairman Stump, Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey, Commissioner Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer, Commissioner Lopez and Commissioner Pack.

**Present virtually:** N/A

**Absent:** N/A

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 3: Pledge of Allegiance**

09:01:51 a.m. (00:00:30/00:00:43)

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 4: Introduction of Guests**

09:02:21 a.m. (00:01:00/00:01:13)

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 5: Approval of Agenda (Action Item)**

09:15:28 a.m. (00:14:07/00:14:20)

**Motion:** To approve the agenda for the April 25, 2025 meeting as written.

**Motion by:** Commissioner Clemente.

**Seconded by:** Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey.

**Approved:** Unanimous - Chairman Stump, Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey, Commissioner Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer, Commissioner Lopez and Commissioner Pack.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 6: Consent Agenda (Action Item)**

09:17:08 a.m. (00:15:47/00:16:00)

Commissioner Pack expressed a desire for the minutes of State Game Commission meetings to contain more detail than has previously been included.

**Motion:** To accept Commissioner Pack's proposal that the minutes for the April 25, 2025 State Game Commission meeting be more detailed when they are presented for approval at the June 13, 2025 State Game Commission meeting, and that the Department work with Commissioner Pack to ensure that the approach and new style of the minutes has more summary to it.

**Motion by:** Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey.

**Seconded by:** Commissioner Pack.

**Approved:** Unanimous - Chairman Stump, Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey, Commissioner Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer, Commissioner Lopez and Commissioner Pack.

**Motion:** To have the Department work with Commissioner Pack to revise the minutes of the Jan. 10, 2025 State Game Commission meeting, adding more information.

**Motion by:** Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey.

**Seconded by:** Commissioner Clemente.

**Approved:** Unanimous - Chairman Stump, Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey, Commissioner Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer, Commissioner Lopez and Commissioner Pack.

**Motion:** To approve the consent agenda as amended by the Commission.

**Motion by:** Commissioner Clemente.

**Seconded by:** Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey.

**Approved:** Unanimous - Chairman Stump, Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey, Commissioner Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer, Commissioner Lopez and Commissioner Pack.

The Commission took a break at 09:47:51 a.m. and returned at 10:07:06 a.m.

**Motion:** To reconsider item 6A, the approval of the minutes from the Jan. 10, 2025 State Game Commission meeting.

**Motion by:** Commissioner Pack.

**Seconded by:** Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey.

**Approved:** Unanimous – Chairman Stump, Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey,

Commissioner Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer and Commissioner Pack.

**Motion:** To disapprove the minutes from the Jan. 10, 2025 State Game Commission meeting, with the understanding that Director Sloane will work with Commissioners to revise the minutes to more accurately reflect broader discussions.

**Motion by:** Commissioner Pack.

**Seconded by:** Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey.

**Approved:** Unanimous – Chairman Stump, Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey, Commissioner Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer and Commissioner Pack.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 7: Presentations by Jicarilla Apache Nation and Catron County**

10:13:27 a.m. (01:12:06/00:53:08)

Members of the Jicarilla Apache Nation and employees of the Jicarilla Game and Fish Department made a presentation to the Commission regarding deer management in Game Management Unit 2B, providing statistics generated from recent studies.

11:58:49 a.m. (02:57:28/02:12:30)

Members of the Catron County Commission made a presentation to the Commission regarding encounters with Mexican gray wolves in the county.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 8: Annual Financial Audit (Action Item)**

02:07:04 p.m. (05:05:43/04:20:34)

A financial audit of the Department for fiscal year 2024 was conducted by Clifton Larson Allen LLP. Pursuant to statutory requirements, the Auditor presented the results of the audit for Commission approval.

**Motion:** To approve the Department's audit report for fiscal year 2024.

**Motion by:** Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey.

**Seconded by:** Commissioner Fulfer.

**Approved:** Unanimous - Chairman Stump, Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey, Commissioner Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer, Commissioner Lopez and Commissioner Pack.

The Commission took a lunch break at 02:18:43 p.m. and returned at 02:58:28 p.m.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 9: Initial Discussion of Proposed Changes to the Fisheries Rule 19.31.4 NMAC and Manner and Method Rule 19.31.10 NMAC**

02:58:28 p.m. (05:57:07/04:32:18)

The current Fisheries Rule 19.31.4 NMAC expires on March 31, 2026. The Department presented proposed changes to the Fisheries Rule and the Manner and Method Rule 19.31.10 NMAC for initial consideration by the Commission. Proposed changes have been developed based upon internal Department discussions as well as public input received over the past several years.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 10: Proposed Changes to the Migratory Bird Rule 19.31.6 NMAC**

03:08:39 p.m. (06:07:18/04:42:28)

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.
- Changing certain season dates to be later in the year because of calendar shift.
- Based on population survey data, increasing Sandhill crane permits in the Middle Rio Grande Valley and southwest draw hunts by 12 total, to be distributed among existing hunts
- Bag limit for northern pintail increasing from one to three per USFWS regulatory framework.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 11: Initial Discussion of Proposed Changes to the Upland Game Rule 19.31.5 NMAC**

03:19:32 p.m. (06:18:11/05:31:47)

The Department presented proposed changes to the Upland Game Rule (19.31.5 NMAC) based on public comment, survey information and management goals. The Department is currently analyzing data and reaching out to upland game hunters to evaluate alternatives and to help inform the rule development process.

Proposed changes included:

- Adjusting hunts for calendar dates.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 12: Legislative Session Review**

03:26:41 p.m. (06:25:20/05:00:30)

The Department provided an update of legislation affecting the Commission and Department passed in the 2025 legislative session and signed by the Governor.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 13: General Public Comment**

03:45:06 p.m. (06:43:45/05:18:56)

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 14: Commissioner Comments**

03:52:15 p.m. (06:50:54/05:26:05)

Commissioner Pack has communicated with ranchers, hunters, landowners and advocates within her district, recently attending the National Wild Turkey Federation banquet in Silver City. She also said she has met with residents in her district regarding Mexican gray wolves.

Commissioner Clemente said he has received phone calls from members of the public expressing gratitude for the Department's policy of revoking hunting and fishing privileges for those who are out of compliance on child-support payments.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 15: Executive Session**

03:56:03 p.m. (06:54:42/05:29:52)

**Motion:** Move 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; Section 10-15-1(H)(7), attorney-client privilege, litigation update; and Section 10-15-1(H)(2) NMSA 1978, limited personnel matters (director's performance evaluation).

**Motion by:** Commissioner Lopez.

**Seconded by:** Commissioner Clemente.

**Approved:** Unanimous - Chairman Stump, Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey, Commissioner Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer, Commissioner Lopez and Commissioner Pack.

The Commission adjourned into executive session at 03:57:20 p.m. and returned at 05:48:32 p.m.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 16: Action(s) from Executive Session (Action Item(s))**

05:48:32 p.m. (08:47:11/05:31:14)

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 17: Adjourn**

05:48:48 p.m. (08:47:27/05:31:31)

## **OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPTS**

### **Agenda Item 1**

CHAIRMAN RICHARD STUMP: Good morning, everybody. Thanks for joining us in Roswell today for the State Game Commission meeting. I hereby call this meeting to order. Director Sloane, please call the roll.

### **Agenda Item 2**

DIRECTOR MICHAEL SLOANE: Chair Stump?

STUMP: Yes.

SLOANE: Vice chair Hickey?

VICE-CHAIR SHARON SALAZAR HICKEY: Yes.

SLOANE: Commissioner Clemente?

COMMISSIONER FERNANDO CLEMENTE: Present.

SLOANE: Commissioner Fulfer?

COMMISSIONER GREGG FULFER: Here.

SLOANE: Commissioner Lopez?

COMMISSIONER TIRZIO LOPEZ: Here.

SLOANE: Commissioner Pack?

COMMISSIONER SABRINA PACK: Present.

SLOANE: You have a quorum.

### **Agenda Item 3**

STUMP: OK. How about we stand for the Pledge of Allegiance?

ALL IN ATTENDANCE: I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all.

### **Agenda Item 4**

STUMP: OK. As is our tradition, we go around the room and ask folks to introduce themselves. I'd like, to start with Commissioner Tirzio Lopez.

LOPEZ: Tirzio Lopez, District 3, Rio Arriba County – the little small town of Cebolla, New Mexico.

STUMP: Richard Stump. At large, from Santa Fe, New Mexico.

CLEMENTE: Fernando Clemente, at large. From Sunland Park, New Mexico.

SALAZAR HICKEY: Good morning, everyone. It's nice to see you. My name is vice chair Commissioner Sharon Salazar Hickey. I am from Santa Fe. Very proud to say I am from New Mexico. Born in California but actually raised in New Mexico. And I am from District 4. And again, thank you for being here today. We look forward to hearing from all of you.

PACK: I'm commissioner Dr. Sabrina Pack. I reside in Silver City. Lifelong resident there. Born and raised here. And I'm from District 2, which is the southwest corner of the state. Thank you all for being here today. We appreciate you being here.

FULFER: I'm Gregg Fulfer from District 1. I live in Jal, New Mexico, down in the very southeast corner that hardly anybody ever gets to. But thanks for coming this far.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT DIVISION CHIEF STEWART LILEY: Good morning commissioners, members of the public, Stewart Liley, chief of wildlife.

CATRON COUNTY COMMISSIONER BUSTER GREEN: Good? All right. Buster Green, commissioner for Catron County. Born and raised in Quemado, New Mexico. Third-generation rancher there.

CATRON COUNTY COMMISSIONER AUDREY McQUEEN: Audrey McQueen, Catron County commissioner. Born and raised in Luna, New Mexico. Lived there all my life. Cattle rancher, outfitter and commissioner.

CLEO LUMPKIN MAU: Cleo Lumpkin Mau. Raised in Catron County, a resident of Lincoln County, New Mexico. Born and raised in New Mexico. A guest.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES DIVISION CHIEF PAUL VARELA: Good morning, commissioners; Members of the public. My name is Paul Varela. I'm the chief of administrative services for the Department.

BUDGET DIRECTOR JOSEPH MIANO: Good morning, Mister chair. Commissioners, members of the public. My name is Joseph Miano. I'm the budget director for Game and Fish.

MARK MATTAINI: Good morning, Mr. Chair, members of the Commission, staff and all the public that are involved here. My name is Mark Mattaini. I live in Pagate Village on Laguna

Pueblo. My wife is native. I'm not, but I've been around there a long time, and I am on the board of the New Mexico Backcountry Hunters and Anglers. I also am a member of the Citizens Advisory Committee for our Habitat Stamp Program.

JICARILLA APACHE FISHERIES BIOLOGIST JACOB MAZZONE: Good morning everyone. My name is Jacob Mazzone. I'm the fisheries biologist for the Jicarilla Apache Nation Game and Fish Department.

JICARILLA APACHE FISHERIES TECHNICIAN VINCENT TAFOYA: Good morning, everybody. My name is Vincent Tafoya. I'm the fisheries technician at the Jicarilla Game and Fish Department.

AUDIE REVAL: Good morning. I'm Audie Reval, Jicarilla Apache Nation. Raised in Las Cruces, New Mexico. Moved up, went home. And that's where I reside now. I'm here supporting the Jicarilla Apache Nation. Thank you.

JICARILLA APACHE VICE PRESIDENT JIMMY GARCIA: Good morning, Commissioners. My name is Jimmy Garcia, vice president, Jicarilla Apache Nation. Thank you to the public. Thank you for all my tribal members for making the drive today.

JICARILLA APACHE GAME AND FISH DIRECTOR BERNARD INEZ JR.: Good morning, Mr. Stump; members of the public. My name is Bernard Inez Jr. I am the director of the Jicarilla Game and Fish Department. A resident and proud member enrolled in the Jicarilla Apache Nation. Thank you for having us.

JICARILLA APACHE WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST KYLE TATOR: Good morning, Commissioners. My name is Kyle Tator, wildlife biologist for the Jicarilla Apache Nation. Multi-generational New Mexican. Proud to be here today. Thank you.

LARSON PANZY: Hello. I'm Larson Panzy with the Jicarilla Game and Fish Department. Been there for 38 years, and I'm glad to be here supporting our nation.

TRESTON TAFOYA: Good morning. Treston Tafoya, managing editor for the Jicarilla Chieftain newspaper.

VERYL CHAVEZ: My name is Veryl Chavez. Good morning. Legislative Council member for the Jicarilla Apache Nation.

TOM PATERSON: Good morning, Chairman Stump; Commissioners; public. My name is Tom Paterson. I'm a rancher in Catron County, New Mexico, and I have the privilege of serving as president-elect of the New Mexico Cattle Growers Association.

VERNON POSEY: Good morning. My name is Vernon Posey, ranch manager on a ranch west of here at Picacho, New Mexico. Born and raised, Lincoln County.



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

ETHAN WRIGHT: Good morning, Mr. Chair; members of the Commission. I'm Ethan Wright. I'm with the New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau. Born and raised in Clovis on a farm and ranch. I live here now. Grateful for the opportunity to attend today. Thank you.

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT DIVISION CHIEF KIRK PATTEN: Good morning, Mr. Chair; Commissioners and members of the public. I'm Kirk Patten, chief of fisheries for the Mexico Game and Fish.

JOHN HICKEY: Good morning, commissioners and the public. My name is John Hickey. I'm a resident of Santa Fe. I'm also, the spouse of Commissioner Salazar Hickey. And I enjoy coming to these meetings because they're very informative.

CATHERINE MARY PESATA: Good morning, everybody. My name is Catherine Mary Pesata. I'm a lieutenant for the Jicarilla EMS.

ART PESATA: Good morning. Art Pesata, Parks and Rec supervisor at Jicarilla Game and Fish. And, yeah, proud to be here and just have a good day.

TAYLENE PESATA: Good morning. I'm Taylene Pesata. I'm the administrative manager for the Jicarilla Apache Nation. I am just here to show support.

ANTHONY MADRID: Good morning everyone. Anthony Madrid. Interested hunter. Grew up in Cuba, New Mexico.

LOGAN MCGUIRE: Logan McGuire from Dexter, New Mexico. I'm here as a houndsman and a sportsman.

GENERAL COUNSEL JEREMY MARTIN: Good morning Commissioners, members of the public. I'm Jeremy Martin. I'm the general counsel for the Department of Game and Fish.

COL. TIM CIMBAL: Good morning, Commissioners; everyone in attendance. Tim Cimbal. I'm the colonel for the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.

KEITH MANUEL: Good morning, everybody; Commissioners for Game and Fish New Mexico. My name is Keith Manuel. I'm with the Jicarilla Apache Nation. Prior game warden for Jicarilla. Forty-nine years under my belt working for Jicarilla. And thank you for having us here.

ASSISTANT CHIEF OF FISHERIES MIKE RUHL: Good morning, Mr. Chair; members of the Commission and the public. I'm Mike Ruhl, assistant chief of fisheries with the Department.

GEORGE PACK: My name is George Pack, a concerned person to enjoy the outdoors and the wildlife.

DAN SUTCLIFFE: Good morning, commissioners. Name's Dan Sutcliffe. I'm out of Albuquerque. Probably the only one in New Mexico who will admit they were born and raised in (indistinct).

PUBLIC INFORMATION SPECIALIST MELISSA GARNETT: Good morning, Commissioners; director. My name is Melissa Garnett. I'm the public information officer for the Southeast Area for the Department of Game and Fish.

WEB DEVELOPER VALENTE MEZA: Hello, there, Commissioners and members of the public. It's your friendly neighborhood web developer for Game and Fish.

COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR DARREN VAUGHAN: Good morning. Commissioners and members of the public. I'm Darren Vaughan. I'm the communications director for New Mexico Game and Fish.

HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR REBECCA ARCHULETA: Good morning, Commissioners; director. My name is Rebecca Archuleta. I am the HR director for Game and Fish.

MAJ. COLIN DUFF: Good morning everybody. My name is Colin Duff. I'm the major for the southern half of the state.

PUBLIC INFORMATION SPECIALIST COLLEEN PAYNE: Good morning, Commissioners; director and members of the public. My name is Colleen Payne. I'm the public information specialist for the Southwest Area, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.

LT. SHAWN CARRELL: Good morning, commissioners. Lieutenant Shawn Carrell over revocations.

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION CHIEF TRISTANNA BICKFORD CARRELL: Good morning, Commissioners and everyone in attendance. I am Tristanna Bickford Carrell. I'm the assistant – I'm sorry. I'm the division chief for the Information and Education section. We do have 18 people online today. And one person, Diane Schmidt, does not have a mic, but she'd like to introduce herself as a hunter education instructor for 22 years from Aztec. And then we do have two individuals who would like to introduce themselves. So I will start with Erin Hunt. Erin, you should be available to talk. Good.

ERIN HUNT: Morning. This is Erin Hunt. I'm representing Lobos of the Southwest. Excited to talk about New Mexico native wildlife. Thank you.

T. CARRELL: Erin, can you unmute your microphone and say good morning?

HUNT: Hello? Can you hear me talking? He's not talking. Hello?

T. CARRELL: OK. I'm not sure why Erin's not coming through. Will jump to Cyndi Tuell and then come back to Erin. So, Cyndi, you are unmuted.

CYNDI TUELL: Good morning everyone. Can you hear me? I am speaking and I've unmuted. Can you hear me? My name is Cindy Tuell. I'm the Arizona-New Mexico director for Western Watersheds Project and a multi-generational user of Forest Service lands. I am happy to be here today. I really appreciate you letting me attend virtually. I'm coming to you from Tucson, Arizona, which is land of the Tohono O'odham. And also I'm recovering from COVID, so I really appreciate being able to attend without having to show up in person and expose folks to germs, so thank you very much.

T. CARRELL: All right. We will try another one and see if it comes to you. Tom Phillips. Tom, can you unmute and say good morning?

TOM PHILLIPS: Good morning. My name is Tom Phillips. I'm calling in from near Las Cruces, New Mexico. Hunter and user of public lands. Thank you.

SLOANE: Mr. Chairman, while we wait for us to sort this out, I'd like to go ahead and congratulate Tristanna as the new chief of the Information and Education Division. Yeah. As you know, James left in January or so. We had interviews, and, I'm confident she's going to be an excellent addition to the team.

STUMP: Thank you, Director Sloane. And yes, much congratulations. Looking forward to working with you.

T. CARRELL: Thank you.

SLOANE: Mr. Chairman, maybe we should move along, and then we can allow folks to introduce themselves when we get the technical issues sorted out.

#### **Agenda Item 5**

STUMP: I agree, thank you, Director Sloane. OK, the next item on the agenda is the approval of the agenda. I think there might be some suggested changes.

PACK: Chairman Stump, I have two items. So first is, I understand the use of a consent agenda to help streamline meetings by grouping things together in a single action. But I would like to request to remove an item from the separate discussion and vote. I would like to pull item 6A, the minutes, from the consent agenda and have it stand alone for discussion. I would also like to, in the case of that is address accuracy and completeness of the minutes. I'd also like to request agenda items 13 and 14 be swapped. I feel that commissioner comments should follow public comment, as we very well may want to respond to something the public has said, and so I think it's appropriate for us to close with that. So I therefore move that these actions be applied to the revised agenda.

STUMP: Would you like to make a motion, please?

PACK: So I therefore move – I make a motion to move that these actions be applied to a revised agenda.

LOPEZ: I'll second the motion.

STUMP: Is there any discussion? All right. Motion passes. All those in favor, say aye. Sorry. Go ahead of myself. All those in favor say aye.

STUMP, SALAZAR HICKEY, PACK, LOPEZ, CLEMENTE and FULFER: Aye.

### **Agenda Item 6**

STUMP: Opposed? Motion passes. So, we're pulling 6A and letting it stand alone. Where would that you'd like that to stand? If it's going to standalone. Right now. OK.

PACK: Are you ready for me to discuss that? OK. So, I would like to request that significant comments or discussions by commissioners be summarized and noted in the minutes. I would like to see the minutes provide a fuller picture of our decision-making and provide greater transparency. Furthermore, I would like to request that there is a section included in the minutes that summarizes public input, even if generalized. For example, "public comments were raised – commenters raised the following concerns," listing their overall concerns and the number of concerns per topic. I know per Open Meetings Act, section 10-15-1G, that of course the minimum is that it includes the date, the time and place of the meeting, our names of members in attendance and those absent, the substance of proposals considered and record of any decisions and votes taken. Furthermore, the commentary in Open Meetings Act says that it should be considered and useful to record in the minutes other persons invited or to present and participate in deliberations. When I review Robert's Rules of Order, key points of the discussion are often included motions, amendments and votes, and optional summaries of public comments or significant statements without verbatim transcripts unless required. When I review the minutes, though, I do compliment Director Sloane on his record-keeping and currently meeting the basics of Open Meetings Act. I feel that the minutes can be more thorough and reflect the details of the meeting, especially pertaining to commissioner comments. So, in review of the last meeting and the public comments that we've been receiving, I think there was issues brought to our attention that we should put into our minutes and have as a record, instead of having to watch a video to see that. So, I can go into some details if you would like. I have other specific comments about examples or we can, you know, move forward if that's in agreement with people.

STUMP: I would like to hear some examples.

PACK: OK. So, summarizing public input, add a section for the agenda item 15. This is from the last meeting. General public comment summarizing key themes even if generalized to avoid verbatim. Example: Public commenters address wolf depredations and Catron County requests enhanced compensation programs and stricter wolf management. Others supported the Habitat Stamp Program, but urge prioritization of big-game habitats. The rationale: This aligns with Open Meetings Act requirements, summary of comments, and ensures transparency on contentious issues. Expand for example item agenda item 16 to include context of commissioners' remarks. Rationale: Capturing those reflected commissioners' priorities, and public engagement. For agenda items 9 through 13, we had the following: We had the Habitat Stamp. We had commissioners discuss balancing hunter access with habitat restoration with BLM, challenges in public-private project implementation, a habitat stamp program.

MEZA: Sorry folks, I'm just trying to test it out for the public.

PACK: 2021 (indistinct). That was great. But I think that we should have included that. We talked about big-game habitats, prompting questions from myself and Lopez on funding allocations. Item 12 was a big topic that day on pronghorn. We noted license decrease in the northeast GMUs, but lacks context of why or any debate. As we know, Commission debated on the license reduction due to declining populations in the northeast GMUs with concerns about economic impacts on hunters. So, I remember Commissioner Fulfer had focused on some economic impacts. I'd asked about hunter feedback but I also particularly took note of our biologist on the board with Commissioner Clemente. He added his valuable biology background to ask about reliability of the population data driving the license reduction. The methodology was questioned, especially considering seasonal migration patterns. Commissioner Clemente raised questions about environmental factors contributing to the decline, such as drought and habitat degradation. So, I just think overall that having a little bit greater detail and these minutes provide our public with a fuller understanding of what is happening when we look back. It also provides a reference to track comments and that we do value from the public. So, we also had a pretty good lengthy discussion about our meeting location dates. And that discussion involves spreading them out across the state. So, for those reasons, I think the minutes should reflect some of our actions as well as the public's input into these meetings. So I would therefore move to table the approval of the minutes until the next meeting, June 13, 2025, pending revisions to include a full summary of discussions and public input verified against the meeting recording. I furthermore suggest moving forward that the Commission uses the guidance that the minutes shall include a summary of public comments, key discussion points, and significant Commissioner statements.

LOPEZ: Mr. Chair?

STUMP: Go ahead.

LOPEZ: If I remember correctly, years ago we had an actual contract (indistinct).

SLOANE: Mr. Chair; Commissioner Lopez, we have gone from something very similar to this to verbatim transcribe to a transcription service. They would transcribe every word, to something in between over the course of my career. So, we can certainly do whatever the Commission's preference is. Obviously, it just takes time and energy. The one question I have, and I don't have a good answer for it right now, and I don't know if Jeremy does out there – I don't know if we could not adopt the minutes, we could change them, obviously. Maybe it would be appropriate to adopt them, but bring revised ones at the next meeting. I don't know, I, I haven't run into the situation where we did, but certainly there have been changes spelling, rephrase this, that sort of stuff that we can do. But I haven't run into a situation where we haven't. I'm not sure how that works with Open Meetings Act, because one of the requirements at the next meeting is you're supposed to adopt the meeting. So, but maybe you've read Robert's Rules a little more closely than I have.

PACK: Well, as I look at Robert's Rules, I believe that you can table the minutes until the next meeting because I think there is enough, though I outlined just there what I feel like probably should be included. Not everything verbatim, but the summary. I feel like it would be better if we could adopt those changes right now, I realize, but I think it would be better to and more accurate for you to just go over the recording. So, I believe Robert's Rules of Order say that you can table these minutes, but I, and I did not see anything in Open Meetings Act that restricts us or not. But I'm not an attorney, so yes, Jeremy maybe can weigh in on that.

STUMP: Jeremy, do you have an opinion?

SALAZAR HICKEY: Commission chair?

STUMP: Yeah.

SALAZAR HICKEY: I appreciate what you're bringing up. Thank you, Commissioner Pack. That's, one of our most important values in this commission, is transparency and earning the trust of those that we represent. I don't call people from my district my constituents because I wasn't elected, but, my representatives. So, that said, transparency is very important. My responsibility coming here is to be prepared and to know what's going on, reading, etc.. With my experience, I do not believe – I mean, I believe that we are not required to have detailed minutes to the extent that you're describing. I think that, historically, what I have seen since I've been here on the Commission for the last five years, I have seen transparency, I've seen the recordings, and I've seen, the minutes as they have been presented today, which are excellent. I prefer to have the resources of the Department spent the way they are, which is not heavily on administrative work. And I think this what you described would be heavily administrative work. What we know in the Department of Game and Fish, with all of the rulemaking that we do, there is often conflict. And due to that conflict, the issues that could be presented in the summary could be contentious and sometimes, take up a lot of our time. "Oh, is that the way we said that? Is that really what we meant?" And I'm not sure it's a valuable piece of our time. The transparency that we provide to the public is on the website. There are the recordings, the transcripts. We are as open as you can get when it comes to the Open Meetings Act. So, I prefer

to keep the status quo. That's my personal opinion. I like the brief summary of the minutes. And I come here taking a lot of notes, and that's what I would like to continue doing. And I don't want to rely heavily on more detailed minutes. But I respect your opinion. And thank you.

MARTIN: (Indistinct) I think you could, let it be amended within 10 working days after the meeting. So.

SALAZAR HICKEY: Commissioner chair, I apologize, Jeremy, for cutting you off, because I know today is a very busy day, and I'm looking forward to, agenda item number seven. And I think we need to spend some time on some of these other items. So, if there isn't any other discussion, I would like to make a motion.

CLEMENTE: Chairman, I'm sorry, but we're not following the actual proper – there is a motion on the on the table and until that motion gets amended, we cannot have another motion and we're under discussion of that motion. With that being said, I am going to say that all of these notes that have been taken, the reason why they get approved is because this is what gets recorded. OK. This is what gets recorded. And this is where it gets recorded – what the Commission and the public announces, what they speak, what the conversation is. I agree, we don't have to go into very detailed – “well, I meant that this way, I meant it ...” No. All the comments have to be, in general, be documented. If I say, a comment on whatever it is, that that comment or that specific has to be within the minutes, and that's the reason why those menus are provided to us for us to check them prior. And that's the reason why we adopt the minutes. We accept the minutes. There is a motion to accept those minutes. So I do agree, there has to be a little bit more detail. I don't think it takes a lot more. I'm not going to say that it has to say exactly every word, but the comments have to be included. All the comments, all the motions. I have noticed that some of the motions, they're not specific to what the motion was and what was the response of those motions. So all of that has to be documented because this documentation is what proves what was said and how it was taking action. Thank you.

STUMP: Do you have any other comments on this motion?

SALAZAR HICKEY: I would like to know what the motion is that's been presented.

PACK: So, chairman. So I had moved to table the approval of the minutes till the next meeting. I will withdraw that motion. I do not believe we had a second for that motion, but I would furthermore discuss in response to Commissioner Salazar Hickey's comments. I'm not asking for verbatim, as apparently you have done in the history of this. I am asking that general summarization happens on the comments happening from the public, so they are fully documented in our minutes, in the sense that these were the discussion topics that were brought to our attention, and most importantly, is that some kind of summarization of what the commissioners are debating on. Because when we hear reports and we have valuable input from all of the commissioners, I think there should be some kind of summary included, because right now the minutes are very, very abbreviated. There's a presentation. We don't know anything more than just the presentation in two or three sentences. So, Commissioner Salazar,

OK, I appreciate your comments, but I do not I'm not asking for heavy administrative overburden here. I am just asking for a little more detailed representation of what is happening in these public meetings.

SALAZAR HICKEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, Commissioner Pack, Commissioner Clemente and Commissioner Lopez, I think that, we all are similarly situated, in what we want in minutes, again, focusing on transparency and changing nothing. We're focusing just on the minutes. Director Sloane, looking at the minutes of our last meeting of Jan. 10, 9 a.m., an example, I think, of what Commissioner Pack is looking for – an example would be agenda item number nine, aquatic Species of Greatest Conservation Need Initiatives, in that it has a very brief paragraph that says the department is engaged in several conservation initiatives, dot dot dot dot, and if we can keep it simple and brief – again, I where I'm coming from is not to overburden the Department. You have bigger fish to fry, no pun intended. Sorry. And, so that said, Commissioners, Mr. Chair, I would like to move that today, we approve the minutes that have been presented as is and that for our next meeting, today's minutes reflect a different style and format as described by Commissioner Pack. And thank you again for summarizing what you said earlier, which is not detailed, but concise, of highlighting the major points of what commissioners are saying, what members of the public are saying, and a little bit more information than the skeletal approach that we have. That is my motion. We accept today's minutes and we see something different next. Do I have a second?

STUMP: Do I have a second for that motion?

CLEMENTE: So if I can just get some clarification. So these minutes that we approve will not be adjusted within the time that we have to for them to be adjusted.

PACK: So that currently there's no second to that. But we could make a motion to have the minutes – Jeremy? – amended within 10 days of this meeting. Is that correct? Jeremy?

SLOANE: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Pack, I believe that the 10-day requirement is after a meeting. You have 10 days to post the draft minutes, and we will try and do that regularly. I don't again, I haven't had experience with significant amendments to the minutes. Usually it's pretty minor and then they get posted immediately after the meeting or very shortly thereafter. I don't – it's just completely new to me. And Jeremy looks like he's reading the Open Meetings Act as we speak.

STUMP: I'm more inclined to go with what Commissioner Hickey is recommending for this meeting.

SALAZAR HICKEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess Commissioner Pack and Commissioner Clemente, why is it so important to the two of you that we have the minutes of our last meeting revised now? Can we just start today instead of focusing on what we did Jan. 10?



CLEMENTE: OK, I can answer that question. Why is it so important? It is not important just for the last minutes; for the last meeting. It is important from — if you want to go, it should be done from the beginning. OK. So we cannot go that far. We're here. The only time that we can take into consideration, because it was brought up by Commissioner Pack and, yes, I have seen some things that they're missing on the minutes, and that's why I'm agreeing. So why is it important? Because that's the only meeting that we can go back to change it. So that's why it's important. That's why it's being brought up right now, because we have time to make it correct. Why do we keep making mistakes forward?

SALAZAR HICKEY: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Clemente, I think it's important, to do something very accurate and very truthful. And going back to the January meeting, that's three months ago, and I'm not sure it's as easy as you think it might be to just go back three months. I would rather focus, start today, with today's meeting and have a new reflection. That's my opinion. Start today, and for the next meeting.

STUMP: Commissioners?

SALAZAR HICKEY: I will make a motion. Maybe we'll do it in two phases. My first motion is that we accept Commissioner Pack's proposal that the minutes for today's meeting that we will see at our next meeting will be more detailed. That is my motion for today's minutes.

SLOANE: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Salazar Hickey, I assume that would be for all minutes from today's for going forward?

SALAZAR HICKEY: That's correct. And I would also add to that motion that the Department work with Commissioner Pack to ensure that the approach and the new style has more summary to it.

PACK: I'll second the motion.

STUMP: Thank you. Is there any more discussion? All those in favor?

LOPEZ: Vice chair Hickey, just for the record, it's not really — let me use the exact phrase — cumbersome or burdensome for (indistinct) that the staff has to do these minutes because the staff of New Mexico Department of Game and Fish located at 1 Wildlife Way, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87507 — or 6 — 7, they actually send this to a transcribing agency that we pay to do it. So, we used to do it, we used to pay \$2,000 (indistinct).

SLOANE: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Lopez, we did used to do that, and that became very expensive very quickly. So we do not do a transcription service. One of our personnel sits and rewatches the meeting and tries to summarize it.

LOPEZ: So, if you use the transcription service that removes them from that to fry other fish.

SLOANE: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner Lopez, I think there are potentially a variety of ways that we can get to a place, that is more along the lines of what's being asked for, including potentially Zoom transcripts. We just have to play around with the technology and see where we can get to.

LOPEZ: OK, that's all I had. No comments.

STUMP: So, all in favor say aye.

STUMP, SALAZAR HICKEY, PACK, CLEMENTE, LOPEZ and FULFER: Aye.

STUMP: Opposed. OK. Motion passes. Thank you.

SALAZAR HICKEY: Mr. Chair? So the second motion is to, for the minutes of Jan. 10, the Department work with Commissioner Pack to revise the minutes that have been presented today and add a few more items and information. Do I have a second?

STUMP: Do I have a second on that motion? And thank you, Commissioner Hickey.

CLEMENTE: I second the motion.

STUMP: OK. All those in favor say aye.

STUMP, SALAZAR HICKEY, PACK, CLEMENTE, LOPEZ and FULFER: Aye.

STUMP: Opposed? OK, that motion passes as well. Thank you, Commissioners. OK. So, moving on. Item number seven, presentations by ...

SALAZAR HICKEY: Commissioner – Chair, I think we need 6B, the revocations.

### **Agenda Item 6B**

STUMP: I apologize. All that vernacular threw me off. So, OK. Revocations. Any questions or comments regarding these items?

SALAZAR HICKEY: I just have this. Commissioner Chair, I have to say a big thank you and a shout out to our law enforcement. You all are doing an awesome job. It's not an easy task. And a big thank you for bringing what you did today.

LOPEZ: Mr. Chair?

STUMP: Yes.

LOPEZ: I have a quick comment on the revocations. Is revocation staff available real quick?

SLOANE: Mr. Chair and Commissioner Lopez; Yes, we have Lt. Carrell and Col. Cimbal.

LOPEZ: Perfect. Once again, gentlemen, just I want to echo what Commissioner Vice Chair Salazar Hickey stated, but I am seeing just a whole bunch of fishing violations on here. And can you just reiterate, when our fishing license, just let the public know when our fishing season started, when it ends, that the new license requirement is now happening?

CIMBAL: Absolutely. So it doesn't change, every year it's going to be April 1 through March 31. So your new license would be required April 1 every year. Most of the folks you're seeing on this list, pretty much habitual, not going to buy a license, you'll see some of them have revocations stacked upon revocations and what that leads to is until they clear their one revocation and actually pay their penalty assessment and fulfill their three years, five years, whatever it is, if they're caught during that time, they get fishing while on revocation, which will add more years to their revocation time. So, they have to fulfill the first one before the second one even begins. A lot of these times, the habitual ones will end up, you know, three, four or five times down the road that they're not purchasing a license. It may end up an arrest without that option for penalty assessment.

LOPEZ: Thank you, Col. Cimbal. So, ladies and gentlemen, listening at home and here in attendance, buy your license. It's cheaper to pay \$45 than it is to pay your court costs, your bond fee and your time and dealing with our – I shouldn't say dealing, but communicating with our officers on a constant basis when they could be doing more public safety. It's turkey season as well. If you're out there hunting spring turkey, please buy a license. It's \$25. And I also want to thank everybody that was successful in this year's draw. And, those who were unable aren't successful, keep on trying. And remember, you can go hunting and fishing and always take a kid fishing. So thank you, staff.

CIMBAL: I'll add in there. I mean a lot of our waters that people commonly fish are what we refer to as put and take. So those fish are stocked by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. And the money to stock said fish comes from license dollars. So not buying licenses results in potentially less fish down the road. So, like Commissioner Lopez said, it is important to buy that license annually and and support the state of New Mexico and the hunting and fishing that we have.

LOPEZ: Thank you, Colonel. Thank you, Lieutenant.

STUMP: Thank you. Gentlemen. Commissioner?

CLEMENTE: I was not, I looked it up and I was noticing there's a person. I'm not going to say the name or anything, but, this is a 10-year revocation, and I believe in the description, it says that he's been several times that he was in revocation already, and he continues being several times. I don't know if this is for the Commission or what can be done because to me it's just something that they're just utilizing the system and continuing on. Obviously, there's no

respect. And, you know, the loss of wildlife, whether it's fish, whether it's, deer or anything. I mean, the loss of wildlife for the residents of New Mexico is huge. So it's not only about a license or if he was revoked or not.

CIMBAL: Yeah. I think you're referring probably to one of the habitual-not-going-to-buy-a-license-ever fishermen. So, what you don't see here would be the court costs when we do catch them, bring them to jail. They're in front of the judge. They're getting assessed fines and fees, potentially jail time. So, there is more to that. But, as you can see, they're not getting away with it very well. They're getting caught often. So, they're paying fines and fees behind the scenes. Certainly, they're not buying a license, that is for sure. But they are getting caught regularly.

S. CARRELL: And I might add to that, this this particular individual did, I believe, spend 30 days in jail for this violation. Anything after three convictions is a mandatory 90 days in jail. Some of that could be waived on house arrest. But I believe he spent 30 days in the jail and 60 days on house arrest. So, there is some additional stuff that is being done in the courts that isn't reflected here.

SALAZAR HICKEY: Commissioner Chair, I do have one comment. Col. Cimbal and Officer Shawn Carrell. Thank you both. I have to do a shout out to Officers Apodaca and Melendez. Like many of the persons present here in the public, they are concerned about their livestock, their pets, their animals, their children, their people, our community. And, I live in a city. I live in Santa Fe. And who would know that a bobcat or two and coyotes, like to prey on some of our pets. And so, I want to say a big thank you to our Apodaca and Melendez, because you not only do revocation, you do convictions, but you also try and do preventive stuff and you work with our communities. So, I want to say a big thank you for both of you and all of the officers.

STUMP: I'd like to echo that we appreciate what you guys do very much. OK. Is there, any more discussion or questions on the revocations? Do we have a motion to approve the consent agenda, as amended?

CLEMENTE: I so move.

SALAZAR HICKEY: I second.

STUMP: All in favor say aye.

STUMP, SALAZAR HICKEY, PACK, CLEMENTE, LOPEZ and FULFER: Aye.

STUMP: Opposed? Motion passes. I was just informed that we're having a problem with Zoom before these presentations. And I think it's important that we get our Zoom straight for this. So, if we could take a 10-minute break and hopefully we can get that resolved. Thank you.

STUMP: Tristanna, do we have people online that might be able to introduce themselves?

T. CARRELL: I believe so. If you're online and want to introduce yourself, please raise your hand again. OK, Erin, will you unmute yourself and introduce yourself?

HUNT: Good morning. Can you hear me?

T. CARRELL: Yes, we can. Thanks, Erin.

HUNT: OK. Thank you so much. My name is Erin Hunt. I'm here with Lobos of the Southwest. Excited to talk about New Mexico native wildlife with all of you. Thank you.

T. CARRELL: OK, Cyndi. Cyndi, you will be next.

TUELL: Good morning. Mr. Chair and commissioners, members of the public. My name is Cyndi Tuell. I'm the Arizona-New Mexico director for Western Watersheds Project. I'm also a multi-generational user of the Gila National Forest, and one of the main reasons I go there is to view wildlife. I camp there with my children, and I really hope someday to be able to see and hear Mexican gray wolves in the Gila. I'm really glad to be able to be here today. Appearing virtually – I'm recovering from COVID, so I really appreciate the opportunity to not have to share that germ with you. And also, I'm coming to you from Tucson, Arizona, which is Tohono O'odham land, and so I appreciate not having to make the drive this time. Thank you very much.

T. CARRELL: Wonderful. Thank you. And, Stephanie, you are allowed to talk.

STEPHANIE HERBERT: Good morning everybody. My name is Stephanie Herbert. I am the wildlife program lead for BLM New Mexico, and I appreciate the conversation today.

T. CARRELL: Thank you. Stephanie. Tom Phillips, you are permitted to speak.

PHILLIPS: Hi. Good morning. Tom Phillips calling from Las Cruces area. I'm a hunter and public lands user in the southwest, primarily of New Mexico. So, appreciate the opportunity to join you.

T. CARRELL: Thank you, Tom, and Brandon Wynn, you are allowed to speak.

BRANDON WYNN: Thank you. My name is Brandon Wynn. Fifth-generation, sixth-generation, whatever New Mexican, avid hunter. And, as many of the commissioners know, avid follower and instigator of change on the New Mexico State Game Commission. And I'm just here listening in and I want to make some general comments at the end. Thank you.

T. CARRELL: Thank you. Brandon. And next, Robert Apodaca.

ROBERT APODACA: Good morning, board. Good morning, Commission. Robert Apodaca, I'm a consultant with the Jicarilla Apache Nation. But, we are also from from Taos, New Mexico. Thank you.

T. CARRELL: Thank you, Robert. And that is everyone that has their hand raised at the moment.

STUMP: All right. Thank you, Tristanna. I think we need to do some cleanup on on item No. 6. I need a motion to reconsider the second motion.

PACK: Chairman Stump, as we reviewed, how the motions were made. So, we believe that there's a clarification needed to bring us into compliance with Open Meetings Act. So, the second motion made by Salazar Hickey involved basically postponing the amendments being approved or disapproved or, you know, basically that was the content. And then over the next few weeks, working with Director Sloane on those revisions. I believe, and we did discuss with the attorney, we do need to either approve or disapprove or amend, and we are not in the position to amend today because we would like to review the records. So, I am going to make a motion that we disapprove the minutes from the January meeting with the notation that over the next few weeks that – I'm happy, and I'm sure any other Commissioner to work with Director Sloane on adding additional commentary to that set of minutes to be reconsidered for approval then, at our next meeting,

SALAZAR HICKEY: I second.

SLOANE: Mr. Chair, commissioners, I think we would need to reconvene, have a motion to reconsider and a second and a vote on that motion, and then a new motion.

STUMP: So, can I have a motion to reconsider?

PACK: Let's start with that one. So, Chairman Stump, I make a motion to reconsider item 6A, the minutes.

STUMP: Do I have a second?

SALAZAR HICKEY: I second.

STUMP: Any opposed? Motion passes. OK. Now, we – you're going to make the next motion.

PACK: Let me say that again. OK. Mr. Stump, I move that the minutes from the January meeting be disapproved with the understanding that Director Stump will work with myself or any other Commissioner on revisions to those minutes to more accurately reflect some of the broader discussions, and that we will re-present those in the June meeting. Or Director Sloane. I'm sorry. Work with Director Sloane. Thank you.

SALAZAR HICKEY: I second.

STUMP: Any opposed? Motion passes. Thank you, Commissioners. OK. All those in favor way aye.

STUMP, SALAZAR HICKEY, PACK, LOPEZ, CLEMENTE and FULFER: Aye.

### **Agenda Item 7**

STUMP: Opposed? OK. Housekeeping is done. Thank you so much. OK, moving on to, agenda item No. 7. We have two presentations by two governmental entities that have requested present to the commission today. First, we will hear from the Jicarilla Apache Nation, and then we'll hear from Catron County. We will allow Commission questions after and public comment pertaining to each presentation. So if I could get the Jicarilla Apache Nation to come up, please.

INEZ JR.: Good morning. For the record, my name is Bernard Inez Jr. I am the director of the Jicarilla Game and Fish Department. Once again, I would like to thank you guys. Chairman Stump, I do appreciate your efforts in getting us on the agenda for today's meeting. I do have some packets here. I sent out some emails, in regards to some letters and supporters of this presentation, I'm not sure if you guys received that. Can I approach and give you guys this information?

STUMP: Please? Chief Liley will bring them up.

INEZ JR. Yes, sir. OK. So, Like I mentioned, Bernard Inez, director of the Game and Fish Department. I do have Mr. Kyle Tator – he is the Jicarilla Game and Fish wildlife biologist, and honorable Vice President Jimmy Garcia, Jicarilla Apache Nation, with me for this presentation. Yeah. All right, so we'll just get into the meat and potatoes of our presentation. Our objectives, for this presentation, are to share our knowledge of mule deer in our region, share our concerns to the Commissioners, the urgent biological need and public support to reform game management – Unit 2B deer management, to gain the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish's support for change, and to create a roadmap to change deer management in unit 2B from an opportunity to a quality unit. We feel that this is time sensitive because of our studies and data and the decline of mule deer in the area. So, for those that might not know, the Jicarilla Apache Nation is located in north-central New Mexico, where the Colorado Plateau meets the Rocky Mountains. The reservation encompasses 850,000 acres with incredible wildlife values, and lies in the proximity of off-reservation high country, the southern San Juan Mountains, making some of best big game habitat in the west. So, part of our philosophy in conservation management is, exceptional habitat equals healthy wildlife. I think we can all agree that. And, this slide just kind of shows some of that stuff that we do, you know, work in the sagebrush fields, mountain mahogany stuff, planting. As stewards of the land, we know it is important for us to give back to our land and make it as healthy as possible for our wildlife. So, Jicarilla Apache Nation Wildlife Management Fund was born out of necessity. As you guys may know, Native American sovereigns are excluded from sharing over \$1 billion in federal excise taxes that fund state programs. And because we do not get any of that money, we had to find a way to fund that. And that is through our management practices in our jurisdiction. So this was kicked off, 1993, the Supreme Court ruling, New Mexico vs. Mescalero tribe. That kind of was the starting point of Jicarilla, building the self-reliant program. So, everything that we do within

our jurisdiction is science, data and fact-driven. That's how we make our decisions. Our priority is to tribal members for hunting opportunity for cultural reasons as well as – it is part of our way of life. With that said, we do offer a very limited opportunity for non-members, and this is part of that self-reliant funding source. So, any threat to our model of self-reliant wildlife management is considered an infringement on our sovereignty. So, a little bit of history and values of, the Jicarilla Nation and the Department. So, the Department was established in 1957 to manage programs for all fish and wildlife and species in our jurisdiction. The nation's land's comprised of 850,000 acres. So, because wildlife and, you know, habitat is so dear and important to the Jicarilla Apache people, over the years, the nation has purchased adjacent lands, ranches that we have put into trust, that permanently protects for future use. So, over the years, this is about 131,283 acres that have been permanently protected. Our commitment, like I have mentioned, is to our tribal membership. It is our way of life. Mule deer, in particular, is culturally significant to our people. It is used in ceremonies, is used in our feasts, it is used in our teachings to our young as well as taking care of our elders. We do have strong public support from our community as well as our neighboring friends, if you will. And we have always had support from our Jicarilla leadership because this is pretty important to us. Like I mentioned, for the Jicarilla Apache, hunting isn't just hunting for us. It is the way of life is teachings that have been passed down from generation to generation. A mule deer just isn't a deer to us. It is a being that is that we connect with. Like I said, it's used in our religious ceremonies, our culture, and, of course, it helps fund our efforts in conservation, just like what was mentioned earlier with the officers that were sitting here, you know, fish funding their programs. This is what it does for us. So, the science based conservation that mule deer require is also the preservation of culture and lifeways that have grown and evolved with deer since the beginning of time. I think this picture is pretty powerful. This is an elder within our community. The gentleman sitting behind me, Mr. Albert Posada, that is his grandmother. She is one of the very fortunate that was able to get a mule deer last year. And he harvested that for her. We have always managed and had to cut permits to make sure that this resource is there for our needs. And, we are seeing this decline, and that's why we are here to, to hopefully, come up with a plan as Jicarillas as well as the state in New Mexico to manage mule deer in our region. So, some of the awards and achievements, as you can see, are on the board – Tribal Wildlife Program of the Decade from the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society in 1994; High Honors Recipient from the Harvard University's Honoring Contributions in the Governance of American Indian Nations program, 1999; Sporting Heritage Award of Excellence from Sporting Classics Daily, 2017; Tribal Excellence in Conservation Award from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2023. We do our best and I feel like we are the best at what we do when it comes to mule deer, and we are here to hopefully send that message and work together for this cause. Right now, I'll turn the presentation over to Mr. Kyle Tator, the wildlife biologist. He'll start going over some of the science and data that the nation has acquired over decades.

TATOR: I'll sit there. Thank you, Bernard. Thank you for having us today, Chairman Stump and Commission. Again, my name is Kyle Tator. We've been working on this issue for five years. This is near and dear to me. I am from Dulce. I grew up in the community, and I, for better or worse, I'm an Aggie, right? How many Aggies do we have up there? All right. The Jicarilla Apache Nation is successful because we believe in our data. We believe in our monitoring. It detects



threats, and it prevents and or mitigates impacts. It's something that we are very proud of. It's something that we implement annually. I mean, we're very intensive in how we do things. One of those things is migration. We've been working on migration since the early '80s, and we know a lot about what elk and deer do in the region, generally speaking, how deer in particular utilize the landscape to survive and and reproduce. Just a little, you know, note, on migration, what it is. Migration is a learned life strategy. And mule deer research indicates that this strategy is passed along maternally. So, if a fawn's mama moved, that deer would adopt the same life strategy. Further, deer notoriously lack the ability to adapt or change their life strategies – things like migration routes, timing highway crossings, finding areas, winter grounds, environmental cues and more. Mule deer exhibit extreme fidelity to these things, learned and passed on through ancestral knowledge gained from generations before them. This lack of plasticity makes deer incredibly specialized and in-tune with the land they depend on, but also equally vulnerable to hard change and rapid change, such as barriers, energy development, habitat loss, fragmentations and natural events like drought. Thus, on a population scale, a diverse set of strategies is optimal for buffering uncertainty. To me, it forces us to look across the fence and realize that on an ecosystem level that we need to become better partners with the folks that are influencing management. So this slide is incredibly busy and might be difficult to interpret, but it's purposely done. What we have learned over the years is wintering animals move northeast from winter range in summer and animals move southwest. The complexity comes with the jurisdictions. So each color represents a different land jurisdiction or land ownership. The colors – so, BLM land would be yellow. Tribal land would be, the gray. So, you could see Jicarilla, Apache Nation and then Southern Ute above the Colorado border. And then, green would be U.S. Forest Service lands. Similarly, the deer movements from the Crow Mesa study, conducted in unit 2C, have also been mapped. Both of these maps demonstrate the intertwined and complex landscape linked by elk and deer migration. Again, when I look at these maps, I immediately think of the network of players, the depth of what it will take for wildlife to compete for its rightful place on the landscape. And my job, or our job, as wildlife professionals is to advocate for wildlife. The key is to advocate for wildlife collaboratively in this case, because migration provides that umbrella. We had breakfast with the with a gentleman the other day on this issue and he dubbed, the San Juan interstate deer herd a national treasure. And I thought it very fitting for this meeting. It is a national treasure. It is super unique. It is something that is near and dear to I think everyone in this room that understands what what's on the table. A natural wonder that is so very important that it crosses four jurisdictions. So, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Southern Ute, Jicarilla Apache Nation and New Mexico. This map is from the Rosa study, which was conducted in unit 2B and it demonstrates the vast movements that mule deer are using. So important that our predecessors established a group called the San Juan Interstate Wildlife Working Group, established in 1988. It was intended to promote and communicate open communication and coordinated management of migrating big-game members, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Jicarilla Game and Fish, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, and the Southern Ute. Other partners that have been at the table and are certainly always welcome at the table would be BLM, U.S. Forest Service, state land and private holders. It's been in place since 1988. In 2009, there was a MoU that kind of, was in place between Colorado and New Mexico directing the New Mexico Game and Fish and Colorado Parks and Wildlife to work together in managing

wildlife, but it also excluded the two sovereigns in the in the region as signatories. Basically, since that time, there has been a good faith annual meeting where we share information that's already been publicly available. It's a formality. So, an assessment of migration and game management in unit 2B — this is what I could find in from the literature and what we know about deer in the region. It's 90 to 95% migratory. It serves as an incredibly important winter range to a regional deer herd ranging from Pagosa Springs to north of Bayfield to Chama, you know, all of these deer that are summering in this area will come down and overwinter in unit 2B. Incredibly important. Just some thoughts that I have on important winter ranges: overwinter survival requires habitat enforcement; oil and gas mitigation, in this case in unit 2; access management so that, you know, we minimize disturbance; law enforcement, of course; protection; and one of those things is harvest restraint. You're concentrating deer on winter range. It's not something that, that we would advocate for, heavy harvest. So migrant deer, again must travel through three different jurisdictions to reach a game management unit 2B based on some of the research that we've done. The fall migration date has fallen within October 21 to November 6. And that's been, some recent studies by Hall, Sawyer and myself. Game Management Unit 2B harvest relies on bucks that are born, grown and protected on surrounding lands. Again, 90 to 95% migratory. So, what happened? Excuse me. From 2019 to 2022, the New Mexico Department of Game Commission authorized a late-season youth hunt for, quote, youth on Thanksgiving break. The timing of the hunt and the excessive quota on the hunt was something that we immediately opposed. It was 150 tags issued during the rut. It's something that if you know mule deer, is something that we would never do at that level, can be extremely damaging. For the record, we do not oppose youth hunting nor youth hunters' success. It's something that we believe in wholeheartedly. We have a variety of youth opportunities on the reservation ourselves. We do oppose excessive harvest during mule deer breeding season. Again, mule deer are extremely vulnerable to rifle harvest during the rut. It was also additive. This is an additive effect to the already excessive quotas in unit 2B issued during non-youth seasons. So, 1,750 licenses is what's currently being issued in unit 2B. The last cycle was around 2,500. This period effectively liquidated buck abundance and age class. The current deer rule from 2023 to 2026 continues to excessively harvest and remove annual cohorts of bucks, thereby reducing any possibility of recruiting older age-class males into the population until the harvest strategy is drastically changed to restore buck age class. Some of our issues and concerns, if we were to summarize them onto one page — I tried to do that — is that as the unit 2B opportunity-based hunts hurt actually took away opportunity from the Jicarilla Apache people. So, there's a fixed number of deer in the system. You know, gaining opportunity for youth and unit 2B sounds really great, but it was actually taking opportunity from Jicarilla Apache. Late or rut hunts exploit Jicarilla Game and Gish deer conservation efforts. impacts have been compounded by record-breaking drought — and I'll get to that here in a second; also, detrimental effects to regional health, abundance and age class of bucks; the Jicarilla Apache culture and traditions; regional hunting opportunity and economy; the Jicarilla Apache model for self-reliance and sovereignty; constituents, individuals, businesses and tribes. I would like to remind the Commission that your constituents or your or your folks are also the Jicarilla Apache people. Unilateral and damaging decisions are a clear violation of state law — the State Tribal Collaboration Act of 2009; also, a district court order from 1990 that I'll familiarized the group with. Back in 19 — I believe it's 1998 — or 88, I should say, the Jicarilla

Apache Nation purchased El Poso and Theis ranches and put them into the Federal Trust. New Mexico Department of Game and Fish argued the process was illegal, and they had jurisdiction over hunting and fishing regulation on these purchased lands. March 6th, 1990, the judge, the judgment in favor of the Jicarilla Apache Nation stipulated the nation and state work together and to coordinate annual allocation of mule deer and elk permits in unit 2, 4, 5 and the Jicarilla Apache Reservation. For perspective, I have compared, the two two sovereigns, if you will. So unit 2B is on the right and the Jicarilla Apache Nation is on the left. I titled this slide Same Deer Herd, Conflicting Management because I think that is very true. For perspective, Jicarilla Apache Nation 850,000 acres. Game Management Unit 2B is 477,000 acres. We are issuing 50 licenses this year because that's what the resource allows. New Mexico Department of Game and Fish is issuing 1,750, of which 775 will fall within November seasons. Forty-eight of our licenses are going to tribal members. Most of those will be going to elders, few opportunities for the general public. Two of those will be going for November licenses auctioned, because that's what funds our model for conservation. Our funding is self-reliant. New Mexico's funding is federal and state excise taxes, permit sales, etc., it's much more diverse. Our monitoring is intensive. We monitor everything. We monitor populations through aerial surveys. We fly 30 hours every January. We monitor harvest. We have a skinning shed. We pull teeth, we score antlers, we monitor for disease. We have a very in-depth habitat monitoring program on winter range. We – you name it, we are involved in it. Our research is in-house. I'm not familiar with the state is doing as far as research for elk and deer. Our harvest is for quality opportunity. If we issue a license, we want that individual to have an exceptional hunt, tribal member or not. Exceptional is a, subjective thing, right? Some folks it might mean harvest; to us, it's opportunity that you will have a successful hunt; you will go out and you'll have opportunity to harvest. So, habitat work – very intensive. We are actively, working on all habitats on the reservation, annual workloads. You know, we're a very small staff, but we are able to perform some great things. Habitat work on unit 2B is mainly by the federal government. Regulations are set annually. We work very hard to compile these data every year, and it is quite the hustle from about January to March to get annual proclamations out. And as director Inez says, everything we do is science-driven as the resource allows. We are extremely proactive. New Mexico 2B regulations are set four years into the future. And everything that we've talked about or discussed, it seems to have a social precedence. Drought. Drought seems to be a part of life in New Mexico these days, right, unfortunately. What we're looking at here is basically the two jurisdictions. The top is the Jicarilla Apache Nation. The bottom is Rio Arriba County, because I could not find a polygon for unit 2B, drought in itself from 2000 on the left, all the way to present day on the right, the blue line with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish logo on it depicts when the youth hunt was authorized and what we're concerned about today. I guess to summarize, what has happened is, the area has been basically 100% in drought from 2018, again in 2022 or, I'm sorry, 2020 to 2022 and again in 2024. Again, record-setting drought since the beginning of time that they've been collecting these things. We've experienced extreme severe, damaging drought, in a time where proactive deer management would have actually called for reduced harvest levels, adjustments have not been made by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish to mitigate drought impacts. Instead, the inaction, compounded them. We're looking at a fawn recruitment chart, again on the X axis, 1998 to present day. And I've overlaid the drought. You know, the diagram underneath it. We believe

that a minimum of 50 fawns per 100 is ideal. It's our sort of bare minimum number of fawns. And what we should be, our objective is for perspective, 0 to 30 is obviously very bad. And we've seen some pretty bad ratios over time — drought-driven, mainly. Thirty to 50 fawns are OK. Research indicates that 66 or better is actually what we need to grow a deer herd these days. So, as you can see by our data, it's — we're well below. We're in a downward trend and downward decline. Again, the blue line depicts when the youth hunt was authorized. Certainly not saying that the youth have impacted fawn numbers. That's, you know, no one's hunting fawns out there. We are saying, conditions would have dictated some better planning, I guess. This chart depicts something, much different. So, Jicarilla Apache Nation buck trends through time again since 1999. On the left, you can see it kind of bouncing around stable herd buck numbers. And then in about 2019 — apologies — the youth hunt began. And we have an inflection point where we start seeing a downward, decline. We are seeing, the number of bucks per 100 does steadily declining. We are also seeing the total number of bucks declining. We're typically seeing 750, 800 deer in an annual survey. This last year, we saw 450 total in 30 hours are flying on the Jicarilla Apache Nation, 850,000 acres of 30 years — 30 hours of flying. For perspective, the 1,750 licenses that are issued in unit 2B removed around 500 deer a year. So, moving forward. We are looking forward. Mule deer need our help, and I mean that sincerely — need our help. One of the things that that is needed most is, conservative harvest, in our opinion, is the solution is something that, should have been done when drought started. Reduced harvest — quality deer management has multiple benefits to the region's deer herd, regardless of jurisdiction. It's good for everyone, all the users within the migration chain. Rebuild a diversity and resilience in our herds by generating or regenerating depleted buck age class and structure. Help us strengthen and protect the connections between mule deer and our constituents. Support the Jic-Apache model for conservation and provide an example that the state of New Mexico serves New Mexico's most diverse communities and respects New Mexico's first inhabitants. It's something that we feel very strongly about. Working to get together for the benefit of shared wildlife. These are some of our supporters. So, we've been talking with a bunch of folks in the region or they've been talking with us. There's been a lot of concern over the last five years. We've had lots of intense conversations, a lot of hard conversations sometimes. But this list, the folks up on the on the slide are folks that support what we're doing today that have written letters, I think, to the Commission expressing their support. Southern Ute Indian Tribe are strong supporters. They are very similar in their management strategy to us. Mescalero Apache Tribe; Representative Derrick Lente, Senator Benny Shendo Jr.; Chama Peak Land Alliance, which are landowners within the region; New Mexico Council of Outfitters and Guides; Safari Club International, Four Corners Chapter; and, of course, future generations of mule deer lovers. I'm one of them. But I also have four sons. And that's who I'm talking about when I say this. Numerous local businesses that whether or not they're wildlife-related or not, they have reached out to us, expressing concerns. I've had many conversations with non-hunters — maybe not anti-hunters, but folks that don't go out in the woods and harvest for themselves that are concerned; hunters, conservationists and of course tribal membership. There's — Roswell's a long drive right from Dulce, New Mexico, and we have a lot of support from Dulce behind us. There's a lot of folks on our Zoom call right now that are supporting us. And, so on and so forth. We also have a petition. We started a petition, and also we had a meeting two or three weeks ago on this very issue. And, one of the ideas that

came up that was, why don't we get a signature log? And from that effort, we ended up getting 512 signatures from tribal membership and folks in the community.

INEZ JR.: So, I'd like to read this letter. Mr. Stump, I am respectfully requesting that the following 500-plus signatures be accepted into record. The listed individuals have been informed of the New Mexico Game and Fish meeting in Roswell, New Mexico, on April 25, 2025, and their wishes are for their signatures to be accepted as New Mexico residents who support change in New Mexico Game Unit 2B in accordance with the Jicarilla Game and Fish petition.

TATOR: So, here's some of our ideas for a permanent solution. We'd like to shorten the time scale that New Mexico operates their mule deer management on. Our concern is mule deer require much more proactive management. Reconsider the four-year cycle to allow the State of New Mexico's staff to adapt and proactively manage for uncertainty, which seems to be the only certainty these days, within a biologically appropriate time frame. We'd also respectfully ask for enhanced communication and adherence to the New Mexico State Collaboration Act, the court order from 1990, and the existing framework that exists within the San Juan Interstate Wildlife Working Group. I think one of the things that I would love to see is the San Juan Interstate Wildlife Working Group already provides the framework for collaborative work. It just needs to be taken more seriously from the top down. I think we can definitely, boost the importance of this group. Immediate action — again, mule deer need change. The magnitude of this problem requires immediate action. We're asking for a 20% reduction under the authority of Director Sloane. We ask for a 20% reduction in unit 2B tags beginning in the 2026 season. We also request that that 20% reduction come from November rifle seasons. Option B would be open. The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish deer rule from 2023 to 2026, and just switch it to quality deer management effective in 2026 with the overall overarching goal of adopting quality deer management in unit 2B by 2027. That is the goal. I'm going to turn over the last slide to Vice President Jimmy Garcia.

GARCIA: Thank you, gentlemen, for your presentation. Thank you, Chairman Stump. Thank you, Mr. Sloane. We have, we had several meetings leading up to today, and, director's office and also at the Capitol building in Santa Fe. So, I guess we'll do the slide first, and then I'll have some additional comments. But our desirable outcome from the New Mexico Game Commission is, number one, direct Mr. Sloane and staff to sit with Jicarilla Game and Fish for a thorough review of issues and impacts that were presented today. And number two, jointly develop a plan of action to address and resolve issues short-term and long-term. And number three is to provide recommendations to the Commission to address and resolve the outstanding issues identified for Commission action in June, the Red River meeting. We will be in attendance and, so those are our asks for today. And just to kind of elaborate on what things that were said earlier. So the mule deer — we're here in protection of the mule deer herds. We realize we have a different strategy in managing with the state. And that's what we're here to work collaboratively to preserve our shared resource in the future. So, the importance of the mule deer to Jicarilla native people is, goes back to our creation story. In the beginning, we came into this world on a ladder made of deer antlers. That's how that's how we came to this world and into and in today. As, Mr. Inez stated, we use it primarily in our coming of age of harvest for our

young maidens or young females, and they wear a cape made of deer hide. And it's to symbolize womanhood and vigor within a nation. And our future. And, also, we believe that the deer were created and given to the Jicarilla people by our Haston. That's our holy people. So that's the significance here on our why we seek to protect the mule deer. So, in addition to these three requests here, I guess it was covered. But just to emphasize, we request that your familiar selves with the state laws, particularly the Indian Collaboration Act. And, we request a delegate from your staff who we could work with – a liaison – because this one's very important to myself and to the nation. Since 2018, we've been excluded from meetings. We haven't been informed. We find out of your decisions, the state decisions when it goes to publication. And that's in clear violation to state laws. So, we request a liaison and to be informed of all future meetings. And we will be in attendance like we are today. We look forward to the June meeting and future meetings, and we look forward to the collaboration that we could reach a partnership to the management styles moving forward that will benefit both parties and, we request that – you know, all these requests are part of the state laws. So just kind of familiarize yourself. We'll provide you with our contact information so we can work together. And again, just please provide us with the liaison, and I will turn to — those are just my requests. We look forward to the government-government relationship. And again, thank you, Chairman Stump, for coming to the meeting in Santa Fe and just hearing our concerns. Thank you, board. Thank you to my tribal members today for making the trip here. We appreciate you all.

STUMP: Thank you. As it was a really good presentation. I appreciate that. And thank you for all your tribal members that showed up in support of you, but appreciate it. You bring the petition to us to our attention as well. And that's a lot of information. I think that we will take all this under advisement and look at what you're proposing. It's a big ask for the state, the hunters of the state, that they may have to have some input in this public comment. So, with that in mind, also I'd like to you share your data with our biologists. That could be very helpful in making these decisions. The deer rule will open in less than a year, so that will be a conversation. And, of course, we're going to have public comment as well from your folks that are here today – Whoever else wants a public comment regarding this issue. So if we have public comment commenters, I don't have anything registered to this.

SLOANE: Mr. Chairman, I don't believe we've received any cards related to this agenda item, but it seems like there might be folks here that would like to comment or potentially folks online.

STUMP: Are you aware of any people that want to comment? No, no. I have a hand back and they're back there.

MADRID: Chairman, Commissioners, my name is Anthony Madrid. As I shared earlier, I grew up in Cuba, New Mexico. I also resided in Blanco, New Mexico, for 17 years. So, I spent the majority of my life growing up in northern New Mexico. So, I grew up hunting in. game management unit 2B. I've had some amazing experiences with my family out there hunting 2B, and just, over the years, we've seen a significant decline in mule deer quality in Game

Management Unit 2B. So, I just want to encourage the Commission to take a hard look and help us restore that quality in Game Management Unit 2B. Thank you.

CHARLES TRIPP: Chair Stump, Commission. Charles Tripp, I believe you have my card in your hand right now. But I work in that area on and off. And for the last 15 years, there's been great herds there. The last four or five years, they're almost non-existent. We used to see herds of 40, 50 in winter, running around together. Bucks and does. And, now, if you see one all winter, you're lucky. So I think it's only fitting to reduce numbers similar to what the Jicarilla is putting out. Thank you.

STUMP: Thank you, Mr. Tripp. Commissioners, do have any comments or questions?

PACK: I have a question. Director Sloane, do we already have a liaison or anyone that works with the Department between them and us?

SLOANE: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Pack, we have a tribal liaison, archaeologist Jack Young, who interacts with all the tribes, nations and pueblos. And we also have Orrin Duvuvuei, who is our deer biologist who participates in the San Juan Working Group.

GARCIA: Yes. Would you please provide the information to the individuals you mentioned? Because we have not had any conversations with either of them. Thank you.

TATOR: Chairman Stump?

STUMP: Yes.

TATOR: We have sat with Orrin multiple times. I don't know who Jack Young is. I didn't know there was a state tribal liaison for the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.

STUMP: Thank you. Thank you for that. I have a couple questions. Let me write this down real quick.

INEZ JR.: Chairman Stump?

STUMP: Yes.

INEZ JR.: Can I make a comment?

STUMP: Yes, sir.

INEZ JR.: Respectfully, the Nation and the 500 signatures that were dropped are New Mexico hunters, they are residents – rooted New Mexicans here. So ...

STUMP: Yeah. It's important. Thank you.

INEZ JR.: When you said, you know, we want public input. I would like that to be considered as each individual's voice, that signature. Because we are New Mexico residents, we pay taxes. We are the First Nations, established before the State of New Mexico. We've been here. So if we're not looked at as New Mexico residents and a strong voice, then I think something is broken, and I don't think that is broken. I just think that we need to realize that, you know, we are part of New Mexico.

STUMP: Bernard, I can assure you, you're being heard as New Mexico residents. And I appreciate you bringing that up. But you mentioned a couple things in your presentation. One of them was the hunters in 2B to take opportunity away from hunters on the reservation. But I wasn't clear on what that meant.

TATOR: OK. Thank you for that, Chairman Stump. What I was referring to there was the 2019 youth hunt. We've never been overly excited with the opportunity based harvesting unit 2B. That's dating back to the early '80s. We've never been excited about that. It's completely different than what our philosophy and management style is. It became damaging in 2019 that late season youth hunt, if you understand what deer do migration wise, it took away opportunity from tribal members. We hunt deer in October as that migration chain continues down and crosses, not all, but some deer crossed into unit 2B, right? That's what I'm referring to.

STUMP: OK, thank you for the clarification. And have you spoken with the Colorado department at all about this? Because this is a huge migration that mainly that comes from Colorado, correct?

GARCIA: If I may just add a comment to that last question you had. Our strategy is science-based. So, every year these gentlemen here and their department, they do the scientific data and they present it to our council annually. And we do the hunters' compact. And that's how we're requesting that, you all kind of, include in your strategy and not the four-year plan because it's more flexible to the immediate concerns, like the drought and impacts of the hunting. But that's how we conduct our studies is annually and it goes before our council.

STUMP: OK. Thank you. Thank you.

TATOR: Chairman Stump, to your question about Colorado, we do speak with CPW staff. San Juan Interstate Wildlife Working Group. Our concerns are not necessarily with Colorado Parks and Wildlife. They implement a fourth-season hunt in November. Just, you know, like statewide Colorado does. Our understanding of migration is deer migrate out of Colorado by the time that fourth season is there. Typically, there's very few deer. I hunt fourth season around Pagosa Springs all the time, and there's a big flush of migration typically that third week of October, just like the data suggests. And by the time that the rut occurs, they're on winter range. That's what the literature said. That's what researchers said. The other big component to Colorado is



Southern Ute tribal lands. Southern Ute also is what I would call a sanctuary. They are extremely conservative on their harvest. Part of that migration chain, especially the lower elevation, is Southern Ute lands. So, if they can survive third and fourth season – bucks, I'm saying, – and get on to Southern Ute lands, there's very small likelihood that they would get harvested at any meaningful rate. Once they cross into New Mexico, that's a different story.

STUMP: OK. Thank you. The – trying not to lose my train of thought. As far as the Colorado migration goes, that also is what you're talking about – the youth hunt and, and the number of tags that we're in the hunt, which is, it's down to 25 currently. So before — do you recall what that was, Director Sloane? How many tags we've dropped that from?

SLOANE: I want to say it was 150.

STUMP: One-hundred and fifty. That's correct. OK. Do we have any other comments, or ...?

CLEMENTE: I'm gonna – I have a question. I am a wildlife biologist like you, as well. I believe I, I don't know if I was with you.

TATOR: I guess you look familiar.

CLEMENTE: OK. So I do have some questions on, based on scientific data, and I'm going to agree agree. I mean, I don't think nobody can disagree that mule deer populations have declined on the whole southwest of the United States and northern Mexico. I have talked to Texas. Their population is declining, Arizona population is declining. Sonora huge mule deer population is declining. Chihuahua, big-time declining. So yes, I agree. I agree with everything that was presented as well. If we go to the charts over here that you provided, you can put the migration patterns, we can start from there. So, let's go right there. You're requesting to be dropped license 2B. OK. Let's let's put something in perspective. New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. The state of New Mexico only hunts bucks. We do not hunt does, which bucks, to really make a big impact into the population, it will have to be, as you know, a pretty high percentage of bucks to be able to be harvested and I believe, correct me if I'm wrong, but we're within the 10% or lower of bucks harvested within the state of New Mexico of the population. So, can somebody answer that?

SLOANE: Mr. Chair, Commissioner, I think I would defer to Stewart on that one, because I'm not exactly sure which 10% we're talking about.

CLEMENTE: I mean, what is the percentage of bucks that we will if you (indistinct). Yeah. And the population. What would you say it is?

SALAZAR HICKEY: You know the answer?

LILEY: So I think there's a percent of the population of males that you take out every year. But I think the concern from a population dynamics, herd growth or stabilization, you know, fawns –

fawns drive population growth. Female survival drives population growth. I think we would say the only time that male harvest would drive population growth or decline of the female segment of the population is when we get below 10% or 10 bucks per 100 does. And I think that's where we look at from a breeding standpoint where you get below a point where you don't have enough males in the population to breed females. And so, it'd be – we look at that ratio at about below 10 to 100, where we would say that you maybe have a potential male-harvest-driven issue that could affect populations, but not, again, we believe, you know, fawns and females are driving the actual totality of the numbers of animals in the population.

CLEMENTE: Correct. OK. With that being said, here you're requesting 2B – your migration patterns here, they go ... I don't see migration patterns from 2B migrating into the Jicarillas.

TATOR: That's true because we don't – we are not able to capture deer in unit 2B. This is an example of where we are able to color on Jicarilla Apache Nation winter range. But it is very similar based on all the literature available. Next slide, unit 2C along with the Rosa study in itself that similar patterns exist. We would not ever capture deer in unit 2B, therefore, our maps would not have data that goes there.

CLEMENTE: I believe there is some data of 2B. I've seen data from 2B and the migration patterns, they actually go north to Colorado.

TATOR: Similar patterns. Yes, sir.

CLEMENTE: OK, so, I'm just trying to put everything – I'm not arguing the data. I'm just trying to put everything in context. OK. So those migrations, if they go from 2B to Colorado, what is what Colorado is doing for those migrations to return into New Mexico that will be impact into 2B populations, correct?

TATOR: Sure. And in this this is a great, illustration of that, the Rosa study. I will say to your point, there's huge data gaps in between unit 2C and southern 2B. And I think that would be something that would answer that question if it was necessary.

CLEMENTE: OK. So. Oh, thank you for that. That's where I was trying to get it. So thank you for that. On the you mentioned that you decreased, in the last five years, you have decreased harvest.

TATOR: Yes. Correct.

CLEMENTE: What is what you have decreased within the reservation?

TATOR: What we would call in the good old days was 250 licenses a year. Right?

CLEMENTE: OK.

TATOR: That was the maximum when, you know, deer herds were productive, fawn recruitment rates were high, adult sex ratios are where they need to be, etc., etc.. Two-hundred and fifty. We haven't been there in a while.

CLEMENTE: OK. From 250 to 50, now to 50. OK. What if you if I ask you what is what is your population? How much has it increased in the last five years?

TATOR: The population? Yeah the population is ...

CLEMENTE: Recruitment or buck-to-doe ratio.

TATOR: No, I mean – I can show you, let's see here. Which way am I going. Apologies. So, I agree with chief Liley – fawns drive population abundance. Right. We're not talking about growing a deer herd. We're talking about restoring buck age class in abundance. So, every fawn matters in drought. That's the future. So, in 2018, 2019, when drought first struck, looking, projecting four years into the future, that's what we're talking about today. Or, you know, the last year, we've seen severe and extreme drought occurrences and depleted fawn recruitment rates basically since 2018. So, we're not talking about growing deer herds. We're not talking about harvesting does. It's not that's not what we're talking about at all. We're talking about restoring what we have. Drought basically makes the piece of the pie shrink, and the slices are still maybe the same. We manage our adult sex ratios by cutting permits. We want to make sure that our 42 per 100 buck-to-doe ratio is where it's at. That's the sacrifice that the Nation has made. You know, later and later seasons in unit 2B and the way migration happens and all the things that are occurring in the region are basically shooting us all in the foot.

CLEMENTE: I just want to make sure that New Mexico Department of Fish and the state of New Mexico manages for population size for numbers, not for quality right now. So, I want to make sure that it is completely understood that we're not – that if what is being asked is quality management for quality, that would be completely different management strategies.

TATOR: Absolutely. That's what we're asking for, Commissioner.

CLEMENTE: OK.

TATOR: The wholesale change in unit 2B.

CLEMENTE: OK. Thank you.

STUMP: Thank you, Commissioner Clemente. Commissioner Tirzio?

LOPEZ: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Kyle, 20 years ago, you and I were litigating at the poker table when we were in college. And thank you, Mr. President and Director. I've known Kyle for quite some time, we went to school together, and you have a good staff here. I mean, when I met with him in Pagosa Springs regarding the gray wolf reintroduction in Colorado – that fiasco on that side

of the line, but you guys are going to be on the front lines when they come down, down south. So he's a good guy on your team. On the 20%, you go back to the, where we have the comparison of – right there. So, right now you're requesting that – to reduce about, well, 355 licenses from that – our proc, so to say, that you say that would be sustainable, to raise the quality population up?

TATOR: Commissioner Lopez, yes, sir. I think that's a reasonable ask, given the circumstances. And I know that's something that's in statute that allows Director Sloane to take action immediately. It's a gesture that you guys are willing to hear us. I think the final solution is the 2027 deer rule, where we can sit down and come into an agreement on, you know, what the future looks like. But in 2026, yes, we are asking for a 20% reduction in November. That's where it's most meaningful to what we're trying to resolve. Yes.

LOPEZ: And in in your data with the drought that's encompassing – I drive through Dulce going to Farmington most of the time – I (indistinct) and I see how it's dry going through the Caracas area and taking the back road of 112 to El Vado along the lake. And I've never been deep into, reservation with gas buggy. And the base exists. Right. But, is the drought really severe in that area? And on top of Archuleta Mesa and that that area?

TATOR: That what we're seeing is, back to the drought monitor graph. Maybe I didn't explain that completely. The bottom is Rio Arriba County and basically, if it's red and dark, that's really bad. That means 100% of the land base is in severe or extreme or exceptional drought – doesn't get higher than exceptional. So the dark red is exceptional. We have seen, on our south end of the reservation, which would be unit 2C for New Mexico, we have seen native trees die, you know, so we're seeing extreme conditions up there. Piñon juniper stands or 20 to 30% mortality, you know, drought-stricken type stuff. All of our habitat monitoring, winter range browse, mountain mahogany and a little bit of brush, big sage, gamble oak, all of those things, of course, are drought-driven, right? So, we're seeing impacts to that as well. Those are all deer food and deer, like I said earlier, are the most in tune with the habitat. So, reduction in habitat, reduction in deer.

LOPEZ. That's all, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Kyle.

STUMP: Commissioner Fulfer, go ahead.

FULFER: I just had a few clarification questions more than anything. So, one of your main concerns is the youth hunt, is that what I'm understanding?

TATOR: The 2019 youth hunt was unprecedented. It was something that was unilaterally decided. It was something that, in 2019, we found out about it, the San Juan Interstate Wildlife Working Group, after the proclamations had already come out. We immediately said, whoa, whoa, hold on. You know, this is going to create issues. It's around Thanksgiving, mule deer are rutting around Thanksgiving. One-hundred fifty for four years is unacceptable. It's just too many. And, that hunt reported a 96% harvest success rate. Most of New Mexico's hunter in the

teens, if I understand that correctly, at harvest success rate. So that should tell, you know, timing is important. Seasonality is important. Understanding of migration and how it might impact your neighbor is important. That was our contention and is our contention today.

FULFER: So, the other clarification is, I've heard a lot about the quality, but is it quality you're mainly concerned or is it the quantity of the animals, the mule deer or is it, what?

TATOR: Commissioner Fulfer, in my opinion, the quantity is dictated by drought. The quality is dictated by us in this room. The structure of our herds is something that we can control. Mother Nature holds the cards, right? That's our contention.

FULFER: Can — you said your habitat work was intensive. Can you give us some examples of kind of what you do for the habitat to improve it for the wildlife?

TATOR: Absolutely. Thank you for that. Basically, everything we do on the reservation, habitat wise, has mule deer in mind. Of course, we have lots and lots of elk. We have other species but it's all mule-deer-centric. So, mule deer are concentrate selectors. They require early successional plants, they require high-quality feed, whereas a cow or elk or something like that is more of a bulk concentrated — you know, they can eat almost anything. I joke that they can eat cardboard and survive, right? Mule deer are not. They are very, specialized. So, everything we do is food-wise is to generate early successional species. So, aspen regeneration, sagebrush enhancement, piñon juniper mastication, reseeding, noxious weed treatments, water developments, water catchments, guzzlers, solar wells, erosion control, I mean, you name it, we are very active. We have a full-time bulldozer operator that cleans out ponds. It doesn't help if it doesn't rain or snow, but, you know, having that cup available when it does is important. We've been toying around with bentonite clay in some of our soils, and it seems to be working wonderfully. We really like wildlife guzzlers. It's, you know, put water in spots that's really hard to get water into, things like that, where — you name it, we do it.

FULFER: Any type of farming or anything?

TATOR: We like to keep things as natural as possible. That is our strength. If you've ever been — you're welcome to tour. You ever want to come look at the Jicarilla Apache Nation, be happy to take you on a tour of all the work that we do. We are extremely diverse. We are high in cover values, we're high in browse species. That's what makes our mule deer world-renowned, in my opinion. It starts with the soil, goes into the plant species. We like to keep it as natural and healthy as possible, because we don't like to concentrate animals onto an alfalfa field, for example.

FULFER: You had, in there, oil and gas mitigation. What's that consist of?

TATOR: Typically, on the Jicarilla Apache Nation, some of the things that we worry about is seasonality and making sure that disturbance is minimized. You know, if you have a concentrated winter range, you have deer on winter range and they're constantly getting

moved by an oil and gas truck, that creates a disturbance and an indirect effect on habitat. That's typically what we do. We're also very active in the reclamation process, you know, so when a well gets plugged and abandoned, you know, the Nation has a process where it gets put back into the landscape, so to speak. Roads get closed, we have on-site visits, etc., etc. to put that well back into the landscape. One of the new ideas is getting kids involved in that process. and trying to get, you know, plants and browse species on an old lease road or a well pad and things like that.

FULFER: What about wolf impact. Have you seen anything?

TATOR: We're about to be the meat in the sandwich. From the north we are seeing northern grays, and from the south, we have Mexican grays. Right. And I'll leave it at that. We have not seen any impacts. No, sir.

FULFER: Thank you, Chairman.

STUMP: Thank you, Commissioner Fulfer.

GARCIA: I'd like to add to the, the first question. Could you repeat it, please? The first question you have?

FULFER: The main concern with the youth?

GARCIA: Yeah. So, on that, just to reiterate comment I made earlier, again, we were not given notice of that. That's one of the main issues, today's discussions, that we please be made aware of that on a government to government basis, because we were not made aware of that. We were feeling the impacts of it. So, we were not at the table for those meetings. So please, in the future, extend the invitation to us. Thank you.

STUMP: Thank you, Mr. Vice President. Mr. Fulfer, are you done? OK, Commissioner Pack? Sounds like you have a question.

PACK: I do, if you go to your last slide. So, I'm wondering on the – Director Sloane, you mentioned the liaison. The request, I think, here is to review some of these issues and maybe at the next meeting, we discuss them or – and I know Stewart, Chief Liley, that you – I'm sure you have studies and research and things being done. That's why we you're on the four-year rule. I've listened to your reasoning on that. I wonder if we could update that or something and have those discussions. Is that a possibility between now and the next meeting to work on some of this and least come back to the next meeting and discuss it more fully?

STUMP: Yeah. That is my intention.

GARCIA: Sure. Once again, we please be included in those discussions as a government-to-government basis.

PACK: That's what I'm requesting.

GARCIA: Yes.

PACK: What I'm saying (indistinct).

GARCIA: Thank you.

STUMP: Thank you. Any other questions from commissioners?

LOPEZ: Just one comment. Mr. President, director and biologist, thank you for making the long trip from northern Rio Arriba County down here to Roswell and as well as the tribal membership with representative and council members. So I do go to Jicarilla a lot for Little Beaver. And I had the privilege to go in a couple of years to go (indistinct), which is very, very interesting. And culturally interesting, which I like. So, thank you so much. And, I hope that we can collaborate more than we have been doing in the past. And if we haven't, then thank you for letting us know so we can continue to work together. We're sorry.

STUMP: Thank you. Chairman, quick comment.

INEZ JR.: From the commissioners, I did, mentioned in the past meeting that it probably would be pretty important for you guys to get the, biological studies data that way you guys can make some decisions, because I'm not sure if you guys get that. And I did request a presentation from you guys' deer biologist for this meeting. But we were told that that wasn't going to happen from Director Sloane. So, I think it is very important because you guys are the decision-makers to hear that. And we are in full transparency. We want to share data. We want to see mule deer back to the national treasure. As New Mexico, we can have the best and we should have the best. New Mexico don't deserve anything other than that. And I think you guys have a lot on your plate. I do appreciate you guys' time. Like Mr. Tator said, please come join us. We're not mean people – we want to work together. Thank you, guys.

SALAZAR HICKEY: Commissioners, the chair. May I?

STUMP: Sharon?

SALAZAR HICKEY: I just want to say thank you. Do we say "Iheedn"?

INEZ JR.: Iheedn.

TATOR: It's the last slide. I saved that for the end.

SALAZAR HICKEY: Oh, OK. Thank you. I think, I, when I introduced myself earlier, I think your traditions are that you describe your family, your clan? My heritage is back to the 17th century and probably older. I do have some Native, 30%. And, Spanish, Portuguese. But, I love New

Mexico. That's where I'm from. So, thank you for your presentation. I will also say that, I am so impressed today with your presentation. I'm going to reach out and I already see some nods in the audience here today that, we have many people who come before us and give presentations and, what I heard you provide information which I respect, science based. And thank you, Commissioner Clemente, for your input in your questions. I thought that was very good. Second, your presentation was also concise about what you are seeking. And, the request, in my opinion, is not unreasonable. If you can go back, please. Thank you. The request that you have. Oh, one more thing before we, before I go into that, is it vice president?

GARCIA: Yes.

SALAZAR HICKEY: I want you to know that we are not treating your nation or any other nation's tribes in New Mexico differently. We try to be transparent and very public. So, when we had the youth hunt, I wasn't here in 2019. But I came in in 2020. And everything that we do is on our website, and we try to give public notice. And I respect your biologist, your department chief, or, I don't know the title, but anyway, I, I hope that you continue to see what we have on our website because we never want to exclude anyone, whether it's the nation or the public, and it includes people outside of New Mexico. I think they also join in. So, please do not consider that we were excluding you. OK, but let's get to your next request. The next issue, which is, Director Sloane and staff to sit with the Jicarilla Game and Fish for a thorough review of issues and impacts as presented. I don't see that to be an unreasonable request. In fact, I think it's very good, to jointly develop a plan of action to address and resolve issues short and long term. I think that comes through communication and, three: recommendations to the Commission to address and resolve the outstanding issues identified for the Commission action at our June meeting. I respectfully defer to our chair, and our Commissioners, because where we sit, we are always listening to the residents, the people that we represent in our districts or at large. And, I think we need to hear from everyone before we make decisions. I respect the, Department because they're always, I, I believe, open to information. And so that's what I'm going to defer to the chair is that, we can't make a decision today, but at least can we be open to some of that? The only thing that I would also add in terms of a liaison from the Department, Chair Stump, I would also, ask that I know you've been in communication with them, before this meeting, and I thank you that you, it takes a lot of time to be the chair. Trust me. A lot of work. So thank you for your time, but, if you would like to continue to be that liaison, or if you want another commissioner to assist you. You know, I think how we proceed is very much, always science based, open, hearing all the sides. I think that's the approach that we always take our commission and being very transparent. Thank you. Iheedn.

STUMP: And then thank you, Commissioner Hickey. Thanks for volunteering my time. OK. These are all discussions that we will definitely have. And, rolling back around to Red River and, what we're asking, what you're asking for is to have a paradigm shift from quality, quantity, opportunity to quality. So that's the conversation that we have to have. And, we appreciate you very much coming in today. I appreciate all your folks that supporting you coming in today. And, we will be in touch.



T. CARRELL: Chairman Stump. Yes, we have a couple of virtual comments. Do you mind if we listen to those before we close this topic?

CLEMENTE: I gotta say something before.

STUMP: Yes. I'm going to go ahead and let Commissioner Clemente speak first and then we'll have them. Thank you.

CLEMENTE: I just want to say thank you. Thank you for the presentation. Thank you. And this is great information. And yes, you're right. Communication is a big key here. Communication I think needs to happen. I'm going to make an invitation to the tribe as well as you made it to us. I want to make an invitation. You know, our information is public. I always want to learn. Always. You know, I we don't know everything. And we want to learn. So please, if you if, if you have something that we can be knowledgeable on, if you want to provide some information, please reach out. Please. I'm going to ask – I mean, I'm going to – we're going to do this the other way around as well. And I believe we need to create better data. I believe we need to create better knowledge on our population. I believe we need to create not only deer. I think we need to create an (indistinct) for ecosystem. Everything that we do is getting more and more challenging. You know, we create a road, we know what a road, a two-track road, what we can do right? For isolation of populations and things like that. So, let's work together on that communication please, let's keep it going.

INEZ JR: Absolutely. Thank you.

GARCIA: Thank you for your comments. But I have a, part pardon me, Chair, if I may, we had a meeting in early March with Director Sloane at his office, with his staff, and we made some requests to him, and those requests were not honored. And that's why we had to follow up meeting in later March. Just this just making this comment and that. OK. Just what you stated.

CLEMENTE: Thank you.

GARCIA: So we contacted, Chairman Stump and he joined us at the state Capitol building. We told them our concerns and we thank you for coming to that meeting and for getting us on the agenda today. But again, just out of transparency, that that's what happened. So, we had the first meeting that we had to have a follow up meeting because our concerns were not addressed at that time, at a first meeting.

CLEMENTE: Thank you Chair, Chairman Stump, did contact me and he did we had some discussion on this regard. He did give me Information and I appreciated that.

GARCIA: That and we appreciate that. And as the suggestions were, who are the liaison? Maybe we feel comfortable with, Chairman Stump. Thank you.

STUMP: Go ahead.

SALAZAR HICKEY: Thank you. Chair Stump. Vice chair or Vice President specifically, what did you ask Director Sloane that he did not provide?

GARCIA: We asked, for one, to be on the agenda today, and I don't — maybe it was not in his authority to do so, but we did request to share the presentation today. And well with them what they. ...

STUMP: So there is a process and you're here today.

GARCIA: And so that wasn't even explained to us. So that would have been appreciated.

STUMP: And then in Director Sloane's defense, I think that, you know, we are in the four-year rule and it's a management paradigm that we are in right now. And so, you're asking to change a big — it's a big change.

GARCIA: Yeah, we request that. But we're just saying is talking about communication and transparency. I was making you aware that we did have requests that were not relayed to the board.

STUMP: OK, Thank you for that. Thank you. Thank you for that. And, I last like to point out that, Commissioner Clemente and I did meet with our deer biologists and we talked about the paradigm that exists at this point. And so that is — it's very different than what you're asking for. And so, there's this — there's not a biological need as far as the paradigm that we're under right now, in our view, just it is what it is right now. Sir?

TATOR: I respectfully disagree with that, Chairman Stump. But we can get into that. The details in these following meetings, and for full transparency, when, you know, there's a history here, there's five years ago, past Director (indistinct) Vincente and myself met in Santa Fe with these same very concerns. And in 2020, early 2020, we asked for the same meeting with the Commission, and we were told to just wait and see. So, there's a history here. Forgive me if we're, you know, getting passionate about this, but we want change. We I think, the timing is now. And I appreciate the time today that you've given us. It's been a long time coming.

STUMP: Thank you, Kyle, I appreciate that. And, let's close this one up. And we appreciate you guys presentation once again. And, we appreciate all you folks coming down here.

GARCIA: We appreciate your time. Also, chair and Commissioners, we look forward to the meetings and we'll see you all at Red River. Thank you. Have a good rest of your day.

STUMP: Thank you. Before we move on to the next presentation, I think you might need a break. OK, so let's take, we put 10, 15 minutes. 10 minutes.

STUMP: Go ahead and proceed.

BUSTER GREEN: Yes, sir. Mr. Stump and fellow Commissioners, we, just appreciate the opportunity to come and present before you today and hope that we can get some cooperation with the Game and Fish Department, but we are grateful that you have allowed us to come here and present with you today. And my name is Buster Green, and I am the chair of Catron County. And, right before I start, I would also like to say that I am going to request that we put on the agenda a letter of support for the Jicarilla. I thought that was well thought-out and a common-sense approach. There was a comment made there that Game and Fish only regulates for quantity and not for quality. And I would hope that sometime in the future that that might be considered, because New Mexico – and I can tell from those people that were speaking representing the Jicarilla, they love New Mexico as I myself loves New Mexico. It's a world-renowned hunting spot, and I would like for New Mexico to stay there and to get even a better reputation, that it is the best hunting spot in the United States. And I think with your cooperation, we can do that. Also, Commissioner Hickey, you mentioned earlier, you talked with the with the officers about, the pets that were lost to bobcats and coyotes. They're nothing compared to the wolf. And we hope that you will listen intently to our presentation to know what's coming. The Jicarilla mentioned that they're the meat in the sandwich. I guess that would make us the bread because we don't have any meat left. So, with that, I'm going to turn the time over to Mrs. Audrey McQueen, fellow commissioner.

A. McQUEEN: Good morning. Chairperson, commissioners and members of the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. My name is Audrey McQueen. I'm a Catron County commissioner. I appreciate your time and commitment to serving our state and protecting its natural resources. So, I'm going to start off with, like, a background to where we are now. Before the Fish and Wildlife Service began introducing the Mexican wolf into Catron County in 1998, many of our residents registered their concerns. Fish and Wildlife told us then that its target population for Arizona and New Mexico would be 100 wolves. Now the target is 320 wolves. We've listened during these meetings to wolf advocates urge resetting the number at 750 wolves. Over the years, we have watched the wolf population grow. We have attended countless meetings to voice our opposition to management and numbers. Fish and Wildlife Service pats us on the head, tells us it shares our concerns, has our back, and then simply ignores us. Steadily, the issues have become worse. The flashpoint is with our livestock industry. Put a cow, a deer and an elk on a starting line with a wolf behind them. Guess what happens when you say go? The cow is the slowest and gets attacked first. On behalf of our livestock producers, we ask for help. We ask Fish and Wildlife Service to stop introducing more wolves into Catron County. It said no. We ask Fish and Wildlife Service for technology to tell our ranchers where the wolves are so they can manage their herds and find depredation, the carcasses. Fish and Wildlife Services provided a clumsy, ineffective radio signal to our ranchers for them to carry with them as they ride their pastures. It's very useless. The depredations have increased. For years we've endured excuses from the Mexican Wolf Livestock Coexistence Council about why it couldn't or wouldn't pay our producers for the livestock the Mexican wolves were killing. As that program became nonfunctional, we urge that it be replaced. With significant county involvement, it has been replaced in New Mexico with the county Livestock Loss Authority. It now administers payments from the funds that New

Mexico receives from the Federal Livestock Demonstration Grants. Those funds are not sufficient to cover livestock losses. In fact, as annual recovery costs for the Mexican wolf have dramatically increased and the number of wolves has increased, federal funding for depredations has decreased. We have lobbied the Congress for funding. None to date. We have lobbied the New Mexico Legislature for funding — \$1.5 million for three years, slashed from the \$9 million we told them we needed. The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish has not sat idly by. Fish and Wildlife Service's response with support from New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, was to change the statistics that happened last fall when Wildlife Services, Fish and Wildlife Service, with Department of Game and Fish complicity, agreed to make it harder to prove a confirmed depredation. By doing so, there are fewer of confirmed depredations and they call it a day. Respectfully, that's offensive. The Department of Game and Fish is a member of the Mexican Wolf Interagency Field Team. It serves on the Mexican Wolf Executive Committee. Our understanding from Fish and Wildlife Service is that Department of Game and Fish is as influential as it wants to be. It has abandoned any responsibility to protect our people from its actions. Fish and Wildlife Service has ignored our concerns. Department of Game and Fish has ignored our concerns. Our congressional delegation members have done nothing to change the policy. Indeed, certain of them have actively supported introducing wolves into Catron County. And while they've ignored us, the problem has become worse. We no longer simply have a livestock crisis in Catron County. We have a public safety crisis. We have reached the point where Mexican wolves are roaming through our communities. They are stalking our schoolyards. They are stalking our homes where little kids would be. They would like to just be playing outside. They are showing up 10 feet from the door of our elderly. They are killing pets off the porches of our homes. They are killing our horses and our cattle. Our children wonder why they aren't more important than the wolves. Why, we ask, has this problem been so acute? One answer is numbers. Wolf numbers are increasing. Another is location. Wolf holding facilities across the US are at capacity. Fish and Wildlife Service insists on releasing all extra wolves and it does so primarily in Catron County where we have an abundant population. A third is management, Fish and Wildlife Service management of Mexican wolves encourages habituation of wolves. That means Fish and Wildlife Service management actions, if not useless exercise such as fladry, have the effect of making wolves understand that humans are not a threat to them. Things like range riding, food caching, and abounding lethal removals, which the service actively promotes, teaches wolves not to fear man. The upshot: wolves are close by, watching our children play and waiting for an opportunity. They are chasing our kids on horseback, out of the woods. That's what we heard and why on April 3rd, the Catron County Commission held a special meeting on Mexican wolves. Each of those reports were confirmed. I'm going to show you a short clip of two of the kids that have spoke with us and shared stories of what's happened to them.

BREELY GREEN (on video): Hi, my name is Breely Green. I'm 12 years old and I'm from Quemado, New Mexico. I've been riding in the saddle before I could even walk. My grandparents would pack me a lunch and my juices and they would take me to go gather cows with our family. When I was seven, I started riding alone. My dad would send me off to go get my group of cows and to bring them back in the water, and then we would go from there and take them as a herd. We have seen wolves on our ranch before, but they haven't been as scary

as this encounter that I had with a Mexican gray wolf. And one day in the fall, we were gathering this pasture so that we could protect the cows. I was walking along in the trees and I had an encounter with a Mexican gray wolf. I was just walking and my horse started getting a little nervous. She started panicking a little bit and I just petted on her and I just thought, you know, it was just a – she is just young, she's only three, so she's just kind of freaking out. And so, I just kept walking, trying to find my cows. And I heard something in the bushes, and it was a Mexican gray wolf. It was just sitting there, staring at me. And I got really scared. So, I called my mom and I couldn't get a hold of her because my service was bad. I still tried my dad, but my service was too bad. I couldn't call out. So, I started walking and it started walking the same time I did and it really scared me. It was kind of like a stalk – it was just imitating everything that I did. So, I just remembered that my dad told me that just to keep walking slow, and then if it got too close and it started to get a little too aggressive to just trot back to the water. And so, I just started walking for about a mile, and after a mile it finally left. But that whole time I was praying and praying that nothing would happen because it was literally just doing everything that I did. It was not scared. I tried to scare it off. I yelled at it. I screamed at it. It would not. It wasn't scared of me. Think back to this day. What if there was more? What could have happened? I still get scared to think of if there is five or four. If they could have surrounded my horse or scared it to where it booted me off and I was there and it could have got me. I love my horses so much and I couldn't even fathom losing one to wolves. I had a really good friend lose her barrel horse to wolves, and it really brought to reality that they do kill anything. I don't think that I should be afraid when I'm feeding in the morning that one of my horses won't come in. I love these animals so much and I dedicate my time to them. They're like a part of my family. We have had cows and calves killed up next to our house and it is really sad and devastating. Our house is surrounded with tracks. It is covered in tracks. Me and my sister can't go and turn on the water anymore. We can't go to our trampoline and play on it anymore because the wolves have surrounded our house, and we don't know what would happen if we went out there and did that. I just don't know when a wolf's life became more important than mine.

A. McQUEEN: I've got one more slide.

TAYLOR McQUEEN (on video): My name is Taylor McQueen, and I'm going to share with you a story that happened not too long ago with a very tragic accident. My horse, Pickles was in a pasture with all of our other horses, and we checked on her that night. She was doing just fine. And then the next morning when we got up, she was just dead. We had no idea what happened. Her body was just laying there. And then when we had the wolf people investigate her, they found lots of hemorrhaging on her neck and bites along her hocks. When I got home from school, my mom told me, and I just broke down because I loved her so much. I'd had her since she was three. She was, like, my favorite horse ever. So, I had broken her pretty much myself. She was, kind of a pain in the butt when I first got her. But the more we worked with her, the better she got. And I just got on a bond with her that was so great. And I gotten to a point where we were winning almost every competition we were going to. My favorite thing about her was her name. Her name was Pickles, and the only thing I could think was that she ate some of these pickles she'd always chew and steal everybody's food. My favorite thing was

to wake up and go and get her snacks, because I would whistle, and she'd run up from the bottom of the pasture. All my life, I've wanted to be a rancher just like my mom. But it's become quite hard because we've had to coexist with the wolf and they've faced so many deaths. Every day we wake up and we're just fearing that another horse is going to be dead, or another cow, or maybe even another pet dog. We don't really know what's going to be lost until we get up. Some way we've got to find a way to coexist with the wolf, and not deal with having to fear waking up and finding something dead. I want to make a difference with it. Maybe we can get some way to deal with it and control the population a little bit. Maybe we'll be able to not wake up fearing for all the death and maybe some other child's not going to have to face another horse killed like me, or another calf that they love.

A. McQUEEN: The Commission approved signing a resolution asking the Governor to declare a public safety disaster. That resolution, which we've revised once to make clear that it is no longer just a livestock crisis, but it's a public safety disaster, was delivered to the Governor on April 14. In our resolution, we asked the Governor for funding sent to Catron County to hire boots on the ground to mitigate wolf problems and deploy the National Guard to haze wolves to protect livestock. That's not all we have shared with the Governor. Our list of action items. The first section is based on that. Wildlife Services and Catron County Livestock Investigator have requested they should be noncontroversial. Each is something that the Department of Game and Fish, as a member of the Mexican Wolf Executive Committee, may immediately ask Fish and Wildlife Services to do. The second section identifies a series of options. Some fall within the responsibilities of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Others require congressional help. For too long we have asked and have been rebuffed. Now we are asking for immediate relief and we did not receive it. We will focus our attention on delisting. We suspect you know the consequences if help is not forthcoming. We have tried to coexist with the wolves. It hasn't worked. We have a crisis. Department of Game and Fish working with Fish and Wildlife Service has a narrow window within which to take decisive, meaningful action. Fail to do so, and our citizens will protect themselves. So, part of that. So, like some of our some of the problems, is like you go to cross fosters, we're going to take that first. So, cross fosters. They are trying to get the wolves genetically viable improve the genetics. So, they bring in cross fosters and that's fine. That's going to help the wolves. But Arizona Game and Fish, they've got a cap on their number of cross fosters – I believe at six they might have went to 12, but there's a cap. New Mexico we have no cap – anything that they don't put in dens in Arizona, Catron County's got the brunt of that. And as far as I think there needs to be more collaboration with the ranchers where there's already packs that are killing livestock and horses, and running around schools and stuff. Those probably don't need extra wolves in them. And so, you know, I think they really need to talk about where these pups are getting placed. And it would help. The other thing is that we have asked for the radio antenna receivers that were given out where you can get a beep on a collared wolf. If it's in the area, it's not depending on if you're in a canyon or you're on a hill, like, it's really not possible to go even see which pasture they're in or if they're on a kill, it doesn't pinpoint them. And what we would love to have is a map with the cluster information. Now it's not real time. Even those cluster informations, the points where the wolves have been, they're all 24 to 48 hours old. So I think that that is an ask that could be reasonably done so that at least the ranchers could know what pastures they're in, where they

could ride, where they could see that there's definitely a cluster. They could go check it out so that they could get killed. With the depredation standards the way they are now, if a cow lays there more than about a week, they don't have the evidence to confirm them. So that's just another loss that the rancher's going to have without being able to find the depredations. So, the safety of our children and elderly, I get calls daily, sometimes weekly of constituents in Catron County and they're upset, and they said, we can't even go for a walk anymore. We can't just go walking and feel safe. We're afraid of the wolves. Parents, they say, well, when the sun starts going down, we put our little kids in the house because they're getting pets ripped right off their porches. They're like, what's going to stop a wolf from eating one of our kids? And has it happened yet? Not yet. But why do we got to wait for it to happen? Why are we keeping wolves right in the town? Just this winter, they were right there in Reserve. The wolves were in town at the hardware store. We begged them to get rid of the wolves to disperse them out, to trap them, to do whatever. Nope. That was a quarter-mile from our school, and I don't know why they have to be in and around towns. I don't agree with it. The other issue that we're going to be facing, which is all this came up lately, is, Wildlife Services, some – a lot of their personnel took the buyout. So, we have both trappers that would trap in Arizona or New Mexico – both took the buyout. We have zero trappers. The range riders were laid off. So Wildlife Services doesn't have anyone hired or anywhere in the area that's going to even attempt to address these problems. So before we had a public safety crisis, we had a livestock crisis in Catron County— we'll start there. In at least two public meetings this year, a Department of Game and Fish employee has testified that cattle are major disruptors of the forest health. That employee cited no science for the assertion, or an authority to make it. Is it the policy of the New Mexico Game and Game Commission to remove cattle from our forests? So that's a question. Well, actually, maybe I shouldn't go into the questions until after Buster presents, and then I could ask questions after that. So.

BUSTER GREEN: We can get this working. You'll just click down and go to slide. OK. My presentation is going to take a little different route. That's it. Oh. Thank you. Lower right.

UNKNOWN: Right. Right.

BUSTER GREEN: Thank you. You have to help us out. We're technical—technologically challenged in Catron County, for sure. So, I just want to start out by offering a little different perspective than what you would probably think that I would say. So, I'm coming to you advocating for more wolves. I want a lot more wolves. I think it's important that the species extends its range, particularly in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, Jemez mountains, Sierra Blanca mountains and especially the Sandia mountains. There are reasons why Catron County was chosen for an area to start the wolf reintroduction program. It's vast amounts of federal lands and minimal population to offer any kind of substantial pushback or political collateral made it the perfect place. I was there at those meetings that the federal government held to meet their necessary things that they have to do. And I watched as every single citizen from Catron County was against the wolf reintroduction program, and I watched them bus in people from Reserve, I mean, from Silver City and from Albuquerque in support of the wolf. People that didn't live there. In fact, one person made a comment when we said, why don't you

release them in the Sandias? They said, "well, there's people there." I guess it's just the amount of people that makes for it to be substantial, right? Just the amount of people that determined [whether it would be an issue/concern]. There's an old proverb said that that says, "to understand a man, walk a mile in his shoes." We want other people to experience the great experience that we are going through with the wolf. It is only then that the political tide will change. Hopefully, then, our pleas for management of the wolf program will be heard. Hopefully those that would be enduring that which we have endured will look back and hold accountable all of the elected people and agencies who chose to do nothing for wolf management in Catron County. People will begin to see that Catron County is not made up of uneducated people that just hate the wolf, but that we are a people that love where we live and want to protect it and our way of life. On the website, it says it is the mission of New Mexico's Game and Fish Department "to conserve, regulate, propagate and protect the wildlife and fish within the state of New Mexico using a flexible management system that ensures sustainable use for public food supply, recreation and safety." The point that Audrey made out, and the point that we're making out, is we have a safety concern in Catron County. The fact that we have had to alter the way that we live is a safety concern. So, in full disclosure, the first video that you saw of Breely Green. That was my daughter. And you know what? She was well composed in the video and didn't show any emotion. But during that day when you have your daughter riding, crying because she's scared, and you can't legally shoot at that wolf unless it's attacking you, that's a problem. And yeah, I do agree with her. What would have happened if it would have been a pack? So, I'm asking you, each of you, to consider that if it was your child. It is a safety concern. And I think that that statement would go to show that you and your positions are here to protect all wildlife. Why, then, would a predator be given preferential treatment over other predators and prey animals? The wolf is a unique predator because of its social structure and its ability to hunt in packs. That's also what makes it especially destructive not only to wildlife, but to livestock and pets. Looking at most wolf-supportive websites, they will defend the wolf and say that it does not hunt for sport. We in Catron County, who are living this, know all too well that that isn't the case. And this isn't part of my deal, but in support of that. And I think that a lot of our problems are caused because these wolves are raised by people. They are then turned out in the wild and expected to act wild. They have no repercussions from people at all, so they do not fear people. Being a third-generation rancher from northern Catron County, I grew up where I saw mule deer on a daily basis and wild turkey all the time. Now, I am lucky if I see a mule deer a couple times a month, and I have not seen wild turkey in years in northern Catron County, I know that they're still down by Luna, where Audrey is. There's no common sense involved at all when one says that increased wolf numbers will help that situation. So, we're talking about other species that are going to continue to decline as the wolf population increases. The Game and Fish Department's efforts generate nearly \$1 billion a year—this is from your website to the state economy—often for rural areas where funds are needed the most. Receiving no money from the state's general fund, the department is funded by sportsmen and women who enjoy outdoor recreation opportunities across the state. License sales, your primary funding source, provide approximately \$20 million annually. Catron County is a primary example, as hunting and recreation are a large part of our economy and way of life. As I stated earlier, New Mexico is a world-renowned hunting destination. We in Catron County support that and want that to be viable and increase in the



future. We only know that this is possible with the help of the New Mexico Game and Fish Department. The Jicarilla also talked about the drought and its effect on wildlife in the area. I run a small ranch north of Quemado about 15 miles, 15.5 miles north of Quemado. But just recently, I've leased about two thirds of Great Western for a short period of time, and I also grew up on that ranch. So I'm leasing about 350,000 acres. I can tell you right now that within that area that I run—I run about 400,000 acres—there is not one single dirt tank that has water in it right now. If it was not for the ranchers and the permanent water systems that are maintained there, there would be no wildlife. None. And I can tell you that there are hundreds and hundreds of elk, minimal deer, as I stated. Then also predators, bobcats, wolves, coyotes, mountain lion – it's necessary for them to maintain life off the existing water structures that ranchers provide. So basically, in a time of drought, we are helping to sustain your wildlife, the wildlife that the state claims to own. So just for a little bit of comparison of the Mexican wolf recovery zone to the northern gray wolf populations. They're estimating—and I'm saying estimating because they're saying there's 286 Mexican wolves that occupy about 2 million acres on the recovery area in New Mexico and Arizona. I say estimating because even in our meetings and stuff, when we ask Wildlife Services, they will admit that they do not have an accurate count. We in Catron County, because we're living it, we know that that count is low. Yellowstone is about 2 million acres in size and it has about 100 wolves. Washington State has about 230 wolves in at least 6 million acres of eastern Washington. Clearly, the density of the Mexican wolf population in New Mexico and Arizona is at least three times greater than other wolf populations that are federally de-listed right now. Catron County is a signatory to the Mexican Wolf Recovery MOU and a cooperating entity in the Mexican Wolf Executive Committee. We have repeatedly asked the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, as a lead agency, to assist us in gaining support for actions that would help Catron County residents. And as Audrey stated, we've asked for access to Mexican Wolf GPS collar data so that ranchers will be able to maintain their livestock around wolves. We have begged for help with the politically motivated changes to Mexican wolf depredation, the SOE. They say these changes have artificially decreased the number of confirmed depredations in the last two years. Montana, Idaho, Oregon and California used the same SOE that New Mexico and Arizona used for over 20 years. They just changed this. And they did it subvertedly, we fought it. We're supposed to be a partner in this. We fought it and gave our explanations while we were fighting the changes to the SOE, because it makes it harder to show that that your livestock was killed by a wolf. And so now they're able to say that livestock depredations are going down when it's just because of the changes in their qualifications. And since federal money can only be used for confirmed depredations, Catron County residents are now paying for increased probable depredations out of their own local tax dollars for wolves introduced by the federal government. Probable depredations in New Mexico have increased from six in 2023 to over 30 in 2024, an increase of 500%. The New Mexico Game and Fish Department could use its considerable power and authority to influence the US Fish and Wildlife Service to manage wolves. Just last week at the Mexican Wolf Executive Committee meeting, the lead agencies recognized that if the Mexican wolf population continues to grow at 10% a year, it [the population] will be over 500 in just six more years. Will the New Mexico Game and Fish Department still do nothing to help Catron County residents? Wolf advocates are always proud to say that the wolf only accounts for 1% of livestock deaths. What they don't tell you is their

statistics are drawn by taking all of the livestock numbers within a given state. This includes feedlot and dairy cattle. It is very leading in their misrepresent, instead of taking an area like Catron County where it is the epicenter of the wolf reintroduction program. Contrary to wolf advocates' misinformation, wolves are the largest source of livestock mortality where they roam. And I can tell you that that is the case in Catron County. Catron County now has a public safety crisis. It's not just the livestock. As Audrey talked about, it's pets now, and it's altering the way that we're having to live our lives. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and New Mexico Game and Fish Department have complicity caused this crisis by insisting on the use of non-lethal methods that have habituated the wolves in Catron County. Mexican wolves have no fear of humans. They have been hazed and have experienced close human presence through range riding with no bad outcomes or painful results. Habituation is a serious problem known to scientists and wolf researchers for decades. When this occurred in the northern Rockies, wolves were lethally removed. This isn't happening here, and Catron County residents are paying the price. Mexican wolves, as Audrey stated, are roaming the streets of our towns in broad daylight. They are seen or seen near school playgrounds. They are snatching pets off of front porches of homes. They have shown up on the doors of elderly residents. Wolf advocates and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service claim that Mexican wolves have never killed anyone since they've been reintroduced. As we talked about earlier, why are we waiting for this to happen? And we're wanting to get ahead of this as Catron County because we want to be on record so that when it does happen, that those agencies that are involved will be held accountable. Catron County, as she said, we had a special meeting on April 3. We had no testimonies. Everybody was invited to make comment at that meeting. We had no testimonies from anyone living in Catron County that is for the increased propagation of the wolf there. I just close by saying, I know that you aren't directly involved, but you do have a lot of power and authority. And if there is any down listing or de-listing of the species, the wolf is going to be turned over to your department to manage. And I am telling you that from our experience from Catron County, you see that we're not here advocating for more management on the coyote, the mountain lion, the bobcat and the bear—we're not here pleading for that because it is a different species altogether, and the destruction caused from it is different altogether. And we are hoping that you will consider that. Just as the Jicarilla said, they're the meat in the sandwich. This, if not managed properly, is going to become a bigger issue. And as I stated at the start, we are a limited population in Catron County and do not hold that much political clout. That's why I want the wolf to spread, because then when those other counties start to feel what we're feeling, then the political willpower will be there. Then the pressure will be there to make changes and to manage things differently. So, all we're pleading with you is that you understand what we're living, because that's good—that's going to become a reality for other counties in the state, and it's just going to happen. But I don't want to wait 20 more years for that to happen—for every other county—for something to be done for our county. So, I'm hoping that that's what you'll consider. We have a few pictures here, to go through. If you want to do any explanation. Audrey.

A. McQUEEN: So, yeah, there's a lot of livestock that gets maimed as far as elk and deer. It's the same way I witnessed a lot of that. I've seen actually, wolves attacking elk. There was a horse that was killed and confirmed. All these are going to be confirmed kills from wildlife service

depredation investigators. But here you've got a rancher that I think—that was six calves—that he went out in the pasture one morning and came across that. Here's another picture— from one night— of another rancher who I think—there was five there. You take a calf that in today's market is worth \$1,600 to \$1,800, and there's nobody that could withstand that kind of financial loss. That was a calf that was killed in a rancher's corral right at their house.

BUSTER GREEN: Inside the corral.

A. McQUEEN: Right inside the corral. I know the wolf advocates will say, you guys don't take care of your cattle. What do you want to do? Like, there's nothing more we could do, except for put them in the barn. So, you do that. [referring to the photo presentation] So here, you see, this was a pet. They actually called the investigator.

BUSTER GREEN: Click. So right here.

A. McQUEEN: This was the people's porch where the wolf came in and attacked the little dog. How do you go to the next?

BUSTER GREEN: Oh. Just minimize.

A. McQUEEN: This pet, it was investigated. They did the bite spreads. They did confirm it – wolf. But these same people have a couple of kids that are not even four years old. They will not let them out there. And I can't say I don't, you know, blame them for it. So, for a lot of years, we dealt with the cattle—the livestock part—but now we're in a human crisis. So, do you have any more or do you want to have questions?

BUSTER GREEN: No, let's go ahead.

A. McQUEEN: So, I'd like to ask some questions, Mr. Chair.

STUMP: I think we're going to ask you some questions after your presentation.

A. McQUEEN: OK. So just finish my presentation then? OK, so I have these questions. Does the New Mexico Game Commission control policy of the Department of Game and Fish? We ask because Department of Game and Fish policy concerning Mexican wolves would lead one to believe that it's indeed the policy of the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. It is our understanding that not only has the Department of Game and Fish made that assertion during public meetings, but that the Department of Game and Fish has advocated to raise the evidence standard for confirming a Mexican wolf depredation, replacing SOP 11.0 with 11.1. True? Advocated not to provide wolf location information to ranchers so they can find livestock carcasses. True? Why does the Department of Game and Fish assign non-collared animals to kills when there are collared wolves present on the kills; promote cross-fostering of more Mexican wolf pups into already saturated areas and known livestock killer packs in Catron County; decline to push the Fish and Wildlife Service to provide to Wildlife Service investigators

wolf cluster information and the number of wolves in a pack? True? Is there a single instance when the Department of Game and Fish has ever pushed back on Fish and Wildlife Service management actions in Catron County? Do you see why we believe that New Mexico Department of Game and Fish's policy is to remove cattle and cattlemen from the landscape in our county? We also would like to know from the Department of Game and Fish what they think about Mexico as a secondary area for wolf recovery and what's really going on with Mexico. We've been told there's not very many wolves at all. They've been in this study as long as we have. But yet, New Mexico, Arizona is 10% of the re-introductory area. Why are we paying this whole price? We would like to know the status of that, about Mexico.

BUSTER GREEN: So last year when, you all came down and we met in Reserve, the biologist then stated that they were recording one viable wolf in Mexico at that time. And they also stated that we spent \$5 million a year for their wolf reintroduction program. And we basically made the comment that they must laugh when they cash our check and they go out and kill the wolves that are released.

A. McQUEEN: So, then I have some public safety questions on this. Catron County has passed a resolution. We've prepared this set of other action items. Does the Game Commission have any reason not to believe the testimony of the people at our special meeting or intend to direct the Department of Game and Fish to do anything to help us? What do you plan to do and by when? You're scheduled to meet in Catron County on Aug. 15, and we intend to fill the building. We urge you to have done meaningful action so our citizens see the relief from this public safety crisis before that meeting. And I'll just end by saying what a lot of the little kids are saying: "when is a wolf's life more important than a human's life?" So that's what I have.

STUMP: Thank you. Audrey. Buster. Is there any questions from commissioners?

CLEMENTE: More than questions. I mean, one of the questions that I'm going to have is for you is: how are you documenting all these cases? I'm not talking about cases that have already been confirmed by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services on cattle. I'm talking about public safety. How are you documenting all of this information? Where can we get a hold of that document, that documentation?

A. McQUEEN: Yes. So, the sheriff's office will have those reports. The Catron County Sheriff's Office.

STUMP: OK.

FULFER: My question there may be for the director. So this 320 that they're coming up with, is that what the New Mexico number is, or is that for the southwest United States? Where does that number come from? And what area does it cover?

SLOANE: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner Fulfer, it covers Arizona and New Mexico.

FULFER: And Mexico doesn't play into that in any way?

SLOANE: So, there are recovery criteria for the U.S. population and for the Mexican population. The U.S. population is an average of 320 over four years. And I think it's 21 cross fosters surviving to breeding age. And then there's another set in Mexico I want to say it's 200. And Stewart's shaking his head, "yes," so 200.

FULFER: So. This is probably an unpopular statement, but could, New Mexico—could this board come up with a motion and say, "we want to limit these to 100 in the state of New Mexico? And, if they become around a populated area, they could be removed to an unpopulated area?" And we create a kill and depredation specialist/patrolman to support the cattlemen and livestock owners?

SLOANE: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner Fulfer, I'll try and answer your question backwards. With the changes in the administration and the loss of federal employees, we are in the process of trying to go out to bid to get range riders that we would pay for, to help with the problems down in Catron County. The answer to your first question is that because the wolves are listed under the Endangered Species Act, it's a federal, listing, and it's a federal recovery program. And the standards numbers, where they go, that kind of stuff is determined ultimately by the feds.

FULFER: But New Mexico could come out with the numbers. Say we don't want over 100 of them in New Mexico. Couldn't we?

SLOANE: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner, the Commission could do that. I don't think it would have any effect, because the numbers have been litigated in federal court. Based on the science the Service used, they have been upheld. And so, I think that if we took that position, we would not be successful. And I guess I'll add that ultimately, I think the best way to get to resolution of this is to get to those recovery criteria, down-list the species and get more state management abilities in place so that we can more directly address concerns.

STUMP: Can I I'm going to go ahead and call Chief Liley to address some of this stuff. And, he's really a vessel of knowledge around this whole program. Chief Liley, please.

LILEY: Yeah. Chairman Stump, Commissioner Fulfer, as Director Sloane alluded to, it is a federally listed species. So it falls under the Endangered Species Act. Recovery plans are developed through the Fish and Wildlife Service, and as stated, it was changed from 100 to 320 in 2017. It was 320 in the United States, 200 in Mexico. You're right that 10% of historic range is in the United States, and three – and 90% is in Mexico. And, so I think there's a big key to recovery of looking into Mexico, too. And there has been struggles in Mexico. And there's been times, working through struggles of any recovery program. And I think we're going to see that. The issue is until there's a change of Congressional Endangered Species Act, the federal government is going to try to recover the species. And, so if Mexico fails completely in recovery, you're probably looking at more populations of Mexican wolves in the United States at higher

numbers. And so, while the Commission may ask to limit the number of wolves in the United States, what will potentially happen at that is you get a population that's potentially never de-listable. And so, if a population becomes de-listable, you have no relief potentially for maybe people in Catron County, maybe expanding across all of the United States. So, I think there's, as you get closer to recovery, stated earlier in the presentation, we're getting closer. We're getting towards places where there's mechanisms in the Endangered Species Act, whether that be a 4D rule, a 4D rule would be if the population was moved from endangered to threatened and more take allowances would be allowed. And the federal government is the ones that determines take, take for livestock, etc., lethal take. There's also avenues as the population continues to expand, grow, to adjust the rule. The provision that allows wolves on the landscape right now in New Mexico, Arizona is called a 10J rule. The 10J rule talks about what allowances of take are allowed for Mexican wolves. 10J rules get really restrictive when there's very few, and there's the potential to amend rules to allow for more flexibility and take for more ability to manage, like we do for bear or cougar or those kind of species. We definitely know we have predation losses to other predators out there for livestock, etc., but there's more allowable forms of take for individuals living on the landscape when we have that. So, a limitation or a reduction potentially only compounds or could compound the issue of you're getting farther away from recovery and farther away from potentially de-listing or down-listing and allowances for more take.

STUMP: Yeah. Thank you, Chief Liley. Anybody else have a question for Chief Liley? Yes.

CLEMENTE: And I do understand that this is a federally protected species. OK. So hands are kinda tied. As Chief Stewart Liley just mentioned, we do see that there's concerns. We do see we represent the residents of the State of New Mexico. One of the main things is there is a possibility to have a management plan by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. I'm seeing a lot of little issues right here. I'm seeing that the new administration, obviously, we don't have the staff for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services. We're counting on another country. They have their own issues, their own problems, their own politics, that we don't know if that country's gonna be able to meet the criteria. If it was 200 wolves right now in Mexico, it will be down-listed because I believe the count is 200 wolves in Mexico, 325 here. Am I correct?

LILEY: Yeah, it's 320 in the United States, 200 in Mexico.

CLEMENTE: Two hundred in Mexico. So, I don't know, where are we getting these numbers in Mexico. But that is one of the things is why are we taking into consideration Mexico? It is very important, I understand, for the biodiversity, for the sustainability of the species. I understand all of that. But here, it is creating problems. You just mentioned that it will – if Mexico does not come up with the numbers, this population is going to continue increasing. What is going to be the pressure? Now my question is, what does the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish as a state agency, as an agency that manages wildlife populations for the protection, the sustainability of the population, but it's intended for the protection of the public safety? What are what do we have in our back hand? If U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, especially now that they don't have, they're not going to have the staff to maintain all of this.

Where are we? What role are we playing? What can we do? How can we manage? What leverage does New Mexico Department of Game and Fish have with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services to control so this doesn't get out of hand?

LILEY: So, Mr. Chair, Commissioner Clemente, ultimately any take provisions. So, there's a rule that lists out the take provisions in the Endangered Species Act and in the rules set by the Fish and Wildlife Service, including any take by a state agency. And, so it limits even our ability. Lethal take is not allowable unless the federal government allows lethal take. So, they have to initiate and allow like federal take or excuse me, lethal take. We have the ability with our staff to do hazing and those kinds of activities. But the actual lethal take authority lives solely in the Fish and Wildlife Service. And so, there is no way for us to even say – we would be in violation of federal law as a state agency if we go in and initiate lethal take. Only when we get granted permission from the Fish and Wildlife Service or some other entity gets granted permission from Fish and Wildlife Service, can lethal take occur. Fish and Wildlife Service typically grants lethal take to USDA Wildlife Services when they do issue take, but they have not issued lethal take to us. So ultimately, I guess it's the Fish and Wildlife Service that can issue lethal.

CLEMENTE: Well, that's I think something that needs to be – I don't know. Does Arizona? Have they been allowed to take lethal take?

LILEY: That is the regulations of the US government for an endangered listed species. When it's fully listed, only the Fish and Wildlife Service has the authority to issue take (indistinct) species.

STUMP: Thank you, Commissioner Clemente. Commissioner Hickey?

SALAZAR HICKEY: Oh, Commissioner Chair, thank you very much, and Commissioners, Director Sloane and Chief Liley. This Commission has always taken our responsibility very seriously when it comes to rulemaking, and we always defer to the Department for information, statistics, you know, biology to make decisions. In a general sense, we have a responsibility of public safety at the end of the day, right? As appointed government officials, I think that's a critical responsibility, public safety. So, we've heard since last year, public comment on wolves. And I thank you both, commissioner chair Green and commissioner McQueen, thank you very much for your presentation today. So that said, let me get to the punch line. Director, Chief, can you give us any suggestions on what we could do today to move forward on this issue with Catron County? Is there anything? What? I mean, I feel like I'm very concerned when it comes to public safety. I just think we need – is there something within our control, within our resources, that we could do something?

LILEY: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Hickey, I think even as to as Commissioner McQueen stated at the end, I think what we're going to see is what we're seeing, what's happening with Wildlife Services. Wildlife Services was instrumental in some of the non-lethal actions that that occurred in Catron County that occurred across wolf range, that worked with producers to try to reduce conflict, to try to reduce potential habituation of wolves or depredations to happen. We saw a lot of – basically all of New Mexico's Wildlife Service people in Catron County that work in

wolves are gone in the last two months. I think that is an issue that the Department can work on. I just submitted to the Department of Finance Administration a scope of work yesterday that I hope they approve for working to get range riders out on the landscape contracted that maybe are locals in that area or other non-lethal means that we could work on things. So, we are on the permit for non-lethal work. We're not on a permit for lethal, but we can maybe work with contractors to try to help that. So, we are going to work to try to do that, fill that void that's going to be there because it is going to be a void. Those people were there in the last year and we had issues, and I'm not going to say that there were not issues, but we need to work and figure out how we do it more proactively, how we can get people maybe more involved. I would say some of the biggest issues that I saw from maybe even Wildlife Services is a person would be there for three months and then go take another job somewhere else. If we get people that are there for more permanency, it's not going to completely alleviate all of the problem. But there's conflict for sure. And so how do we work to try to alleviate the conflict as much as possible? I would strive to get it delisted as soon as possible, down-listed as soon as possible, so some of these issues can be taken up by – like, it'd be no different than a bear or cougar. And so how do we get that? How do we get to that point where it's down-listed or delisted and as quick as possible by also trying to recognize that there is limitations on take, but trying to reduce that conflict and working with the county and the producers in that area.

STUMP: Thank you, Chief Liley.

A. McQUEEN: Mr. Chair. Can I ask a question?

STUMP: Go ahead.

A. McQUEEN: Or it's not really a question. I just wanted to say, that was why we did the emergency resolution. And asking the governor, we took like eight positions of what we're – we have a guy in the county that works now that the county solely pays for. We've never had any help from Fish and Wildlife financially. That all comes out of the county. And so that's that was one of our asks to the governor, since we had lost all this personnel and there's no help and we're tapped down there, if we could have it was just sort of \$1 million to try to hire eight or nine personnel to try to mitigate the problems, and then possibly send in the National Guard to help haze, because everybody's calving livestock right now. There's ranchers that are losing two, three a day. And it's not feasible. So, I have a list of the of immediate actions. I would – I'll hand out to all you guys. I don't probably want to go over through them, but can hand them out to you.

STUMP: A handout would be better, for sure.

SALAZAR HICKEY: Commissioner Chair? I think, it would be very helpful to have data. I know Commissioner Clemente was asking and you said about that, and you said we can find that in the sheriff's department. But I think in some of the presentations, having specific data, you know, you mentioned so many losses per day or that sort of thing. But, having specific data presented – I don't know why you were denied certain funding, I think earlier in your



presentation, you were saying you've requested, you know, federal funding and have been denied. I wasn't sure why you were denied, but, again, what I think the questions were here is trying to help you, but trying to understand how to move forward with this.

BUSTER GREEN: Mr. Stump, may I respond?

STUMP: Commissioner Green, go ahead.

BUSTER GREEN: OK. So, when the program was initially started, the federal government was supposed to have a, a, program set up that would reimburse livestock producers for their depredations. That program – and Audrey will talk – it was called the Coexistence Council, but it never functioned properly. And, just for instance, last year, because a wolf advocacy site was saying Catron County had received \$600,000, you know, and I think that they were meaning the livestock producers, because Catron County didn't receive any money at all, you know, as the county government. But livestock producers, if they were saying that they received \$600,000, it wasn't just in Catron County. That was that was a large overview that took in all livestock depredations. The problem is, is that within the Coexistence Council, there was no mechanism in there to adjust for market prices and stuff. So, the \$600,000 that they're touting was reimbursed was payback on livestock that now on livestock values would have been estimated at \$2.2 million. So, you're talking about – you would've got reimbursed for basically a quarter of the worth of your livestock. So that was the issues. That was within that. we were able to create the Cattle Livestock Loss Authority here within New Mexico. And that's what Audrey was specifying there, that we petitioned for \$9 million because over the time it got cut to a million and a half, and that's over a three-year period. So that's \$500,000 a year. And that's to take care of livestock depredations wherever they happen. Not only in Catron County. So we're trying to get ahead of the curve, and we're trying to have the federal dollars go into a New Mexico program that's functioning, that basically producers are going to get immediate, you know, help or relief instead of waiting two years, which was what was happening within the Coexistence Council. And that was if it happened. But no. And so we've been back to Washington. We do realize that Mexico is part of the problem. And that's why we're coming to you, because we're saying if they aren't down-listed or delisted, we're petitioning for you to understand the problem that is going to spread from Catron County. We want you to understand what we've been going through, because more counties are going to go through what we're going through. Unfortunately, we are the dumping ground for everything right now, all the cross-fosters, everything and like I said, and I think it's just because they know politically we don't matter. That's why I'm advocating for the wolf to be established everywhere in New Mexico. But we are petitioning for Mexico to be decoupled, because the only way that we are going to reach our numbers and get down-listed is if the program is decoupled from Mexico. Mexico is not going to support 200 viable wolves. We don't have that control over their government, and it's asinine for us to pretend like we have that control over what we release down there.

STUMP: Thank you, Commissioner Green. Commissioner Clemente?

CLEMENTE: I'm going to say something first. First of all, I'm gonna – we got to say the bad and the good as well. I'm gonna thank Chief Stewart Liley. One of the things is just standing there and saying what it is, I really appreciate it, saying and putting the picture how really it is. And, another thing I have is I when I took this chair, I took it very seriously. When I said, yes, I will, I took it very seriously. I've been going into Mexico, making trips, talking to the government, federal government, states. I've been talking to biologists all the way to Spain. OK. To get information about because I'm not the expert for wolves. The expert is here, I am not. OK? to get the the knowledge to try to do better things. And I actually got a call that, Mr. Chief Stewart Liley has been talking to Mexico, to the federal government, trying to push this very hard. And I really appreciate that. That speaks a lot. With that being said, you may have answered this question. You might know because I haven't been able to find it. I haven't been able to get an answer on this. Mexico has their own Endangered Species Act, 1996. Part of it was created by my father, the first wildlife biologist, PhD, wildlife biologist in Mexico. So, my question is this. Does Mexico have listed endangered species under the Mexican Endangered Species Act?

LILEY: Commissioner Stump, Commissioner Clemente. Yes, they're listed under there. And they have a PACE plan for the Mexican wolves. They're actually trying to update their PACE for Mexican wolves, to recognize the need to recover in historic range. Part of their PACE also discusses our letter of intent with Mexico. So, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Arizona Game and Fish, New Mexico Game and Fish signed a letter of intent to work on recovery across historic range. And so, to work in collaboration across the historic range for recovery. Again they're working on a new PACE, but they are endangered in Mexico and they are listed under their federal Endangered Species Act as well.

CLEMENTE: And what I was told – it's just one more question – is what I was told is Mexican landowners does not get compensation for the loss of cattle. Correct?

LILEY: Commissioner Stump, Commissioner Clemente. Not in totality, for sure. Especially in the Nuevo Casas Grandes, where the majority of the wolves are right now. There wasn't a compensation program put up. That's why a lot of the discussion came around moving south into historic range in Mexico, in the state of Durango, where it's more forestry-driven and less cattle-driven. But, yet wildlife populations are high. We've been trying to press the state of the Durango for about seven years now – six years. Under the new administration in Mexico, I think there is the chance that they are looking at potentially releasing wolves in Durango as soon as this winter. But and that is a big issue, is the compensation program in conflict mitigation. Any predator on the landscape that conflicts with it is going to have problems. And then that trying to resolve that issue is you tell me how to do that. ...

CLEMENTE: And I agree.

LILEY: There would be a lot, but it's just a very difficult thing, whether you're talking grizzly bears or you're talking wolves or you're talking that – especially when it's a listed species where there's limited authority on take.

CLEMENTE: And the reason why I'm bringing all of this is because, I'm very impressed that I actually haven't heard one person that says – does not want the Mexican gray wolf. And the video that we saw – I took my notes here, I'm sorry – your daughter, I believe, commissioner, she says, wow can we coexist with wolves? How can we control the population? They're not saying that they don't want wolves. We want the wolves. But that's the key. How can we control? How can we manage? How can we coexist? Right. And that's, I guess, why I'm bringing up these. I mean, the whole story has to come out and we have to push together and we have to come in a plan. That's all yhat I'm going to say. Thank you.

STUMP

Thank you, Commissioner Clemente. Sabrina?

PACK: Thank you, Chairman. So as you most of you probably know that I am district two. So this is right in the heart of my district. And I have been actively involved in listening to both sides, all sides, all people who are willing to talk to understand the situation more thoroughly. So just for my fellow Commissioners, to depack, this a little, I'm going to take it slowly and go over each one of these things as we consider. Are there things the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish can do under our advisement? Because we are – I am seeing it firsthand that we are in a crisis. I believe if you support the wolf or you don't support the wolf, in order for any of it to be successful on either side, we have to figure out how to coexist. I mean, this is and as you pointed out, Clemente, really, his daughter was – and I think even, your daughter had said, let's figure out how to work this out together. It's not that they don't want the wolf. It's just, how do we how do we live with the wolf? So, let's take this one thing at a time. So, I wasn't able to attend your first meeting you had that you declared the state of emergency. But I know Director Sloane and Commissioner Lopez attended that. So, I'm grateful that you attended that meeting. The next week, we had another meeting as a follow-up because it became public safety – quite critical. And Commissioner Clemente and myself were able to attend that meeting. Since then, I've had the opportunity, besides listening to the video recording of all the testimonies for three hours and hearing what the public was saying there and just talking as well to wolf supporters, I've had a lot of dialog. I think one of the most moving dialogs I had, though, recently when we talk about public safety, was I personally, you know, talked to the sheriff. There is a public safety crisis going on here. And we need to figure out how to coexist. So, in that, Chief Liley, I have a couple of just clarification questions I think would be helpful if you could answer. So, as I understand, the interagency was formed and the field team was formed. And so – my terminology – became the Wolf Executive Committee or it's the Wolf Executive Committee, as you refer to it, that you sit on? The New Mexico Department of Game of Fish sits on with other individuals?

LILEY: Mr. Chair. Commissioner Pack, New Mexico Game and Fish sits all the way on the interagency field team, the executive, and – yeah, it's part of the whole co-management.

PACK: So, could you clarify like what is our role on that. What do we do?

LILEY: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Pack, we are advisory members. Ultimately, the Fish and Wildlife Service has the decision authority. It is even spelled out in the MoU that we could advise the Fish and Wildlife Service. But the Fish and Wildlife Service has ultimate authority.

PACK: So, in that advisory capacity, how do you what – do you advise for? I mean, like, give me examples if you would.

LILEY: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Pack, it might be advice on where depredations are occurring. It might be on when the SOPs come up and, and there's discussions about should it be this or that. There's advice over on – a lot about SOPs. And I think I should point out to on that whole committee, the counties are involved in that as well too. They sit on that as well. And, so there are different structures and obviously different structures on who has, like, lead roles. Lead roles are land management agencies or somebody that has statutory authority like us over wildlife. Land management agency, such as BLM, Forest Service, that have statutory authority over land. But ultimately it goes back to the Fish and Wildlife Service on all decision-making, on who has the authority.

PACK: And I appreciate that. So, I know I've asked because – in the fall, when we got into discussions on SOP 11.1 and even 26.1, understanding Department of Game and Fish's role in this and the advisory position. So that's why I just bring this up as just a clarification for the commissioners. The we are advising. And so I'm looking for solutions. I'm looking for ways that this all comes together in meaningful ways on all sides to make sure this program is moving along in a positive way with a minimal impact. I hope to the residents. So, in that – but I'm going to come back to you, but I have a couple of clarification questions. I remember hearing and I don't remember the number. So, I thought it might be useful to give the perspective, what is the livestock loss? Yeah. The economic cost given at one of your meetings. I think that you had shared – what's the economic cost or and it could be broken out economically or livestock and other means to Catron County?

A. McQUEEN: So, Chairman, Sabrina Pack, what are you exactly asking?

PACK: I remember you had discussed the cost of livestock, like for one year. So, these are some of the facts and statistics that you had presented in one of your meetings. So – how many – what's the estimated cost of livestock losses in Catron County for last year versus, you know, other costs that you're incurring as a government there?

A. McQUEEN: OK. So we don't have – I mean, we're still working on some of the 24 costs, but 2023, we estimated it between all the all the losses. And that was that was only going to be on the producers of Catron that participated. But what we came up with was \$2.2 million.

PACK: And do – so, if you had that loss, do you have a number of how much they were recouped of that money?

A. McQUEEN: OK. So, we don't have, I mean, we're still working on some of the '24 costs, but 2023, we estimated it between all the losses. And that was, that was only going to be on the producers of Catron that participated. But what we came up with was \$2.2 million.

PACK: And... so, if you had that loss, do you have a number of how much they were recouped of that money?

A. McQUEEN: It was right at around \$600,000.

PACK: OK. So, also you're incurring cost — after talking to the sheriff, I mean, there's a lot of cost and public safety that's had to increase. Have you put numbers to any of that? And what you're asking for even from the governor's request, what does that request look like? What? Explain the request.

A. McQUEEN: Yeah. So, the county has Sean Mingus, who's the depredation investigator that goes out about this time of the year every single day on three or four kills. And, so with his vehicle, everything it needs to, keep him at work, it's about \$160,000 a year it costs the county to keep him. And so. The sheriff's office, I think we're down to five. I think we've got five deputies and sheriff and undersheriff. They deal with a lot of calls on the wolf, but they're, that county is big, and it's becoming very burdensome. We don't have the personnel or the money to keep funding it.

PACK: So this is concerning. Like I, I will say I'm still if you say we're neutral, whether we support them, you know, we want the wolf to be successful. We want also to be successful for you. All the costs to me are escalating, in that we're having so many contacts with wolves now and so I am concerned about that. And I think that you just mentioned, Chief Liley, when I visited with you last week, you mentioned something about, could you explain on the cost of what the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish incurs for the program? Because I remember you talked about you had refunded 50% of one range rider, I think it was, or something. There were some numbers like that on the trapping.

LILEY: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Pack. So, we have three full-time employees, and then we also funded 50% of the range riders with Wildlife Services. And then we also funded 20 – 33% of the trapper that was lost that was from Wildlife Services.

PACK: So does that plan that you just mentioned, that you just completed yesterday, does that include like 100% of that now of those or what does it look like?

LILEY: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Pack, yes. For the range riders it will pick up 100% of that.

PACK: For one range rider.

LILEY: IT depends on how many. So, the contract would be open to bid, we're hoping. We're working through the procurement process that it would allow multiple vendors, multiple

bidders, and so we could put multiple people on contract. We'll see how – again, you have to go through the state procurement process that we're working through to try to get to that, but we'll see how many people bid it, how quick we could get the bid open, and then where how much money we have to help fund and how many.

PACK: So, in light of range riders, I'm kind of confused because I've talked to quite a few ranchers that don't seem to think range riders are effective. I talked to Director Sloane, and they are. Do you have – I mean, could you give me some data on that?

LILEY: Commissioner Stump – or, excuse me, Chairman Stump, Commissioner Pack, range riders can be effective at deterring some depredations. Absolutely. Are they 100% effective? No. I think there's instances when you have a range rider out there that's out there when the wolves are out there and at night or really early in the morning, they can be more effective with range riding and preventing depredations. I think the comments that were made to and I think there's some validity to it, is when there's not lethal component with it, maybe it's not as effective. And so again, the aspect of the lethal component falls squarely in the Fish and Wildlife Service. And so even, I think we're looking at, right, an endangered species where take is illegal. And how do we work on trying to use non-lethal deterrents to try to get and manage this as much as possible? And that's the goal there. Is there ways, it's not 100% effective, even lethal control wouldn't be 100% effective unless they're gone completely. And so that that's not the position we're in. And, so trying to reduce conflict as much as possible, make it something to where they don't associate humans to a positive, that would be helpful. Range riding has been used in the West, and there's quite a bit of research that came out of the Fort Collins Research Station with USDA that shows it is an effective tool to reduce livestock conflict. So, I think the research has shown that it's there. And so that's why we're putting forth on, trying to reduce some of the conflicts with it .

PACK: So let's go with that. Let's say range riders are effective. And we're talking about trying to fund or we only had one range rider and didn't your presentation say that we had 2 million acres and that's, I don't see how one I mean, I maybe I, that's me. I mean, I know I think about the ranches, I mean, I'm in the Gila all the time. And I'm concerned about, that doesn't sound like enough appropriation that I don't, maybe we don't have funding for the rest, but maybe when we're looking at the crisis that's evolving and escalating now, and coupled with the federal budget being cut and we don't know all those implications, I'm concerned that we're not addressing. I mean, even if we replace it and pay 100% of one or two or whatever the contracting looks like, I am concerned that that's probably not going, that's like putting a drop in a bucket of what needs to happen.

LILEY: So, Chairman Stump, Commissioner Pack, I think it's also important to note the Western Landowners Association has a, I can't exactly remember what the acronym stands for, but RCPP it's based off of USDA, to implement \$2.5 million towards range riding once it gets signed. They just had 119 sign-ups in Colorado for range riding. It would be a producer-based sign-up so the producers themselves can apply for the money through the RCPP that was being handled, through Western Landowners. And that money goes directly to them to maybe hire another

individual on their property that does that work. And so that I think is going to be more effective than us being able to hire a lot of people. Can we get that through the finish line? We are working to try to help Western Landowners get that through to figure it out. I think that's a lot more productive. Again, that's federal money that deals with that. You're talking \$2.5 million over a year. It's just something that the Department can't really absorb from that price. And it also, I think, is more beneficial to have the producers figure out who they want as a range rider on their own place, have 100% control over it and those kind of aspects. So I think this kind of a program, and approach, is going to be helpful whether the federal government comes through on the funding or not, I don't know, and I think that's part of their ask, too, is that the federal government put more money into this program. And as they kind of discussed, working with congressional delegations on how that might look, is that a farm bill that maybe, hopefully sometimes comes? I don't know, but I do think there's some avenues to work through a farm bill or other aspects that recognizes this. This is not an isolated problem in New Mexico. This is a problem across a lot of western United States. And, so as you see, expanding wolf populations and grizzly populations, again, it's not isolated to New Mexico.

PACK: So Commissioner Green had three asks. One of them was revolving around GPS collaring and getting location data. And while the other one was we'll get to the other standard of 11.1. So, let's talk about collaring. Could you talk about OK, so the three employees that she mentioned that we had, what do those three employees do for the wolf program?

LILEY: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Pack, one is kind of the supervisor, the lead to kind of direct some of it. A lot of it is the work through different issues of the year, whether that's during the annual count and capture, working to help capture and radio collar animals, if they're working to do mitigation or nuisance abatement, those kind of issues as well. So, it's a whole suite depending on the time of the year. And, and like you said, it's a big area for those three employees to work in. But yeah, they do everything from wolf biology to try to mitigate some of the impacts of depredations, etc. ...

PACK: Some of them get into management plans, I would hope, but that's good. Let's talk about collaring. I know that one of the asks is can we collar moew wolves? So what is your thought – can those employers help with that? Or can we collar more wolves?

LILEY: Chairman Stump, Commissioner Pack, absolutely. If we get our hands on – the hardest part is sometimes catching the wolves and catching the wolves at the time that's permissible from the permitting that we have to put traps and catch or go on aerial counts according to, or excuse me, area of capture. So, any wolf we get in hand, we get – we put a radio collar on.

PACK: I've heard a question about limiting the number of collars in a pack. Is that true?

LILEY: Chairman Stump, Commissioner Pack, so a lot of that comes into limiting when we have a helicopter in the air, limiting it to putting two so we can move on to other packs to get at least two collars on the next pack. So, part of that is a limitation on helicopter time. And the funding that comes from the helicopters comes from the Fish and Wildlife Service. So that would be,

not a limitation, if like trapping seasons, those kind of things, we try to put as many collars out when we're doing that. But in the aerial operations, they try to – if it's not a critical animal or if a collar is failing, they try to move on so they can get collars on as many packs as possible because they are a pack-structured animal. And because of that, when they disperse, yes, that's a different issue. But when they form new packs, we're trying to get two collars on both the adults, at least.

PACK: So, recently I talked to Director Sloane about collaring, because that seems to be a, echo from both the wolf lovers and residents trying to deal with this and trying to get accurate counts, because there's a lot of hunters saying, you know, there's actually more wolves out there. And I understand your minimum count, number of 286 right now. Sloane, I believe you said to me there wasn't a concern about funding the cost of the collars or the or the work to do that. Is that correct?

SLOANE: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Pack, I believe we can find money to get additional collars. It's the getting our hands on the wolves, as Stewart just pointed out.

PACK: So, when we're thinking about Commissioners, fellow Commissioners on how moving forward, could we advise the Department of Game of Fish, I think that the ask of collaring more wolves, if you know, somehow figuring out the funding so we can do that is not an unreasonable ask. Nor is if we're trying to work with compatibility issues. How do we help these ranchers know where the wolf is so that they can haze them? We know that lethal kill is not allowed, but so they can actually be out there where the wolf pack might be on their herd. I don't think that's an unreasonable ask, but I'll let you guys discuss that. But those are some concerns, some of the concerns that I have. I applaud your effort to come all this way. I know that's a long way to come. You have a lot of people who have come. I am very concerned if the idea of potentially these collared wolves, because of funding cuts, may actually turn off the collars in 90 days, that is a concern, a potential risk to even protecting the wolf. There's both sides of this, but I definitely think we need to have better counting. More collaring will allow that. And we need to also definitely need to look at SOP 11.1, because even though the depredation standards, the depredation numbers, I've talked to Sean Mingus, who is their livestock depredation officer, I feel like from the conversations that I've had with this gentleman that we definitely are seeing, of course, as calving season, we're seeing challenges there. But SOP 11.1, I understand, is kind of unique to our own area. And I believe this. We go back to our advisory capacity on the executive committee. If the Commissioners were to advocate or to direct the Commission or Stewart Liley to support some of the things that would bring this more into balance so that we can coexist, I think those are the things that this Commission needs to look at. So, I do have a final remark, but if it's somebody else wants to add in something before I do that, please do.

CLEMENTE: (Indistinct)

STUMP: I think, Commissioner Lopez, you've been wanting to ask something for a bit.



LOPEZ: Stewart, you said you submitted a plan to DFA to get more range riders. Correct? Correct? Yes?

LILEY: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Lopez, yes. A scope of work. We're trying to get a determination.

LOPEZ: IOK, well, I got some job budget people here. We have vacancy savings, don't we, in the budget last I saw? Correct? Is there vacancy savings? How much vacancy savings do we have? The reason I ask is because if we're going to go through a contract through DFA to hire range riders to help Catron County, and if we have vacancy savings based on our people, why can we have two, a couple of full-time employees are down there that we don't have to go down this train six or seven years down the road, part-time employees or full-time employees, because – and the wolf program can help out your team.

LILEY: Commissioner Stump, Commissioner Lopez, I think our employees are going to cost a lot more than what we could do on contract based with maybe a landowner that works down in Catron County. I think that would be a better way to do this as we put this out for contract to bid and that maybe even one of the ranchers' children bid on that, or one of the different ranch hand bids on it and that knows that country, knows how to work the land a lot better than what someone from outside in the public would. I think it'd be better suited to let them bid that contract and work on hazing and attempts there. And I think local knowledge of that is going to be better than trying to hire two or three full-time employees, where we maybe could put six or seven more contractors out, that maybe you're getting paid when depredation – there's definitely periods where depredations are very high and then depredations fall off. And so, for example, January through May. When elk aren't calving, depredations peak and it spikes. And so, we see a fall-off on some depredations after elk calve. And, so what does that employee do at that time versus – we can maybe saturate more contract employees during the depredation season for the same cost instead of full-time employees.

LOPEZ: So, what's the, I guess the contract amount that they're... What's the amount of money that the Department is willing to spend, I guess, on this?

LILEY: Chairman. Stump, Commissioner Lopez, we have to get a determination first on if it's a professional service or a general service, and I don't want to speak before we get that determination made. And so that's really going to depend on how that determination is made.

LOPEZ: Another question for the commissioners from Catron County. Where is the emergency order now? Up the chain, or where is the location of it or status of it?

A. McQUEEN: I know for sure that it's on — Howie Morales has had it. I don't know, I think the governor's Gone right now, but I don't know if she's, you know, I haven't heard from her office, just heard from some of Howie Morales' staff and they have it.

LOPEZ: OK, so it's in the chain in government bureaucracy – government somewhere.

A. McQUEEN: Yes.

LOPEZ: OK.

BUSTER GREEN: Yes, sir. And, Mr. Lopez, just for the record, the biggest I'm sure that most of you know this, but the biggest percentage of our kills happen at night. And, so the range rider position, it's not, like a cherry, or an easy position because for, for a real, for a range rider to be effective when the livestock would be getting killed, most they're going to need to be out there from 12 to 4 in the morning with night-vision goggles and be able to see the wolves coming in and stuff.

So, it isn't like a go out in the afternoon for a couple hours and yell at some wolves. Like it would be, you know, uncomfortable conditions.

LOPEZ: That's all I have. Thank you.

STUMP: Well, thank you, Commissioner Lopez. And to address what you just, remarked on. I agree with that. And I think it will take that type of effort to get what we need to get. If you're going to have range riders we need to get someone that's willing to do it at night, just like a hunter's willing to get up every morning at four in the morning. So, I don't disagree with that. Anybody else?

SALAZAR HICKEY: Mr. Chair, thank you very much. I can't say thank you enough, for your presentation and for your patience and understanding with us. We're really trying to work through this, OK? And we're listening. So, to wrap this up, my question would be for the director. I think, Mr. Secretary, is a summary at some point of what is it specifically we're going to be doing between now and our next meeting in Red River? Or at least how are we going to move forward on this? A summary.

SLOANE: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Salazar Hickey, we can certainly put something together, probably in my monthly report to you.

PACK: Can I make a comment?

STUMP: You have one more?

PACK: Yes, I have something I would like to wrap up with, because I know we would get to a point. I hope that we could...What is our next step and how can we help? So, I would like to say overall, your presentation and my time now talking to many people underscores the evolving wolf situation. I also understand that 90% of the wolves are in Grant – in Catron County, so that's a concern with real safety concerns near our homes and livestock losses, as well as potential federal funding shifts could impact the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish wolf program and how we are involved in this wolf program. I believe we as a Commission need updates to plan reasonably. And that's kind of what Commissioner Salazar Hickey was saying.

And we need to continue this open public dialog around this important topic. So, I would therefore like to see both on the June meeting and the August meeting agendas, this topic, and I would like the next meeting, the Department of Game of Fish, as well as the August meeting to give us any updates, because I think this whole thing is evolving tremendously and I'm very – Chief Liley, I'm thrilled to hear that you've worked on, you know, a plan or you know you're working on a plan. I'd like to hear more about that. And I would like to also have listed on the agenda for the June and August meeting this be an action item, in case the Commissioners want to advise or direct the Department of Game of Fish on their advisory role and the Wolf Executive Committee and any other actions that they may be doing. Not saying it'll be an action item for certain, but I think it should be listed that in case we decide to that there's something that we want to act upon. So, I will hope that you will take that into consideration, and I hope that some of the other Commissioners will feel the same way.

STUMO: Thank you, Commissioner Pack. I will take that under consideration as well as both the meetings. I don't know that we'll do both of those meetings. We'll talk about that, but to sum this all up, thank you guys, I appreciate your, it's a lot of information, and I've heard it before, and I don't think everybody has. But I also have to point out, as the Commission, the chair of the Commission, I also received, I would say, close to 6 or 700 emails from the advocates, and which is great. There were – I don't know if any of you received those, but I received – they're all addressed to me. It was all the same form letter. So, they all sent the same letter. I'm a little disappointed nobody from that side is here today. But, you know, the bottom line is where there's wolves, people don't want wolves, and where there's no wolves and people don't live around wolves, they think wolves are great and they want more wolves. And it's a challenge. And I don't think anybody on this Commission here wants the wolf program to fail. I certainly do not. And I know Commissioner Pack receives constant concerns every day from – and both sides. That's right. And it's, so that's my point. But what I took notice of, is I didn't really realize I didn't really see one email from anybody with any kind of form of solutions. No solutions. This is very polarized. And, these groups that exist and they're environmental groups, which I think they're great that they're around here and part of our existence, there's a lot of money there. And, it would be great if we could all come together and not be so polarized so this is a successful program for everyone, and it's in a real – it's a sticky place right now because it is in recovery. So, I'd like to close with that. And this and I appreciate you guys being here today. I think we're going to take a break for lunch. And thanks again, Commissioners. Oh. Public comment. I forgot all about public comment. I'm going on a piece of toast here. So, Yeah, I guess we have some public comment. I apologize. Mr. Paterson.

PATERSON: Thank you, Chairman Stump. Mr. Chair, Commissioners, my name is Tom Patterson and the cattle rancher from Catron County and I serve as president-elect to the New Mexico Cattle Growers Association. I've spoken with you a number of times before about Mexican wolves and about the emerging or the consistent aggravating situation with them. I disagree with you, Chairman Stump. We've given you a list today of what can be done now, we've – to the question that Commissioner Clemente and Commissioner Hickey identified what can be done now, I believe you've got a list of 15 action items based on what ranchers have said, based

on what public safety officials have said, based on what wolf investigators, depredation officers have said. You've got a list. We've put – that list has been getting assembled for years. It's been updated with the most recent information that we could possibly find in Catron County to give to you. So, we have given you – we put our best foot forward to give you specific action items. They don't all involve delisting; they don't all involve lethal kills. They're things that can be done now. Immediately. To your question, Commissioner Fulfer, about numbers. We can stop putting more wolves in Catron County. There is no reason, other than subject to an issue about genetic diversity on cross fosters – subject to that, there is no reason why we should be, they should be releasing more wolves in Catron County. To the point about, well, Fish and Wildlife Services in charge of all this. I would respond, go talk to them. They might listen to you. They darn sure don't listen to us. They pat us on the head and ignore us. But you can go to the Fish and Wildlife Service as a member of the interagency field team, as a member of the Mexican Wolf Executive Committee, and tell them no more wolves in Catron County. Provide cluster information. Provide the number of wolves in packs so the investigators can go – can have that information, because they say it would be useful for them. There are things that can be done now short of delisting, short of perhaps going in and trying to modify the 10J. Short of a Rule 4 rule, there are things that can be done now that would make a difference in management. And that's what, you know, we really want to see. I think the problem we have, and it's been illustrated here repeatedly today, is that the debate over wolves raises two almost philosophical questions. Does ESA management rules – do those rules adequately address the situation when the species at issue is an apex predator, and not some worm or butterfly or toad? Second: where do people fit in the hierarchy? (Indistinct) apex predator.

STUMP: Thank you, Mr. Patterson. Next up is, Cleo. Cleo, Mew?

Cleo Miao:Cleo Miao

STUMP: Miao, Miao, sorry.

Cleo Miao: Good afternoon, Chairman and Commissioners. Thank you. I came in support and to hear what is going on. I was born and raised in Catron County, and, we've known each other our whole life. We were all raised together in the county. My father still resides there and is a very small cattle rancher. When I say small, he's down to 15 cows. And, unfortunately, my dad is very proud and will not usually call anybody to come see the wolf kills. But, when I begged him to was whenever my mother, my late mother, stepped outside and saw her puppy that was given to her, Butter, and witnessed a wolf eating the back end of her puppy and just walked off from their front yard right outside, their front yard is where Butter was laying. And so, that was several years ago. I fortunately, did not have to go to school and sit at the school bus, but I was the first one on and the last one off the bus as a child. And that was at 6:30 in the morning because our bus ride was very long. But to see my childhood friends raising their children there, along with Audrey and Buster's kids, who I've known their whole lives, have to sit in a cage or not even be able to wait for the bus outside because of the danger of the wolves. How many of you guys have ever encountered a wolf in the wild – a gray wolf? OK. You have. So, I drove every day, 65 miles one day to work one way to work from Magdalena to Quemado. And then I

would drive one day a week to Reserve and one day a week to Datil. And the other day I worked in Magdalena. And so, I work in the public. I worked at the public schools at the time. I saw many wild gray wolves in the wild that would just sit on the side of the road and watch cars pass by. Pulled up to one right in Datil Canyon and it just sat there and I rolled down the window, and it just stood there and stared at me. We had a staring contest, and then I just drove off. Now, Miss Breely, who I've known since she was in kindergarten or pre-K, and Miss Taylor—um—I was heartbroken by both of their experiences. And those are just the first. But whenever I get on social media to find out what's going on back home, I see my friends and childhood classmates posting that the wolf was in the middle of town in Reserve. I was, um, pretty distraught to know that it was in town. This is where I call home. This is where I graduated from, and this is where my family still resides. So, I was optimistic coming here today. And after hearing you guys listen to the commissioners, I'm—  
*(audio cuts off; speaker out of time.)*

STUMP: Thank you, Mrs. Mau. We have, I think, six online.

T. CARRELL: Yes. We currently have six hands raised. We'll start with Cyndi Tuell. Cyndi, you are unmuted.

TUELL: Thank you. I hope you can hear me, Mr. Chair, Commissioners, members of the public. I appreciate this opportunity to speak. Today, one of the commissioners asked, um, how the public safety in Catron County was being documented. And the answer Miss McQueen provided was that the sheriff has that documentation. I would like the Commission to know that I submitted a public records request for that information on April 2, 2025, and as of today, I still haven't received those records or any information. I'm here today to be the voice for the Mexican gray wolves in New Mexico, because they are actually under attack by members of the ranching industry, despite the fact that livestock depredations are going down. They have been going down since their peak in 2019. The Fish and Wildlife Service has a five-year report that attributes this decline in depredations to an uptick in coexistence measures like range riding, showing that ranchers' effort is what makes the difference in the numbers of livestock lost to predators—not the killing of wolves. Compared to the number of livestock on the ground in New Mexico, there are very few wolves. We noticed that there's a new fulfilled wolf removal order posted on the Fish and Wildlife site today for Rainy Mesa. The government apparently took the patriarch of the Hill Canyon pack last week for his alleged crimes of feeding his family on the easiest prey available on the national forest lands—and that's private livestock. So just this month, two Mexican gray wolves—key members of their packs and important contributors to the future of wild wolf recovery—have been killed at the behest of the livestock industry, which is private business. The New Mexico Cattle Growers are asking for a variety of management changes, from defunding and de-listing the Mexican gray wolf program to insisting that every wolf is collared to firing program staff. None of that is geared toward recovery; it's geared toward serving the interests of private business, who want more wolves to be removed from the land. I don't think that's what the majority of New Mexicans or Americans want to see. I think they are a vocal minority. I do think the fear is real, but I think coexistence measures and information shared by the Game and Fish Department could help people

alleviate a lot of their fear and a lot of the problems that are going on. Livestock grazing, drought—those things displace the natural prey for wolves, which is elk and deer. And I've heard ranchers complaining about the number of wolves in the forest, saying the wolves eat their cows. They complain about the number of elk, saying the elk eat their grass. They complain about the number of juniper, saying the trees keep the grass from growing. They complain about coyotes, bears and cougars. It appears that the ranchers in certain parts of New Mexico think there's just too much wild in the wild places in New Mexico—and I just completely disagree. I visit New Mexico so that I can have the opportunity to see and hear wolves. It's a tourist industry that could be a boon for the communities, and I hope that that would be encouraged. It's what makes New Mexico a beautiful place to visit and live. Those wild animals being on the landscape—they belong in New Mexico. They have a right to exist. And private businesses, like ranchers, have an obligation to share the land with the plants and animals that were there first. Thank you.

T. CARRELL: Thank you. So next up, we will have Joanna Zhang. Joanna, you're unmuted.

JOANNA ZHANG: Hi there. Thank you for the opportunity to give comment. Um, so I'm Joanna Zhang. I'm an endangered species advocate with WildEarth Guardians, and I'm based in Albuquerque. I wanted to speak to a few of the things that Cyndi already covered. But, you know, we heard today a lot of anecdotes of wolf attacks. And to echo what Cyndi pointed out, the number of wolves—that is, the number of kills that wolves are making of livestock—is actually decreasing. That's gone down both in total and per 100 wolves. And to me, that doesn't really signal an emergency. And when we talk about defunding or de-listing wolves or any of that sort of thing, you know, it's—it's really when U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and state agencies can carry out, and have the resources to do, proactive non-lethal deterrence work, that's when we're able to keep livestock losses down. So, when you defund a program like this and you take staff off the ground, then there's a higher possibility of things going backwards. I also wanted to highlight that wolves are not the biggest threat to livestock on the landscape. There are so many other threats that are statistically more likely to kill cattle—like drought being a big one, along with disease, injury, weather, etc. And there are a lot of things currently working against agriculture and cattle in Catron County. You know, we have the climate crisis. This year in New Mexico had some of the worst snowpack that it's ever had historically. And there's big wildfire risk. So, Catron County could be investing in water infrastructure or resources for people to create defensible space, rather than, you know, declaring this wolf emergency. And, you know, it's been pointed out today that there's—there's some people... you know, I hear the fear from the folks who've spoken up today. And I also wanted to speak for WildEarth Guardians members. We work with many people in Catron County who love wolves. They're not afraid of them. They want them on the landscape. But their voices are often drowned out by others. And one final point that I wanted to make was, you know, if the Commission wanted to relieve the pressure of wolves on Catron County—we heard from the presentation today about the high density of wolves in Catron County compared to Yellowstone—they could lift the ban on crossing I-40 and let wolves disperse into suitable habitat in northern New Mexico. When wolves are being prohibited from going north, that kind

of artificially inflates the population density in Catron County and makes it harder than it needs to be. So that's all I have to say. Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

T. CARRELL: Thank you, Joanna. Next up, we'll have Craig Miller. Craig, you are allowed to speak. Craig, can you unmute your microphone on your end, please?

CRAIG MILLER: Hi, I'm Craig Miller. I'm the Senior Southwest Representative for Defenders of Wildlife. I live in the Mexican wolf experimental population area. I've been involved with Mexican wolf recovery since before wolves were on the ground. One of my projects involves working with ranchers to place range riders on the ground and to use non-lethal tools and conflict prevention strategies. To date, we've supported over 180 discrete projects for a total of over \$1.7 million. We use our expenditures combined with the in-kind contributions of participating ranchers to help federal and state agencies receive additional support in New Mexico. That takes place through the New Mexico Department of Agriculture and eventually through the County Livestock Loss Authority. It comes in the form of livestock loss demonstration grants, which are also federal funding (indistinct). In 2023, as a result of this partnership, the Livestock Loss Authority received \$150,000 in compensation funding and \$97,500 in prevention grants. Additionally, the federal Livestock Indemnity Program, which is funded in part through the Farm Bill, paid out \$736,000-plus to 25 recipients just in the year 2023. Additionally, the Governor and the Legislature recently appropriated \$1.5 million to go to the Livestock Loss Authority to assist with depredation compensation and conflict prevention. Additionally, as Director Liley mentioned, the NRCS allocated \$6.5 million for livestock risk management in predator-occupied areas, to be split between New Mexico and Arizona, led by Western Landowners Alliance. To quote one of the officers of the County Livestock Loss Authority, "Just to clarify, there's no lack of money. That's a complete lie. Period." That was in November of last year. In Arizona, they recently implemented a carcass removal incentive, which pays producers \$250 for disposing of livestock carcasses to reduce the potential for them serving as an attractant. The point is, one of the problems Catron County is experiencing now is the result of an emergency declaration, which just ushered in more irrational and irresponsible decisions that led to the dismissal of the experts with Wildlife Services, who are responsible for range riding and non-lethal deterrents. Implementing another emergency declaration would only inject more hyperbole and confusion into an already challenging program. Funding is available. What's really needed is clear thinking and a commitment from leaders in all camps to use our collective problem solving to apply the significant resources already available to the ... *(speaker ran out of time)*

T. CARRELL: Thank you, Craig. Next up, we will have Erin Hunt. Erin, you are unmuted.

HUNT: Hello? Can you hear me?

T. CARRELL: Yes, we can. Thank you.

HUNT: OK. Thank you for the opportunity to speak and for your dedication in carrying out your mission of conserving wildlife for future generations. My name is Erin Hunt with Lobos of the

Southwest, a collaborative effort of concerned community members, scientists, educators, and conservation organizations working to save the endangered Mexican gray wolf. I'm joining from the traditional and unceded lands of the Kumeyaay Nation. I've worked with Mexican wolves for over 17 years. I'm a visitor to New Mexico who appreciates the native wildlife, wild places, and vibrant and diverse culture. I frequently spend my time and tourist dollars in the state. Wolves are an endangered species native to New Mexico, and they deserve continued protection from illegal and government-sanctioned killings. We're hearing a lot about costs, but New Mexico's biodiversity and native species are priceless. Let's keep investing in that natural heritage. I'm speaking on behalf of New Mexicans and Arizonans who couldn't attend today but who support Mexican wolves, including people who live in wolf country. Based on research polling data that included an oversample of Catron and Grant counties to ensure those living in wolf country were represented, we have several important takeaways. Opinion on protections for plants and animals under the ESA follows a nationwide trend showing a majority of support. Support for Mexican wolf recovery remains very strong—73% in Arizona and 74% in New Mexico. Three in four voters—more than a 3-to-1 margin—want to see the success of Mexican wolf recovery. The majority of voters in the counties in or near the areas where Mexican wolf recovery is active also support the effort—59% in Catron and Grant counties and 56% in Navajo, Greenlee, and Apache counties. 70% of New Mexicans feel we need to do more to protect endangered species. 59% of voters in Catron and Grant counties agree. Only 39% of Catron and Grant County voters believe livestock should be given higher priority over the recovery of wolves on public lands in New Mexico. Fifty-eight percent of Catron and Grant County voters believe wolves are an essential part of nature, keeping elk and deer herds healthy by ensuring the most fit animals survive. Only 35% believe the wolf population should be controlled because of impacts on deer and elk. The Mexican Wolf Recovery Program should be fully funded and fully staffed so that the State of New Mexico continues to receive resources and support needed to recover Mexican gray wolves. That helps Catron County, too. Recovery will be most successful when done through collaboration between states, tribes and the federal government. Livestock depredations are decreasing despite a growing wolf population, and there has never been a documented attack by a Mexican wolf on a human. Thank you for considering these points as you continue your work preserving all native species in New Mexico.

T. CARRELL: Thank you, Erin. Up next will be Brandon Wynn. Brandon, you are unmuted.

WYNN: Thank you.

T. CARRELL: I apologize, Brandon. You are unmuted.

WYNN: I'm unmuted, right?

T. CARRELL: Yes, you are. Thank you.

Brandon Wynn: OK. Yeah. I'm—I'm actually in Catron County right now. I'm turkey hunting. I've been running around down here for over two weeks, all over Catron County: 16D, 15, other 16



units. I've been all over. And what I'm seeing—I mean, the drought is unbelievable. This is the driest year I've been coming to this exact area 25 or 30 years—every spring, every April. It's as dry as I've ever seen it right now. I think I've seen it this dry one time. Tanks that usually have at least some water—empty. And even on wetter years, more normal years, what you see in the whole Gila country and Catron County is cattle grazing on public land is severely degrading their habitat, which is fine, if that's the United States' policy—that we want to give a huge percentage of the forage to cattle ranchers in subsidized cattle ranching. And, you know, there's so much direct cash payment subsidies for cattle ranching. I mean, it's supported by the public, which is fine. I think it's good policy. You know, it keeps people on the landscape, keeps open areas, so on and so forth. But then—so cattle ranchers in Catron County, in particular in the Gila, want to suppress the elk population—they want to have the majority of forage for cattle. They want to suppress the elk population so it doesn't interfere with cattle. And then, when elk go to private land to get lunch or drink water, they get private permits. Seventy-five percent of the private permits in the entire Rocky Mountains are issued to New Mexico cattle ranchers. So, the thing is, who knew that there's wildlife on public land? We have to have—we give enough to the cattle ranching industry. To hear these ranchers come into the Game Commission and bitch and moan about this and that and, "Oh my God, there's wildlife out there," it's infuriating. And the Game Commission has been catering to cattle ranching. We have the largest elk permit privatization program of all the other states combined—it comes out of New Mexico. The Commission caters and caters and caters and caters to ranchers. I mean, really, the only thing I think you could do to satisfy the cattle ranchers in New Mexico is to deed all the wildlife to them. You've almost done that already. Deed the wildlife to them. Deed the public land to them. Just give them what they want. They want everything. They don't think that there should be wildlife. They don't think there should be other people on the landscape. Just give them what they want. You know, the bottom line is, there is not a crisis with wolves in the Gila. It's a manufactured crisis. The wolf program is going as predicted and as it should—slow and steady recovery. And once we get them delisted, the state can manage them, and it's just not this problem that everyone's hearing, and the Game Commission should see through this bullshit. Thank you.

T. CARRELL: Thank you, Brandon. And up next, we'll have Mary Katherine Ray. Mary Katherine, you are unmuted.

MARY KATHERINE RAY: Can you all hear me?

T. CARRELL: Yes, we can. Thank you.

RAY: Hello. Excellent. Thank you so much. My name is Mary Katherine Ray. For 35 years, we've lived among wildlife just outside the Gila in a remote part of Socorro County. The first time I saw a pair of wolves was by our fence line on a national forest. As I walked out the door with my own two dogs, both wolves turned and ran away as fast as their legs would carry them as soon as they saw us. The experience was not threatening. Nevertheless, my dogs are never outside without me. I don't want them interacting and possibly harming or being harmed by any wildlife. I view this as my responsibility to keep them and wildlife safe in a place that is

home for all of us. I sometimes see wolf tracks. I've heard them howl. This does not scare me. To the contrary, my experience of nature is heightened by their presence. I carried bear spray for years for defense, but honestly, the closest I have ever come to deploying it was not on any wild carnivore, but on a domestic rangeland cow that was inexplicably aggressive. When we first came to the outback, years before wolf reintroduction, the paranoia then was about secret government black helicopters, whose nefarious mission included cattle mutilations—often around the genital area. But time proved these were just cows that died out on the range. The anal area is the location where scavengers often begin to eat because it is soft, thin tissue. There are many ways for a rangeland cow to die: eating toxic weeds, lightning strikes, calving complications. I once found a dead cow with her calf half delivered. It was a gruesome and really sad discovery, but no carnivore was involved. *Outdoor Life* magazine covered the Catron County story and ran a photo similar to the cow I found, claiming it was a wolf kill, but the haunches showed none of the signature wounds that would point in that direction. I'm concerned that wolves are blamed for deaths they do not cause. I'm not saying wolves don't ever kill a cow, but I am skeptical they are doing so in the numbers claimed by some ranching operations. Right now, we are suffering from horrible drought. Since we've been here, it has never been this severe. And I understand the fear for the future this has to make ranchers feel. But it's not the fault of wolves. Compensation is available for verified wolf losses. Strategies exist to minimize losses. One of the requirements for raising livestock on what little is left of our wild natural habitats is that ranchers must bear the risk of these and many other hazards. It should be taken as an expected and normal cost of business, not an atypical emergency.

T. CARRELL: Thank you, Mary Katherine. And that is all the hands we have raised at this time.

#### **Agenda Item 8**

STUMP: OK, not so fast. The auditor would like to make a presentation before we get to lunch so they can get out of here. OK, so thank you, Commissioners.

So, item number eight. Chief Varela and Ms. Tinker are going to do a statutorily required presentation of the independent audit of the Department for fiscal year 2024.

VARELA: So agenda item number eight is the annual audit for fiscal year 2024. I'll just go ahead and introduce Jane Tinker. She's going to be joining us via Zoom. I just want to remind you that this is an action item.

JANE TINKER: Hi, hello. Thank you for your time today. My name is Jane Tinker. I just want to make sure you guys can hear me, right?

STUMP: Yes, we can.

TINKER: Yeah. Sometimes I don't always have the best luck with Zoom, so I'm glad it works. Yeah. Thank you for your time, and thank you for just having me before you guys head to lunch. I know you're probably hungry—I still have to have my lunch too—so I won't take very much of

your time. But, my name again—my name is Jane Tinker. I'm with CLA. I'm a director and was part of the engagement team for the Department's fiscal year 2024 audit. And we're just going to be here today—I'm going to be here today—just going over some required communication and then just the results of the audit. So, I am going to go ahead and share the presentation that I have. And I just want to confirm—you guys are seeing the PDF, correct?

STUMP and SALAZAR HICKEY: Yes.

TINKER: OK, cool. Thank you. All right. So, as I said, this is the required communications. We do have some responsibilities under generally accepted auditing standards. These are to express an opinion on the full presentation of the financial statements in conformity with GAAP. We do plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable—not absolute—assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement. We do obtain an understanding of internal control over financial reporting at the beginning of the audit. We do utilize a risk-based audit approach—so getting that understanding of the environment every single year and changing our audit based on that understanding.

STUMP: Excuse me.

TINKER : Yes?

STUMP: We don't have anything on our screens.

TINKER: OK, let me see here.

STUMP: Give us one second. I mean, it'd be nice to have it here.

TINKER: Let me try again. Oh, you know what—let me, hold on... You are sharing that screen. Can you see it now? Hopefully ...

T. CARRELL: Miss Tinker, hang on just a moment. We're working on a few technical things on our end, so give us just a moment.

STUMP: You know what—go ahead and proceed, and hopefully it'll come on. My word. So, please proceed, Ms. Tinker. I'm sorry for the interruption.

TINKER: No, that's OK. Completely fine. I understand. We do evaluate the accounting policies and the significant accounting estimates that are in place by management. And then we do communicate any significant matters to the appropriate parties that we need to as we're going through the audit. There is a plan, scope and timing of the audit that we decided at the beginning of the audit. We did perform the audit according to that plan, scope and timing. And this was previously communicated during the audit exit conference. There is some other information that is included in the Department's financial statements. And just a reminder here that those financial statements may only be used in their entirety. Our approval will be required

to use our audit report in any sort of client-prepared document. And then we are required to read other information and consider whether there is a material inconsistency between that other information and the financial statements. As far as the significant accounting policies—just a reminder here—management is responsible for the accounting policies of the Department. The accounting policies are outlined in Note 2 to the financial statements. There were no significant changes in the accounting policies during the year. There were no new accounting standards. And we do feel that the accounting policies were appropriate for the Department. As far as significant accounting estimates, this is again an area of focus under a risk-based audit approach. We do not feel that there were any particularly sensitive or any estimates that required substantial judgment by management. Significant financial statement disclosures—we also do not feel that there are any that are particularly sensitive. And we did not note any significant unusual transactions by the Department during the year. There is some supplementary information in the financial statements. These include the combining and individual non-major fund financial statements, the Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards (or the SEFA), and then the schedules that are required by the State Auditor's Office, which are in the back of the financial statements. We are engaged to report on the supplementary information in relation to the financial statements as a whole. We did note that the method of preparing that information has not changed from the prior year. The supplementary information does reconcile to the consolidated statements, and the information is appropriate and complete in relation to our audit. There was a management representation letter that was provided to us right before the report was actually issued. There have been no passed adjustments—what we call PAJEs—during the audit. So, that means that we did not find anything in the financial records that needed to be corrected and was passed on during the audit. There were no difficulties during the audit that we encountered. There were no issues discussed prior to our retention as independent auditors with management. We had no disagreements with management regarding the accounting, reporting or any other finance-related matters. To our knowledge, management did not consult with other independent auditors, and we had no difficult or contentious matters requiring consultations outside of the engagement team for the Department. As far as the results of the audit—we did issue two opinions. There's going to be one related to the financial statements—our independent auditor's report—where we did issue an unmodified opinion. An unmodified opinion is going to be the most favorable outcome that an entity can receive from an audit. The second opinion that we rendered was related to the federal awards. And that's going to be the major programs—the money that the Department receives from the federal government. We did also issue an unmodified opinion over that. As far as the actual major federal programs that we tested this year—you're going to see, normally every year, it's the Fish and Wildlife cluster. That's, of course, the biggest amount of expenditures that the Department utilizes from federal funding. And then this year, we did have to pick up the State Wildlife Grants. That is probably the second-biggest one. It was just on its natural two-year rotation—so, you guys have to get audited every two years. We do not have any financial statement findings. There were only two findings during the audit. One of the findings is going to be in your major federal programs, and that was specifically related to payroll disbursements. We did note during our testing of 20 payroll disbursements that one of the items we tested—the grant was undercharged by about \$111 for two payroll disbursements. In this particular case, the Department uploaded the

wrong payroll file, and so that's how the undercharge occurred. As far as the second finding that we issued, it was going to be in "Other Compliance and Other Matters," and that was specific to fuel cards. And the Department, in this case—you know, I will say, as we went into the audit—they made us fully aware of this. So, we do appreciate that full transparency as we started the audit. But any time there is any sort of violation of state law, we do have to go ahead and actually put this as an audit finding. So, in this particular case, there was about \$7,500 in unallowable fuel card charges. And I know since then—and even since that occurred—I know the Department's already started putting in place some other things to ensure that this hopefully doesn't happen again. But those are going to be the two findings that we did issue during the audit. As far as the findings from last year, we had one related to accounts payable—that was resolved, and we did not note anything during our accounts payable testing. And there were two findings last year: one related to the deposit requirements for the state—the 24-hour rule. That was also resolved; we didn't note any issues during our audit related to that rule. And then there was a fuel cards finding last year as well. So that one is just repeated and modified based on those unallowable fuel charges that were noted during the audit. Otherwise, I'm going to stop sharing—here's my information. But at this point, I'm going to stop sharing my screen. And, you know, I'll leave it open for anything that Paul wanted to say—questions by the Commission. But I just wanted to really say that we do appreciate all of the Department's efforts. We know that an audit is beyond the regular day-to-day that they have to do for their jobs. So, we really do appreciate all the time and effort—because there is a lot that goes into an audit and all of our requests in order to be able to complete the audit. I do want to let you know that management was very pleasant to work with. And we do appreciate being able to serve the Department again this year. So, I'll turn it over to Paul if he wanted to say anything else.

STUMP: Any questions for Miss Tinker?

SALAZAR HICKEY: Mr. Chair and Commissioners, I do want to say thank you, Jane Tinker. I do appreciate that. I also want to express, for the record—Commissioner Chair Richard Stump, Mike Sloane, Paul Varela—excuse me, sorry—Joe Miano, Stephanie Tapia, Jeremy Martin, and of course, Laura Beltran-Schmitz. I think you all did an excellent job. I appreciate all the hard work that you did in getting us here today with the summary. And in the report, when we have action that is due by June 25, I take it's already – June 2025 – I take it that means it's already been taken care of. Is that correct?

VARELA: Mr. Chairman and Salazar Hickey, yes, it has been taken care of.

SALAZAR HICKEY: OK, thank you.

STUMP: Any other questions for Miss Tinker? Thank you, Miss Tinker. Appreciate you.

TINKER: Thank you very much. I appreciate your time and enjoy your lunch.

STUMP: Thank you.

SALAZAR HICKEY: Mr. Chair, I would like to move to approve the department's audit report for fiscal year 24 – 2024.

STUMP: OK. Did you have anything else, Paul? No. You have a second. Any discussion? All those in favor say aye.

STUMP, SALAZAR HICKEY, PACK, LOPEZ, CLEMENTE and FULFER: Aye.

STUMP: Any opposed? No. Motion passes. OK, everybody, let's break for lunch. Thank you all.

SALAZAR HICKEY: We have some members of the audience, and people from the public here. How long is the break? Half an hour? Twenty minutes?

STUMP: Let's do half an hour.

SALAZAR HICKEY: Half an hour. OK. Thank you.

#### **Agenda Item 9**

STUMP: Everybody, moving on, the agenda. Item number nine. The initial discussion of proposed changes to the fisheries rule 19.3 1.4. NMAC, Chief Kirk Patten, can you please proceed.

PATTEN: Thank you. Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and Commissioners. Like I said, I am here today to initiate amendments or the adoption of, the new fisheries rule, as well as fisheries-related portions of the manner and method rule. Similar to many of our other rules, with – our Game Commission rule, the fisheries rule is on a four-year cycle, so it is set to expire on March 31, 2026. So, we will be doing a series of meetings culminating in a hearing this fall for the final adoption, so it is ready for going into effect next license year. So, before I get into the actual proposals, I just wanted to give you a little bit of background of some of the considerations we make or undergo to get to a point of providing these proposals. Some of this starts, I guess, right after the adoption of the current rule and that's when we start getting comments from the public about different things that we should consider. We also start to look at our management across the state and, think about potential rule changes that we could make that would augment our management as well as – we continually use our monitoring data across fisheries in New Mexico and look at our management plan criteria and how we're measuring up, so on and so forth. So, the proposals that we have developed, so, for this round so far are not all that extensive. These are the actual fisheries rule amendments for this round. We want to, or are proposing to clarify the definition of artificial fly or lure with a single barbless hook. There's a difference between the rule in the manner and method rule, as well as in the fisheries rule. We want to clear up those discrepancies. There's also been some comments we received from the public regarding what is or is not an artificial bait or an artificial fly lure related to or natural or artificial, since they're added into something like an artificial salmon egg or so those sorts of

things are starting to be a blurring of lines between some of the bait versus artificial fly or lure. So, we're looking into that and are proposing to add in regarding a no artificial or natural scent in an artificial fly lure, there are three changes we were proposing to the special trout water designation this time. The first two that are worth mentioning are Rio Chiquito and the Rio San Antonio. These are both Rio Grande cutthroat trout populations that we have discovered over the past couple of years and they have encroaching non-native trout populations. So, as part of our native trout conservation efforts over the years, we've allowed – or the Game Commission, has allowed catch and release regulations for Rio Grande cutthroat trout, as well as unlimited harvest for non-native trout as a way for the anglers to get involved in their conservation efforts for Rio Grande cutthroat trout. Jack's Creek is currently a special trout water – catch and release and artificial fly and lures only. We have started to discover brown trout upstream of the fish migration barrier or the waterfall there. We had been in negotiations with the Forest Service to install and enhance that fish migration barrier, and ran into some troubles with a lessee, and their objection to where we were proposing to place the barrier. So, in the interim, we're proposing to allow unlimited harvest for non-native trout while we negotiate a new location for that fish barrier. We are also proposing to remove the specific reference to Santa Cruz, Bonito Lake and Springer Lakes, and in the actual rule, we used to have fisheries hours listed in the fisheries rule, the time of day and the last round, we removed that. And some of the comments we received internally are, we should consider doing that same thing, not calling out specific lakes that are closed to ice fishing and use the signage at the local – at the actual water body to incorporate those prohibitions. This is a summary of the manner and method proposals that we're going with. (not audible) OK, my bad, yeah, sure. Better?

STUMP: Yeah.

PATTEN: OK. As I mentioned for the fisheries rule, we are proposing to clarify artificial fly and lure, a single barbless hook, make those two definitions consistent. Again, remove the reference to Santa Cruz Lake, Bonito Lake, and Springer Lakes as far as being closed to ice fishing. Again, refer to or use of signage at those waters. When I was with you last time, I presented to you the Pecos pupfish conservation efforts. In this area – in this Roswell area, part of the prohibitions – part of the proposal this time is to outlaw the use of bait fish in the BLM overflow wetlands area, just north of Roswell, and that will augment our Pecos pupfish conservation efforts. We are in the process of enhancing a boat ramp up at Jackson Lake Wildlife Management Area. Currently, you cannot use trolling motors in that water body. If we're going to enhance a boat ramp and encourage boaters, we want to allow the use of trolling motors at Jackson Lake. And the last one that there is there, we are proposing to you to consider is expanding the Director's authority for temporarily suspending angling limits, methods, potentially use size limits or to potentially close a water for a certain duration of time. This is intended to give us greater flexibility to respond to certain situations, say, water starts to get too warm, and we start to notice some potential trout mortality, it would enable us to or the Director to issue a closure to protect that trout fishery. Last year, I don't know if you remember, there was, what we discovered, what we think was an illegal introduction of smallmouth bass into Eagle Nest Lake. At that time, we were encouraging the public to go out and harvest smallmouth bass in that lake, but we have a 12-inch length limit, and so it was kind

of odd to be encouraging harvest, and at the same time saying you got to put those same, the same fish back if they are less than 12 inches, so this would give us a little more, greater management flexibility. At the same time, what we're thinking of is potentially for the Director to be able to make those decisions for a six-month period, during the period where we would either come to you for an emergency rule or a more permanent change to a rule, or just let that time period lapse, depending upon the management need. So, we anticipate going to the public in May or June this year. We're still waiting on some scheduling, but we anticipate probably doing online meetings. We've had some pretty good participation when we do a series of Zoom meetings or Teams meetings, and then we will be back. I will come back to you with a more formal proposal as well as draft language, I believe at your August meeting, again with a hearing on these proposed changes or the adoption of the new fisheries rule, I believe that will be at your November meeting. Thank you, and that's all I have today.

STUMP: Commissioners, any questions?

SALAZAR HICKEY: Mr. Chair? And Commissioners, I guess I have one question. Public (indistinct) also, what's appropriate? Will you also be reaching out to the CAC or do you get their input on this?

PATTEN: Mr. Chair and Commissioner Salazar Hickey, we typically don't include the CAC in these formal public outreach, because that's more of a Habitat Stamp Program advisory board. We certainly could include them, but I think, you know, our typical outreach would reach those same individuals.

SALAZAR HICKEY: For some reason, I thought they had given input on some of our fishery issues, but maybe not. I yeah...yeah

STUMP: I just had a quick question. San Antonio Creek, there are quite a few – when did you find native trout there?

PATTEN: Let's see. Chair Stump, I believe we heard rumors of them being in there. And this is the San Antonio Creek up near Lagunitas Lake, just make sure we're talking about the same geography. We heard rumors of a cutthroat up there maybe five to six years ago, is my recollection. We did genetic testing on that population, I want to say, in 2022 or so and, you know, confirmed that they were a genetically pure population of Rio Grande cutthroat trout.

STUMP: And did you shock it.

PATTEN: Yes.

STUMP: And did you find lots of suckers and rainbows as well? And browns?

PATTEN: No. It's my understanding that this reach that we're concerned about right now doesn't have any non-native species yet. We just want to encourage or discourage their expansion in that area. So farther down ...



STUMP: The upper creek, below the lake?

PATTEN: Commissioner Stump, yes.

STUMP: OK. That's all. Thank you.

PATTEN: Yeah. Thank you.

STUMP: And thank you for your presentation, Chief Patten.

### **Agenda Item 10**

STUMP: Item number 10 is – excuse me – the proposed changes to the Migratory Bird Rule, 19.3 1.6 NMAC given by Chief Liley. Chief Liley, go ahead and proceed.

LILEY: Mr. Chair, members of the Commission. Before you is the proposed changes to the migratory bird rule. We opened that rule in January of this year at your January meeting. As you'll recall, this is an annual rule, working in conjunction with the Fish and Wildlife Service and working within the federal frameworks that are allowed for hunting a migratory game bird. So, it really is adjusting the bag and possession limits according to the frameworks and anything else that would come up in the proposed federal frameworks. That proposed federal rule did come out, I believe, in January in the Federal Register. What we kind of are proposing today is moving, like we do every single year, adjusting the season dates to coincide with the exposure dates that we're allowed. We're only allowed to hunt so many days in the season every year. And in the north zones, we typically try to start the hunt a little bit earlier to avoid freeze out. And, in the southern zones, we hunt as late as legally possible according to the framework. So, you'll see some calendar shift dates just based off of that. We also are getting our allocation of greater sandhill cranes. Those are the Sandhill cranes in the Middle Rio Grande Valley and the southwest. We are getting a slight increase in our allocation. So, we're proposing an additional 12 permits in that draw hunt. So, allowing 12 more hunters to draw those hunts for that area. Based upon our allocation, I think we are going to start running into an issue if we keep getting an increased allocation where we're going to get a potentially hunter density overcrowding type of an issue. There's only so much area to hunt along the middle Rio Grande, and we're starting to maybe see that a little bit right now. We could have maybe gone a little bit more than 12, but we're going to test some of these seasons to see if we're getting into that overcrowding. But it is one thing we are hearing from hunters at the check stations. We do run mandatory check stations after those birds to ensure they're – after harvest to ensure that they're greater or not, and we are hearing a little bit of crowding so we don't want to go up too much, even though our allocation went up – would have allowed us go up a little bit more. One of the other, the biggest thing that that's been in the works for years is there's a new pintail framework from the federal government that's going to allow us to increase the pintail bag limit from one to three. Most likely, that bag limit is not going to fluctuate as much as it has historically. It used to be one, then maybe two, then back to three, then one. So, it's very

confusing for hunters on an annual basis what that pintail limit was. The new federal frameworks really are going to probably keep it in that three-bird bag limit more consistently over time, given where the population status is. We've only received two public comments since we opened the rule. We did have a hybrid public meeting in Albuquerque. We did have one member of the public attend. Because this rule doesn't change much on an annual basis, we don't get a lot of public participation. There's not a lot of changes that do occur. So, there's not a whole lot of different participation coming in. And I think if we were to have bigger changes, if there is way bigger changes in the federal frameworks, I think you'd see more public comment. But because it's basically a status quo year, not a lot of comments coming in. The comments that we did receive were in support for the proposed changes. There are some concerns about pintail hen harvest limits because it is going up to three. I think, biologically speaking, when they ran the models with the Fish and Wildlife Service, that's why they came up with the framework at three. Population's doing fairly well. We don't think it's going to have a harvest impact to where we'll see a population level concern. So, just real quick, these are the proposed hunt dates. We have 2024, for last season's, next season's in there to show what we're looking like for ducks, geese, rail, snipe and that youth waterfowl in September teal hunt. This is in the Central Flyway. We do it in two different flyways divided by the Continental Divide. And so, in the Pacific Flyway, here's our proposed dates. We are allowed to hunt a little bit more in the Pacific Flyway than we are in the Central Flyway. So, with that, I would take questions. Just a note, this would be an action item for at a hearing at your June meeting is when we're proposing to have the hearing on this.

STUMP: Any questions? Mr. Lopez has one.

LOPEZ: Stewart, what was the actual recommendation that came down from Fish and Wildlife regarding the Sandhill cranes? You said we could do 12?

LILEY: So, our allocation last year was 1,063. Our allocation this year is 1,135. Now, we said 12 more hunters, two-day hunt and the bag limit is three a day. So that's why we were saying 12. We don't reach our allocation – like, you can't go above your allocation. So, the other thing that's important in the allocation, if we start to meet it during the season, we have to close the season even for our draw hunters. So, we always stay under our allocation. We think we harvested about 800 birds approximately last year, so.

LOPEZ: That's all I have.

STUMP: Thank you. Mr. Clemente?

CLEMENTE: I just had a comment. This rule always comes up once a year, correct? What is the reason – this is driven by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services. I mean, they're the ones that recommend. Why we don't just – Game and Fish propose. And without the proposed changes, because it's based on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services. Why are we going through so much? It's just a question.

STUMP: It's a good question. So, because we always adapt so I would ...

LILEY: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Clemente, the only reason why you would want to have it is if you want to be more restrictive. So, you could always be more restrictive than the federal government. This Commission has chosen to always kind of adopt the, the whatever the Fish and Wildlife Service, but you always would have the ability to say fewer days or something like that. Most – where you see that more than probably anywhere is in the kind of Mississippi Flyway, Arkansas, Louisiana, where duck hunting is so predominant, tens of thousands of dollars, even Texas. New Mexico is a small level of participation in terms of the continental scale of waterfowl management. So, it's – these rules are pretty big in other states where they're trying to deal with it. Because we're liberal, we don't have other concerns. If the Commission wanted to always just adopt the most the framework set by the service that absolutely could happen.

CLEMENTE: I will put it there on the table for the Commission to think about.

STUMP: Thank you, Commissioner Clemente. And Commissioner Salazar Hickey?

SALAZAR HICKEY: Mr. Chair and Commissioners, I – you stole my question. Because I was actually interested in a four-year rule of why must some of – why must we have a four-year rule for some of our rules and others are just a one-year, or maybe we could make them two. And this is really also for the public. I know earlier there was a question about, who makes the policy, and I want to be very clear for the record, it is the Commission who makes policy decisions and not the Department of Game and Fish. So, from a biology perspective and a, specialist, why would we want to go with a a four-year rule for some, like, wild big game?

LILEY: Yeah. Mr. Chair, Commissioner Hickey, because the federal government in this sets an annual rule. And so, the, Fish and Wildlife Service dictates what we can or can't do on this one because migratory birds, they have ultimate authority to say and they do this on an annual basis. And so, because they do it on an annual basis, we have to either say we agree with the Fish and Wildlife Service or we want to be more restrictive. You can't be more liberal, but you could say we want to be more restrictive. To Commissioner Clemente's point, we could always we in my tenure have never been more restrictive per se. We have some special regulations that we've asked for, like, Middle Rio Grande goose, that we are more restricted than what would be allowed by the Fish and Wildlife Service. So, there are a few aspects that we are a little bit more restrictive, but for the most part where we just agree with the federal frameworks that are allowable. So, it could be that it is something that in rule that you could delegate the authority over to the Department to accept the federal frameworks on an annual basis type of thing. But we would have to have a rule that states the season dates. So, the season dates do change on an annual basis. So, we have to have something in regulations that say the season dates that are by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

STUMP: I have one last question for you, which is you're speaking about your density, hunter density for Sandhill cranes. Where are they allowed to hunt?

LILEY: Mr. Chair, so, the specific population in the middle Rio Grande Valley, the greater Sandhill cranes, basically from south Albuquerque to Elephant Butte.

STUMP: So, on any property?

LILEY: That is correct, public, private, anywhere they as long as they have written permission, private. And then we have a fair amount of people that do hunt on the middle Rio Grande Conservancy District that they, they work with the Conservancy District to get access to that to hunt.

STUMP: I know a lot of farmers down there that would love for them to show up. So, I actually called you last year.

LILEY: That's correct.

STUMP: Yeah. And I think, you sent some hunters there and they got a they got a crane.

LILEY: Yeah. I think, to that point, I think if there's private landowners that are interested in having a harvest, we would be willing to enter into Open Gate agreements with them on an annual basis to try to encourage participation on those. So, I think those if there are farmers that experienced depredations, they could always reach out to us. We could work through some potential agreements for future years that then puts those into areas that we'd have available to our public hunters on hunts in that special draw crane area.

#### **Agenda Item 11**

STUMP: I will explore that. OK. Thank you. There's no public comment on this, right? Thank you for that presentation. And Chief Liley is going to present the initial discussion of the proposed changes to the upland game rule, 19.31.5 NMAC. Please go ahead, Chief.

LILEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair, Commissioners. So, this is the first time you're hearing this. This is a four-year rule. This is our Upland Game Rule. And it is – we're opening it today. Upland game consists of quail, pheasant, dusky grouse and tree squirrels. So, we do this every four years. And let me get here real quick. What we're looking like from a calendar perspective is opening it here today. Some initial ideas that the Department wants to propose to you all for changes. And then we would come back to you either in the June or August meeting with more substantial changes, kind of our bigger recommendations and then an adoption in November. And so, we would in the interim, we'd have public meetings. I have a slide that would get to that. But some of our original – our initial proposed ideas is, like always, adjusting calendar dates or, excuse me, hunt dates to accord with calendar shifts because we have a lot of hunts that start on a Saturday, etc.. We are looking at potentially changing our youth pheasant hunt on Bernardo WMA to get kind of more participation. We have a fair amount of participation, but it seems to be a lot of repeat participation – not as many youth applying for that hunt is as

we would like to see. It's less than, I think it's 60 applicants a year, so trying to figure out ways to maybe work with our Information and Education Division to make, like, hunting camps or something more kind of, exciting, maybe even exploring the opportunities to expand that to quail hunting there. So, we're kind of working through that. We'll work through the public process, to, to see if there's some ideas that we could come up with to make that hunt a little more exciting. It is kind of a hunt where we release birds before, and then they do hunt. So, it's a good time for the children. It's just we want to make it a, kind of a better experience, if you will. And then another proposal that we currently have on our dusky grouse – it's the same bag limit, season dates across the state. However, the southern population of them are not doing as well by any means. And the southern really is in the Gila, they are a mixed conifer bird that used to probably be in the Sacramentos, no longer there, but the Gila, they're not doing quite as well. We don't have a lot of harvest here. So, it's not something that where we think harvest drove it. There's very few annual harvest in there, but there is the potential, you know, if someone gets into a group of birds, they can take the three. It might have a bigger impact. Again, very little harvest. But we're proposing in the north zone, so, north of I-40, basically, a three-bird-a-day bag limit with six in possession. And then in the South, in that Gila area, one bird a day and a bag limit of two. I think some of the other comments that we've been hearing recently, and I think this is definitely drought-driven. Especially in gallinaceous birds like quail, drought drives population dynamics, really not hunting density. And, so we are hearing some concerns about our daily bag limits of 15 on quail. Whether hunting actually drives the dynamics or not is hard to say, but there is maybe some discussion to be had about season length and the end dates for that. As they get longer in the season, closer to the mating season, for some of the birds, there might be a bigger impact. So we're kind of exploring that will bring some more data to you all to show what we see from how many individuals actually harvest maybe 15 birds a day. There's very – we do collect data on daily bag limits, how many you harvested, where you harvested. So, we can kind of bring that to you to see, are we seeing some potential bag limit issues where we would recommend reducing. But it's one thing we'll start exploring. We will bring it back the next Commission meeting. Just real quick, this is the proposed shift in the pheasant season dates again. It's just so they are opening up on a Saturday, and so it just we would propose shifting those dates in the next four years to coincide with that. And then the dates for the Huey and the excuse me, Huey and Bernardo hunts for the pheasant, looking again at that Middle Rio Grande youth-only pheasant hunt to see if we want to make something more of an experience. Here's just a quick depiction of the dusky grouse proposal. So, everything south of that I-40 line would be a one-bird-per-day bag limit two in possession. We right now are going to have at least one public hybrid meeting that will be held May 21. We'll announce that through our normal website and through our GovDelivery email to do that. We may have another public meeting in the south of the state as well to kind of discuss some more of the quail issues that that we are. I think on the big thing on the quail, too (indistinct) we really saw a bumper year in quail almost, four or five years ago in the eastern part of the state. So, maybe a little bit more now, some of the best and most recent history, they really could rebound fast with good moisture and just large coveys, large clutches raised. I think we've had quite a few nest failures in the last few years, just the way the moisture has been. And so, of a species that can rebound really quick to moisture, quail are definitely one that we could see. So, with that, I'd take any questions you might have.

STUMP: Anybody.

CLEMENTE: (Indistinct)

LILEY: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Clemente, that's currently a three-day season. Really, most of our pheasants are not, there's just not a lot in the state and a lot of them are ones that we've either planted or for specific hunts. So we do purchase pheasants and put them in some of our WMA's to have some of these hunts. It's a quick hunt after they're harvested. There used to be probably more a more centric population around the Clovis-Portales area. But that population's – it's still there, but not near what it was 30 years ago.

## **Agenda Item 12**

STUMP: (indistinct) Legislative session. Director Sloane is going to give that presentation.

SLOANE: As the chair noted, I'm going to talk to you today a little bit about the legislative session and the bills that have passed that directly affect the Department and Commission. During the legislative session, there were 18 bills introduced that directly related to Commission and/or Department. There were, you know, a whole bunch of OHV bills that were duplicates. There were, quail licensing bill to allow folks to have quail without permitting through us, and a bunch of bills. The bottom line of all of that is that only three bills are really signed into to law that directly impact the Commission or the Department. Those bills were SB 5, Game Commission reform; House Bill 2, the General Appropriation Act, which was our budget; and House Bill 450, which is the capital outlay projects. So, we can talk a little bit more in detail about those. So, Commission reform Commission reform really did kind of 12 things with multiple effective dates. And I'll kind of walk through those. The first thing is that it changed the name of the Commission and the Department to the State Wildlife Commission and the Department of Wildlife, with an effective date of July 1st of 2026. I think that speaks for itself. The other things that it's done: sets qualification requirements for State Game Commissioners. There are will now be three at-large members, of whom one is a Native American, and all are from different counties, with no more than two of the same political party; one member that is a rancher or farmer who actively works at growing or selling livestock or crops from a ranch or farm where at least two big-game species, as defined by and for which hunting is licensed by the Department, are frequently present, end quote; one member, that is a conservationist who for the previous four years has been, quote, an employee, member of the board, or a member of an established advisory committee of a nonprofit wildlife or habitat conservation organization, the primary focus of which is not game species, end quote; one member that is a hunter and an angler, licensed as such for the previous four years; and one member that is a scientist with at least a master's degree in wildlife biology, conservation biology, fisheries science or management, wildlife science or management, or comparable wildlife field. And that becomes effective July 1 – or excuse me, January 1 of 2027. So all of the Commission-related items are effective January 1 of 2027. And those are the, you know, we're going from the districts that you now have and the two At-Large

positions with some defined roles to more distinctly defined roles. Those requirements also include, I think the (indistinct) no more than four members can be of one party. So, it also changes the way that Commissioners are appointed. It creates a nominating committee, which is to provide a list of at least three individuals for vacant positions to the Governor, from which the Governor then selects the person to appoint. The nominating committee is made up of one member appointed by the speaker of the House, one member appointed by the minority floor leader of the House, one member appointed by the president pro tem of the Senate, one member appointed by the minority floor leader of the Senate, two members of different political parties appointed by the Governor, one member appointed by the Governor to represent Indian nations, tribes and pueblos, and then the chair of the UNM Biology Department or their designee, chair of the New Mexico State University Department of Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Ecology, or their designee. The statute then goes on to talk about the Department supporting the nominating committee and making sure that the, any openings are advertised that we filter those, put them into categories, give those to the nominating committee, who then has to hold a public meeting at which they discuss and determine votes on who should be placed on the list. Again, that list has to be a minimum of three for each position. It also sets staggered terms for commissioners, which would be six years. It defines reasons for removal and sets term limits at two terms. So, beginning – the staggered set up of the first group. I think there's a one-, a two and a three-year grouping. After that there'll be six-year terms and you can't serve any more than two terms. So, a given Commissioner could not serve more than 12 years. And it also adds four advisory members to the Commission. The Director of the Outdoor Recreation Division, secretary of the New Mexico Department of Agriculture, Commissioner of Public Lands and the Secretary of Indian Affairs. Their role, I think the idea in the legislation was to have them available because they have potentially a constituency that has interest in what we do, and they would have input that they could provide to the Commission. Beginning in April 1 of 2026, it provides for a license fee increase, which we expect to generate between \$9 and \$10 million in new revenue, which has been long overdue. It allows the Commission to increase fees based on the consumer price index annually, and requires an increase every five years, beginning in 2032. And it also allows the Commission to set vendor fees by rule. Right now it's set at \$1 in statute. This will change that April 1 of 2026 to allow the Commission to put into rule a just and reasonable fee for the vendor to charge. We're – will be in the process before June of trying to get a hold of vendors and getting a sense of what they think is just and reasonable, so we can provide that to you and build that rule. It also created a new class of license for nonresidents, a shed hunter license. There again, we are working on drafting up a rule, relative to what does that mean? Does every nonresident that picks up a shed have to have this \$200 license, or is it just folks that are doing more commercially? Our thought kind of at the moment is potentially trying to say, if you have two sheds, you're out on vacation wandering in the woods, you pick up a couple of sheds, you don't need the permit, but if you're really out there collecting them, maybe you do. And then there's also a question of whether, we need a season around shed hunting or not. So, those are some of the questions we're working on with that. It allows the Commission to regulate species of wildlife not listed as protected in statute by rule, given that the Commission considers whether the species qualifies as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need, the science-based reason for the protection, the rules and management programs that potentially accompany

protected status, and that goes into effect July 1 of 2026. So that's – we sort of do that under the Wildlife Conservation Act already. This would broaden that just a little bit. I don't know that the Department has any species we would bring forward thinking that there's human take impacting them, but we'll see if, there are any groups out there that would like to see us do something once that comes into effect. It relieves the department of the requirement to respond to depredation by species protected by rule adopted by the Commission. So, if the Commission or for some reason to adopt a species that was causing depredation, you could decide whether we should have to respond in the same way we do for elk depredations and those kinds of things. It adds invertebrates to the definition of wildlife. As you'll see with the State Wildlife Action Plan, we are including some insects on the Species of Greatest Conservation Need list this year, and that that's consistent with the addition to the definition. And it defines Species of Greatest Conservation Need and requires reporting on data and expenditures for these species. So, that's kind of a relatively broad overview of what the bill does. Again, I don't – the name change, the way the Commission stuff has changed are probably the bigger changes. The fee increase and the additional authority for the Commission is really kind of what we've been doing, just changed slightly. House Bill 2 is the General Appropriations Act of 2025. The budget was approved as requested. Thankfully, we have \$52.9 million in Department funds, \$3.3 million from the Land of Enchantment Fund, \$3.5 million from the Government Results and Opportunity Fund, and \$1 million special appropriation for bighorn sheep conservation actions. So the \$52.9 million is broken down with Fisheries. It includes a 4% pay increase for all state employees and then Fisheries has \$10.8 million, Wildlife has \$14.7 million, Information and education \$4.7 million, Field Operations \$12.6 million, and ASD, which includes Human Resources, IT, admin and ASD, is \$10.1 million. The GRO money, the Government Results and Opportunity Fund money, is new to the agency this year. It is a program the Legislature came up with where they fund, for three years, new programs designed to make – new programs in state government. And, so, they passed that to support Species of Greatest Conservation Need, including the American beaver. So we're trying to figure out how we're going to – what categories to put that money in. And we have projects lined up to go get done. But that's a new process for us. And then the \$3.3 million from the Land of Enchantment is also – last year we we got 2.75. That number is expected to go up a little bit depending on I think market forces at this point. So that's also dedicated to Species of Greatest Conservation Need. So we've got a \$6.8 million to put toward Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the coming year. So that's kind of exciting for us. And then House Bill 450 is the capital outlay projects. We had approved, as requested, the \$1.5 million in Sykes Act Fund. So that's the Habitat Stamp. We will work with the Citizen Advisory Committee and our partners in the federal agencies, assuming there are any of them left, to go ahead and get projects identified and, funding directed towards those, these appropriations are four-year appropriations, so we have some time to spend the last bit of what we had before and get these going. And then we have \$500,000 in Bond Interest and Retirement Fund for Department facilities. Generally speaking, we've been spending those on hatcheries. We may look at, doing some work at the main office in Santa Fe this year. And I think with that, I'll stand for any questions.

LOPEZ: I think Commissioner Lopez has a question or two.



LOPEZ: Mike. SB 5, the Governor vetoed partially, correct?

SLOANE: Correct.

LOPEZ: Was SB 5 an appropriation bill?

SLOANE: I believe that the Governor thinks so.

LOPEZ: Why was it vetoed in partial? It's not an appropriation bill. I wasn't an appropriation bill. I can't see that in the bill.

SLOANE: I wasn't part of the conversation, so I'd be speculating, but I think there are some, mention of per diem in there that may or may not make it. There's also the transfer of the assets, appropriations and those sorts of things in the bill from the State Game Commission to the newly created Wildlife Commission, and from the Department of Game and Fish to the Department of Wildlife. And, so, I think those are potentially places, but I haven't spoken with the Governor's Office on exactly what they're thinking as. But those are kind of two that I could potentially identify them. There may be others.

LOPEZ: In part of the conversations, was the Department supporting this bill or not supporting the bill? Because it seemed different on in here, committee rooms, hallways in the Legislature, where we're going with this or where (indistinct)?

SLOANE: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner Lopez, I we didn't take a position on the bill.

LOPEZ: OK. So, then it seems to me that Representative Matthew McQueen held us hostage, knowing that we were in a bad shape for a fee increase and tied it to this so it would pass. My opinion. Don't answer that question. I'm just saying that's what it looks like on paper. That's what it was on paper. And that's what an appropriation bill didn't have on paper. That's all I have.

STUMP: Thank you, Commissioner Lopez. Anything else from anybody? (Indistinct)

SALAZAR HICKEY: Mr. Chair, I want to say, and, Commissioners, I want to say thank you to the Department. Were you present pretty much most of the session?

SLOANE: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Salazar Hickey. We, – it seemed like we were, but, really, just for the bills that got hearings.

SALAZAR HICKEY: OK. Very good. I want to say thank you to the Department and to our state legislators, the senators and the representatives for the heavy lift, the work that they did on this, all three: Senate Bill 5, House Bill 2, and, House Bill 450. I know that so many people are very passionate about what they're trying to achieve here. And that said, I was not, Commissioner Lopez, involved behind of any of the scenes. I have no idea what you were

talking about there, about the appropriation bill other than – or section – other than what I read in the paper. So I'm very curious, in your personal opinion and I don't mean to put you on the spot, but, I think to help the Commissioners and I understand, what was achieved here. OK, and I accept your explanation of the 12 key changes in Senate Bill 5, in particular. What do you believe, in your personal opinion, was the problem that was trying to be fixed? What is it that they specifically wanted changed? I recognize name changes, qualifications, dot dot dot dot dot. But if you had to summarize what is it that needs to be fixed? What was it? Or maybe more?

SLOANE: Mr. Chair ...

SALAZAR HICKEY: Sorry.

SLOANE: Commissioner Salazar Hickey, you know, I think I can I can parrot what I think advocates for the bill were suggesting. I think that they felt like we needed funding – that would be the fee increase. I think that they felt like we did not do enough work on Species of Greatest Conservation Need, and wanted to advocate for the ability to do more with those species. And then I think that they felt like the Commission needed a different group of people that would be longer-tenured.

SALAZAR HICKEY: Do you also believe a lot of politics was involved?

SLOANE: Yes, Mr. Chair, Commissioner Salazar Hickey, there was a lot of sausage being made.

STUMP: Thank you, Commissioner Hickey. Thank you, Mike.

SLOANE: Can I go now?

STUMP: OK. We have another comment.

CLEMENTE: I just have a comment. You know, it's been presented, SB 5, and we ask questions. Questions after our bill has been approved, adopted. I mean, shouldn't we have asked questions prior, especially on Commission reform? Shouldn't Commissioners past, present, whatever it is, should be part of this conversation? That's all that I'm going to say. Thank you.

### **Agenda Item 13**

STUMP: Thank you for that comment. Thank you, Mike. Item number 13 is general public comment. Doesn't look like we have any public left to comment. Yeah. Do we have anyone online?

T. CARRELL: Yes, we do have several online. So, if we're ready, we will start with Brandon Wynn. Brandon, you are permitted to talk.

WYNN: First of all, you didn't ask for public comment on the last agenda item. Can I have three minutes for that? And three minutes of general.

STUMP: We're on the general public comment.

WYNN: So, you're not going to have comments on the last agenda item, OK. All right. So general public comments would be, so the rule cycle hearing is – hearings are next year for the big-game rules, from almost all the big-game rules. And as everyone in the room there right now, which is not very many people, but people online, as the Commission knows, one of the most contentious things we have in New Mexico is privatization of our tags, and specifically EPLUS. So, I've gone to rule hearings, at least every four years, six, six, seven, eight, nine. So over 30 years of rule hearings. And what happens is the Department writes up the rules pretty much the same as they were before. They get rolled out right before the rule hearings start, it's too late for any real, meaningful public comment. The rule's baked, and it's been status quo on the privatization for decades now. And, so, I would suggest that if the Commission was a responsible public commission for the citizens of New Mexico, which the New Mexico Game Commission objectively has not been for decades, you would form some sort of a working group and you would start working on EPLUS reform. And I would like to be part of that working group. I think if you ask even the many people that hate me for being such an advocate for your average New Mexican hunter, I would be a good person to be on there. I think I probably have as much experience and knowledge and expertise in big-game tag allocation policy, not just in New Mexico, but throughout the western United States. I know exactly what every state is doing as far as giving tags to rich people like New Mexico does on a wholesale basis or not, like Arizona does on a zero basis. So, just – if you're serious about putting this thing to bed, now's the time to act a year in advance. And let's figure out a reform. Let's come to a plan and do it. That's going to be a better outcome than just litigating it, because I can guarantee you one or the other is going to happen. The Commission's going to actually reform it in a meaningful way that respects the rights and entitlements of the citizens of New Mexico, or we're going to litigate it, and who knows what will happen there. I like an adult conversation better. Thank you.

T.CARRELL: Thank you, Brandon. And up next, we'll have Tom Phillips.

PHILLIPS: Good afternoon. My name is Tom Phillips, and I reside and occasionally hunt in southern New Mexico, and recently became aware of major changes to land management along the U.S. border. And my purpose for commenting is to ensure the Commission and the Department are aware of the recent action. And this is the public land order that was issued by Bureau of Land Management, which is called the National Defense Operating Area Withdrawal. This order encompasses over 109,000 acres of public land, BLM land in Doña Ana, Luna and Hidalgo County. Included are all the BLM lands south of Highway 9 in Doña Ana and Luna counties, and then a three-plus-mile swath of land along the U.S. border in Hidalgo County, along the eastern and southern side of the county. That withdrawal that was issued in April, April 15, is for three years, but can be extended. So, the main reason I wanted to raise this concern is that the withdrawal specifically states that it transfers the administrative jurisdiction

of the land, meaning the Bureau of Land Management land, to the Department of the Army. So, beyond the question of how hunters using BLM lands might be affected, there are additionally thousands of acres of New Mexico state lands, which the Game Department has a lease for hunting rights, and those are encompassing the boundary are all encompassed in the boundary of this national defense operating area. Beyond that, there's even more thousands of acres of private land there within that boundary. So, my primary ask is to encourage the Commissioners to direct Game and Fish staff to engage with both the BLM and the Department of Army, because they certainly are working on a memorandum of understanding of some sort as to how this operating area will be managed. And I encourage you to demand a seat at the table during this evolving situation. Just in case it helps, yesterday evening I did email to each of you Commissioners and the Director a copy of that public land order that was issued, printed in the Federal Register, as well as a map. And that what's interesting is that map was created by the BLM, but the only place I've ever been able to find a copy of it is on the website of the Santa Fe New Mexican newspaper. So, I hope that gives you enough information to be able to do some more digging and due diligence to try and, make sure hunters are protected in their use of public land. Thank you.

T.CARRELL: Thank you.

SLOANE: Mr. Chair. I would point out that I had a brief conversation with the BLM state director, and she is actively working to figure out exactly who it DoD they need to talk to and develop that MOU and ensure that hunting and other recreational access is still available.

STUMP Thank you, Director Sloane.

T.CARRELL: Thank you. That was all of the hands that are raised.

#### **Agenda Item 14**

STUMP: Thank you. OK. Next is Commissioner comments. Do we have any commissioners like to provide some comments or questions?

PACK: Thank you, Chairman Stump, other Commissioners and all of our residents out there. Since our January meeting, as you can tell, with the challenges happening in District 2, I've been very much involved with discussions with various people, including hunters, anglers, ranchers and the conservationists. I just want to encourage that conversation to continue, because it's that input that drives us to work together, to find solutions together. I wanted to mention I did attend the National Wild Turkey Federation banquet in Silver City, and I met with different residents recently on fisheries. I attended (indistinct) Game of Fish. I see our Habitat Stamp committee member is not here. He was here earlier, but it was nice to attend their meeting. I think Commissioner Clemente attended that meeting with me virtually. And I commend the work being done by that committee and the Department. I always hear really good things about the Department's work with that committee. I do also hope that we can get their minutes on the website, so that it shows the work that they're doing. I wanted to commend the

Department of Game and Fish for adding for aiding our District 2 farmer on his elk-proof fencing, protecting his crops. Thank you, Chief Kirk Patten – is he still here? – on his leadership and the meetings that I've had with him in the Glenwood area about Glenwood area. So, I have many compliments, and I just wanted to relay those, I know there's definitely a commitment to find solutions together. I would like to add one more thing on the wolf issue in Catron County and the surrounding areas, as I've met with residents and elected officials and conservation groups, I say that with certainty that Catron County residents are alarmed by the Mexican gray wolf encounters near their homes, roads and schools, and fearing for children, pets and livestock. These public safety concerns are valid and alongside livestock losses. I think there's a reason we do need to look at it more closely. I support wolves' recovery, but I'm looking for more in the way of the science-based management plans, building on today's Catron County discussion that prioritizes safety, ranchers' livelihoods and successful coexistence. So, I encourage open, data-driven dialog, as Commissioner Clemente champions, this group is critical. So, for the rule year, share your ideas and I respond to your personalized emails and value your voice. Thank you for the privilege of serving New Mexico and keeping us transparent in science-driven wildlife management. Thank you.

STUMP: Thank you, Commissioner Pack. Any other Commissioners like to say anything?

CLEMENTE: I just have a comment. Real comment. And actually, I got three phone calls from, that I believe that, it came out from the Director, that, those people that they owe child support that they're behind on child support that they cannot purchase hunting and fishing license. Am I correct? I got phone calls. People actually thanking, thinking that it was great. So, I'm passing that along.

SLOANE: Thank you.

#### **Agenda Item 15**

STUMP: Thank you, Commissioner Clemente. And, I would just like to thank the Department as well. It's a lot of hard work done out there and a lot of time. So, I appreciate all of you very much. And, now, let's move on to item number 15, executive session. Do I have a motion to move into executive session?

CLEMENTE: I so move.

LOPEZ: Motion to adjourn to executive session, closed to the public pursuant to NMSA section 10-5-1, 1978, to discuss property purchase, acquisition, disposal; pursuant to section 10-13-1 (H) (7) NMSA 1978 to discuss attorney-client privilege, litigation update; pursuant to 10-15-1 (B), limited personnel matters.

STUMP: Do you have a second?

CLEMENTE and SALAZAR HICKEY: Second.

STUMP: Director, please call the roll.

SLOANE Commissioner Pack?

PACK: Yes.

SLOANE: Commissioner Lopez?

LOPEZ: Yes.

SLOANE: Commissioner Fulfer?

FULFER: Yes.

SLOANE: Commissioner Clemente?

CLEMENTE: Yes.

SLOANE: Vice chair Salazar Hickey?

SALAZAR HICKEY: Yes.

SLOANE: Chair Stump?

STUMP: Yes. Motion passes unanimously. We are now in executive.

**Agenda Items 16 and 17**

STUMP: This commission adjourned into executive session, closed to the public. During the executive session, the commission discussed only those matters specified in its motion to adjourn and took no action as to any manner. I adjourn this meeting.