



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

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

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Thursday, June 25, 2026

**Eastern New Mexico University
Golden Student Success Center
[1500 S. Avenue K](#)
[Portales, NM 88130](#)**

9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ej6vQn3-0LQ>

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1: Meeting Called to Order

09:01:01 a.m. (00:00:00/00:00:16 on video)

Called to order by Chairman Richard Stump.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2: Roll Call

09:01:09 a.m. (00:00:08/00:00:24)

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

Present virtually: Commissioner Harwood.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3: Introduction of Guests

09:01:43 a.m. (00:00:42/00:00:58)

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

09:07:07 a.m. (00:06:06/00:06:22)

Motion: To approve the agenda for the June 25, 2026, meeting as written.

Motion by: Vice-chairman Clemente.

Seconded by: Commissioner Lopez.

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

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5: Approval of the Minutes from the May 28, 2026, Meeting in Socorro (Action Item)

09:07:37 a.m. (00:26:36/00:06:52)

Motion: To approve the minutes from the May 28, 2026, Commission meeting as presented by the Department.

Motion by: Vice-chairman Clemente.

Seconded by: Commissioner Witt.

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

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

09:08:12 a.m. (00:07:11/00:07:27)

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

- 1 individual who has entered into a civil agreement or has a civil judgment.

The Department presented the 8 individuals who meet established criteria for the revocation or suspension of their hunting, fishing, trapping, guiding and outfitting privileges or other privileges or authorities granted by an agreement, license or permit issued by the Department.

- 5 individuals accrued 20 or more points in a 3-year period. They were mailed a notice of contemplated action and did not request a hearing.
- 1 individual accrued 20 or more points in a 3-year period. They were mailed a notice of contemplated action and a hearing was conducted.
- 2 individuals accrued 20 or more points in a 3-year period. They were mailed a notice of contemplated action and a stipulated agreement was signed.

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

Motion by: Vice-chairman Clemente.

Seconded by: Commissioner Witt.

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

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7: General Public Comment

09:08:41 a.m. (00:07:40/00:07:56)

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8: Subsequent Discussion of Proposed Changes to the Deer Rule 19.31.13 NMAC

09:10:28 a.m. (00:09:27/00:09:43)

The Department presented proposed changes to the Deer Rule (19.31.13 NMAC) based on survey information, management goals and public comment. The Department has analyzed and evaluated data to help inform the rule development process and is still in the process of collecting public comments on the proposed rules. The Department presented the current proposal for the 2027-2030 hunting seasons.

Preliminary proposed changes included:

Region Specific Proposed Changes

Northwest

- 1) Reduce deer licenses in GMU 2B based on input received during current rule cycle.
- 2) Based on input received during the current rule cycle, the Department analyzed the total number of license reductions required to move GMU 2B to a Quality Hunt unit. Moving GMU 2B to a Quality

Hunt unit would require a reduction of 885 deer licenses across public and private land.

3) Create a public muzzleloader deer hunt on Wildlife Management Areas in GMU 4 to coincide with the private land hunt (10 licenses).

Southwest

- 1) Structure the January hunt on White Sands Missile Range (GMU 19 WSMR only) as a youth hunt.
- 2) Create a December rifle hunt for Coues white-tailed deer in GMUs 16 and 22 (20 licenses in each GMU) to be consistent with Coues white-tailed deer hunts in the southwest.
- 3) Create a separate hunt code for the Silver City Management Area antlerless archery hunt (50 licenses). With this hunt code, archery hunters that hold a license in GMU 23 and 24 who do not harvest a deer during their archery hunt will not be permitted to hunt the Silver City Management Area antlerless hunt.
- 4) Change youth rifle hunts in GMUs 13 and 17 to youth muzzleloader hunts to match elk weapon type for the same time.
- 5) Move January archery hunts for FAWTD in GMUs 23, 24, and 27 from January 16-31 back to January 1-15.
- 6) No longer include Fort Bayard as a special management area. Hunters drawing a tag for GMU 24 can hunt any legally accessible land in GMU 24, including Fort Bayard management area.

Southeast

- 1) Remove the REG antlerless hunt in GMU 32 Roswell and Fort Sumner Hunt Areas
- 2) Remove the antlerless hunt on the Huey WMA; change the ES hunt to FAD bag limit

Northeast

- 1) Adjust license numbers to meet management strategies and reflect changes in deer herd dynamics.

General Statewide Proposed Changes

- 1) Adjust license numbers to meet management strategies and reflect changes in deer herd dynamics.
- 2) Adjust season dates where necessary.
 - a. Adjust season dates to ensure harvest is biologically sustainable.
 - b. Shift start dates to maintain hunts beginning on Saturday or adjusting to calendar day starts for consistency.
 - c. When possible, adjust season dates for hunt structure consistency across the state.
 - d. Adjust season dates to avoid overlapping hunts with mixed-weapon types.
- 3) Designate the premium statewide deer hunt as a Quality Hunt.
- 4) Require the purchase of a license at least a day prior to the start of the hunt. For hunts where published season dates are less than 6 days, hunters will no longer be able to buy a license once the hunt starts.
- 5) Create "ranch registration" process for OTC private-land deer licenses, similar to the current registration process used for private land elk hunting in Secondary Management Zones.
- 6) Caps on private-land licenses OTC licenses for deer.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 9: Subsequent Discussion of Proposed Changes to the Elk Rule 19.31.14 NMAC

10:13:25 a.m. (01:12:24/01:12:40)

The Department presented proposed changes to the Elk Rule (19.31.14 NMAC) based on survey information, management goals and public comment. The Department has analyzed and evaluated

data to help inform the rule development process and is still in the process of collecting public comments on the proposed rules. The Department presented the current proposal for the 2027-2030 hunting seasons.

Preliminary proposed changes include:

General Statewide proposed changes

- Adjust season dates to account for calendar shift. For example, if a hunt normally starts on a Saturday, this date shift would be maintained throughout the rule so the hunts continue to start on a Saturday.
- Adjust some hunts to minimize overlap of weapons used or species hunted. Align most primary management zone hunts to begin with muzzleloader hunts, followed by any-legal-weapon hunts. Early October hunts shift to muzzleloader to address increased male susceptibility to harvest.
- Align hunt season start dates in GMUs containing both PMZ and SMZ. Adjust draw license numbers based on biological data and management goals.
 - o Reductions in GMUs: 15, 16A, 16B, 16C, 16D, 16E and 55A
 - o Slight increases in GMUs: 2, 34, 36 and 51
- Designate statewide draw elk licenses (currently ELK-1-700) as a quality hunt.
- Require the purchase of a license at least one day prior to start of the hunt. For hunts where published season dates are less than 6 days, hunters will no longer be able to buy a license once the hunt starts.
- Re-assess public/private land split due to land ownership changes of the last 4 years.

Specific proposed changes

- Increase antlerless elk licenses in GMU 2 by introducing two Youth Encouragement Hunts.
- Create muzzleloader hunts prior to any-legal-weapon hunts in the following GMUs: 4 (within Sargent, Humphries, and Rio Chama WMAs), 5A, 5B, 12, 16A, 16B/22, 16C, 16D, 21A, 49, 50 and 51.
- Redistribute a small portion of any-legal-weapon hunt licenses to muzzleloader hunt licenses in the following GMUs: 5A, 5B, 12 and 50.
- Creation of, and redistribution of licenses to new muzzleloader hunts will slightly increase licenses in GMUs 5B, 12 and 50. New muzzleloader hunts will be bag limit MB, with the exception of WMA hunts within GMU 4, where bag limits shall be MB/A and GMU 51, where bag limits shall be ES.
- Shift existing late-season muzzleloader hunt dates in GMU 51 to begin after archery and before rifle hunts to align with statewide muzzleloader seasons.
- Increase antlerless elk licenses in GMU 51 to address issues with winter concentrations of elk.
- Increase antlerless licenses within GMUs 34 and 36 to address continued population growth within these herds.
- Eliminate Youth Encouragement hunts throughout Greater Gila elk herd unit (GMUs 15, 16A-E) to reduce adult female mortality within the herd. Reductions in herd productivity and adult female survival necessitate the reduction of female harvest to aid in sustainability of the herd.
- Decrease antlerless licenses within Greater Gila elk herd unit (GMU 15, 16A, 16C, 16D and 16E) to reduce adult female mortality within the herd.
- Shift antlerless hunts earlier in the year within the Greater elk herd unit (GMU 15, 16A, 16B, 16C, 16D and 16E) to reduce adult female mortality.
- Decrease antlerless licenses on Valle Vidal (GMU 55A) to reduce adult female mortality and address decreased calf recruitment.
- Shift Mobility Impaired (MI) and Youth Only (YO) rifle hunts after muzzleloader hunts in units where MI and YO rifle hunts had initially followed archery hunts (GMUs 16A, 16C, 16D and 23). MI and YO hunts in muzzleloader-only units (GMU 9, 15 and 17) will remain as previously scheduled.

The Commission took a break at 11:20:41 a.m. (02:19:40/02:19:56) and returned at 11:34:32 a.m. (02:31:31/02:20:01). Commissioner Harwood left the meeting during this break.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 10: Rule Hearing: Barbary Sheep, Oryx and Ibex Rule 19.31.12 NMAC (Action Item)

11:36:22 a.m. (02:35:21/02:21:51)

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

The Department is proposing the following changes to 19.31.12 NMAC:

Barbary sheep:

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

Oryx:

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

Ibex:

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

Motion: To repeal and replace 19.31.12 NMAC as presented by the Department and allow the Department to make minor corrections to comply with filing this rule with State Records and Archives.

Motion by: Vice-chairman Clemente.

Seconded by: Commissioner Witt.

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

AGENDA ITEM NO. 11: Rule Hearing: Migratory Bird Rule 19.31.6 NMAC Action Item)

11:59:52 a.m. (02:58:51/02:45:22)

The Department presented proposed changes to the Migratory Game Bird Rule (19.31.6 NMAC) based on public comment, the latest information from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), recent survey information, and management goals. Season selections and bag limits are determined in conjunction with the USFWS working through the Central and Pacific Flyway Councils. The proposed amendments focused on:

- Changes to regular waterfowl season dates based on public comments and calendar dates
- Change certain season dates to be later in the year because of calendar shift
- Based on population survey data, increase sandhill crane permits in SW draw hunts by 18 total, to be distributed among existing hunts
- Based on public comment and migration timing, move Estancia Valley sandhill crane draw hunt from November to December.

Motion: To repeal and replace 19.31.6 NMAC as presented by the Department and allow the Department to make minor corrections to comply with filing this rule with State Records and Archives.

Motion by: Commissioner Witt.

Seconded by: Vice-chairman Clemente.

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

AGENDA ITEM NO. 12: Approval of the Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (Action Item)

12:14:04 p.m. (03:13:03/02:59:33)

The Department sought Commission guidance on priorities, areas of emphasis and desired changes in the Capital Project Plan. The Department will incorporate information garnered from this agenda item, and executive branch guidance received from the Governor's Office into the development of the fiscal year 2028-2032 capital and budget request.

Motion: To approve the FY28-FY32 Capital Plan as presented by the Department.

Motion by: Commissioner Witt.

Seconded by: Commissioner Lopez.

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

Absent: Vice-chairman Clemente.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 13: General Public Comment

12:26:43 p.m. (03:25:42/03:12:12)

AGENDA ITEM NO.14: Commissioner Comments

12:48:21 p.m. (03:47:20/03:33:50)

AGENDA ITEM NO.15: Adjourn

12:51:51 p.m. (03:50:50/03:37:20)

Chairman Richard Stump: This meeting is called to order. Good morning, everybody. Welcome to the State Game Commission meeting here in Eastern New Mexico State University. Director Sloane, please call roll.

Director Michael Sloane: Commissioner Witt?

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Present.

Director Michael Sloane: Commissioner Lopez?

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Here.

Director Michael Sloane: Commissioner Harwood? Not on the Zoom yet. Vice-Chair Clemente?

Vice-Chairman Fernando Clemente Jr.: Present.

Director Michael Sloane: Chair Stump?

Chairman Richard Stump: Here.

Director Michael Sloane: You have a quorum.

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: I am present as well.

Director Michael Sloane: Kyle Harwood is here.

Chairman Richard Stump: Welcome, Commissioner Harwood.

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: Thank you, Chair Stump.

Chairman Richard Stump: Let's start with introduction, I guess. Let's start with Commissioner Lopez.

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Good afternoon, Chair, all commissioners, and members of the public [audio cut] Lopez, commissioner out of District 3. It's great to be in Roosevelt County and to get our work done today.

Vice-Chairman Fernando Clemente Jr.: Good morning and thank you everybody for being here. My name is Fernando Clemente. I'm vice-chair, commissioner at-large from Sunland Park, New Mexico.

Chairman Richard Stump: Good morning, everybody. Thanks for being here. I'm Richard Stump, chair of the Commission.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Good morning. My name is Christopher Witt. I am representing District 5, Bernalillo County. Also professor at University of New Mexico. I was very pleased to be shown around the Portales area by a professor from Eastern New Mexico today, Professor Schmitt, who is in attendance and looking forward to learn more about Portales.

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

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: Hello, Chair Stump. Participating remotely, this is Commissioner Harwood. Thank you.

Chief Stewart Liley: Good morning, commissioners, members of the public. Stewart Liley, Chief of Wildlife for the Department.

Ben Neary: Good morning, commissioners, everybody. I'm Ben Neary. I'm with the New Mexico Wildlife Federation.

[silence]

Justin Medina: I'm Justin Medina.

Jonathan Schmitt: Justin is a student here at ENMU. My name is Jonathan Schmitt, and I'm an Assistant professor here in the Biology Department.

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

Chris Guikema: Chris Guikema, Compass West Outfitters.

Kirk Kennedy: Kirk Kennedy, landowner, outfitter in Northeastern New Mexico.

Thomas Austin: Thomas Austin, resident guide, Ruidoso, New Mexico.

Mason Grau: Mason Grau, landowner and member of New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association.

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

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

Capt. Benjamin Byrd: Good morning, commissioners, members of the public. I'm Benjamin Byrd. I'm the Captain of the Southeast area out of Roswell.

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

Lt. Shawn Carrell: Good morning, commissioners. Shawn Carrell, lieutenant over Revocation.

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.

Darren Vaughan: Good morning, commissioners, members of the public. I'm Darren Vaughan. I am the Communications Director for the Department.

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

Daniel Vidal: Good morning, commissioners and members of the public. I'm Daniel Vidal, IT Applications Developer and Webmaster for Department of Wildlife.

Eric Arce: Good morning, commissioners, members of the public. My name is Eric Arce, and I'm the *New Mexico Magazine*, *Wildlife*, Editor.

Matt Alcouffe: Good morning, commissioners. My name is Matt Alcouffe. I'm an IT Operations Manager for Department of Wildlife.

Chairman Richard Stump: Do we have anybody online?

[pause 00:04:43]

Eric Arce: Mark, if you'd like to say something.

Mark Mattaini: Good morning, commissioners and members of the public. My name is Dr. Mark Mattaini. I live in Paraje Village, Laguna Pueblo. I am a member of the New Mexico Board of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, and I am a member of the Department's Citizen Advisory Committee. Thank you.

Eric Arce: Garth, if you would like to introduce yourself.

Garth Reader: Good morning, commissioners, everybody. This is Garth Reader from Los Alamos, New Mexico.

Eric Arce: Jesse, if you would like to introduce yourself. [silence] Asher, if you would like to introduce yourself.

[silence]

Asher Nathan: Hi, everyone. I'm Asher. I'm from Santa Fe, New Mexico, and I'm with Western Landowners Alliance.

Director Michael Sloane: I think that's everyone, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Richard Stump: Okay. Thank you. Again, welcome and thanks, everybody, for participating here today. Let's move on to agenda item number four, approval of the agenda. Commissioners, any discussion on the agenda? Is there a motion?

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente Jr.: I move to approve the agenda as presented.

Chairman Richard Stump: All those in favor?

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Aye.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Aye.

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente Jr.: Aye.

Chairman Richard Stump: Aye. Any opposed? Motion passes. Agenda item number five is approval of the minutes from the May 28th, 2026 meeting in Socorro. Commissioners, any discussion on minutes? Is there a motion to approve?

Vice-Chairman Fernando Clemente Jr.: I also move to approve the minutes as presented as well.

Chairman Richard Stump: Is there a second?

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Second.

Chairman Richard Stump: Discussion on the motion? All those in the favor?

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Aye.

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Aye.

Chairman Richard Stump: Any opposed? Motion passes. Agenda item number six is revocations. Commissioners, any discussion on revocations? Is there a motion?

Vice-Chairman Fernando Clemente Jr.: I also move to approve the revocation.

Chairman Richard Stump: Is there a second?

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Second.

Chairman Richard Stump: Discussion on the motion? All in favor?

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Aye.

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: Aye.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Aye.

Vice-Chairman Fernando Clemente Jr.: Aye.

Chairman Richard Stump: Any opposed? Motion passes. Agenda item number seven is the first of two opportunities to hear public comment. Do we have anybody for public comment registered?

Director Michael Sloane: Mr. Chair, I haven't received any comments yet, but double-check on that. I don't know if there's anyone online that wants to comment.

Chairman Richard Stump: I'll check on that. Just wait till it comes back.

Eric Arce: Mr. Chairman, there's someone online, Garth, that would like to say something.

Chairman Richard Stump: Sure. We do ask comment be limited to items not on the agenda today and that you speak only one of the two public comment comment periods. Go ahead, Garth.

Garth Reader: Good morning. I have a general comment regarding the public draw. There is currently a fundamental lack of understanding of how the public draw works in this state, and it's causing consternation and friction amongst many resident hunters. I would urge the Commission to task the Department to develop in-depth educational materials regarding how the public draw works, its limitations, and its benefits.

I would also encourage that the Department and the Commission look into changes and updates to the public draw to enable more of the resident hunters to score an opportunity to hunt in this state. Thank you very much.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Garth. Anybody else online? No. Agenda item number eight is a subsequent discussion of proposed changes to the Deer Rule 19.31.13 NMAC presented by Chief Liley. As a reminder, this is the final presentation before a hearing. It's important for both the public and commissioners to provide comment before the final draft rule is developed. [silence] Thank you.

[pause 00:10:12]

Chief Stewart Liley: Good morning, Chair, members of the Commission. As you discussed before the start of this, this is our subsequent discussion of the deer rule. After this meeting today, we'll go to draft the rule for the hearing potential at August meeting, so kind of last time to go through some of the proposed changes with you all on the deer rule.

Real briefly, just going through some of the population status and some of the other information.

Statewide, our population estimate is about 80,000 to 100,000 deer. Deer population growth is really driven by adult female survival, which tends to be more consistent across both temporal and spatial, so more consistent across space and time. Whereas fawn survival definitely has higher variability on an annual basis and over time and space as well. Really, fawn survival could also help drive population dynamics if you have really poor survival, and where we see that is more in long-term drought periods or where you have drought impacting higher predation rates, et cetera.

Buck harvest, for the most part, is not going to limit population growth, the overall trajectories of population size. The only time we see buck populations or buck harvest limiting population growth is when we get to ratios below 10 bucks per 100 does. We don't see that anywhere within any of our populations in the state, but that's when you can see potential impacts on reproductive success of deer populations. You'll see there our five-year average-- again, that's statewide average buck-to-doe ratios and fawn-to-does ratios. What we would like to see for a stable population is greater than 35 fawns per 100 does. We're pretty stable in some of that. In the last few years, definitely in some areas, we've seen lower fawn-to-doe ratios. Then that, again, probably long-term drought affecting that.

Real briefly, there's two species of deer in New Mexico, both whitetail and mule deer. Mule deer found pretty much most areas within the state, but what you'll see here is the two different subspecies of whitetail within New Mexico, one being Coues whitetail deer distribution mainly in the southwest portion of the state. That's clipped. You could see they're in the Bootheel region up into the Gila over into the San Mateo's, Magdalena's a little bit as well. On the right graphic is eastern whitetail deer along the Pecos River mainly, along our eastern border with Texas as well. Then also a little bit into the Cimarron River drainages, et cetera, in the foothills of the mountains just outside of Raton.

This picture here, this graphic is depicting license sales and harvest through time, going back all the way to the '50s. You'll see historic declines both in licenses and harvest through time. Those double bars really

represent-- The first one on the left is when the state went from over-the-counter licenses for deer into a limited entry back in about 2005-'06 season.

Then, just after that, we implemented mandatory hunter harvest reporting in 2006-'07 hunting season. Through that time period, you'll see a drastic-- a larger decline really in the '60s into the early 1990s, early 2000s.

That trend is pretty similar throughout the West, driven mainly by mule deer. This is predominantly mule deer declines, and more maybe in the recent history, the last 15-20 years, more of a stabilization within populations, but some definitely variability by location of both increase and decrease in the last 20 years. Looking more in the last 20 years, this is both our buck-to-doe and fawn-to-doe ratios across the last 20 years. Buck-to-doe in the blue, fawn-to-doe in the red. Again, fawn more variable than the buck numbers and to be expected, but you'll see fairly consistent through time, little bit of decline, maybe a decline trend in fawn-to-does across that 20-year period, but a lot of variability within that that nothing really significant stands out.

Here, it's depicting what we would call more management zones. More or less, what we're looking at here is where we have more distinct populations, where we say that functions as a population. It's almost by ecotype in there. This gets refined as we put more GPS collars on deer populations, looking at connectivity and how they move across the landscape. You'll see there it's more or less we look at 17 different management areas or populations of mule deer populations across the state with refinements that are continuing to happen as we go through different research projects that look at movements across. Just really brief, last year's harvest, both licenses and success, so about 36,000 licenses sold. Again, almost all predominantly buck harvest, very few of those licenses are for female does. 87% of our hunters are reporting, so high reporting rates, and we reported a 30% success rate last year. Harvest of about just over 9,000 bucks and just over 137 does statewide. Satisfaction range at 3.5.

More of just a closer look at the last 20 years of license numbers and harvest, you'll see fairly consistent license numbers and harvest through time. Harvest is tracking license numbers fairly well. That red line is our harvest. Green line is license numbers. Then that blue line is a smoothed-out harvest, the average harvest over a five-year period. You'll see fairly consistent across the last 20 years or so for the statewide. Real briefly, just want to touch on a couple of research projects that we do have for deer. One is some looking at movement across the landscape where we currently put some collars on deer in the Pecos Mountains, looking at that post-fire movement in the Calf Canyon/Hermit's Peak, and in the southern end of that. Then also on Mount Taylor, trying to understand deer dynamics across that Mount Taylor. We put radio collars on deer this winter. We will be analyzing the data after the next couple of years of collection. Then last time when we spoke about this, we were getting ready to start a buck survival study in Northern New Mexico, specifically in 2B area, GMU 2B. We did place the first transmitters on deer in March of this year. That's trying to understand how population dynamics work across multiple jurisdictions. Those deer move across both tribal in New Mexico and Colorado, as well as Colorado lands.

Multiple jurisdictions all managing what we think is one or bigger herd. We were able to capture 15 bucks in March of this year. While we were out capturing, we did have an issue where a bearing went out in the tail rotor, so we had to cease capture for the rest of the year. Just given how hot it was, we ceased. Our plan is, though, next year, in cooperation with Colorado, is to put 110 transmitters on bucks in New Mexico and 110 transmitters on bucks on Colorado to really get a better understanding across all these jurisdictions.

Interestingly enough, the 15 deer that we did tag, all of them migrated. You'll see this picture here. Those are the centroids. There's where they were captured on winter range. Then what you're seeing, in the left, is the movements from March 10th to April 30th, so moving up to summer range already. Then what you're looking at the right graph is May 1st to June 16th. Still some movements up to summer range, but some of them have already probably met their summer ranges by middle of June or staying put.

Almost all of them, you'll see, of the 15 that moved, we did have a couple of mortalities. Of the ones that survived, the majority moved to Colorado. You'll see that line in the center of the graphic, that's the Colorado-New Mexico border. We did have one that went over to the Rio Chama Wildlife Area and is hanging out there as well. Already getting a little bit of information out of it, but, to our thought, we've radio

collared does in this population before, but this is the first time we did bucks. I just probably should have shown on this picture, we're using solar satellite transmitters that are ear tags.

We try not to radio collar males of the population as much as possible because it just, especially on ungulates, you get neck swelling during the rut, and it's just not as great to put radio collars on. These ear tag transmitters are showing some pretty decent promise. They've used them in other states like Wyoming, and I think that's going to work out really well for us to get at some of this movement data that we've had on females, but just have been limited on males, to see if they behave different.

Within deer management across the state, we really have two different strategies, if you will, quality where it's designated to basically have a wider selection of harvest from different age class of males. It's a more limited number of licenses for the most part. There might be older age class males in there, higher buck-to-doe ratios, lower hunter density, and then increased opportunity for success.

Whereas, the opportunity units are more to just that the opportunity to try to go deer hunting, maybe lower buck-to-doe ratios, still above our threshold. We want to have of above 10 to 100, but the chance to draw is higher. Success rates may or may not be lower, and in general, it's more maximizing the opportunity to be able to hunt.

Real quick, looking at the graph here, the blue represents our quality hunt GMUs. Some GMUs, we have quality hunts across all hunts in the GMU, but there might be some, what we consider quality hunts, specific hunts, for example, like our 2B 3rd Rifle hunt or the January bow hunt. 2B has been designated as quality just because of the migration that we see in there and the different structure of the population in there. The rest of the GMUs highlighted in solid blue are those GMUs where we specifically designate the entire GMU's quality.

Back in March, we sent out a hunter attitude survey across a lot of our different species, trying to gauge just some kind of hunter response on where they feel management is, what their desires from a hunting perspective is, and try to get respondents from that. It was open for two weeks, and we received just over 1,200 responses.

You'll see the breakdown of what those respondents were. Most of them were residents. The majority were over the age of 35. Most of them were public draw hunters, or self-identified as predominantly a public land hunter, and most of them were rifle hunters.

When we ask the question about how important it is to potentially hunt annually for deer for them, you'll see the majority of those responses. If you look at important and very important, most people, the priority is to try to hunt a deer every single year was their biggest gauge of their attitude on deer harvest. Their primary objective for when they go deer hunting was listed as meat. They hunt for meat.

You'll see harvesting a big buck, a mature buck, came in second there, but the majority was the opportunity to hunt and to hunt for meat, if you add those two up.

Moving on to some of the different questions, we wanted to know how they were in terms of satisfaction and the last experience they had. You could see it's a little bit divided in between not satisfied at all or satisfied. It's an even if you add in the neutral. You would look at more of a neutrality statement in there on whether they were satisfied with their hunt or not. It's almost a coin flip if you add those columns up. Then the reasons for satisfaction versus not satisfaction. You'll see down in those bottom graphics, the graphics showing that the majority of respondents that said they were satisfied with their last hunt was just they were satisfied that they had the opportunity to go hunting, followed by experience of just going hunting. Dissatisfaction came more from lower deer density in general, and then not enough mature bucks was the other reason for dissatisfaction.

Again, as I said, some level of satisfaction and some level of dissatisfaction was virtually the same with neutral being about 24%, so really not swayed one way or the other, but the interesting parts coming out of this, as I mentioned, why they were satisfied or not. A lot of hunters are satisfied, about half satisfied with management, and half are dissatisfied, but if you look at it, those hunters most want to hunt on an annual basis, but also want to have a greater chance at harvesting a mature buck and more deer density, so it's an impossible situation to build in there, if you want.

Everyone that's applying, everyone to have the chance to draw, but also the chance to get at a mature buck, just the deer densities and the potential to try to get at that, it's a supply and demand issue, is that there's more people wanting to get out than there is the ability to have high density, high buck-to-doe

ratios, while still having the opportunity to draw on an annual basis. Came to a, people want to hunt every single year, but they want to have a mature buck every year too with that opportunity.

When we go on to some of our proposals, you'll see, when we try to get into more of the quality type hunt designation, it really requires reducing harvest or limiting tags, and at a significant level, which then, of course, obviously reduces the ability to hunt on an annual basis. Real quick, just going to go through some of our general proposed changes, and then we'll go more regional specific as we go through, like we do at every rule cycle, trying to adjust license numbers to meet management strategies and changes in deer harvest or deer herd dynamics. Then season dates, we adjust every year because of calendar creep. We also adjust to make sure that the harvest is sustainable. Sometimes these harvest dates get creeping into more of the rut, a little bit less sustainable.

We were also adjusting some seasons for consistency across the state. One of the other thing, what we're trying to do is adjust seasons to avoid overlapping hunts with mixed weapon types for different species. For example, if we had a deer hunt with a rifle occurring at the same time as a elk hunt with a muzzleloader, we try to limit that as much as possible across the state to where we had the same weapon type hunting at the same time, if we had to have overlapping species hunts at the same time.

Then we have the one hunt that allows for a draw hunt that, if someone draws it, they could hunt anywhere in the state that currently is not designated as quality hunt. Where we think that it is a quality hunt, so just designating that hunt. We evaluated, and we'll get into more details the antlerless hunts across the state as well. We did propose some reductions on doe harvest.

Then two of the other bigger changes we proposed and looked at was putting a ranch registration in place for private land deer hunts, similar to what we've been doing and proposing for other species such as oryx, deer, pronghorn, and then also putting caps on the private land deer licenses, and we are proposing moving forward with that.

Before we get into the details of what those caps would look like, what we did was we took the three-year average license sales for those units or specific hunts, and that was the propose, to stay with that, if we had no plans on changing the management strategy within that area, so more status quo on the number of private land deer licenses sold, just taking that three-year average license sale.

Real quick, before we go through, just looking at some of our public comments. This is through the 23rd, so that was two days ago when this was put together. We have received a few more comments since then, but you'll see the majority of the comments were on the private land license cap. There was both support and opposition, but more support for it than opposition.

Then also on that ranch registration, both support and opposition. I didn't list all the comments here in this slide. This was that were pertinent to the specific proposed changes we had. You'll see the support for our 2B proposal on reducing licenses and making that a quality hunt as well, and then different comments throughout, both in support and opposition.

Some of our miscellaneous comments that weren't directly at a specific proposal we had, you'll see there's comments in splitting GMU 16 into subunits. That was a form letter comment. It was the same comment that was multiple. We looked at the potential to do that. We felt like the number of licenses across the entire area was not that we would have hunter-density issue. We really felt the number of licenses in 16 for deer, we were able to be able to make sure that they were spread out to where we need to do splits. There were some comments on trying to create doe hunts in units, and you'll see some of the other comments throughout there.

Moving more into the specifics in the regional approaches in the northwest, the biggest there is-- we've discussed this in the past, and we've discussed it with Jicarilla, too, is reducing GMU 2B harvest for mature deer to make that a quality hunt. When we analyzed the data-- the last time we went in front of you, we had not analyzed that yet. We went through, and what our determination was, and the next slide will show, in order to shift that to a quality hunt would require reducing 885 licenses in that unit.

We were thinking it was going to be about 1,000, and that is pretty close to where we came in. Again, in the next graph, I'll show you the exact cuts. We tried to go at the licenses that had the highest success, reducing those so we were able to reduce fewer licenses than just a general broad reduction in licenses across. The hunts that had lower success rates had lower cuts. Those that had the highest success rates had the highest cuts to those licenses.

We also are proposing to create a new rifle hunt in GMU 51A to spread out the pressure across there. It won't change overall license numbers, but just different timeframe to spread that pressure out. Then proposing muzzleloader hunts on the wildlife management areas in GMU 4. Currently, we don't have muzzleloader hunts per deer in there, and we're proposing creating ones on the wildlife management areas in there to coincide at the same timeframe as the private land hunts there.

2B, this is the proposed-- If you'll look at this, it goes through each one of those specific hunts. It shows current licenses and then proposed licenses, and then our estimated change in harvest. You'll see some of these licenses where it really had the bigger impact was that end of October, early November hunts, where you'll see we went 400 licenses currently. We're proposing moving that to 100, so a reduction at 300 that almost relates to we think 170 less in the harvest, so almost a 50% decrease on that hunt. Those other hunts that mid-October, that hunt we didn't propose changing, just we don't see as high of harvest in there, and again, trying to target those hunts that had the highest success, so overall reductions didn't-- to achieve a harvest goal of reducing almost 400 in the population harvest, that's how we came about with these licenses.

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Chair.

Chairman Richard Stump: Commissioner Lopez.

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Chief Liley, on the youth hunts in November, we had those at 25, correct? Then we reduced them by 5 to 20. Could we reduce those even more because that's right during the rut, and maybe put that at-- I don't know, another five of reduction?

Chief Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Lopez, it absolutely could, the drops in success. The hunts that really had bigger impact, that's why we looked at it, that hunt of 400 actually had a higher impact on the population. That's where we work through to say, where are we going to actually see the biggest impact on the population? You'll see the reduction of-- if you win another 5 out of there, you might save potentially a harvest of 5 more, whereas that rifle hunt with 400 licenses moving it to 100, you're saving 170 potentially.

That's why we went at that. Trying not to limit some of those youth opportunities as well, was some of the concerns in there. Just for background, that hunt of 25 during this, that was cut the previous rule cycle. It used to be 150. We moved it to 25. Now we're proposing down to 20. That's gone from 150 down to 20, is the proposal.

Moving on through the rest of the license numbers, these are the proposed licenses on the draw. You'll see that cut in 2B, some minor increases in 5B, 6A, and then another increase in 14. 5B is an archery moving from 10 archery tags to 15, and the muzzleloader hunt from 10 to 15, and 6 moving archery from 100 to 110, and one rifle hunt from 110 to 115.

Then in 14, it's proposing moving the archery from 25 to 40 in the first archery hunt, and then in the second archery hunt from 25 to 30, and then the muzzleloader hunt from 55 to 60. Then the proposed private land caps, as we discussed at the last couple meetings on caps on private land, you'll see here, you'll notice some of the two and four hunts aren't in there because those are already in the draw for private lands in that region, so they're already capped.

Again, the way that we proposed it was taking the three-year license sale average for those over-the-counter unlimited and capping it at what that license sale is. You'll see some of those have a little bit more than the three-year average proposal, because that might be where we increased some of the youth-only hunts in the cap. There was maybe one or two sold, so we moved it up to three, or some of the mobility impaired that was maybe one or two sold. We maybe moved it up to three or five, or we moved some archery hunts up that were selling two or three licenses up to five.

Some of those hunts are higher than the three-year license sales, but it's more moving those youth-only mobility impaired or archery seasons up a little bit.

In the southwest region, we're proposing moving that, and this is in concert with White Sands Missile Range, moving the deer hunt there in January to a youth deer hunt. We're also proposing creating a December rifle hunt for Coues whitetail in GMU 16 and 20. 20 licenses each in those GMUs.

Then in GMU 23 and 24, right now, if you draw that archery tag and don't harvest a deer during your archery hunt, you could go hunt the Silver City Management Area for does. We had public comments coming in enough that people said I would just put in for that hunt if you'd make it a draw. We're proposing

just making that a draw hunt for archery deer, doe tag in that Silver City area anyway. Those that are unsuccessful in the harvest won't be able to hunt there now, but we are proposing just creating a new hunt code for people to put in for that hunt.

We're also proposing moving youth rifle hunts for deer in GMU 13 and 17 to muzzleloader hunts that will match the weapon type during the elk hunt. There's a overlapping elk hunt without our muzzleloader in there as well. We're also moving those to muzzleloader hunts for proposing some slight increases to those licenses as well, because of the success rates of muzzleloader tend to be less.

We're also proposing no longer making Fort Bayard a special management area and just letting anyone that draws that tag in 24 can legally access it, could hunt Fort Bayard as well. It used to be just limited to youth hunts. Youth area, we are seeing not much difference in densities across Fort Bayard to the other areas. Then, creating a public rifle hunt for the new members, WMA in GMU 24 or 5 licenses.

Real quick, just looking at the draw licenses across the southwest, most of that increase in there is in creating new Coues whitetail deer hunts, so not necessarily increasing the mule deer hunts. Where we did increase mule deer again was in 13, 17 on those youth hunts, moving those from rifle to muzzleloader hunts.

Then the proposed caps on private land in the southwest, similar to what we did in northwest, but you'll see in the notes there, too, is also creating these new forked whitetail or Coues deer hunts, creating a new private land code for that as well, since that would be a new hunt in there as well. You'll see that's why those caps are a little bit higher than the three-year average, because these would be new hunts. In the southeast area, we're proposing removing the antlerless hunt in GMU 32 in the Roswell and Fort Sumner areas. We're proposing keeping the youth-only antlerless hunt and putting that at 15 public and 20 private licenses in the cap. It was unlimited previously. We are also proposing removing the antlerless hunt on the Huey Wildlife Management Area, and changing from either-sex to a forked antler deer. Just the densities of deer on the Huey are not as such now that we think doe harvest is necessary.

Then we're proposing significantly reducing licenses in GMU 29 and 30. You'll see, reducing 120 and 30 at 525. That's coming off a lot of public hunter comment, but also success rates are starting to drop in those areas fairly precipitously. Then also seeing hunter satisfaction declining pretty high in those units. I forgot to mention 34 as well is another drop in that.

Looking at licenses in the southeast and the public draw side, you'll see those cuts throughout there. Some of those smaller cuts, again, are those antlerless hunts that we were discussing, but the majority of that is in 29, 30, 34 on the cuts on licenses. Then you'll see the proposed caps on private land in that region as well. Then in 33, you'll see the cap is less on 32 because of removing the antlerless hunt in that unit.

Northeast area, no big changes across the board. Some minor changes in license numbers you'll see there. More of that is in 45, increasing archery licenses from 165 to 170, and the muzzleloader hunt from 160 to 165. In 48, increasing the archery hunt by five, muzzleloader hunt by five, and the rifle hunt by five as well. Just population data suggests some of the ratios are much higher in there, and also the densities that we've been seeing in our surveys has been higher. Then 49, some slight adjustments as well in there, a little bit higher. Then 57, moving the muzzleloader from 15 to 20.

Private land caps in that region as well. You'll see, again, we took the three-year license sales, so the average of what we've seen over the last three years. Then you'll see there is some higher numbers in there. Again, most of that is due to increasing either youth hunts at a three-year average of one or two, or three licenses sold, moving that to five or a mobility-impaired and moving that to five, et cetera. With that, I would take any questions.

Chairman Richard Stump: Commissioners?

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: [inaudible 00:42:57] Chair.

Chairman Richard Stump: Commissioner Lopez?

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Can you go back to your slide, Chief Liley, regarding the numbers of the license you had in that area of the Jicarilla? Right there. I know that the Nation was looking at a reduction of 20%. Were we able to collaborate with them to meet that 20%?

Chief Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Lopez, we did have conversations with the Jicarilla Nation as we were developing these numbers. We did sit down with them and discuss. This is where it's bigger.

The 20% reduction happened in this current license year. We did do that. That was a concurrence with the Chair. This is a much bigger, as you can see, reduction than 20%. What we think will be a quality to meet our standards of definition of quality, that's where we thought license numbers would, about a 400 decrease in harvest in that unit, which relates to about 885 license decrease in there.

Chairman Richard Stump: Commissioner Witt?

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Chief Liley, thanks for the great presentation. I just want to follow up on this because I want to understand more about what you were saying about the biology based on your satellite solar ear tags. Can you go back to the slide where you show the migratory tracks? Yes. Can you just clarify? Were these all bucks? Is that what you said?

Chief Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Witt, that is correct. They were all bucks captured approximately March 10th.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Of this year. These are actively unfolding stories, basically?

Chief Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Witt, that's correct.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: These are all to be or not to be? That's my question.

Chief Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Witt, these are all to be. They were all captured in GMU to be this winter.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: I want to understand what this means more about the seasonal pattern. These bucks are going from New Mexico to Colorado sometime in April or late March, and then we expect them to go back into New Mexico in October or November or something?

Chief Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Witt, our speculation is they're going to follow similar patterns to the doe segment of the population. We've radio-collared the doe segment of the population historically in here. They start arriving back on winter range as early as second week of October to the really peak at the end of October all the way back to 2B. Now, they transition through multiple jurisdictions.

It's hard to tell from that graphic, but if you look at green, that's more or less forest service. If you look at white, just above the New Mexico-Colorado border, that's Southern Ute. That's tribal. Then if you look just to the west of where those were captured, that is the Jicarilla. They do transition through multiple jurisdictions on their way up and on their way down as well.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: There must be other mule deer that are not moving because some of the hunts are happening in 2B before these would ostensibly get back, right?

Chief Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Witt, that's our speculation. Definitely, resident population is probably smaller. That's why we have much lower success rates on those earlier October hunts, less of an impact, and that's why we didn't reduce tons of those licenses.

I think part of it is just a sheer number of our captures. Again, we only were able to get 15. We were hoping to get 110. We'll capture more. I think, this is representative of those 15. Whether it's representative of the entire population, right now, it's hard to say. I think when we capture more, we'll have a better understanding.

I think the other thing that we see too and we know, we just don't know how that pattern hits, is we know Colorado have deer that don't fully go all the way into New Mexico on winter range. Do they join together on summer range? We see that in some of the doe population. We don't know about that on the male segment. We don't know rut patterns, if they move a lot more.

Again, this is the first snapshot on, are these movements really consistent with the does? So far, it seems that way in the spring, but we don't know what happens come fall rut time period. Do they behave differently than the greater segment of the female population?

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Cool. It'll be fascinating to see this unfold. Thank you.

Chairman Richard Stump: Commissioner Lopez?

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Chief Liley, [unintelligible 00:47:55] the Apache Nation? Did you all collaborate or is Colorado going to collaborate with Jicarilla on this collaring program?

Chief Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Lopez, we've talked with the Jicarilla and there's discussions around it. I think there's aspects of if they'll actually put radio transmitters on or not. I don't think we have the firmed-up decision on that, but we are sharing that data.

In fact, right now, today, the San Juan Working Group, which is made up of Colorado Parks and Wildlife, New Mexico Department of Wildlife, Jicarilla, and Southern Ute, is meeting today to discuss some of this data and other just management aspects. I think there's potential for some more collaboration.

Again, I think saturation of transmitters, we're talking about 240-ish type transmitters being put on bucks in this region, both in Colorado and New Mexico, I think we're going to see a lot. We see these one pathways. Are they that narrow or are we going to see a little bit more movement? I think, right now, I don't want to jump to big conclusions based off the 15 transmitters we have here, but I do think we'll see different movement patterns as we get a lot more radio-collared.

If we spread that collaring period out through time. We captured in March, but if we're going to try to start capturing in New Mexico right after the January 15th doe hunt next year and spread that capture out through the wintertime, that might get us a different sample size of the population.

Chairman Richard Stump: Commissioner Clemente?

Vice-Chairman Fernando Clemente Jr.: If we can go to the southwest part of the presentation in the Unit 23 and 24. Can you explain me a little bit how it came out about, and why whenever somebody is not successful in those units, they can come back and harvest a doe? Can you explain me on that? What was the reason of that?

Chief Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Clemente, I appreciate that. I failed to mention. We've worked in collaboration with the town of Silver City to create a management hunt for doe harvest around city limits, just of a high density of deer in that general suburbs. It's an archery hunt. We discussed a lot of options with the city and members that lived in that area about trying to reduce the population, and really harvest of those was the way to do it.

We originally did population management hunts that were your fourth choice on your application. That worked okay. Then we moved to this situation about eight years ago that people that drew those archery tags and those units that were unsuccessful could go back and harvest a doe.

Why it came about now is just more of the general public saying in the comments in the last four years, like, "I would have put in for that specific hunt as a sole use to go harvest a doe." Really, it's trying to deal with-- We have a map on our website. It's a limited area, so it's not the entirety of 23, 24. It's really targeted harvest of deer in and around the Silver City city limits.

Vice-Chairman Fernando Clemente Jr.: [inaudible 00:51:25] correct if I'm wrong, when I started here as commissioner, we had a presentation that the department used to relocate deer from that area, if I'm not mistaken. The relocations were pretty successful, if I'm not mistaken. It was in the 80%, 90% success rates. If it is to reduce population to control population, why we're not continuing with relocating deer to enhance other areas of deer populations? That's one of my questions.

The other question is, providing a hunt instead of an incentive-type of deal for management control, you're not providing something that then, if you meet the goals or the population reduces, you're going to have to take away from the hunters. To me, you're providing a set number of tags versus managing a population.

Chief Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Clemente, those number of licenses came about of what we're trying to speculate on success rates in terms of the set numbers. I'll address the translocation in a second, but in terms of the license numbers that we came up, that's what we were trying to achieve. We're hoping that we'll see about 30% to 40% success rate on those 50 licenses on public and 20 on private.

I think if we don't see that success rate, and we see issues to where either hunters didn't go out, or we had much lower success, that's when we could still use a population management hunt after the fact to meet that management goal. If those license numbers aren't meeting management goals, we could always issue another population management hunt within the mid-cycle, and that would come through the fourth choice.

In terms of translocation, we definitely saw high success early on, like the first six to eight months of the translocation. About year two, we started seeing declines in survival on that. One of the biggest concerns that we've had with translocation and translocation of cervids is potentially spreading chronic wasting disease. GMU 24 doesn't have it now, but when you get into those higher concentration of deer, that's when you're going to have greater potential for chronic wasting disease or disease to set in.

Some of our big concern was trying to-- human-induced mediation and moving a disease around from that population standpoint. I think it still could be looked at as a potential management tool. The other aspect was it's all private land where we are working on and trying to work with the private landowners to get captured, started weaning after, or what happened is those lands, where we were able to get captured, we were pulled in, did really well in the first year or two, captured that population out of those few pieces of private land. Then, after that, our success rates dropped a lot.

We just weren't having the deer come in because we reduced it there, and those other lands where we weren't getting permission, we saw stick there. I think we had a diminishing return. We moved a lot in the first two years. I think it was close to 200 deer that we moved out of there, and then just diminished return after that.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Clemente. I know in the beginning of all this, talking with the Jicarilla National, and they wanted to create this quality hunt, and there was a lot of support in that. I'm glad we followed through with that. I think everything else, as far as the caps go, it's interesting to see that the numbers are not any lower. If anything, they're higher, so I support that. Anybody else have anything else? No. Thank you, Chief Liley. Let's move on to public. Let's start with David Heft.

David Heft: Chair, commissioners, David Heft, Mayhill. I'm one of those old timers. I remember the days when we had 120,000 deer hunters out there, and there were ways to get around it. You could still find the bucks and stuff and use the crowds to your advantage. Overall, I think the department has done about as good a job as they can. This is a really tough species to manage here in the Southwest.

What it gets down to, based on my career, is habitat, habitat, habitat. Right now, we're in a cycle where we're just not going to support the deer herds we used to have. The importance of that is shown. When you do get these populations where they have to go in and do work, it's either around irrigated agricultural areas or it's in suburban areas where people have irrigated lawns and ornamental plantings, nutrition. If you've done any deer management in the Southwest, you know that you can increase the quality and quantity of deer quite a bit if you supply some nutrition for them. I think some of the reductions in 34 is a good thing. I've seen the days when we were just covered up with deer in those areas, 34 and 30, and we're just not going to get them anymore. I think there's some other factors affecting deer that I'll make a comment on later.

Overall, I think the department's done a good job, and the [unintelligible 00:57:08] folks are to be congratulated. We're not going to make everybody happy, but thank you.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, David. Kirk Kennedy.

Kirk Kennedy: I want to know how I get one of them quality units. [chuckles] I'm from the northeast, and the problem I have with what you did, the cap, I believe in the cap. Not all landowners take care of what it is. One problem with the cap is being in the hunting business three years, four years ago, we're [unintelligible 00:57:47] 20 people. Now we can't. I don't know where all the numbers came from, just specifically for the northeast and not state general.

Another big problem I have with the proposal is, as the private landowner, 56, there's seven public tags, 75 public tags, 56 private tags. 78% of the ground in 56 is private, and we get 20 last tags. 22% is the public. 57 it's a 124 private. The cap is, there's a 120 public. The percentage of private land is 84%, 16% public. 58, 80 private tags, 170 public, 79% and 21%. 59, 95 private, 150 public, 75, 25 private and public. Not all the state is like that. I understand that.

That up there, what's going to happen, we're supporting all of them. All of you want the open opportunities, the draw, everyone get the hunt. I understand that. If you're going to have the landowners that are taking care of your wildlife, putting out the salt, fixing the fences, providing the habitat as you were discussing, and wanting to enhance the deer, you're going to take all their incentives away or add it to the public.

I don't see the deer like we used to. I know it's a very hard job of what he's doing, but this is not right. This can't be fair. We don't come to the meetings. 80% of them are public hunters that made their comments. I don't comment. I don't come as much as I used to. I've been in the hunting business for 48 years. 4th-generation rancher. My grandkids is going to be 6th-generation rancher. We want to be there. It's a lovely

place in the world. We do have the habitat. We have the hay fields. They're on private land. That's where my problem is with the northeast corner.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Mr. Kennedy. Kerrie Romero.

Kerrie Romero: Good morning, Mr. Chairman and Commissioners. I'm going to surprise you guys because this is not a comment on behalf of the outfitting industry. It's just on behalf of a mom who has kids that have hunted that youth hunt. I know Stewart is laughing because he's not crazy about this idea. I'm the comment that said split the GMU 8 youth hunt. The reason for that is because I'm not sure that you know this, but they're rebuilding the Crest House on top of the Sandia, and so the Sandia Crest Road is going to be closed from-- right now it's closed at the 10k Trailhead, which prevents access to that parking lot, also to the Ellis Trail, which is the cat track that goes out to the top of the ski area, and then also the top of the crest.

This is not a hill I'm going to die on, but it just seems like it's going to be really, really crowded. To the point, why wouldn't you also split the adult hunts? Maybe you do split the adults hunts, I don't know, but the adults are a lot more capable of utilizing the other access points to the Sandia that are much more hiking-based. Really, the Crest Road is the only thoroughfare that's really friendly to youth hunters because it's got a lot of parking areas and you're hiking 3 miles rather than 15 miles from the Three Guns Trailhead or something like that.

The Albuquerque side, there's a lot of access points, but some of those access points, like at the top of Candelaria, they don't even have a parking structure. It's a neighborhood and they say, no parking everywhere. It's good walking access, but it's not friendly to kids. It's very steep on that west side. The east side's steep too, but the Crest Road helps facilitate access.

During November, I don't know that this will happen, but I think you might even see that arm bar right at the ski area closed, and so that's going to close another three parking lots in the Sandia. I could see the writing on the wall is that you might get a lot of complaints from youth hunter parents during that hunt, so why not split them between Thanksgiving and Christmas rather than all at Thanksgiving? That's my two cents. Thank you.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Kerrie. Brandon Wynn.

Brandon Wynn: Thank you, Chair Stump, Commissioners. On the private land, public land tags. To look at private land to public land ratio as a dividing line or criteria for dividing tags, it ignores the fact that all the wildlife is public. The state doesn't own it. The New Mexico Court of Appeals on June 3rd clarified a little bit. They reaffirm mostly, but that the state doesn't even own the wildlife. It's the trustee for all New Mexicans of the wildlife.

What the various states have done to deal with incentives and private land contributions and problems for private land is, they do more of an incentive than New Mexico. New Mexico privatizes tax at roughly a 10 times rate of any other western state. The reason for that is because the other states recognize the public trusteeship of the wildlife. What I would suggest for New Mexico as a compromise between what we have now, which is a one-sided giveaway to the private landowners of the tags, would be, when you give a landowner tags, say you give a landowner 10 tags, one of those tags should be a public hunter. That's the Utah model.

In Utah, on their premier hunting ranch-- don't worry, [unintelligible 01:04:49], I'm watching that clock. What Utah does, the premier private ranch in Utah, like Utah's Vermejo, is a Deseret Ranch, is 225,000 acre ranch. There's 700 permits assigned to that ranch. That's across elk, deer, moose, and pronghorn. 65% of those permits are public permits. They're on private land. The landowner gets about 35% of the permits. The landowner makes a bunch bucket-load of money selling those permits. They're super high value. It's super high-quality hunting, some of the best hunting in the world for all those species.

The public, Utah resident public gets 65%. If you look at all of our tag privatization rules, we don't have a line in our rules or our statutes that requires any sort of public benefit. We have what I characterize as reverse negative public access. Unit-wide areas, that's great. It's 650,000 acres of public access in return for 9.9 million acres of private access to public land. We have the opposite of what other states do. I just think that you should have requirement in all your rules that if there's a private tag, there's a public tag ratio attached to it. Thank you.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Brandon. Is there anyone online?

Eric Arce: Mr. Chair, there is Travis Edwards, if you'd like to speak.

Chairman Richard Stump: Go ahead, Travis.

Travis Edwards: Hello. Can you hear me?

Chairman Richard Stump: Yes.

Travis Edwards: Oh, thank you. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, Commissioners. Again, my name is Travis Edwards. I'm a lifelong New Mexico resident public land hunter. On the deer overall, I like the proposals department is making. I feel like they really listened on doing some cuts and tags for down the southeast and 2B to make a more better quality hunt, better hunter satisfaction, so I do appreciate that. Also creating some more opportunity with a couple of Coues deer hunts in the Gila. Again, just some opportunity there, and I appreciate it.

Specific on the private land sales, I think there's some positive things there. I like the ranch registration only allowing license to be sold before the hunt begins and the caps in place. I think those are all good steps to over-the-counter private land system. The one negative I would have with the caps is just how they're calculated. It looks like it's purely done on historical license sales. Again, the caps I think are a good step. It seemed like more data or more factors should be brought in to see what should these caps be at?

I don't see anything in biological data. Maybe in a unit, we're only 10% private, and maybe the department thinks that there's only been a certain amount of bucks taken out based on the density of bucks or deer on the private. None of that stuff seems to be in the factor at all. It's just really what is the historical sales. If too many private land tags are being sold, for what the density is, there's really no adjustment there. It's just based off its historical.

I would encourage the commission to maybe have the department provide more data on what they're looking at, or provide other factors what they're looking at on setting these caps just to be more biologically sound. Again, overall, I appreciate the caps being put in there compared to what it is now. That's all I got. Thanks again for the work the department is doing. I really appreciate it.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Travis. Anyone else?

Eric Arce: Yes. Mr. Chair, there's also Cody. Cody, you can speak now.

Chairman Richard Stump: Go ahead, Cody.

Cody Creager: Can you hear me? Can you guys hear me?

Chairman Richard Stump: You're kind of muffled.

Cody Creager: Can you hear me now?

Chairman Richard Stump: Yes.

Cody Creager: All right. Cody Creager here, lifelong New Mexico resident, public land hunter, private land hunter. Anywhere I can get me and my family a tag is my goal. Comments on the deer proposed changes. I'd like to bring up that I think all of the premium statewide tags shouldn't be a hunt code in the draw. I think putting it as an additional raffle-type draw, not exactly a raffle. You can only get one entry during the draw process for anyone, like a non-refundable chance to get that tag. Similar to the way Nevada does the Silver State tag, and Arizona does a Copper State tag to give everybody some more opportunity to get a tag. It also bring a good amount of revenue to the department, I would think, doing a premium statewide tag like that.

On ranch registration, like I said in the last meeting, a ranch registration is a no for me and many other public and private opportunistic hunters out there. A lot of hunting permission that we get when we don't draw a tag is last-minute when we can find somebody. A lot of the time, it's properties that they don't even hunt, so they're not going to be registered. It's going to be a no as far as having a ranch code to buy a tag. I don't think people realize that ranch registration actually will hinder a lot of hunting opportunity, and it'll put it back in the hands of big ranches and outfitters that have it all leased out. I'm just trying to speak on behalf of hunters that can't buy our way to the front, and we're just trying to hunt and take our family hunting. The caps, I think caps should be looked into a little more than just historical license sales. Some herd quality data should be put into that and make some good judgment on the caps as far as harvest sustainability. That's all I got. Thank you, guys.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Cody. Anyone else?

Eric Arce: Mr. Chair, lastly, it's Bernard.

Chairman Richard Stump: Go ahead, Bernard.

Bernard Inez: Good morning, everybody. This is Bernard Inez, Director of Jicarilla Game and Fish Department. Can you hear me?

Chairman Richard Stump: Loud and clear.

Bernard Inez: First of all, I'd like to thank everybody for this meeting and opportunity to speak. I'm in full support of what has been proposed for the reduction of Unit 2B. You guys are all well aware, we've been talking for quite some time right now, as well as I'm speaking on behalf of the Jicarilla Apache Nation's people in support of this reduction. Chief Liley, I appreciate giving that great presentation. I am looking forward to working with you in the very near future on how we can partner up to collect some more data for both sides of the fence. I want to wish everybody an upcoming fourth and be safe, and thanks again.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Bernard. Is that everybody, Eric?

Eric Arce: Mr. Chair, it is.

Chairman Richard Stump: Chief Liley, thank you for that great presentation as always. We anticipate a hearing on this rule at our August meeting. Moving on to Agenda Number 9 is a subsequent discussion of proposed changes to the Elk Rule 19.31.14 NMAC. As with the deer rule, this is a subsequent discussion, so comment and direction are important prior to development of the draft final rule. Whenever you're ready, start.

[pause 01:13:01]

Chief Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair and members of the commission, as like the deer and like you just stated, this is the subsequent discussion. Our plan is to have the hearing in August for this. We'd take any commission direction today if you see something different from the proposals that we're presenting in front of you. Just like I did with deer, I'll go through a little bit of background with elk on some of the biology and management strategies that we have across the state. What you'll see here is what we have is our elk management zones. Those that are colored there are specific herd units, or more or less what we think is a cohesive herd or population.

We probably have a little bit more intel on elk than we do on deer, more distinct in some of their ranges, but we definitely see elk spreading out into different areas. Those colored areas are those, again more distinct herd units. We'll refer to them as a herd unit for example, North-Central herd or the Jemez herd, which might encompass multiple GMUs. The other thing that you see here is our different management zones. We have three different management zones for elk across the state. We have primary management zones. Those are 32 GMUs.

It's a little bit hard to see here, but it's that gray hashed on top of those colored units. That's what we declare as our primary management zone, where we set specific herd objectives and try to manage towards those objectives in those GMUs and those across those herds. We have two different objectives, either optimal opportunity or quality hunt management. We'll get to that in a second on what those look like. We have the majority of the rest of the state where it's secondary management zone. That's where there is no hash marks at all across there.

That's where we're not trying to set a specific herd management goal, a lot of private land. It's maybe areas that are maybe suboptimal for elk or where it's high agriculture, where we have more depredation concerns with elk, where we have either irrigated fields, where we're not trying to manage towards a specific goal, more on a general harvest within those, and maybe in some of those areas actually we are trying to reduce or prevent establishment of elk in there.

Our third very small management zone is our special management zone. That's in the very kind of north-central, a little bit northeast along the eastern edge of the Sangre de Cristo in the north, where it's almost entirely private land. 90+, 95+% private land, but we do have specific management goals for those herds. They overlap with some of our public lands in there, and we're trying to set objectives. We work with those private landowners on a case-by-case basis to set harvest goals and license allocations.

I forgot to mention in the primary, those are set by rule, license allocation to private landowner based upon public-private split within those primary management zones. Secondary management zone is over-the-counter on those private deeded properties only there. Real quick, just looking at the last four years or so, five years of harvest, you'll see a dividing zone in there that's based upon the last rule cycle, the previous one in the last two years. The previous rule cycle and then this current three-year rule cycle.

The one thing that I think I'd point out is fairly consistent cow harvest, maybe a little bit of an increase. That's purposeful. We tried to increase some cow harvest in the South Sacramento herd or the GMU 34. You'll see a decrease in bull harvest. That was intentional as well, mainly trying to decrease bull harvest in the Gila elk herd at the last rule cycle. Reporting harvest has remained fairly consistent through time as well as success rate.

I mentioned a few minutes ago just our two different management strategies that we have within our primary management zones. That's quality hunt management and optimal opportunity. Quality is we're really trying to get less bull mortality and higher or a more distributed age class of bulls, where you have a higher probability of an older age class bull. We're looking for our bull mortality rates and that those GMUs or that herd to be less than 35%.

We also try to design the hunt timing that it's going to be more desirable and that we want to see at least 2/3 of our hunters that report in those units are satisfied with the hunt experience. Whereas the optimal opportunity, we're really trying to get our bull mortality rates at least below 45%, so allow for a higher bull mortality rate, which is going to be a lower bull-to-cow ratio and a more truncated age structure within there. That's not to say that you still couldn't find an older age class male in those optimal opportunity units, but it's going to be less likely than in our quality hunt management.

Those hunts, we want to see at least 1/3 of our hunters satisfied with the hunt experience. Real quick, I just want to go through the public comments before we go through our specific proposed changes. You'll notice here these are our public comments submitted on our individual recommendations. I do want to point out the vast majority of-- This was 175 public comments as of, let's see, Tuesday evening. We've received additional almost 50 comments since then, all pertaining to the proposal to align primary management zone and secondary management zone hunts at the same timeframe.

What happens there is, on our secondary management zone hunts across the state right now, the season is October 1st to December 31st, any legal sporting arm. The original proposal from the department in those 21 units had a hybrid where they had part of the unit was primary management zone and part of the unit was make the secondary management zone hunts aligned with the primary. You'll see the vast majority of those comments on elk are in opposition to that proposal.

As we go through the rest of the presentation today, I think the department will look at guidance from the commission specifically on that because it is one where we received a lot of comments on that proposal in opposition to it and trying to gauge from the commission where they want to go. The rest of those comments, you'll see some of them are divided. Even on GMU 34, where we're proposing some increase in antlerless licenses is not a lot. Both approve and disapprove, so not one really strong way in opposition per se.

Most of the comments that we received on the rest of our proposals were in support. We had a lot of other comments that really dealt with issues that are out of either the commission's authority, such as draw quotas. We had a lot of comments on change the quotas, which is a statutory requirement. It's not a commission-set rule, so a lot of that in our comments as well. In terms of just general proposals in here, like we do before all of our species, adjusting the season dates to account for calendar shift. What we propose to do in our primary management zone, for the most part, is trying to align our hunts to where we have a muzzleloader hunt start first, followed by any legal sporting arms. That created a lot of proposed new muzzleloader hunts across many units in the state. Part of this proposal comes in from discussions around rut timing and harvest susceptibility for bull elk.

What we're seeing, and we've seen through some of our calf mortality research, we're still seeing the peak of calving occur around June 1st in these areas. What you see in elk is you have a strong pulse a lot of times, like the peak will be June 1st, plus or minus five days, is where you have 95% of the calves being born. What's happening most recently with elk is you still have the peak on June 1st for our calving, but it's being extended out a lot longer, so calves are being born further into June, into July, in some instances.

What most likely is happening is cows are not coming into estrus all at the same time in the fall. We're seeing not quite a bimodal rut season, but a prolonged rut, to where when those cows come back into estrus that didn't come in during the peak, they're still being bred. I think what you're seeing is those bulls being more active into the latter part, mid-October/1st of October.

Part of this proposal was to reduce susceptibility to those bulls that are coming on more peak in that "look like rut" when those cows come into that sacred cycle of estrus. We tried to do this so we didn't have to reduce licenses to still meet our hardest objective goal by creating these new muzzleloader hunts and then moving those rifle hunts a little bit later when bulls are less susceptible to harvest.

That proposal number three is again the one that I discussed that had the most comments on it, of aligning those start dates within GMUs that have primary and secondary management zones to make the secondary start the same as the primary. We're probably up to over 100 comments now. I showed you on the last slide that it was about 66. We're a little over 100 comments now in opposition to that.

The next bullet point is, and maybe this is for some clarity, because we saw some comments, is to minimize the overlap of weapon use. What that is, like I discussed in deer, so if we had a rifle deer hunt, we didn't want to have a muzzleloader elk hunt at the same time. The weapon type was the same for multiple species at the same time if we had to have overlapping deer and elk hunts, per se, so we try to minimize that as much as possible.

We'll get through the license adjustments by the herd units as we go along. Just like deer designate that statewide hunt as a quality hunt, and then all of our rules. This will be a point for our November meeting, that when we get done with all the species' proposals and rules, we'll have to change some manner and method items that, because of what we did in individual species rules, **[unintelligible 01:24:10]** require that.

In November, we'll bring to you a manner and method cleanup rule, if you will, of all that to account for what was changed in individual species rules. One of that is the discussion that we've had all along on this, is requiring the license to be purchased a day prior to the start of the hunt, and then, if the hunt's less than six days, you can't buy the license once the hunt starts.

We looked at potential adjustments to our primary management zone boundary or secondary management zone boundaries. After looking at it, we're not proposing any changes to those zone boundaries right now. We think that zone boundaries fit fairly well to meet the management objective goals that we have for both primary and secondary and special. If there's been big land changes in the public-private split in the primary, we'll adjust that because that's how we set licenses based off the public-private split in the primary. There was no changes in the land composition between public and private in the primary, so no changes in those license splits.

Working down the different herd units, the San Juan Herd, so that's GMU 2. Fairly stable population. We are looking at an increase in cow licenses there. We're probably seeing that elk population grow. This is where we just discussed our 2B deer discussion, too. We're seeing more elk in there. We're trying to stabilize that population with an additional cow harvest, maybe even slightly reduce it.

We're proposing an increase of 50 draw tags for antlerless during the draw, and then creating two new youth encouragement hunts of 75 licenses each in unit two. Those would occur around Thanksgiving and then again at Christmas. Mount Taylor Herd, so GMU 9. That's also where the L Bar Wildlife Management, L Bar/Marquez is. We're proposing no changes to that. That herd is maybe starting to stabilize, maybe even increase a little bit. Our calf-to-cow ratios have historically been really low in that area. We're starting to see some improvement in there over the last four years as well.

Lindrieth Herd, that's GMU 5A. We're proposing no changes to overall license numbers in the Lindrieth Herd, but we are proposing moving one of those rifle hunts to a muzzleloader hunt **[unintelligible 01:26:35]** like we discussed in all these primary management zones, having a muzzleloader first, followed by rifles, so that would be a muzzleloader hunt of 10. Again, no overall changes to license numbers. In the Zuni Herd, we feel pretty stable on that population, and no changes recommended there.

Moving to the Northcentral Herd, Northcentral consists of five different GMUs, 4, 5B, 50, 51, 52, the largest probably herd in the state. We do see different herd dynamics. It is a migratory herd in there. What we are proposing, and we'll get more specific in the next slide, is an increase in antlerless licenses in 51. One of the graphics you see there is some of the winter use in that area. 51 probably has the highest concentrations of winter use in there.

We've had, through multiple years since 2014, multiple population management hunts to address depredation concerns of wintering elk in 51. We're looking at increasing some of those licenses to address some of that. The 52 side of that, really those elk move out of their higher elevation and are not in

there in the wintertime. Again, the proposal is a slight increase of cow licenses in 51, moving the public draw by 18 tags, and then increasing the youth encouragement hunt by 20 antlerless licenses. The other thing we are proposing is creating new muzzleloader hunts in 4, 5B, 50, and 51. In 4, it'd be two new muzzleloader hunts of 10 a piece. One of those being on the Sargent Wildlife Management Area, and then one being the Humphries Rio Chama Wildlife Management Area. In 5B, we're proposing a new muzzleloader hunt in there. Overall, it'd be an increase of 19 mature bull licenses in there from current. Again, we took it and looked at the success rates being at muzzleloader lower. We felt like we would maintain the same harvest by having this new muzzleloader hunt in there. We were allowed to increase those hunts by 19. 50 was the same. We think harvest will remain the same, but we'll allow 20 more mature bull licenses in the form of muzzleloader.

The Jemez region, that's 6A through C, and 7. That population's fairly stable, but we've seen pretty low recruitment, mainly that lower recruitment is calf-to-cow ratios. On the Valles Caldera, we're running in the 20s to 30s. It's a little bit variable, you'll see. I think that 2024 result was a spurious result. That was just probably **[unintelligible 01:29:30]** Overall, though you're still in the 25 to 30 calf-to-cow ratio, a little bit higher last year in our calf-to-cow ratio from some previous years, 35 to 100.

The southwest units in the Fence Lake Herd were proposing a new muzzleloader hunt of 35 licenses in that unit. In the Datil Herd, no changes. We've had muzzleloader hunts. That's a muzzleloader unit only. San Mateo Herd, again, muzzleloader unit as well. No changes to that. I think one of our greater changes of overall license numbers that we want to focus in on is in our Southwest and the Gila elk herd.

We undertook a very large study in the Gila elk herd starting about 2017/'18, wrapping up about 2022/'23. You'll see here we're really getting into some reduced recruitment, lower calf-to-cow ratios through time. I think it's some drought impacts. We'll get into more graphics there. That's historically been our quality hunt management area where we've had managing for older age class males, and we're starting to see-- This is where we're looking at.

This graphic is looking at our proportion of observed bulls that are mature. We're classifying a mature bull, roughly about a four-year, five-year-old bull or older. The darker color in those bars is mature bull compared to the overall. You're seeing a little bit of a decline in that mature bull-to-bull, not real significant, but there's probably been some decline in more recent history. We're seeing maybe a turnaround in that a little bit in the last year.

What we did in the last rule cycle was reduce bull licenses by almost 25% in that. We're not looking at changing bull licenses in there. One of the things that we are proposing is making a lot of that first rifle hunt in those units that don't have a rifle a muzzleloader hunt. What this is looking at, so at the last rule cycle, there was a right rule that changed that you can no longer have a scope on a muzzleloader. That was an effort to reduce success rates so we didn't have to reduce licenses. The darker green is showing those hunts when scopes were allowed, versus the lighter green, where scopes are not allowed. You do see a slight reduction in those success rates across all the different hunts.

In terms of an overall harvest number, we could have more licenses to achieve the same harvest. It's anywhere from 5% to 10% difference on some of those hunts on our success rates dropping. Really, where we see the biggest drop is when we get closer to that rut period. The closer we get to October 1st, that muzzleloader success rate has gone from almost 48% down to some of those hunts as low as 35%. I don't have the individual-specific hunts. These are combined hunts for the entire GMUs is why you can't see that individual differences.

The biggest thing in the Gila Herd, and I mentioned the study that we undertook. This was in cooperation with Arizona Game and Fish as well. We radio-collared over 900 adult cow elk in there and over 500 calves across that time period. What we're looking at on this on the top graphic is adult survival and calf survival. Top graph is adult survival. Bottom graph is calf survival. What you see on the top graph is two different bars. That top bar is if we exclude harvest mortality, that's what our survival would be.

Our cow survival is ranging around 90% if we exclude our harvest mortality, but when you include harvest mortality in there, you're down at the 75% to 80%, so unsustainable from a population level. We really need to be in that 85% plus almost to sustain a stable population, so a declining trend in that. The other thing you see there in that bottom graphic is overall calf survival split by season. You'll notice we had fairly high and consistent winter survival of calves. Once they reach six months old, we had fairly high survival

across, but the first 20 days, 30 days, really low survival. You'll see mortality rates that were almost 75% of those calves were dying in the first 20 days or so.

Breaking that out a little bit more on cause of mortality, this is adult female mortality. If you look at that graphic on the left, if you include hunter harvest in there, you'll notice the largest proportion of mortality in our cow/elk herd is hunter mortality. That's that anthropogenics. ANT stands for anthropogenic or human harvest, followed by mountain lion, other predation. Predation unknown is PUP. Unknown is where they maybe didn't get to the carcass in time to be able to tell, and then wolf.

Part of the study was looking at, as the wolf population continued to grow in that region, it wanted to see potential effects of that. If we exclude hunter harvest from that, that's that next graphic to really look at a predation outside of hunter harvest, other predation, or other causes, such as roadkill, was a large one. Mountain lion and wolf were pretty equal across the other predation factors.

Digging a little bit more into predation and calves. You look here at summer survival, as I mentioned, was pretty low for calves. You'll see there that bar on the top graphic is as low as-- or excuse me, this is the percent of mortality per-- If you remember from the previous graph, we had as high as 70% mortality in the summer. This is the cause of that summer mortality. Human mortality is very low, as you would expect. We don't have hunting going on in the summer for calves. That anthropogenic mortality is like road kills, for example. We do still have road strikes on it.

You'll notice most of our predators so it's bear, coyote, feline, bobcat, and mountain lion combined. Other sources, predation unknown cause and wolf. They're fairly consistent across. Those air bars overlap, so there's not one that really stands out. Winter mortality, you'll see, again, really not one big cause over the other. We do have a little bit of hunter harvest on that calves once they reach the fall.

That right graphic, though, splits out where we separated out survival across a gradient of what we considered wolf exposure, or wolf density. We have one where we have no known wolf packs or very low wolf density, and some with moderate or high density. You do see in that moderate to high density on that right, where our wolf predation, the very most wolf bar, shows that wolf predation in the summer does come out as one of the leading causes in there. It's more or less tied with some of our other coyote, bear, and others, but it does show a little bit higher in our higher wolf density, which we would expect of where wolves are, that that would be higher than in our no-to-low wolf density.

With all that said, really given the information we had there, populations are declining in that Gila region, and really it's being driven right now by human harvest on adult survival that we can control, a controllable factor. Calf survival was low, probably driven everything from drought to multiple predators. What we're proposing here is a decrease in about 20% to 30% antlerless harvest across the region, some units as high as 30%, but you'll see the average in there across those four units, 15, 16A, C, D, and E. That decreased to 278 draw licenses.

The other proposal is to eliminate all the youth encouragement hunts in the Gila elk herd. We had those hunts around Thanksgiving. Remember, we'll get into a graphic of that in the second across the state on youth encouragement hunts. The other thing that we're proposing is shifting those cow hunts a little bit earlier in the season. When we have cow hunts that get into mid-November into December, success rates increase, higher susceptibility to harvest on cow/elk then.

You'll see we propose moving some of those hunts into late October, early November. We didn't have to go as high of a decrease in draw hunts, we think, because moving those hunts closer into that time frame, we're going to see decrease in success as well that will relate into an overall decrease rather than keeping the seasons at the same and had to go at a much steeper cut. Again, like our other units that we discussed in the state, creating a muzzleloader hunt first, followed by rifle hunts, that's where we look at a net increase of 125 bulls across all that units. That's because of lower success rates on those bull hunts. The other big thing to note is those units will have rifle bull hunts starting mid-October or later now. Right now, those bull hunts in this last rule cycle came up as early as October 4th, when we had high susceptibility to bulls in that region. We didn't feel like we had to cut bull tags because we're moving those hunts later as well. Once we get past mid-October on rifle bull hunts, for the most part, we see not a real steep decline, but we definitely see 5% to 10% decrease in success rates.

The Lesser Gila Herd, so those periphery units, we really didn't feel like we needed to change much.

There are not a lot of licenses in there, but we're pretty stable in those units for the most part. You'll notice

the asterisk around those ratios. That's just a function of limited survey observations. I wouldn't trust that data too much. There were only 350 animals observed. I think we'll focus a little bit more survey effort in there. The one thing that we are looking at is creating a new muzzleloader hunt in GMU 21.

Moving on to the southeast region, we have two, we call it two herd units. It really functions as one herd unit, the Sacramento Herd and the Ruidoso Herd, but what's in the center of that is Mescalero Apache. Mescalero manages their herd separately from the department. I wouldn't say that we've been working in a lot more cooperation with Mescalero in recent history. We were hoping to deploy 60 GPS collars this winter on Mescalero. We had some issues with collars getting stuck in customs. Also we had issues with, like I mentioned [unintelligible 01:41:10] We're waiting to deploy those next year.

We'll deploy all 60 of those radio collars in cooperation with Mescalero to get a better idea of herd dynamics across both the North and the South. The proposals in there are to increase some antlerless opportunities. In 34, we're proposing a 60 more draw hunts and then an increase of 100 youth encouragement hunts. In the Ruidoso Herd, it's increasing the youth encouragement hunt by 60. Looking at some of the herd units in the Northeast, really not any changes proposed in any of these herds, fairly stable across most of these herds in the Northeast. The one that we are looking at proposing to change is a slight reduction in the Valle Vidal Herd. That's the once-in-a-lifetime herd. Calf to cow ratios are fairly low in that herd. We're looking at a reduction of 15 draw licenses in there.

This is the units that I mentioned early on about, where we have special management zones that surround that. We'll be working with private landowners next year, looking probably reductions in antlerless harvest in there as well to maintain that herd and stabilize it. That's on a ranch-by-ranch basis in those authorizations, but definitely a little bit of a decrease in cow harvest there is what we're trying to achieve.

Those secondary management zone units, so again, secondary management zone, we don't have set harvest management goals. There's also some of these areas where we're either seeing elk coming into new or starting to grow, where we also have public lands in there, where we have some hunt opportunities. In GMU 29 and 30, that herd continues to expand.

Right now, there's two either sex hunts. We're proposing to create a new antlerless hunt of 20 licenses in there.

In GMU 32, that would be just to the east of Mescalero. East of 34, 36, we're also seeing elk start to populate that area on some public land, where we think we have an opportunity for 15 two new rifle hunts in there, 15 licenses a piece. In 38, that would be the Capitans. We're looking at increasing our either sex hunts from 10 to 20 on the public draw side of things. I mentioned some of the youth encouragement hunts where we are looking at creating new hunts or increasing. In GMU 2, it's creating those two new youth encouragement hunts of 75 antlerless, both in the November period and the December period. In 51, we're proposing increasing the November hunt by 10.

In 34, the December one, we're proposing increasing that by 100 licenses. In 36, each one of those two youth encouragement hunts by 110. This is where we have the increase at once. You'll see the overall numbers. I do want to point out this is in the Gila, 15, 16 A through E. That's where we do see that reduction. A fairly large reduction in those hunts, 420 less in the Gila.

That's where a lot of our harvest pressure was coming in on those herds was during those late November, late December cow youth encouragement hunts. We tried to redistribute those to other GMUs, where we felt like the populations could withstand it. Overall, it is a little bit of a net decrease in youth encouragement hunts. It's a function of just that Gila elk herd not being able to withstand that antlerless pressure. With that, I would take any questions.

Chairman Richard Stump: Great presentation, Stewart. Thank you. Commissioners? [silence] I know there was a lot of input. I got over 100 emails on the PMZ/SMZ. Commissioners, do you have any thoughts about that?

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Mr. Chair?

Chairman Richard Stump: Commissioner Lopez.

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: I, too, received a lot of emails. I'll let the public know. I read every single email that came from regarding the special management zone. 110% of the emails I got and read

through, and replied are against the measure. Being that District 3 has a lot of SMZs, in District 3, and in support of small business and hunters, I'm not going to support that change.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Lopez. Commissioner Clemente.

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente Jr.: Thank you, everyone, for sending the emails. As well as Commissioner Lopez, I did receive quite a few emails. I can say that only one email was just to look more into it, but the majority of the emails was against the change.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Clemente. Commissioner Witt, do you have anything to say?

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Yes. I have a couple of questions. I want to start on the very last thing you showed, which was the adjustments of the numbers of tags across a series of units. I wanted to ask about the big increases that stood out there in GMU 34 and 36. I think it was 100 more, was it November rifle or in 34 December rifle, and 34 and then 60 more November, December rifle, and 36? What are those supported by? Is that biological data that's gone into that?

Chief Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Witt, yes. I think what we have, especially in 34, even during this last drought periods, we've seen high calf-to-cow ratios in there. I think we've also seen some expanding populations. I think it's a function of conservative harvest by Mescalero, to be honest. Both 34 and 36 are separated by Mescalero. I think we're reaping the benefits of conservative harvest of Mescalero.

It's a sourcing issue, I think, going on there to where Mescalero becomes the source for that harvest. This has been something we've been looking at for over 20 years, where we've increased licenses significantly in 34 and 36, but we still see maybe expansion of the herds and maybe even some growth. I think what will really help is when we get these radio collars on in this winter is to better understand how big that sourcing dynamic is. Do those animals move on to a refugia during some of this harvest season?

From a standpoint of the population, yes, we believed we could withstand that harvest, that will at least maybe try to stabilize those populations, or maybe slightly reduce it. I think there's been a lot of discussion. If you go all the way back to the comments, this was with a one that had other comments, both support and opposition. It was about even support, even opposition, not one or the other.

I think what we do definitely hear from some private individuals and some grazing permittees is they really would like us to see a reduction in these elk herds overall. Some were opposing factors where they'd like to see us grow. From a perspective of, will it be able to sustain? Yes, I think absolutely, including these other units, where we had some minor increases, or where we created new ones in GMU 2, where we think that growing population in GMU 2 could sustain more elk rifle tags to either stabilize or reduce that growing population there.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Thanks for that answer. Because it is complicated, as you indicated. I'm hearing from you that you're comfortable with the biological justification for the reduction that we're not going to send that GMU 34, 36 herd on a negative trajectory. Is that right?

Chief Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner, it might be on a slight negative trajectory, which I think we would be okay with from the current status of that population. We've been trying to stabilize it for the last 15, 20 years. I don't know. I think this potentially might, but not to the point where we're going to come back and have to cut 50% of licenses or something like that because of that. I think this will be definitely a little bit of decrease, but how big? Not.

The other aspect that I think is important to note in 34, we do have the ability. If we saw that during this rule cycle, like any other unit, if we see something that we're not meeting our management objectives, we could propose to the chair of the commission at the time an adjustment of licenses up or down by 20%. If we think we're at a harvest rate that's unsustainable, we could propose that change for the future year within the mid-rule cycle.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Thank you. Chief Liley, I'd also like to ask you to expound on two of the issues that were really important in a lot of the emails that we received. The first one just has to do with aligning the hunt season start dates in GMUs that contain both primary and secondary management zones. Can you talk a little bit more about the case in favor of doing that, the justification for doing that? Because there certainly was a lot of pushback against it.

Chief Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Witt, this I don't think is a biological issue. As I mentioned at the very forefront of the discussion, when I was showing the lines of primary management zone versus secondary management zone, those primary management zones, we think that's where the herds majority are, and that's where we have our set specific management goals. Outside of that, the way it currently exists is, in secondary management zone, October 1 to December 31st, any legal sporting arm over-the-counter for secondary management zones on their private deeded land.

Some of the discussions we heard in the ensuing four years from some public was that, a fairness issue, if you will, on that those hunters in the secondary private get a hunt prior to the start of the primary management zone. I think one thing to point out, again, we definitely draw out areas to put it in the secondary because we're trying to deal with depredation or something like that. For example, I would point out the Chama River Valley, from around Abiquiú, then in the Rio Grande Valley from Velarde down. Those areas are drawn specifically out of the primary management zone. There's a lot of small acreage, private deeded farm, ag land, hay fields where we get a lot of depredation complaints. When they were in the primary management zone, there were maybe 5 to 10-acre properties. When you're in primary, they're competing against all primary management zone ranches for allocations, and they weren't getting allocations. Harvest wasn't happening on there. We were putting up fences, or we were dealing with depredation issues.

When we moved that to secondary, they were able to harvest those animals on those depredation fields. Our depredation complaints went way down on there. Same thing happens in 13, 17. 13, 17 go all the way up into the Sawtooth, Datil Mountains in 13, but come all the way down to San Acacia on I-25, where you go pure desert, some hay fields, pecan fields, those kind of things. Along there, we have agriculture and depredation. 17 a little bit, and 21B is another prime example where you go from the Black Range down all the way to chili fields in Hatch.

That's why we draw those areas out, let it out of there. The biggest support for what was there was that they start the same time as we hunt up in the mountains. That's really where that proposal came from. I think the opposition on that, for the most part, that we've heard is, there's concerns about those landowners being able to harvest animals when they're present there in those areas where we're not trying to really encourage elk.

I got a lot of those emails as well too, and that was where the opposition came in from, where right now primary/secondary is working from that perspective. I would say that we did not really get any comments on adjusting those management zone boundaries. People are pretty happy with how we have the secondary. Primary is common just on, should we align those hunts or not? It really came about draw hunters hunting the same time as those.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Thanks for that. I have the one more issue that relates to the adjustments with muzzleloader seasons. It seems like in the big picture that the department is expanding muzzleloader opportunities, and of course, the reduction of scope usage. It's a management tool to be able to maintain opportunity while maintaining the herds by reducing hunter success rate. I wanted to ask you to explain whether you're considering the demand for muzzleloader opportunities and the way that hunters feel about increases in muzzleloader opportunities, and the potential effects on hunter satisfaction, and especially in light of the opposition that we've seen in some of the emails.

Chief Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Witt, even all of our muzzleloader hunts across the state, these are specifically for bulls, but even our cow muzzleloader hunts in the state go oversubscribed. There's more demand than there is supply. I don't think you're going to have that issue. We'll still have a lot of demand for those muzzleloader hunts as well, I think, especially given that these are going to be the first gun hunts in these units. I think you're going to see maybe some shift that used to apply for that rifle hunt first. They're going to move to those muzzleloader hunts.

I think there is going to be some people, for sure, that do not hunt with a muzzleloader that just don't have that as many rifle tags in the state. Overall, though, the number of tags that will be able to be drawn are going to increase. In elk, we don't have any undersubscribed hunts. There's the potential that we're going to actually have more opportunities through time. I don't have a concern where we're going to have muzzleloader hunts that go undersubscribed, is where I'd see that.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Is there a consideration? I genuinely don't know, but when you have muzzleloaders, in particular muzzleloaders without scopes, do you get more wounded elk?

Chief Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Witt, we don't have a great, great example. The only thing I would say is when we radio-collared 900 elk in the Gila, we definitely had wounding loss in some of that. We didn't see a wounding loss differential much from muzzleloader hunts to rifle hunts. Now, that was not when scopes were on. I think what we probably saw in this, this is not with empirical data, but this is more of speculation.

When we had the scopes on muzzleloaders, what we were seeing was long-distance, basically muzzleloaders being built. You saw people taking shots at 300, 400 yards. I think what you had at that point is if the animal didn't drop, a lot of wounding loss because they didn't see an animal drop, but maybe absorbed a bullet, a sabot, or something like that, and then died much later.

Without scopes on, I think you're much closer. If you're going to hit that animal, you're going to have a much more known impact at that time. I think you saw potential to where you didn't see a reaction from an animal at a much larger distance with scopes and muzzleloaders on. Wounding loss was probably higher at that perspective than it is right now. All of our licenses, in general, we do factor in wounding loss when we determine licenses. We look at harvest, combined across all weapon types, a roughly 15% wounding loss is what we suspect when we calculate those licenses.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Thank you. No more questions.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Witt. Quite a few of the emails I received are regarding muzzleloaders and older folks that can't see me included, can't see the sights. That was something I would just like to point out. They felt like they were losing opportunity if they were forced to hunt muzzleloader hunts. As far as the SMZ and the PMZ situation, I feel like based on as much pushback as we had, that we should remove that from the proposed changes if other commissioners concur with that.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: I do.

Chairman Richard Stump: Commissioner Witt, do you have anything to say about that?

Commissioner Christopher Witt: I don't know. I can go along with that change.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you. Thank you, Stewart. Do we still have Commissioner Harwood with us?

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: I am here.

Chairman Richard Stump: Do you have any opinion?

Commissioner Kyle Harwood: I concur with your suggestion, Chair. Thank you.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Harwood. It looks like we're taking out the lining of the hunt season start dates and GMUs containing both PMZ and SMZs. Let's move on to some public comment here on this issue. Let's start with Brandon.

Brandon Wynn: Worst first, huh? I was a little confused, Chief Liley. Did I hear you right that you said that overall the youth encouragement went up a little bit just in the one year? Okay, so the overall youth encouragement on your June 23rd online proposal shows a decrease of 420 youth encouragement tags. Is that correct, 21% overall? From 1960 to 1560. You had an increase in the Northeast and the 34, and then you had a bigger decrease in the Gila. You lost 750 Gila youth encouragement tags. There's 10 hunts of 75 each completely gone. What I would suggest that the commission do, the stars are aligned right now to have some sort of at least small reform to privatization of tags in New Mexico.

This is the ninth, four-year rule cycle I've attended, and I think that it's a fair statement that we've never had any notable commission action to reverse any privatization. It's been growth or status quo, and that's been the case this rule cycle. We've just kept things about the same ratio. What I would suggest is the special management zone to wade into this reform gently and do it this rule cycle at least something, because I think it's accurate to say that we haven't done anything. The commission hasn't done anything on privatization tags this entire cycle for all the big game rules. Minor little things, but no real even beyond a rounding number change.

This special management zone, why couldn't you do like what Utah does, and I keep bringing that up for a reason, because it works really well. The hunters are happy with it. The agency's happy with it. The

landowners are happy with it. I've talked to a lot of people in Utah. They really like what they have, where there's a sharing of public and private hunting on private land.

In the special management zone, maybe try to make New Mexico youth whole, because New Mexico youth lost a lot of pronghorn tags, and they're losing a lot of elk tags. In just the special management zone, just have a requirement that pick a number, figure it out with game and fish. 10% of the tags are going to be public tags. You could split it between bull tags and cow tags, or you could make it all cow tags, whatever you could do. What I'm asking you is to make a good faith, listen to the public. I know I say this all the time, but we're not being listened to, and I really think that the time is now to modernize the way we do things and do at least that. A small thing for the public. Thank you.

Chairman Richard Stump: David Heft.

David Heft: Chair, commissioners. Thank you, Chief Liley, for that presentation. Just a couple of comments. Primarily, as a former habitat manager, and I had a little discussion with Chief Liley before the meeting about this, very cautious about trying to maintain, let alone increase, elk herds in the face of the severe drought we have over much of the state right now, especially down south, where Noah also says we're long-term. It's not just a short-term situation.

The other issue is that this is a new one, and Chief Liley was discussing the fact that there's been some extended calving periods. A lot of decades-old research has shown that sometimes that's tied to the age ratios of the bull segment of the herd, where there's not enough mature bulls. It's not simply that the cows themselves are cycling multiple times, just that they're not getting bred during that first cycle. In some cases, that may be something to look at.

Just some quick reference material. I know, especially Commissioner Witt asked some questions about 34 and 36. I've run around in southern Sacramento since the '70s, lived down there in unit 34. I can remember back in the '70s or early '80s when, in a month of October, I could go on the mountain and see less than this many elk. In 2000, when we still had population objectives for elk, the population objective for 34 was 1,000 dead.

Right now, we're taking over 1,700 elk during the fall hunts. I noticed the department's not giving a population estimate anymore on 34. They're still trying to get a handle down there. The population is doing a good job. They're trying to figure out what's going on in there because that herd just doesn't seem to be able to get knocked down. Just some general comments there. Thank you.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, David. Kerrie Romero.

Kerrie Romero: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and commissioner. I had a whole big spiel, but it sounds like you heard our voice on the SMZ/PMZ thing, so I just wanted to say thank you. Add a couple of little data points. Landowners have been able to sell tags in the secondary that began October 1st since October of 2005. This is over 20 years that we've been doing this, which is why I think that you've seen just such a strong response. It's distracting. [laughs] It's okay. Okay. No, I completely lost my train of thought. Oh, to the fairness--

Kirk Kennedy: Sorry.

Kerrie Romero: Terrifying. To the fairness point of it all, I think it's important to recognize that the public draw hunts that are within exclusive secondary units, so not hybrid units, but exclusive secondary, they do start October 1st, and actually on the other side of the aisle. The landowner tags that are selling in primary units, they're losing a rifle hunt like in the Gila, and they're going to have to go to muzzleloader. Nobody's upset about that. They understand the biological reason behind it, and so nobody's upset about it. Really, it was just the hybrid thing that really was, and you heard our voice, so I really, really appreciate it.

Two, the point that was just made about the commission has never really done anything for the public as it relates to the private landside. I just sat through a two-day meeting in Montana with them, trying to understand why landowners don't want to participate in all of their landowner programs. Well, it's because they force public draw hunters on the private land. Landowners do not like that. If you try to foist public draw hunters onto people's private deeded acreage, you will see them pull out of the program so fast. I don't really know that much about Utah, but I can tell you, I just sat through two eight-hour sessions in Montana, where all they talked about is why don't landowners participate in their landowner programs? I think that that's something that we do right here, and we should really be recognized for it. Thank you.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Kerrie. Thomas Austin.

[silence]

Thomas Austin: Commissioners, Chief Liley, I'll be real quick. I came up from Ruidoso. We work quite a bit in GMU 38, and the only thing that we wanted to speak of changes is you are wanting to add 10 tags to each of the rifle hunts to increase opportunity. What we would rather see is 40 new tags and an archery hunt instead of that. I was one of the commenters that wanted the more opportunity into the age. That's all I had. Thank you.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Thomas. Chris G.

Chris Guikema: I'd like to thank you for listening to all the emails that came in on the primary-secondary alignment issue. That was my primary reason of coming here today. I'd like to thank you guys for listening on that. To the survey that we issue, one of the things I'd always wondered, Wisma added it a couple of years ago, where they asked if there was a wounded animal. I know it's probably not stats that you want, but it might be something to consider adding to the statistics to track where we are with wounding outcome [unintelligible 02:08:51] the muzzle over change. Thank you.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Chris. Mason. Can't read the last name.

Mason Grau: Chair, commissioners, thank you for the opportunity to comment today. My name is Mason Grau. I serve as a board member of the New Mexico Cattle Growers Association. First, I just want to recognize the elker, one of New Mexico's greatest wildlife success stories. That success has been built through a partnership among the department, hunters, private landowners, ranching families, and public land permittees. We appreciate the department's efforts to manage healthier elk herds throughout the state. I would like to briefly address two concerns and one recommendation.

First, we are concerned about the proposed changes to elk hunt start dates. Many ranchers schedule gathering, shipping, weaning, pregnancy testing, and other fall cattle work around hunting seasons on their private lands. Historically, many ranchers have preferred that hunts occurred earlier in the fall because it allows hunting activity to conclude sooner and provide greater flexibility to complete livestock work before winter weather arrives.

Excuse me. We ask the commission to carefully consider the impacts these date changes may have on working ranches. Second, we encourage the community or commission to allow rifles during late-season cow hunts in primitive weapons units. These are population management hunts designed to help the department achieve herd objectives while providing meat for New Mexico families. Allowing rifles during these late-season hunts would not affect the primitive weapons experience during regular hunting seasons. It would, however, improve harvest efficiency, increase hunter success, and provide the department with another effective tool for achieving its population management objectives.

Finally, although it is not part of the proposed amendments, we encourage the commission to revisit the proposed statement in the future. Elk management occurs on landscapes managed for multiple uses, including livestock grazing, watershed protection, recreation, forestry, and wildlife conservation. The proposed statement should recognize the role that private landowners, ranchers, and working landscapes play in maintaining habitat, water developments, and open space that support elk populations across New Mexico. Thank you for your time, your service, and your consideration of these comments.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Mason. Eric, anyone online?

Eric Arce: Mr. Chair, we have three people online, starting with Travis Edwards.

Chairman Richard Stump: Go ahead, Travis.

Travis Edwards: Yes, hello again. On the elk, I had a couple of things. I really do appreciate the department's proposal to cut the cow tags in the Gila. However, I don't think that actually goes far enough. I would like to encourage the commission to adopt cutting all cow tags in the Gila for the next four years. That herd is declining. The public sees it. Everybody sees it, and the department sees it as well. In the presentation, you saw that they had that herd as declining.

Chief Liley has said it many times in all kinds of presentations, you don't give female tags to a population that is declining. You give it when you're trying to stabilize it, keep it stable, or decrease the population. You don't give them when that population is declining. I'm not sure why we're still giving some tags, even though we cut quite a few with the youth encouragement and the regular. I don't know why we're giving

any. I trust our biologists. I think they have a lot of good people, but it just seems like we have a history of not cutting tags fast enough on declining populations.

You see that in the history of the Mount Taylor herd, Ibex comes in line, obviously. We just kept giving tags even though the population was going down. Again, I'd urge the commission to have all cow tags to be eliminated in the Gila for public and private for the next four years. Better to be safe than sorry. It's one of the premier elk destinations in the whole world, so if that population just continues to crash, it's not going to be good.

If, after four years, the herd is increasing, we can always bring the cow tags back. I think Chief Liley mentioned that the mid-cycle rule we could even-- if somehow the population starts booming, we could start giving cow tags or even use the depredation list that every hunter when they plug for the draw they put their name on the list to be called if they want to hunt elk, we could utilize that, but I think right now we should just cut all the cow tags in the Gila just to be, again, better to be safe than sorry.

The second thing I wanted to say is a few months ago, I sent emails to everybody on the commission, really regarding the tags being issued via EPLUS versus public draw, and how the EPLUS lands are actually getting more tags per acre than the public draw. That's really due to tags that are being allotted for all private land in the unit. The lands that are not enrolling in the program, those tags are automatically getting rolled over into the EPLUS private land. It's creating an imbalance where EPLUS lands are actually getting more tags than the public draw.

I know you guys are very well aware that the private land system in New Mexico is controversial already. You guys hear it all the time. Really just adjusting the formula to make sure that the EPLUS private lands are getting the same tags per acre as the public would be great for the public and really appreciate it. Thank you for your time and taking my comments.

Chairman Richard Stump: Eric?

Eric Arce: Mr. Chair, next we have Cody.

Chairman Richard Stump: Go ahead, Cody.

Cody Creager: Can you guys hear me?

Chairman Richard Stump: Yes.

Cody Creager: Awesome. Thank you for having me, Cody, again. I didn't see any increases to 38 on the proposals online, but I heard that in this meeting. Is that true? Increases to rifle tags in 38 as a proposal?

Chairman Richard Stump: Yes.

Cody Creager: I would encourage that to be an archery hunt. I spend a lot of time in 38, 34, 36, and I don't think we should increase rifle tags in 38. I think that would be a great archery opportunity, especially with how popular archery is these days. Then those burn scars, those elk just standing there in the open, we'll wipe them out with increased rifle hunts over there. Like we did with Ibex, I'd rather not to the herd in 38. That's a pretty neat little herd over there. That would be my proposal. Just if we're going to add hunts to 38, an archery hunt would be an awesome opportunity.

Then, with 36 and 34, I would encourage no increase to cow hunts. Like I said, spent a lot of time there going on a lot of hunts, people's hunts. Of course, it's hard to draw over there. In the last 10 years, I've seen the quality go down significantly. You used to be able to go in there and know you're going to kill a cow. The last time my fiancé drew a tag there, we did not fill it, and we only seen a few, and that was about a year ago. Definitely put in the work, so it's not like we're just out there road hunting. The bull quality, I've noticed, has gone downhill to the age class. I would encourage no increases there.

Then again, my opinion with the statewide elk draw, not be a hunt code, but be an option to buy in. Every person could buy in one chance and increase department revenue, and an additional opportunity for everybody. Could even call it the turquoise state tag, like how we got the silver state and the copper state tag. As far as the youth encouragement hunts, I think we should look at getting rid of cow hunts or even all hunts in the EPLUS program in the greater Gila region.

Our youth, as we preach recruitment all the time, taking their hunts away doesn't really seem fair when we're trying to recruit our own residents that live here in this state as opposed to these tags being transferable, being able to sell them out of state to rich people all over the place. They're not the ones that are living in these communities. As we know, New Mexico's population is going down, not up, and taking those opportunities away from our youth, I think, is not right, and other ways should be looked at.

We're the ones out there. We're the veterans that live in this state, the law enforcement officers, the nurses, the teachers. We live here, work here, and we're part of the community, and taking tags away from them isn't fair.

Chairman Richard Stump: Cody, your time is out. Thank you.

Eric Arce: Mr. Chair, lastly, we have Lance.

Chairman Richard Stump: Go ahead, Lance.

Lance Bernal: Good morning, commissioners and the public. I'd like to just say that landowners do a great job as helping with the state department manage the elk herds, and we look forward to working with the department to hopefully change the directory or the direction of the Valle Vidal elk herd up here at Vermejo. Secondly, I know there's quite a few landowners who, if they were asked, would probably try and help support youth opportunities. People just need to ask that.

We've always donated an amount of our elk authorizations to youth hunters as well as veterans groups. People just need to ask, and rather us not point the finger so much at each other. That's all I have to say. Thank you.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Lance. Chief Liley, thank you. That was a great presentation, as always. We anticipate hearing on this rule at our August meeting. Let's move on to--Do we need to take a break? Are we all good? Quick break? All right. Let's do 15 minutes. There were some suggestions made, one online, and somebody actually made another suggestion regarding the same thing for Unit 38, and changing that to bow tags. Would you like to address that, Stewart?

Chief Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, members of the commission, regarding elk, absolutely, I think it's just we don't have an archery hunt in that unit. We could definitely do it. I think there's the potential to create more opportunity with archery because there's lower success. I think the proposal from the individuals online and then in the public was to create two different archery hunts of 20 apiece, which would be 40 instead of our 20 rifle tags. Again, that herd is in the secondary management zone, so I don't think there's an issue with that, and easily could create that hunt if that was the desire of the commission to move forward with something like that.

Chairman Richard Stump: I personally don't see anything wrong with that. It actually provides more opportunity because it was going to be 10 tags of rifle.

Chief Stewart Liley: 10 and 10. That's correct.

Chairman Richard Stump: 10 and 10, yes. Commissioners, you have any feelings?

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: I will be all in favor of that.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: My sense is the demand for archery is high, and so I'd be in favor of that as well, following the comments that we heard.

Chairman Richard Stump: Commissioner Lopez, do you have any input? Commissioner Harwood had to leave our meeting, so he has no input either. With that, let's direct you to change that from 20 rifle tags to 40 bow tags in unit 38. Thank you, Chief Liley. Agenda item number 10 is a rule hearing. Barbary sheep, Oryx, and Ibex rule 19.31.12. This hearing will please come to order. My name is Richard Stump, chair of the commission. I will be serving as a hearing officer and be advised by the commission's council. The purpose of this hearing is for the commission to receive public comment on repealing and replacing Barbary sheep, Oryx, and Ibex rule Title 19, Chapter 31, Part 12, New Mexico Administrative Code. This hearing is being conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Game and Fish Act and the State Rules Act. This hearing is being audio-taped and video recorded. Anyone interested in a copy of the audio tape or video recording should contact Darren Vaughan with the Game and Fish Department. Public notice that this hearing was advertised in New Mexico Register, the New Mexico Sunshine Portal, and on the department's website. Copies of the proposed rules have been available on the department's website. Those wishing to comment here today must have registered to submit public comments. The rule hearing will be conducted in the following manner. Staff will present pre-filed exhibits. Exhibits admitted into evidence are available for review by the public on the department's website. After all exhibits are entered, we will proceed to the presentation of the proposed rule. After which, testimony will be taken from the audience. Participants are asked to wait until they are called upon to speak in order to ensure that the hearing is accurately recorded. Only one person at a time shall be allowed to speak.

Any person recognized to speak is asked to identify yourself by name and who you're affiliated with for the record. Each time you are recognized, speak loud and clear to accurately record your comments. After a person has offered comment, they will stand for questions from the hearing officer. The audience may also ask questions of anyone offering comments after being recognized by name.

These hearings are not subject to judicial rules of evidence. However, in the interest of efficiency, I reserve the right to limit any testimony deemed irrelevant, redundant, or unduly repetitious. The Commission may discuss proposed rule after the public comment portion of the hearing. Final Commission action, including adoption of the rule, will occur after the conclusion of the presentation and public comment period of the hearing. In the preliminary matters of hearing, item number 10, Barbary sheep, Oryx, and Ibex rule 19.31.12 NMAC. This hearing is now open. Are there any exhibits for the rule hearing on the Barbary sheep, Oryx, and Ibex rule 19.31.12 NMAC for the record?

Chief Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, I wish to enter six exhibits. Exhibit number 1, the notice of the rulemaking. Exhibit 2, the proposed rule that was posted on the website. Exhibit 3, the presentation I'll be giving today. Exhibit 4, the summary of the proposed changes. Exhibit 5, the technical information we relied upon when drafting the rule, and Exhibit 6, the 85 public comments received during the rulemaking process.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Chief Liley. Six exhibits are admitted into the record. Whenever you're ready, Stewart.

Chief Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, members of the commission, as you say, this is the hearing for our exotics rule. Just going to go split them up species by species. You've heard this multiple times through different aspects of the presentations. Again, on our Ibex is to try to maintain a huntable population on the Florida mountains between about 350 to 700 animals. We're definitely lower than that right now. As you'll recall, coming into this season mid-rule cycle, we went and really capped licenses significantly. Real quick, just looking at last year's harvest data that wasn't finalized last time you saw it. We had a success rate of 15% estimate harvesting 18 males total on the mountain and 5 females, or excuse me, 4 females overall, pretty low satisfaction ratings, and that came into play when we decreased in this mid-rule cycle.

Significant decreases for this current season coming up, moving the archery hunts from 100 a piece to 20 each. The muzzleloader hunt down to zero. The once in a life hunt down to five, and the female immature hunts down to zero, and the youth tag to one to recognize that decrease in that population. As we discussed the last few rounds, we've switched some of our survey methodology and working to use thermal imaging to get at that.

We also just did a survey a couple of weeks ago on June 5th, where we were trying to get at-- this was a helicopter, but specifically looking at if we're having juveniles being born and survived early on, that was one of our concerns. As you remember, discussions early on we were concerned of why the decrease was happening given we were not harvesting females at any rate that would have suggested that.

The concern was, was there just not juveniles being born? Were they not surviving? Again, we discussed the difficulties in putting radio collars on these, given where they live, from a perspective of animal safety and human safety, just almost impossible. We did observe 106 out of the helicopter. As you remember, our helicopter observations typically are lower than the other observations. That's definitely a minimum. We missed some. The encouraging as we observed 40 juveniles in that survey.

Total of 106 that includes males, but a high juvenile ratio. We'll try to replicate that survey again throughout the late summer, early fall to make sure see if we have survival rates either dipping or dropping, and that could be the reasons why we're seeing it. In terms of the proposals for the Ibex for the rule cycle, we're proposing doing Ibex like we do bighorn sheep, to where we do up to numbers and rules. We could issue on an annual basis based off survey information and population data. Now that we're down at a low level, we could issue the number of licenses up to, so basically once in a lifetime we're saying up to 15 archery up to 40 in two different hunt periods. Muzzleloader up to 15, youth only up to 5, and female immature up to 40. Again, that's up to, so some of these hunts may have as few as zero. If the population is still tracking either stable or declining, I would imagine that that up to is going to be much less than what we're proposing, no more female mature hunts. It allows the flexibility if we see some growth and we want to try to stabilize to issue those numbers within the four-year rule cycle. Just like the deer and the rest of the surveys, we did that hunter survey early on.

Most people really is the unique experience for is the primary reason why they put in for Ibex, just the opportunity to hunt them. Dissatisfaction is pretty high right now. I think it's due to the population density is mainly the main thing, and also because the mature billy numbers are low. The main objective of hunters in here was to basically see mature billy presence on the mountain is the main driving factor of why they want to draw that tag.

Moving on to Barbary sheep, our goal is to maintain huntable populations in the Southeast and then minimize expansion of that population outside of the Southeast. That's why we have over-the-counter license sales outside of the Southeast. Real quick, just looking at the 2025 harvest data that wasn't available the last time you saw that, but roughly 3,600 Barbary sheep hunters across the state at 38% success rate, harvesting 652 estimated males and 333 females.

Fairly high satisfaction rating, as you see there at 3.7 overall in the hunts. The proposed recommendations for Barbary sheep is requiring ranch registration for the private land over the counter tags in those GMUs where we have draw tags. We also, as we mentioned previous, is splitting GMUs 29 and 30 out into individual hunts. Currently, it's a combined 29 or 30 draw hunt. No change in license numbers, but just adjusting the licenses based on proportion of where we have animals.

Then the bigger one is with McGregor Range increasing their either sex hunts from 10 to 20, and then increasing the female immature hunts from 130 to 150 spread over a one-month hunt period, right now, it's just a weekend. This would pretend we would have to work with the military on non-mission days, so even though it's a month-long hunt period, it probably is just going to be limited to weekends, but it'd be multiple weekends within a month on non-mission days on McGregor Range.

In terms of the hunter surveys on Barbary sheep, just the experience to draw on the unique opportunity again is the main driving factor there. Most of it was highly satisfied with it, but the ones that did discuss dissatisfaction was more on low density and low mature rams, and there was no real clear public consensus over the counter versus draw structure. We were trying to get out, do people prefer just more of an over-the-counter experience versus draw to kind of get at that? Again, it was more neutrality in that, both sides divided on that.

Then oryx, our management direction is maintain a huntable populations in GMU 19, that's really White Sands Missile Range is vast majority of GMU 19, and then continue to have over-the-counter, or off-range, month-long hunts, to limit expansion of oryx herds out there. Again, 2025 harvest and license data is there. High success rates still on White Sands Missile Range, about 80%. Success rates off range are still very high at 58%, and you'll see harvest there almost a little closer to parity between males and females on that, with a high satisfaction rating of 4.2.

Population status we think range wide across White Sands Missile Range about 3,000 to 3,500, with the vast majority of those being on Stallion and Rhodes Canyon range is the majority of those animals, and then animals off the range make up the rest, including Fort Bliss. Our recommendations on oryx is like the other species, have a ranch registration for the private land over the counter, maintain our license numbers, really virtually no changes in license numbers on White Sands and Fort Bliss, and increase our off-range licenses by 5%.

We originally came back with a higher proposal, and then we reduced that at the second subsequent based off public comments, so you'll see that in a second in the public comments when we came back, but it's an overall 5% increase in the off-range hunts, and then just adjusting dates to deal with military missions. Then the other big one we heard was shifting that 70-plus limited-only hunt to oryx to make it more of a draw for anybody, and we did that in the proposed changes, and just a definition clarification on what a broken horn oryx is.

It doesn't change what we feel like can be hunted on a broken horn, it's just a clarification on that definition. In terms of the surveys, meat is the number one driving factor for oryx hunters, and less concerned about horn size, with a strong satisfaction for oryx hunting, showing over 66% of the hunters that draw license. This is both on range and off range, are highly satisfied with their hunts, and the dissatisfaction is more on the lower extensity against not as much.

We did hold two public virtual in-person meetings in Albuquerque and Las Cruces with 40 people in attendance, and as I mentioned at the start of the rule hearing, we had 85 comments submitted to the official record on this rural development. In terms of the comments, we had more support than opposition

on the ranch registration in oryx. We had a lot of opposition early on to the increase, again, that was where we moved that to 5%, and we started having more support.

When we first came out, we didn't have the percent increase on our summary proposed changes, and we just had general opposition to it since we came out with the 5% we haven't had that opposition is not driven as much. Then on Barbary Sheep, we had support on splitting GMUs 29 and 30, and Ibex was our most comments with pretty broad support in how we did our license reductions, and also in support of how we're structuring it, similar to the big horn sheep.

We did receive some opposition to license reductions in some comments that suggested that we eliminate the herd as well too, so a little bit of varying comments, and then just in general 16 other comments that really did not pertain to the management, or were other things that talked about predator control, et cetera, that were outside the scope of this rule made, and with that I'll take questions.

Chairman Richard Stump: Commissioners.

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: I don't have questions, but I have a comment. Thank you. Well, more of a thank you comment is, thank you for listening to the public. I really appreciate it. Just [unintelligible 02:35:34] has been taken into consideration all the comments, and adjusting accordingly to the public's comment. Thank you.

Chairman Richard Stump: Commissioner Witt?

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Yes, Chief Liley. Great presentation again, and that was mostly review for us, but I like that new data from June 5th that you shared from the helicopter survey, but I wanted to clarify, the 106 individuals, did that include the 40 juveniles, or was that in addition?

Chief Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair and Commissioner, it included the 40 juveniles.

Chairman Richard Stump: Okay, it looks like we have a couple from the audience. Brandon. You pass. David Heft?

David Heft: Chair, Commissioners, it's David Heft from Mayhill. I'll be brief, since you pretty much know my opinion about the exotics. I love hunting them, just like everybody else, but as a ball, just I can't support them on the landscape. Right now, or whatever the reasons for it, whatever you believe, we're in long-term climate change. Southern half the state, where all these exotics are found, we're in long-term drought.

Our native wildlife is under tremendous stress in the habitats that they depend on, and these exotic species here that we have out there, simply to run a Texas-style game ranch operation are another stressor on the landscape, and something that we've created, and quite frankly, the current research and scientific research does not support having these out there, just the opposite. Thank you.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, David. Is there anybody online?

Eric Arce: Mr. Chair, there is one, Cody.

Chairman Richard Stump: Go ahead, Cody.

Cody Creager: Can you hear me?

Chairman Richard Stump: Yes.

Cody Creager: Awesome, Cody again, thanks for having me. As far as the 29, 30 split on Barbary, I think that's good. I think that'll help some people draw the hunts they actually want, instead of lumping those two together, of course. Again, I'll speak on ranch registration, that's going to put people getting permission last minute in a bind, as far as the ranch not being registered or hunted or anything like that, and then, as far as getting rid of the 70 plus year old hunt for oryx, I think that's a good move, and then again with the Ibex, I know it's a controversial topic.

I'm actually from Deming, born and raised, and I've been watching them over the years, it's quite the sight to see when they're doing well. If you guys could just do everything you possibly can to keep that hunting opportunity there, the vast majority of people like that opportunity, it's unique, and we don't want to see that go anywhere, of course, and predator control, I think, would be a good idea over there. I can't go on a hike up there without finding a lion kill, so that might be something to look into up there, and that's all I got. Thank you, guys.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Cody. Anybody else, Eric?

Eric Arce: Mr. Chair, that is everyone.

Chairman Richard Stump: Okay.

Chief Stewart Liley: I didn't follow it during the break.

Chairman Richard Stump: Okay, I don't have any cards, just give me a sec.

[pause 02:39:04]

Chairman Richard Stump: Jonathan Schmitt.

Jonathan Schmitt: Thank you, Mr. Chair and commissioners. I'm Jonathan Schmitt from Kirtland, New Mexico. I'm a faculty here at ENMU, and so I just want to clarify that this is my personal opinion, and I'm not representing ENMU or the state of New Mexico or whatever, but I just want to echo, and I'll keep it brief, the comments that were previously made regarding these exotic species. I vehemently disagree with the department managing exotic species, and I think the department should be taking the opposite approach, and for the benefit of the native wildlife of the state, ridding these exotic species from our state, and you could add to this Eurasian collared dove as well. Anyway, I'll leave it at that.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Jonathan. Chris.

Chris Guikema: Thank you, guys. My comment on this is I am in favor of all these registrations for the various hunting ranches, elk, deer, oryx, Ibex, everything. I think one of the things that should be considered by the department is having the ability to register a ranch with the department so that EPLUS and the mule deer and the oryx and the Barbary sheep all can communicate in one deal, because like right now, I'm trying to deal with getting mule deer ranches registered for special projects that are registered with the EPLUS, but they can't get the information from the EPLUS because they're too busy. I'm trying to get in some of these cases, 80-year-old ranchers running down there with old blueprints of their properties or hand-drawn maps, whatever they come up with. If we could get a deal where we could get these people to be, or myself included as a landowner, to register my ranch a single time, that the entire department had access to it. That way, if I'm registered for elk, I can have Barbary, oryx, because some of our properties have all of them. I have to deal with this with four different deals. That's my comment. Thank you.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Chris. Is that a manner and method thing?

Chief Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, it's an internal IT thing, and we're actually working on that process right now. We met with our field operations, and our wildlife management division met with our information division a couple weeks ago to discuss the process for the registration, because they're going to have to create that in the system, and that was the exact thing that we're trying to do, is make it so they speak across. When one person comes in to register, they could register for pronghorn, elk, deer, any species that they might have at that same time.

They'll probably receive different authorization. They'll receive different ranch codes for each one of those when they draw, but it will be a one shop is what we're trying to deal with on a registration process.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Chief Liley. Those that registered and participated in the hearing will be included on the attendance sheet. At this time, the attendance sheet shall be marked and admitted as Exhibit number-

Director Michael Sloane: 7.

Chairman Richard Stump: -7. The comments submitted and testimony heard during this rule hearing will be reviewed by the Commission and discussed during the open session of today's meeting. The Commission will vote on the proposed rule at that time. I'd like to thank everyone present for their participation today. Let the record show that this rulemaking hearing was adjourned at 11:59 AM. Commissioners, any more discussion? Is there a motion?

Commissioner Fernando Clemente Jr.: I so move.

Chairman Richard Stump: Can we just move it like that, or do we have to--

Commissioner Fernando Clemente Jr.: Do we need the description? [crosstalk] You are going to replace 19.31.12 NMAC as presented by the Department and allow the Department to make minor corrections to comply with filing this rule with the State Record and Archives.

Chairman Richard Stump: Is there a second?

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Second.

Chairman Richard Stump: Discussion on the motion? All in favor?

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Aye.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Aye.

Commissioner Fernando Clemente Jr.: Aye.

Chairman Richard Stump: Any opposed? Motion passes. Agenda item number 11 is another rule hearing, Regulatory Bird Rule 19.31.6 NMAC. Give me one second here, let me catch up. Do you want a break for lunch? He doesn't? Yes, he's sitting in the seat. Let's just go. This hearing will please come to order. My name is Richard Stump, Chair of the Commission. I will be serving as a hearing officer and be advised by the Commission's Council. Purpose of this hearing is for the Commission to receive public comment on repealing and replacing the Migratory Bird Rule, Title 19 Chapter 31 Part 6, New Mexico Administrative Code.

This hearing is being conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Game and Fish Act and the State Rules Act. This hearing is being audio-taped and video-recorded. Anyone interested in a copy of the audio tape or video recording should contact Darren Vaughan with the Game and Fish Department. Public notice of this hearing is advertised in New Mexico Register and New Mexico's Sunshine Portal and on the Department's website. Copies of the proposed rules have been available on the Department's website.

Those wishing to comment here today must have registered to submit public comments. The rule hearing will be conducted in the following manner. Staff will present pre-filed exhibits. Exhibits admitted into evidence are available for review by the public on the Department's website. After all exhibits are entered, we will proceed to the presentation of the proposed rule, after which testimony will be taken from the audience. Participants are asked to wait until they are called upon to speak in order to ensure that the hearing is accurately recorded, and only one person at a time shall be allowed to speak.

Any person recognized to speak is asked to identify yourself by name and who you're affiliated with for the record each time you're recognized. Speak loud and clear to accurately record your comments. After a person has offered comment, they will stand for questions from the hearing officer. The audience may also ask questions of anyone offering comments after being recognized by name. These hearings are not subject to judicial rules of evidence, however, in the interest of efficiency, I reserve the right to limit any testimony deemed irrelevant, redundant, or unduly repetitious.

Commission may discuss the proposed new rule after the public comment portion of the hearing. Final Commission action, including adoption of the rule, will occur after the conclusion of the presentation in the public comment period of the hearing. In the preliminary matters of hearing item number 11, Migratory Bird Rule 19.31.6 NMAC, this hearing is now open. Are there any exhibits for the rule hearing on the Migratory Bird Rule 19.31.6 NMAC for the record?

Chief Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, I wish to enter six exhibits. Exhibit 1, the notice of the rulemaking. Exhibit 2, the proposed rule that was posted on our website. Exhibit 3, the presentation I'll be giving today. Exhibit 4, the summary of the proposed changes. Exhibit 5, the technical information we relied upon when drafting the rule, and Exhibit 6, the seven public comments we received during the rulemaking process.

Chairman Richard Stump: Six exhibits are admitted into the record. Sir, please introduce the proposed Migratory Bird Rule.

Chief Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, members of the Commission, as you know, this is an annual rule working in cooperation with the federal government and Fish and Wildlife Service. I would like to note that this year with the federal government, it's a little bit different. They did not do a proposed rule. They went and proposed a final, first time they've done that ever. It was just released, I think, from OMB today. Basically, the rule, what will happen is it's going to go for a 60-day public comment with a final at the end of the 60 days.

Normally, they would do a proposed rule in January, February, take comments, do a final rule about now, and then close it in there, but they're doing a proposed-to-final because they didn't do a proposed rule before. Luckily, they got the proposed to final issued this week, or else we potentially would have had to roll back to the previous year's regulations is what we were looking like, and we wouldn't have been able to do any adjustments, but the proposed to final did go out recently. With that, we are just looking at some adjustments to bag and possession limits if they concur with the frameworks.

We looked at the frameworks, and nothing will change in terms of our general harvest structure and seasons for our migratory birds. The one thing that we do have some control over is our Rocky Mountain population of Sandhill Cranes. We get an allocation every year. Our allocation has increased again. We

are proposing creating 18 new draw hunts for our southwest dry areas, so that's that Las Cruces down in the Bootheel dry area for RMPs. We didn't increase the ones along the middle Rio Grande partly because of just a hunter density issue that we were concerned about that we're going to get at a place. We're already hearing from some of the hunters that there is a little bit of concern that we have too many hunters out one period of time. I think we did see some potential growth along the southwest. The other thing that we proposed changing was moving the Estancia Valley hunt later in the season when we get more cranes. It used to be earlier because the concern was that the harvest would be more on RMP cranes and not mid-continent cranes.

Given that we have a larger allocation on Rocky Mountain Population cranes and that we are not seeing many RMPs even later, we feel comfortable with shifting that hunt to the later period in the Estancia Valley. We had seven public comments, as I mentioned, received to the rule. Held 2 public meetings, hybrid, 11 people online, 9 in person. Some of these comments were outside the allowances in the federal frameworks, like hunting after January 31st or more exposure days than were allowed. That additional hunting request was just that we just don't have the capabilities to hunt above what is allowed by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and what Congress sets for exposure dates. Some people are asking for a reduction in season length. I think part of that was this last year we were warm across the whole Central Flyway, and birds just didn't come as far south as they historically have, so there's concern about just not as many birds. We'll see if this trend continues, but I think that was a function of weather more than anything on the migrating patterns.

Again, the Estancia Valley hunt I just mentioned. One comment that came in frequently, and we'll work with the Fish and Wildlife Service over the next year, we have a special Middle Rio Grande dark goose season for Canada geese that's limiting in there. Dark geese, Canada geese, are doing well across the whole continent. I don't think we need to have a limited hunt in there. I think it could follow the normal seasons. It's a set-aside that we do ourselves, so we're proposing eliminating that dark goose season in there.

Then some of the comments on duck hunt changes on youth applications. They're requesting more of an application process for trying to get blinds on some of our WMAs. I think that's something we could do outside the rule and look at maybe a registration for, especially the quagmire. It really is dependent on water and the amount of water that we get. This year, unless we get a really great monsoon season, I don't know how much water we're going to get on some of those pondings in the Bernardo area, including filling up the quagmire, which takes a lot of water in the last to fill.

Then one last comment on elimination of the band-tailed pigeon season. Some concerns, definitely population has decreased. Our band-tailed population harvest is very low in the state. We're tracking it. We've actually reduced season lengths and dates through time, including at the federal level, and we are tracking that. One of the things that we do do and we put in place about eight years ago was in order to hunt band-tailed pigeons in the state, you have to pre-register with us prior to so we could actually go out to those hunters and survey directly to figure out what harvest was.

In terms of a concern on eliminating, we really don't feel like that's necessary at this point, but we are tracking harvest on band-tails as well. Just real briefly, those are the snapshots of the Central Flyway proposed season dates that aligns with the federal framework that's going to propose the final right now, and then on our Pacific Flyway as well. With that, I'll take any questions.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Chief Liley. We don't seem to have any public comment. Is there anyone online? No. Okay, thank you. Commissioners, do you have anything to say? No.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Yes. I want to get some clarifications on this. Are we going to eliminate the MRGV special dark goose limit? I don't assume we're looking into it.

Chief Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Witt, it's really a short season. The bag limit will go back to what's allowable across the whole Central Flyway in our tier zone. Right now, the limit and the time frame is smaller, so we're proposing just eliminating that carve-out for MRGCD for dark geese. That's a self-imposed. It's not a federal imposed. It was a self-imposed to shorten season and bag limit on MRGCD dark geese.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: The change is going to go back to the whole season starting mid-October, and this [crosstalk] go up to five?

Chief Stewart Liley: Yes. Mr. Chair, Commissioner Witt, it would follow the rest of the flyway.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Okay, good. That's not reflected in the current-- the commission book that we got highlights the changes that are proposed, but it doesn't include that change.

Chief Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Witt, what we would have to do because we didn't get that comment in and analyze in time to get it through the federal frameworks at this year's Central Flyway meetings, we were going to propose that to the federal government to remove that restriction in the federal frameworks as well. We'll work with the federal government for the 2027 season to remove that restriction within. We took that comment. Again, we couldn't do it for this season. Federal frameworks were already being developed, and we'll set it at the Central Flyway meeting. We'll propose that Central Flyway. We'll take that to service regulation committee meeting in October-ish, and I don't think the service will have any concerns about us removing that restriction because it's self-imposed restriction.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Okay, good. Now, can you help me clarify another aspect of these proposed changes that was provided in the commission book for dark geese, also for the Central Flyway? It says dark goose: regular season closed in Sierra, Socorro, and Valencia counties. Can you explain that?

Chief Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, that's the MRGCD. That's our Middle Rio Grande population. We refer to it here Middle Rio Grande population, but the counties is how the federal government refers to it.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: I see. Okay. Maybe you could use some more punctuation in there to understand that that's a carve-out. Also, does that now include Bernalillo County?

Chief Stewart Liley: It is, I believe, portions of Bernalillo as well.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Okay, that should be added then too, so we could be a little more clear on that. One other question. On the Pacific Flyway, under geese, we have a limit of 10 white-fronted geese. Does anyone ever get white-fronted geese in the Pacific Flyway into Mexico?

Chief Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Witt, no. From our wing survey data, we haven't seen that. I don't think we get many white fronts coming through into Mexico in general. We just follow the rest of the frameworks for the Pacific Flyway.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: The rarer geese in the Central Flyway, like white-fronted and brant, which do occur, they would be included under dark geese, and they would be huntable, right, in the Central Flyway?

Chief Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, that's correct. They are considered a dark geese.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Okay. I don't have any more questions. Thank you, Chief Liley.

Chairman Richard Stump: Commissioner Witt, thank you. I guess there's no more discussion with the commission. Those registered and participating in the hearing will be included on the attendance sheet. At this time, the attendance sheet shall be marked and admitted as Exhibit Number--

Director Michael Sloane: 7.

Chairman Richard Stump: Last one was 7. Both 7? Comments submitted and testimony heard during this rule hearing will be reviewed by the commission and discussed during the open session of today's meeting. The commission will vote on the proposed rule at that time. I would like to thank everyone present for their participation today. Let the record show that this rulemaking hearing was adjourned at 12:12 PM. Commissioners, is there a motion?

[silence]

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Sure. I'd like to make a motion. I move to repeal and replace 19.31.6 NMAC as presented by the Department and allow the Department to make minor corrections to comply with filing this rule with state records and archives.

Chairman Richard Stump: Is there a second?

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente Jr.: I second the motion.

Chairman Richard Stump: Discussion on the motion? All in favor?

Commissioners: Aye.

Chairman Richard Stump: Any opposed? Motion passes. Thank you, Chief Liley. Great presentation as usual. Do we want a break for lunch? Yes?

Commissioner Christopher Witt: A working lunch.

Chairman Richard Stump: 10 minutes? Let's go. Okay. Let's hold on for lunch. Agenda item number 12 is approval of the infrastructure capital improvement plan presented by Chief Varela.

[pause 02:59:40]

Chief Paul Varela: Agenda item number 12, the Department is seeking approval of the 2028 to 2032 capital improvement plan. The infrastructure and capital improvement plan must be submitted to the Capital Outlay Bureau by July 1st, 2026. That's a statutory requirement. Please keep in mind that it is separate from our operating budget request, which will be presented in August. Once it's submitted in July, it is to be heard in front of a Capital Outlay Committee in October, which is comprised of members from the executive branch and from the legislative branch.

They then make recommendations to the legislature, which ultimately makes the final decision on capital outlay plans for each agency. It's important to focus on fiscal year '28, which is the next current year which we'll be presenting for capital improvement, because the legislature only approves it one year at a time. The subsequent four years after that can change, and they are just anticipated projects which are dependent on available funding at the time. If capital plans are approved, they are good for four years. In fiscal year 2028, there's four projects in this presentation, but we would like to request three. The first project is our wildlife habitat restoration and management projects. These are mostly to prevent catastrophic wildfires, improve watershed health, and the operation of state-commission-owned game properties. The first project has 2.5 million, which is used from the Sikes Act fund, but the Department would like to combine projects number one and projects number three. For this presentation, we broke it out into two different projects.

Project number three is for dam improvements to Bear Canyon Dam and to Eagle Nest Dam. The Department will be requesting 25 million from the General Fund to support these projects, and it's to comply with regulatory requirements from the Office of the State Engineer. Then the second project is for \$10 million to improve the Santa Fe Building headquarters. This would be to add additional square footage for staff and to also add a commission meeting room.

Then the third project, once we combine projects 1 and 3, is for 2.5 million for hatchery improvements, which includes Bond Interest and Retirement Fund money, and Game Protection Fund money. For fiscal year 2028, the total amount requested is 40 million, and 25 million of that is for State General Fund, which is the most important, which is the largest request. For fiscal year 2029, the Department has three project requests. The first is, again, wildlife habitat restoration and improvement management projects.

Which is also to prevent catastrophic wildfires, improve watershed health, and for the operation of State Game Commission-owned properties. The second project we would like to request is \$2 million from the Game Protection Fund for hatchery improvements. These would be utilized on all hatcheries wherever necessary. Project number three is 500,000 from the OHV fund for Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Development and Improvement projects, for a total of \$9 million.

In fiscal year '30, the Department, again, the priority number one is wildlife habitat and restoration management projects, which is another \$2 million from the Sikes Act Fund. Priority number two is hatchery improvements. In fiscal year '30, we will be requesting \$10 million from the Game Protection Fund. This is specifically for renovations at Los Ojos Hatchery and Lisboa Springs Hatchery, and another \$500 from the Bond Interest and Retirement Fund. The total request in fiscal year '30 is 12.5 million.

In fiscal year '31, the Department again will be requesting 4.5 million. 2.5 million from the Big Game Enhancement Fund and 2 million from the Sikes Act Fund for wildlife habitat restoration and management projects, again, for catastrophic wildfires and watershed improvement health. In fiscal year '32, the Department will also be requesting 2 million for wildlife habitat and restoration management projects from the Sikes Act Fund. It's basically the same as before. Then the second priority would be 500,000 from the Bond Interest and Retirement Fund. With that, I stand for any questions.

Chairman Richard Stump: Commissioners? Commissioner Lopez?

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Chief Varela, thank you for the presentation. I have a question. Maybe Kirk can come up as well. Has the Department looked at fixing the dams, I believe we own them, in the Carson National Forest for a couple of the recreation areas, the Nutrias Lakes and the Canjilon Lakes?

Chief Paul Varela: Chairman Stump, Commissioner, we have not specifically had any plans to restore any of those dams, but a lot of our dams are high-hazard dams according to the Office of the State Engineer. Perhaps Kirk could provide more detail.

Chief Kirk Patten: Yes, Mr. Chair and Commissioner Lopez. We've had early conversations with Carson National Forest about two dams in particular, the Trout Lakes Nutrias Lakes Dam, as well as Canjilon Lakes. Originally, we had devised a couple small fixes for Canjilon Lakes, got into some of the compliance conversations and engineering requirements, and that stalled. The Trout Lakes fix is a much longer consideration that we're in discussions with them on.

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Is it still possible to maybe allocate some capital outlay funding in this process? I know it's at the 11th hour, but at least add it into one of these plans somewhere?

Director Michael Sloane: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner Lopez, I think they could potentially receive some of the Sikes Act money if a project was submitted, but I don't think we're far enough along in the engineering design compliance conversation with the Forest Service for that to happen. Certainly, when it does, they would be eligible for that kind of funding if the Citizen Advisory Committee chose to go that route.

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Thank you, Director. I would urge the Department and staff, if they could expedite some of these conversations. I do know that the wheels of government do turn slow and we have a lot of projects going around statewide, a lot of great projects by the way, but this is a high recreation area for Northern New Mexico. Of course, if we can do work with the Forest Service to have these conversations, possibly get them going in the next year or so, it would be great. That's all I have, Mr. Chair.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Lopez. Commissioner Witt, yes, please.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: First of all, I'm really happy to see the money for wildlife habitat restoration and management projects in here. Although I notice it's a little uneven among years and the funding for hatchery improvements is really badly needed, and those upgrades will be really important for the Department for Fisheries, obviously, but also for the public image of the Department since those are really frequently visited and great facilities for school groups and things like that.

I wanted to ask specifically about the headquarters expansion. We're proposing this meeting room for public meetings. It'll be up to 250 people in capacity, which would be great for the commission meetings, I guess, but will that just sit unused between meetings, or what's the thinking there?

Chief Paul Varela: Chairman Stump, Commissioner Witt, I think it may have various use purposes. We could use it for commission meetings, as well as other regional meetings for our other divisions. Sometimes we have regional meetings for law enforcement, also for fisheries, so we could potentially use that for that, as well as any other meetings that the director might approve.

Director Michael Sloane: Mr. Chair, Commissioner, yes, that's correct. It's designed to be a multi-use room. It's not theater-style or anything, so I'm sure it'll get a great deal of use both from our agency and potentially from some others.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: If there's demand for that, I understand the need for it, but the appearance of having \$10 million for the headquarters improvements, but only 2.5 million for wildlife habitat restoration and management throughout the state, it feels a little out of balance. I noticed that in fiscal year '25, we have 6.5 million targeted for wildlife habitat and restoration, so clearly, we can spend a lot more on that. It's just a little bit regrettable that we're spending four times more on our headquarters than we are on wildlife management throughout the state.

Director Michael Sloane: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner Witt, I think there are a couple of reasons for that. One is we are stacking people on top of each other at the moment in our current building. Thankfully, because we got GROW Money and Land of Enchantment funding, so we do need the space. The second piece of that is the funds that are drawing the 6.5 number you mentioned are dedicated funds for specific purposes. We need to allow those balances to grow to be able to take the bigger chunks out.

Our strategy has been along the way to take, as you can see, every other year from Sikes Act, for example. That chunk aligned with multiple Big Game Enhancement, Sikes Act, and something else, so that it was a larger number. Part of the reason we've had to spread these costs out is because we just got the fee increase. The game protection fund is hopefully going to rise, and we'll be able to take bigger

chunks as time permits. We felt like the priority at the moment was getting some space at the office, both for the commission and for our employees to have a decent workspace to go do the great work that they do do.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Thanks for the answer, Director Sloane. Much appreciated.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Witt. Where did Commissioner Clemente go to? We might have to pause.

Director Michael Sloane: Mr. Chairman, because it's not a rulemaking, if you're ready to vote, you could vote as long as you get three affirmative votes.

Chairman Richard Stump: Okay. Thank you, Director Sloane. Is there a motion?

Commissioner Christopher Witt: Yes. I move to approve the FY28 to FY32 capital plan as presented by the Department.

Chairman Richard Stump: Is there a second?

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Second.

Chairman Richard Stump: All in favor?

Commissioners: Aye.

Chairman Richard Stump: No opposed. The motion passes. Thank you, Paul. Tend to item number 13 is our second general public comment period. Let's start with Brandon.

[pause 03:12:23]

Brandon Wynn: Thank you, Chair, Commissioners. I just want to make an observation of how things went down today. The public has been coming to the commission for decades, basically, saying, "Please reform private tags." The commission keeps its heels dug in and just won't do it, and won't listen to the public. Private tags are an enormous special privilege for wealthy hunters and wealthy landowners in New Mexico that it doesn't exist in any Western state at scale or method and means. It just doesn't. That's just a fact.

I've stood up here and complained about it a thousand times, maybe, I don't know. You see, as time goes by, there's more and more people. People who are offline or online, complaining and just saying things, and we don't get a response from the commission as far as any action. I can't remember a commissioner defending it. Saying, "Yes. The reason we're not listening to you is this is why we think we have good policy and that it's fair and that we're being good public trustees in doing this." The special management zone for elk is a super special privilege.

It's unlimited, landowners can do it, and they have months of season. The private hunting industry rallies a bunch of comments, and the commission, unanimously, I believe today, is just like, "Okay. Yes. This is what the private side of the equation wants. We will listen to this." You made one or two tinkers on the entire proposal for the elk all the way through the process, and it was to make that privilege extra special. It is extra special. What it does is you're saying that if you're a public hunter, if you're a New Mexican, if you're 99% of New Mexicans, you draw or you starve.

You better know where you want to hunt in March when you apply. By April, when the results come out, that's the end of the line for you. Your hunting season, your year for your family is set in April, and it's cast in stone. There's not much way around it, because we can't afford these private tags. If I'm a wealthy guy and I live in, I don't know, Columbus, Ohio, and I'm sitting around in November. I say, "Man, I sure would like to go kill a big elk." The secondary management zone has become this low-key, the ultimate giant bull hunt.

You just let them sign up in November. "I want to go hunting next week," and here they come. It's unfair.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Brandon. Jonathan Schmitt.

Jonathan Schmitt: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairperson and Commissioners. I'm Jonathan Schmitt from Kirtland, New Mexico. I'll just, for the record, clarify again that I'm not here in my capacity as a faculty member here at ENMU. I'm just a citizen of the state and born and raised New Mexican. I wanted to add to what I said earlier and say that I also have a tremendous respect for the Department. My father worked his whole entire career for the Department. I do appreciate what you guys do, but I have a couple of, I guess, more questions.

I wanted to start off commending the Department for the name change. Although I guess it would be nice if it were reflected on some of the branding. In light of this change, one of my comments or questions is

regarding, I guess this is the more general question, but what the Department's plan or vision is for using funds to help the conservation of non-game wildlife in this state. I think that's something that I think the rest of the public would also be interested in knowing, or having a better idea of what the vision is for those funds.

My second question is more specific and related to our setting here in Roosevelt County regarding the federal government's removal of the lesser prairie chicken from the endangered species list and what the Department's vision or plan is for conserving that species in the state with what I assume will be without the support of the federal government going forward.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Jonathan. Chris Guikema?

Chris Guikema: [unintelligible 03:18:08] I am a resident, landowner, hunter, sportsman, whatever. I'd like to thank you for listening today. I would like to also point out that residents have every opportunity to buy every single tag in the state. Secondary management zone, primary management zone, all the EPLUS tags, all the secondary stuff. You as residents can come to me at any time and purchase tags to hunt. The fact that they're not available, they are available. Then one of my other comments was what New Mexico private land, cattlemen, and everything else bring to the state.

We're an arid-dry state. I'd like to point out that in some of the lands that we manage that benefit wildlife for the state, we just finished an \$800,000 mechanical thinning project. We're following that up with four years of chemical thinning. One of our primary ranches went from 190 AU or animal units, cow-calf pairs, to 20. They're doing that to support the wildlife. We're coming in, we're moving cattle off of areas that are primarily for calving zones, so we can protect them in the fall when that grass is all grown in and is heavy and is there.

We are keeping that stuff protected. In the last six years, we've rebuilt and redesigned 30 dirt tanks. We have over \$150,000 invested in dirt work, and labor, and man-hours. In the last two years, we moved 40,000 feet of net wire fencing. We went back through and reinstalled to date 30,000 feet of wildlife-friendly, according to the Department's requirements, of 18-inch slick wire on the bottom, 40-inch height on the top. The private landowners and the people that provide the tags and participate in these programs, we're not just taking.

We are also giving back. We're here to help wildlife, not just take, so thank you very much.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Chris. Kerrie.

Kerrie Romero: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Commissioner Kerrie Romero, on behalf of the New Mexico Council of Outfitters and Guides. This is a little bit preaching to the choir, but I think it needs to be stated more for the public record than anything else. New Mexico residents have access to all except for 6% of the tags in the state of New Mexico.

They have 100% of the draw cow elk tags, 100% of the wildlife management tags, 84% of the public land draw tags, and the outfitter pool is resident or non-resident.

Additionally, all landowner tags, regardless of species, are equal opportunity. Residents have access to those tags. They have more opportunity, I would argue, than any other Western state. I think it also gets lost a lot of times that the private land elk tags through EPLUS, they are allocated authorizations to the private landowners. We hear so often, "Oh, these are just rich non-residents." No, the vast majority of these landowners are New Mexico residents. These EPLUS tags are being allocated. Yes, those tags are transferable, but those landowners, they can utilize those tags if they want.

They can give them to their grandson. They could give it to a charity, or they can sell them to recuperate some of the costs that they've put into providing wildlife habitat. New Mexico is a very arid and dry state, and we get compared to a lot of different states all the time, where the habitat is vastly different. New Mexico actually has very good quality, wildlife quality, for the amount of water that we have. I don't think that can be overlooked. Thank you.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Kerrie. Kirk Kennedy?

Kirk Kennedy: Kerrie, your correspondence stole my thunder for most of it. Anyway, for your wildlife, they belong to everybody. They don't belong to the state. They're managing them. If the private land decided to say, "Come on and take all of your wildlife and put it on the public land," how would that work? They're private landowners. We're helping manage both. As for Brandon, my question was, is how do the rules

work anymore? I haven't been for a long time. I pretty much, like I say, I've been in it for 48 years in [unintelligible 03:23:15].

Rancher all my life, several generations. When I started out, we got asked for a comment. They appreciated our comment to people that are living on the ground and working with the wildlife as an outfitter and the ranchers. I argued with my dad a lot. Because ranchers say that wildlife, all they are, is a detriment of their resources, their grass, their habitat, their water, tear up their fences. When we started doing this, we would get them help with you guys, or with Stuart, with the rule.

I came here upset, and I got to see where you've done a lot of research in a lot of areas, but I think 50, that northeast corner, has been the whipping board for a lot of. We got our antelope herd, the best antelope herd in the state, the largest, it's decimated. It's not all by what you guys did, but part of it was. Now, with the deer deal coming up, I agree wholeheartedly with having some accountability to the ranchers, because not all of them are like me, I promise. That's part of what happened to the antelope. When it comes to fairness, if we're going to cut or go back or keep it the same, let's start managing with strictly biology, not on permit numbers or what Brandon wants or what I want. Let's go with what the animals need. That's what I look at, and I don't see it being done in all cases. My question is, how can I have more input, because I don't e-mail. I'm an old man that doesn't do that, and I refuse to. How do I go about having more input? It's too late now, this time, but in the future, where do I come up with more input?

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Kirk. If you're not going to e-mail, you probably need to go to meetings. Brooke?

Brooke Woodmansee: Thank you, Chairman Stump, and members of the commission. My name is Brooke Woodmansee. I'm a natural resources management student at UNM-Taos, and I'm currently working as an intern with Western Landowners Alliance. We would like to take this opportunity to appreciate the Department and Commissioners for their consideration of private landowner stewardship of wildlife habitat during this rulemaking cycle. We value the previous and current efforts put forth by the commission to enforce biological management strategies in equitable respect to our rural and agricultural communities.

We stand in support of future policies that will promote the abilities of landowners to continue their invaluable contribution to maintaining nearly half of our state's wildlife habitat. As New Mexico continues to experience drought severity and wildfire risk, we would like to emphasize the importance of private lands that provide water resources, refuge, and connectivity. As natural water sources and vegetation are stressed during this time, there is a need for continued balanced wildlife management on both private and public lands.

The labor and cost attributed to supporting wildlife on working lands is susceptible to increase as environmental conditions become poor. Acknowledging the historical and current efforts of landowners in sustaining wildlife populations, we ask the Commission to foster sincere consideration of landowner equity and support as our state navigates future wildlife management under environmental duress. Thank you for your time.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Brooke. Eric, is anyone online?

Eric Arce: Mr. Chair, sorry about that. There are two people online. The first is Travis. Go ahead, Travis.

Travis Edwards: Hi, hello. A couple quick things back to elk. First, I wanted to thank the Department for adding public tags to Unit 32. I've been asking for it for quite a while. We've been down there deer hunting and barbary hunting. It's been amazing how many elk have been in that desert country. I'm happy that they're adding those tags.

I would ask, though, there's two hunts, two of either sex. The first one starts October 1st, which I think is good, is great. It matches the private land. The second one is, I think, starts mid-October.

I would ask the Department and the commission to see if you could move that to later in the year, like December. That country down there is most probably letting you know is rocky and a lot of hiking, and when temperatures in mid-October are still 80 degrees sometimes or even higher. It'd be really tough to pack out an elk. It'd be great on that second hunt if we could just move that until December so we have some cooler weather. Second thing I wanted to comment on is echoing a little bit of what Brandon had said earlier.

The EPLUS system, or private land system, it's very controversial with the public of the state and has been complaining about it for quite a long time. I'm sympathetic to both sides as a public hunter myself. I see a lot of the arguments on the public side, but I recognize a lot of the stuff the private does for wildlife. I think there definitely needs to be a balance there. I'm not opposed to EPLUS overall. One thing that does, and I again want to echo, is the public has been complaining about EPLUS for a long time, white tags, all kinds of things.

The commission has been pretty much silent on most of those. Yet this year, the Department makes one change to propose one change for somewhat fairness in the secondary and primary, where it's a hybrid unit. More fairness is a hunter draws a tag and starts October 10th, and the same unit, the private has already been hunting it October 1st starting. They said, "Let's just align that and make that more fair." That's one change that's been towards the public on the elk system in the last several rule cycles.

Yet that one change, we get a bunch of comments organized by a group, and the commission just automatically reverses that. It's just disappointing to see that when you get organized from that side, that any department recommendation that benefits the public, they cave to it. This is disappointing to see.

Thank you for hearing my comment.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Travis. Anybody else?

Eric Arce: Mr. Chair, there's one more. Dan?

Chairman Richard Stump: Go ahead, Dan.

Dan Roper: Good afternoon, Commissioners. Can you hear me okay?

Chairman Richard Stump: Yes.

Dan Roper: Thank you for the opportunity to speak. For the record, Dan Roper with Trout Unlimited. I'd like to offer a brief and largely supportive comment of the Department's ICIP request that you just approved, as it pertains to investments in our fish hatcheries. The most recent numbers I've seen from 2024 estimate that existing infrastructure and capital improvement needs for the Department's six state-run fish hatcheries are close to \$30 million. I would guess that today the actual funding needs are even higher.

That same report puts the annual number of angler days in New Mexico at over 4 million, and I believe that annual fishing license sales continue to exceed 200,000 every year. The department also estimates that most of those angling days are spent on state waters that either entirely or partially are supported by our state fish hatcheries. In a state where we spend a lot of time talking about hunting, let's also remember that New Mexicans really love to fish, and we have some big needs when it comes to fisheries management and the future of fishing in our state.

We need to invest big in habitat. We need to be thinking hard about the impacts of drought and water scarcity on our fisheries. We also need to modernize our fish hatcheries. Trout Unlimited's mission is focused on the conservation and restoration of wild and native trout in trout streams, but we also, of course, recognize that our hatcheries are critical to keeping New Mexicans on the water, both catching and keeping fish. In addition to supporting recreational angling, it's also important to note that our hatcheries support Native Rio Grande cutthroat and Gila trout for both conservation and recreation purposes.

We support and appreciate the \$14 million investment proposed in the current ICIP request. Our ask of the commission and department is also to think big when it comes to special multi-year appropriations from the legislature for infrastructure needs. Securing other state funds at a time when the state continues to see healthy non-recurring revenues will allow the Department to direct more of its resources from the Game Protection Fund to other critical needs like improving habitat for big game species, and trout, and migratory birds.

Last year, a coalition of hunting and fishing organizations collaborated for the first time to support a handful of special appropriation requests that included funding for natural disaster recovery, strategic land acquisitions that we hope will benefit the Department, investments in river and wetland restoration, and a special appropriation request for hatcheries. In total, over \$80 million was directed towards those purposes outside of any contribution from the Game Protection Fund.

We think this demonstrates the level of opportunity that we have in New Mexico today to pursue big ideas and investments that benefit fish and wildlife and the resources that support them. We encourage the

commission to think big when it comes to both how we invest in fish and wildlife, but also the multitude of places where that revenue can come from. Thank you.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Dan. Eric, is that it?

Eric Arce: Mr. Commissioner, yes, it is.

Chairman Richard Stump: All right. Commissioners, do you have any comments or updates? Yes?

Vice-chairman Fernando Clemente Jr: [unintelligible 03:33:57] and comments, I do have. Normally, this is a time where we speak what we do, right? Correct? I want to be correct. Normally, as a commissioner, we do different stuff around the state. Obviously, I always meet with the public. I'm always meeting with nonprofit organizations, with conservation organizations every month. As well, several of the commissioners and myself, we went in the Department of Game and Fish staff, we went to the WAFWA, to the Western Association Fish and Wildlife Agencies, where I learn a lot.

I love to go to that event. We learn a lot about what other states are doing. We talk to other commissioners from other states. A lot of the information that you guys provide, what other states are doing, that's when we take the moment, and we actually speak to them and see what is working, how is it working, what are they doing, and why are they doing it as a management tool. We get that feedback from all of that. The reason why I'm saying this is because this commission is very involved into trying to understand where the needs and what is what the public is asking for. Thank you.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you. Commissioner Lopez?

Commissioner Tirzio Lopez: Thank you, Mr. Chair. First off, I want to thank our three gentlemen back here in the gray uniforms and also all our staff in the gray uniforms. National Police Week was couple of months ago, I guess, well, end of May. They're doing a great job out there. They're getting a lot of accolades from staff and along from the public of what they're doing with community engagement, enforcement, and keeping not just wildlife safe, but keeping the public safe. We all know in rural New Mexico that sometimes you are the only response out there, where backup is three hours away, so thank you.

I also want to say, yes, I echo what Commissioner Fernando Clemente said, we did attend WAFWA. I want to thank our fishery staff for the presentation they gave to the Western United States regarding the YY male brook trout project that's been implemented in northern New Mexico. Great how that was being used across the United States or the western part of the United States. As well to all our staff that we are now going into the holiday for 4th of July, where we have a lot of recreation happening in the state of New Mexico.

It's always great to meet stakeholders. Of course, I've been involved with the uranium mining debacle in northern Rio Arriba County, where we're coordinating with Forest Service, the wildlife agencies, as well as the soil and water district, to help preserve and protect our wildlife in that district because it's not only going to affect us in the north, but everybody drinks from the Rio Grande, and all the water that comes into Rio Grande comes from the north. Hopefully, stay tuned. That's all I have, Mr. Chair.

Chairman Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Lopez.

Commissioner Christopher Witt: I don't want to prolong the wait for lunch, so we're good.

Chairman Richard Stump: All right. Now, thank you all for attending today's meeting. Our next meeting will be August 21st at Highlands University in Las Vegas, New Mexico. We stand adjourned.

[03:37:43] [END OF AUDIO]