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

MINUTES AND TRANSCRIPTS
NEW MEXICO STATE GAME COMMISSION

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Friday, Aug. 15

Reserve Independent Schools Gymnasium
24 Mountaineer Rd.
Reserve, NM 87830

9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Video Link: https://youtu.be/HTP0_-dAJK0

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1: Meeting Called to Order
09:12:24 a.m. (00:00:00/00:00:16 on video)

Called to order by Chairman Stump.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2: Roll Call
09:12:38 a.m. (00:00:14/00:00:30)

Present in person: Chairman Stump, Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey, Commissioner Clemente, Commissioner Lopez.
Present virtually: Commissioner Fulfer, Commissioner Witt.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4: Introduction of Guests
09:13:06 a.m. (00:00:42/00:00:58)

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3: Pledge of Allegiance
09:40:22 a.m. (00:27:58/00:28:14)

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5: Approval of Agenda (Action Item)
09:12:46 a.m. (00:09:20/00:09:36)

Motion: To table Agenda Item No. 9, Approval of the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget.
Motion by: Commissioner Lopez.
Seconded by: Commissioner Fulfer.
Approved: Unanimous - Chairman Stump, Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey, Commissioner Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer, Commissioner Lopez, Commissioner Witt.

Motion: To amend the agenda that we table agenda item number 9, the approval of the fiscal year 2027 budget proposal action item table that for another date to be determined.
Motion by: Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey.
Seconded by: Commissioner Fulfer.
Approved: Unanimous - Chairman Stump, Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey, Commissioner Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer, Commissioner Lopez, Commissioner Witt.

Motion: To hold a special meeting to discuss the approval of the fiscal year 2027 budget proposal action item for our special meeting on Thursday, August 28th, and that can be virtual.
Motion by: Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey.
Seconded by: Commissioner Clemente.
Approved: Unanimous - Chairman Stump, Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey, Commissioner Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer, Commissioner Lopez, Commissioner Witt.

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

09:54:18 a.m. (00:41:54/00:42:10)

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

- 165 individuals certified by the Human Services Department as being out of compliance with the Parental Responsibility Act (40-5A-1 NMSA 1978) were suspended until in compliance.
- 290 individuals who failed to pay a penalty assessment citation within 30 days of the violation were suspended until in compliance.
- 5 individuals who have entered into a civil agreement or have a civil judgment.

The Department presented the 12 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.

- 24 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.
- 5 individuals accrued 20 or more points in a 3-year period. They were mailed a notice of contemplated action, requested a hearing and the Department entered into a stipulated agreement.
- 2 individuals accrued 20 or more points in a 3-year period. They were mailed a notice of contemplated action, requested a hearing and a hearing was conducted.

Motion: To increase the revocation of Aubrey Martin, Thomas Hewitt, and Kevin Escobedo from three years to five years.
Motion by: Commissioner Lopez.
Seconded by: Commissioner Fulfer.
Approved: Unanimous - Chairman Stump, Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey, Commissioner Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer, Commissioner Lopez, Commissioner Witt.

Motion: To approve the consent agenda as amended.
Motion by: Commissioner Clemente
Seconded by: Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey.
Approved: Unanimous - Chairman Stump, Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey, Commissioner Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer, Commissioner Lopez, Commissioner Witt.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7: Discussion Among Catron County Commission, New Mexico State Game Commission and New Mexico Department of Game and Fish Regarding Wolf Management

10:05:09 a.m. (00:52:45/00:53:01)

The Commission took a lunch break at 12:16:58 p.m. and returned at 01:09:49 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8: Discussion of Proposed Rule for Shed Hunting

02:28:40 p.m. (05:16:16/04:23:46)

The Department is proposing a change to the Manner and Method Rule (19.31.10.9.E NMAC) to require a shed hunter license for non-residents to possess more than two obviously shed antlers found in the field. Public comments gathered from two public meetings was summarized for the Commission.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 9: Approval of the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Proposal (Action Item)

Tabled.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 10: Discussion of Proposed Changes to the Hunting and Fishing Licenses and Application Rule 19.31.3 NMAC

03:25:44 p.m. (06:13:20/05:20:50)

The Department presented proposed changes to the Hunting and Fishing Licenses and Application Rule (19.31.3 NMAC) regarding eligibility requirements for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program as required by law (Senate Bill 5).

AGENDA ITEM NO. 11: Discussion of Proposed Changes to the Game and Fish License/Permits Rule 19.30.9 NMAC

03:34:54 p.m. (06:22:30/05:30:00)

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

AGENDA ITEM NO. 12: Discussion of Proposed Changes to the Fisheries Rule 19.31.4 NMAC and Manner and Method Rule 19.31.10 NMAC

03:48:33 p.m. (06:36:09/05:43:39)

The current Fisheries Rule 19.31.4 NMAC expires March 31, 2026. The Department presented proposed changes to the Fisheries Rule and the Manner and Method Rule 19.31.10 NMAC based upon comments provided during the rule development process, including public meetings.

The Commission took a break at 03:48:51 p.m. and returned at 03:56:25 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 13: Discussion of Proposed Changes to the Upland Game Rule 19.31.5 NMAC

04:37:09 p.m. (07:24:45/06:24:45)

The Department presented proposed changes to the Upland Game Rule (19.31.5 NMAC) based on public comment, survey information and management goals.

Proposed amendments focused on:

- Adjusting hunts for calendar dates

- Dividing Dusky Grouse into a North and South Zone, using I-40 as the dividing line
- Setting bag limits for Dusky Grouse Zones
    - North – 3 Birds/Day; 6 in possession
    - South – 1 Bird/Day; 2 in possession
- Adding a special draw permit youth pheasant hunt on Jackson Lake WMA
- Opening Bluebird and Pine River WMAs during squirrel season
- Opening Double E, LBar, Navajo and River Ranch WMAs during quail season

AGENDA ITEM NO. 14: General Public Comment

05:11:49 p.m. (07:59:25/06:59:25)

AGENDA ITEM NO. 15: Commissioner Comments

05:25:51 p.m. (08:13:27/07:13:27)

AGENDA ITEM NO. 16: Executive Session

05:29:46 p.m. (08:17:22/07:17:22)

Motion: To adjourn into executive session, closed to the public, pursuant to Section 10-15-1(H)(8) NMSA 1978, to discuss purchase, acquisition or disposal of real property, and Section 10-15-1(H)(2) NMSA 1978, limited personnel matters (director's performance evaluation).
Motion by: Commissioner Clemente
Seconded by: Commissioner
Approved: Unanimous - Chairman Stump, Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey, Commissioner Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer, Commissioner Lopez and Commissioner Witt.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 17: Action(s) from Executive Session (Action Item(s))

06:05:55 p.m. (08:53:31/07:18:38)

AGENDA ITEM NO. 18: Adjourn

06:06:09 p.m. (08:53:45/07:18:52)

Adjourned by Chairman Stump at 06:06:18 p.m.

Transcripts

Richard Stump: Good morning, everyone. I'm calling this meeting, New Mexico State Game Commission, to order here and Reserve New Mexico. I'd like to thank the Catron County officials, Commissioners, and residents for hosting us here today. Director Sloane, please call the roll.
Michael Sloane: Commissioner Witt.
Christopher Witt: Present.
Michael Sloane: Commissioner Lopez.
Tirzio Lopez: Here.
Michael Sloane: Commissioner Fulfer.
Gregg Fulfer: Here.
Michael Sloane: Commissioner Clemente.
Fernando Clemente: Present.
Michael Sloane: Vice Chair Hickey.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Present.
Michael Sloane: Chair Stump.
Richard Stump: Present.
Michael Sloane: You have a quorum.
Richard Stump: As we do at all our meetings. I like to go around the room, introduce ourselves. Before I do that, I'd like to acknowledge some of our political officials who are here today. Representative Armstrong, Senator Ramos, and Representative Terrazas. How about we start with Commissioner Lopez?
Tirzio Lopez: Good morning. I'm Commissioner Lopez from the great county of Rio Arriba. It was a pleasure to drive down here to reserve yesterday. Literally drove across the state and got to have some great pie yesterday at Eagles Landing, the kind of pie you got to genuflect before you eat it. Thank you so much. Great hospitality, great people, and good to be down here in the Gila Country.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Good morning, everyone. It's very nice to see all of you. I want to say thank you very much for coming here today. I know we're all excited. First, let me say I'm from Santa Fe County, and I have looked forward to coming to Reserve for so many years. For those of you who do not know about Reserve, New Mexico, it is the birthplace and home of Justice Patricio Serna. He is the former chief justice of the New Mexico Supreme Court. I want to send a shout-out to all of you who know him and to Justice Serna. This is also beautiful elk country. The wildlife out here is just phenomenal. Coming in, we saw the elk, the deer, everything. Again, it's just so nice to be here, and I want to say thank you again for being here today.
Richard Stump: Good morning, everyone. Thank you for being here. We appreciate all of you being here today. It's an important day. My name is Richard Stump. I'm the chair of the commission, and I'm a New Mexican. Grew up in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and I've been appointed at large. Like everyone here, I love our state, so thank you again for being here today.
Fernando Clemente: Good morning, everybody, and thank you for being here. This is great turnout, and we really appreciate this. My name is Fernando Clemente. I am appointed at large. I am from Sunland Park, New Mexico, but since I was 15, I've been hunting on this area, 16A, 16D, 15. This is an amazing area. I just wanted to say that. Thank you.
Michael Sloane: Morning, everyone. Mike Sloane, director of the department.
[pause 00:03:51]
Kirk Patten: Good morning, Commissioners, members of the public. I'm Kirk Patten, chief of fisheries for the department.
Shawn Carrell: Good morning, Commissioners, members of the public. I'm Shawn Carrell. I'm the Revocations Lieutenant.
Tim Cimbal: Good morning, Commissioners, members of the public. I'm Tim Cimbal. I'm the colonel for field operations with Department of Game and Fish.
Frank Mraz: Good morning. Frank Mraz, Apache Creek Fire and EMS. Thanks for everybody coming.
[silence]

Deborah Mahler: Deborah Mahler, I am the Catron County Manager.
Buster Green: Morning, Commissioners. Buster Green, commissioner for Catron County and lifelong resident of Catron County.
Audrey McQueen: Good morning, Commissioners, everyone. Catron County Commissioner and lifelong resident of the county.
Haydn Forward: Good morning, Commissioners, everyone. Haydn Forward, Catron County Commissioner, District 3.
Luis Terrazas: Thank you for being here. Luis Terrazas, State representative for District 39, which is Grant, Hidalgo, and Catron County, mostly Southern Catron, just below Alma.
Gail Armstrong: Good morning, State Representative Gail Armstrong, born and raised in Catron County. House state representative for District 49. I have Catron, Sierra, Valencia, and Socorro County. Largest house district in the state with the fewest amount of people.
Ben Neary: Morning, everybody. I'm Ben Neary. I'm with the New Mexico Wildlife Federation.
Jesse Deubel: Morning, Commissioners, members of the audience. Jesse Deubel, executive director, New Mexico Wildlife Federation.
Stewart Jacks: Good morning. My name is Stewart Jacks. I'm with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. I'm the acting regional director for our Southwest region and our regional offices in Albuquerque.
Paul Souza: Good morning, Commissioners. Good morning, everyone. I'm also from the US Fish and Wildlife Service. My name is Paul Souza. Great to see you.
Brady McGee: Good morning, Commissioners. Good morning, everybody. My name is Brady McGee. I'm with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and I'm the Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator.
Seth Willey: Good morning, everyone. I'm Seth Willey. I'm with the US Fish and Wildlife Service out of the Albuquerque Regional office as well. Nice to meet you.
Jennifer Jones: Good morning. My name is Jennifer Jones. I'm state representative for District 32, which is Hidalgo County, Luna County, and Doña Ana.
Gabriel Ramos: Good morning. Thank you all for being here. I'm Senator Gabriel Ramos for District 28. I represent Grant, Luna, and Hidalgo County, and I am a taxpayer here in Catron County. Thank you.
Tom Paterson: Good morning, Commissioners. Thank you for being here. Friends and neighbors, thank you for being here. My name is Tom Paterson. I'm president-elect of the New Mexico Cattle Growers Association. I live and work in Catron County. I'm a cattle rancher. I'm here with my lovely wife, Callie.
Adrienne Seltz: Good morning. Thank you, everyone, for being here. Thank you to the commission and everyone for coming today. I'm Adrienne Seltz, and I'm from Sandia Park, New Mexico.
Peter Schoenburg: Good morning, everyone. Peter Schoenburg, I'm from Albuquerque, New Mexico, and this is my wife, Jane, who wants to introduce herself.
Jane McGrath: Thank you. Hi, I'm Jane McGrath, and I'm happy to be here with all of you. Thank you to the commission for holding this, and Catron County for hosting.
John Hickey: Commissioners, my name is John Hickey. I'm from Santa Fe, New Mexico.
Bryan Bird: Good morning. Bryan Bird with Defenders of Wildlife.
Tom Shelley: Good morning, Commissioners. Tom Shelley, from Silver City. Born and raised in Grant County, and I'm a County Commissioner, District 5, also Supervisor on the Soil and Water Conservation District.
John Ladd: I'm John Ladd. I'm a cattle rancher in Cochise County, Arizona. I'm a past president of Cochise Graham Cattle Growers Association.
Don Lackner: Good morning. I'm Don Lackner. I'm from Graham County. I am the president of Cochise Graham Cattle Growers Association. Thank you.
Mike Wear: Mike Wear, rancher, Willcox, Arizona. Down by the Chiricahua National Monument. Past president, Cochise Graham Cattle Growers, past director, New Mexico Cattle Growers, and current director on Cochise Graham Cattle.
David Stone: Good morning. David Stone, Silver City. We moved there from Tucson. I will never retire.
Jim McGrath: I'm Jim McGrath. I'm from Silver City, New Mexico.
Lynn Major: Lynn Major, rancher, Cibolo, Catron, and Socorro counties.
Randall Major: Randall Major, lifelong rancher, Socorro County, Catron County.

Kerrie Romero: Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Commissioners. Good morning, Catron County. I'm Kerrie Romero, Executive Director for the New Mexico Council of Outfitters and Guides.
Rich Krug: Rich Krug, Luna, New Mexico.
Henry Edwards: Henry Edwards from the Farr Ranch by Datil.
Tristanna Carrell: Good morning. Sorry about that. Tristanna Carrell, I'm the Chief of the Information and Education Division for the Department of Game and Fish.
Bruce Gillerman: Bruce Gillerman, resident of Apache Creek the last three years, a former rancher, retired.
Ryan Devereaux: Ryan Devereaux. I'm a journalist writing a book.
Nan Franzblau: Good morning, Commissioners and everybody. My name is Nan Franzblau. I live in Silver City, New Mexico. I'm a mother and a teacher.
Carol Ann Fugale: Good morning, Commissioners. My name is Carol Ann Fugale. I currently live in Silver City, New Mexico, and I'm a lifelong lover of wildlife.
Greta Anderson: Good morning, everyone, Commissioners. My name is Greta Anderson. I am the Deputy Director of Western Watersheds Project, and I came up today from Tucson, Arizona.
Cindy Tuell: Good morning, everyone. Good morning, Commissioners. My name is Cindy Tuell. I'm from Tucson, Arizona. I'm the Arizona–New Mexico Director for Western Watersheds Project, and I'm so glad to see some of my fellow Southern Arizonans here today.
Luke Koenig: Good morning, Commissioners, members of the public. My name is Luke Koenig. I live in Silver City, and I'm the Gila Grassroots Organizer for New Mexico Wild.
Cindy Renee Provencio: My name is Cindy Renee Provencio, and I am a born and raised lifelong resident of Grant County, and specifically the Mining District.
Franky DeAngelis: Good morning, all. I'm Franky DeAngelis. I'm an outdoor photographer from Silver City. Thank you.
Matthew Atencio: Good morning, everyone. Matthew Atencio, field manager for the Bureau of Land Management, Socorro Field Office.
Zebb Andrews: Good morning. Zebb Andrews, Bureau of Land Management, Socorro.
Alex Simon: Good morning. I'm Alex Simon. I'm retired. I live in Silver City. Being retired, I switched from rifle to bow hunting. I spent a lot of time up this way in 16B.
Michael Robinson: Good morning, Commissioners, members of the public. I'm Michael Robinson. I work with the Center for Biological Diversity, and I live in Pinos Altos in Grant County.
Scott Chandler: Morning, Commissioners. I'm Scott Chandler. I'm a 8th-generation rancher, Sierra County, in the Gila Forest. Also, an elected magistrate judge in Luna County.
Collette Chandler: Good morning, Commissioners and general public. I'm Collette Chandler, Luna County Commissioner Chair, and we live in Deming. This is my husband, and so glad that you all made it here today.
Darren Vaughan: Good morning, Commissioners, members of the public. I'm Darren Vaughan. I'm the Communications Director for the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.
Jim Travers: Hello. Good morning. I'm Jim Travers, White House Ranch, Datil, New Mexico. Cow-calf operation. Thank you.
Colin Duff: Good morning, everybody. My name's Colin Duff. I'm with the Department of Game and Fish. I'm our Major over our Field Operations Division.
Logan Vanlandingham: Good morning, everyone. My name's Logan Vanlandingham. I'm the Southwest Area Captain for the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.
Josh Wright: Morning, everyone. My name is Josh Wright. I'm the local corporal here in Quemado for Field Operations.
Aubrey Warner: Good morning, everyone. My name is Aubrey Warner. I'm a district officer out at Quemado.
Paul Romero: Good morning, everybody. My name's Paul Romero. I'm from Pueblitos, New Mexico.
Gregory Nash: Gregory Nash, lifelong owner of property in Catron County.
Louis Sanders: Good morning, Commissioners. Thank you for having this. I'm Louis Sanders for Catron County. Cattle Rancher.

Keith Hughes: Morning, Commissioners. I'm Sheriff Keith Hughes, Catron County Sheriff's Office.
Randy Yearwood: Good morning, Commissioners. My name is Randy Yearwood. I'm the superintendent with Reserve Schools, and I'd like to welcome everyone to Reserve Schools.
Adan Jacquez: Good morning, everyone. Adan Jacquez. I'm the sergeant here, one year local friendly game wardens.
Colleen Payne: Good morning, Director, Commissioners, members of the public. My name's Colleen Payne. I'm the Southwest Area Public Information Specialist for the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.
[pause 00:15:54]
Maresa Pryor-Luzier: Hello, Commissioners. Welcome to Catron County. I am Maresa Pryor-Luzier. I'm a Catron County resident and a professional wildlife photographer.
Carolyn Nelson: Good morning. I'm Carolyn Nelson. I'm a rancher's wife, and I believe ranchers have rights.
Ginger Cheney: Good morning. I'm Ginger Cheney. I'm from Greenlee County. I am the Greenlee County Cattle Growers President, teacher, rancher, and, more importantly, a mom.
Laura Schneberger: Good morning, gentlemen. I'm Laura Schneberger. We ranch in western Sierra County. I'm with the New Mexico Federal Lands Council. I'm their Wolf Liaison. Thank you.
Tom Klumker: Tom Klumker, Glenwood. Outfitter Director for the Coalition of Counties. Past director for the New Mexico Council of Outfitters. A 39-year-long outfitter, primarily in the Gila Wilderness.
Jay Platt: Jay Platt, Catron County. I'm an Outfitter in this county as well, run statewide. Also, a rancher in the area.
Andy Carrejo: Andy Carrejo, Apache Creek, New Mexico. Rancher and lifelong resident.
Billy McCarty: I am Billy McCarty, fourth-generation rancher here in Catron County.
Becca Luten: Good morning, everyone. I'm Becca Luten, here with New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau, and I'm the Director of Government Affairs. I'm also here with Katie Adams and Jesi Watson.
Katie Adams: Good morning, Commissioners. My name is Katie Adams. I'm the Director of County Development with New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau.
Jesi Watson: Good morning. My name is Jesi Watson. I'm a field services manager for the New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau.
Bill Nelson: Good morning, Bill Nelson, Datil, New Mexico. I'm the Catron County Public Safety and Depredation Officer, Catron County Sheriff's Office.
David Heft: David Heft, retired wildlife biologist, hunter, trapper, Bayard, New Mexico.
Ana Levin: Ana Levin. Member of the public.
Jeremy Martin: Good morning, members of the public, State Game Commissioners, Catron County Commissioners, and members of the Legislature. I'm Jeremy Martin. I'm the general counsel for the Department of Game and Fish.
Tom Lister: Tom Lister, a farmer from New Mexico, and a member of the Hidalgo County Farm Bureau.
Art Malott: Good morning, Commissioner. I'm Art Malott. I am the Hidalgo County Commission Chair.
Craig Catron: Good morning, everyone. Craig Catron, Horse Springs, New Mexico. Rancher and contractor.
Mathis Catron: Morning. I'm Mathis Catron. Rancher and fence contractor.
Dally Catron: Good morning. Dally Catron. Rancher and fence contractor.
Wheeler Brunschmid: I'll just use this one. Tristana. I'm Wheeler Brunschmid, Assistant Chief of Information. We're going to go back online to Commissioner Fulfer and Commissioner Witt to introduce themselves.
Gregg Fulfer: Good morning. I'm Gregg Fulfer, District 1 commissioner. I live here in Jal. I'm a rancher here in Jal, and I own and operate a hunting and fishing lodge in Colorado. My business is in oil and gas, for oil and cattle here in Jal. Diversified in a little bit of all of it. Good to see you all. I'm sorry I'm not there. I had some transportation issues, blowout and tore up my fender and steps to my motorhome, so I'm having a little mechanical issues. I wish I was there and give Senator Ramos a hard time, but we'll catch up with him a little later. Good to see him there. Thank y'all.

Christopher Witt: My name is Chris Witt. I'm the newest commissioner for District 5, Bernalillo County. I'm a biologist. I've been at University of New Mexico for 18 years. I mostly study birds. I wish I could be there today in Reserve. I'm Zooming in from St. Louis, Missouri, where I'm attending the American Ornithological Society Conference, presenting our research at UNM on sandhill cranes in New Mexico. I can report there's a lot of science here being done and presented on New Mexico birds. I'm happy to see the meeting today is so well attended, and looking forward to seeing what people have to say.
Wheeler Brunschmid: Thank you. Sorry, it's too loud. There are four people online that wish to introduce themselves, Mr. Chair.
Richard Stump: Thank you.
Wheeler Brunschmid: Erin Hunt, you are allowed to talk.
Erin Hunt: Good morning, everyone. Thank you for the opportunity to be here. I'm Erin Hunt with Lobos of the Southwest, a collaborative effort of community members and conservation organizations working to save Mexican gray wolves. Thank you.
Wheeler Brunschmid: Thank you, Erin. Mark.
[pause 00:22:25]
Wheeler Brunschmid: Mark Mattaini. I said that right?
Mark Mattaini: Yes, you have.
Wheeler Brunschmid: Yes, we can hear you.
Mark: My name is Mark Mattaini. I live on Laguna Pueblo with my wife, who is a tribal member. I am here representing the New Mexico Board of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers.
Wheeler Brunschmid: Thank you, Mark. Jackie Hall.
[pause 00:23:09]
Wheeler Brunschmid: Okay. We'll go on to the next one. Jackie, if you get your audio figured out, you can introduce yourself. Glenn Griffin.
Jackie Hall: Oh, can you hear me now?
Wheeler Brunschmid: Yes, we can.
Jackie: Sorry about that. This is Jackie Hall with the Carroll Petrie Foundation based in Santa Fe, New Mexico. I'm sorry I can't be with you in person today.
Wheeler Brunschmid: Thanks, Jackie. Who's next? Glenn, go ahead.
Glenn Griffin: Good morning. This is Glenn Griffin from Silver City, New Mexico. I represent Grant Countians for Democracy.
Wheeler Brunschmid: Thank you, Glenn. Bernadette Maldonado.
Bernadette Maldonado: Hi, good morning. My name is Bernadette Maldonado, and I'm an illustrator and author. I wrote *Why Asha Goes North*, and I'm currently writing *Asha and Marty Explore New Mexico*, Marty the Moose. I am very excited to be here and understand more about Asha and what others feel about her. Very passionate about Asha, the wolf. Thank you.
Wheeler Brunschmid: Thank you, Bernadette. We have just three more, Chair. Dr. Aletris Neils.
Aletris Neils: Good morning. My name is Aletris Neils. I have a PhD in wildlife management, and my specialty is mitigating conflicts between carnivores and livestock. I am the founder and executive director of Conservation CATalyst in Arizona.
Wheeler Brunschmid: Thank you. Mary Katherine Ray.
Mary Katherine Ray: Good morning, everyone. I hope you can hear me. My name is Mary Katherine Ray. I'm the wildlife chair for the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club, and I'm calling from our home in the outback of Socorro County.
Wheeler Brunschmid: Thank you, Mary. Last one, Mr. Chair. Barbara Marks.
Barbara Marks: My name is Barbara Marks, and I live with my family on the Arizona-New Mexico state line. We live with wolves. We have been around them since 1998. We aren't so well represented, and we just would like to have the truth be out there and really appreciate this opportunity. What happens in New Mexico also happens in Arizona and vice versa, and we need to be thinking about each other. Thank you again for this opportunity.
Wheeler Brunschmid: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. One more person raised their hand. Kate Scott.
[pause 00:26:40]

Wheeler Brunschmid: Kate Scott.
Kate Scott: Oh, excuse me. I didn't unmute myself. Apologies. I'm the co-founder of the Madrean Archipelago Wildlife Center, located in Cochise County in southeastern Arizona, with a mission of wildlife advocacy. Very happy to be in attendance with you all today. Thank you.
Wheeler Brunschmid: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. We have one more. Do you want to continue? Okay. Last one, Randy.
Randy Chulick: Hi, my name is Randy Chulick. I live in Silver City, and I would like to speak at today's meeting. Thank you. I have a question. Should I present now, or will you call on me later to present?
Wheeler Brunschmid: I'll message you in the Zoom chat, sir. Thank you.
Randy Chulick: Okay.
Richard Stump: Okay, thank you, folks. Appreciate all that. How about we all stand for the Pledge of Allegiance before we get going?
[pause 00:28:03]
Richard Stump: Next item on the agenda is the approval of the agenda. Do you have any questions or comments on the agenda?
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Mr. Chair, I do have a comment. We have a number of people in attendance, and I would like, for the sake of time management, to have an idea of how many people would be speaking during any of the agenda items. For example, agenda item number 7, or during public comment, either online or present. Do you know how many plan to speak?
Richard Stump: Wheeler, do you know online how many people are going to speak after agenda item 7?
Wheeler Brunschmid: I will message them, Mr. Chair, and get a tally.
Richard Stump: How about everybody raises their hand that are planning to comment? Are you all registered? Make sure you're registered.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Mr. Chair, can we have someone count the number of hands, please?
Wheeler Brunschmid: There's a lot.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Okay. Tristanna, do you mind walking out and counting them all?
[pause 00:29:57]
Richard Stump: It's around 40, Sharon. It's around 40.
Wheeler Brunschmid: 10 online.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: About 50 and 10 online.
Wheeler Brunschmid: About 50 and 10 online, Mr. Chair. In person 50, 10 online.
[pause 00:30:26]
Sharon Salazar Hickey: [mumbles]
Richard Stump: No, we'll do two minutes. There's a little concern about time. That's going to take us an hour and 20 minutes, so we're not going to go more than two minutes per person, just to be clear. Do we have a motion to approve the agenda?
Tirzio Lopez: Chair, I do have an amendment to the agenda. In item number 9, I wish to table that item, the approval of the 2027 budget proposal. Being the fact we got limited access to the budget. We did get the email yesterday, and I haven't had time to review the entire budget. It's our fiduciary duty to have this operating budget ready, and I haven't had time to prepare. I don't know if any other commissioners have. We can call a special meeting later on to approve the budget, but at this time, in the lieu of time, I can honestly say that I can vote in good faith to approve this budget.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Mr. Chair and Commissioner Lopez, I thank you for bringing that up, but my concern is on the department. Our next meeting is November 7th.
Tirzio Lopez: It's due to DFA by September, but we can have a special meeting to review whether to sit down with the director and the CFO. I have a lot of questions.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Lopez, could we hear from the director to see what his thoughts are, if that would be a problem?
Michael Sloane: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner Salazar Hickey, the budget is due to DFA September 1st. We did send out a summary document that included a narrative as well as a summary by program of the budget. Unfortunately, I didn't get out the more detailed roadmap, which lists dollar amounts by division and account number. I apologize for that. Obviously, it would be easier on us if you were comfortable

approving the budget today, but if you're not, then yes, we would have to set a special meeting before September 1st to get approval.
Richard Stump: Commissioner Clemente?
Fernando Clemente: I do have a little bit of a concern of the time that has been delivered to us, the budget items, and the review. Yes, it was provided some information. My only question is if this has to be presented to DFA, what is what they get, and what is what we get in difference on presentation? Because I believe there is supposed to be a time where commissioners can have the input or recommendations to the department, and that time has not happened. With that being said, I think our public deserves the right procedures and for this commission to oversee and review well and be knowledgeable, just for that reason, and make the recommendations, and then approve it correctly.
Richard Stump: Commissioner Witt, Commissioner Fulfer, do you have any input on this?
Gregg Fulfer: I would second the motion that was presented.
Christopher Witt: I share Commissioner Lopez's concern. I wonder if we could ask the director to answer Commissioner Clemente's question about what's going to be presented by September 1st and how it compares to what we've been delivered so far.
Michael Sloane: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner Witt, we enter the numbers from the roadmap into a system that DFA has for creating the overall state budget. Ours is a piece of that larger budget that then gets sent to the governor's office for her approval, and then it ultimately presented to the legislature within the agency budgets. The numbers we've given you both, the summary program number-- the summary program numbers are what gets entered into BFM, the budget system. Those are the numbers that DFA gets.
Richard Stump: Does that answer your question, Commissioner Witt?
Christopher Witt: Yes, I would say that the numbers just got delivered to us. I found them difficult to quickly understand. I would be in favor of arranging a special meeting to go over this, especially because we are pressed for time today. If others support that, I think that would be the best path.
Richard Stump: I do have a motion to table.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Before we make a motion, Mr. Chair, what are your thoughts? Are you in favor of moving this back?
Richard Stump: I, too, had concerns about receiving it later. It was my understanding that it's basically the same budget as last year, with a 3% inflation increase and a $50,000 addition. I can't remember what that was to. But if it's the consensus of the commission, we can go ahead and table it, but we have to call a special meeting that we're all going to have to attend.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Mr. Chair and commissioners, then you're willing to meet before September 1st?
Richard Stump: We have to.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Okay. Mr. Chair, Commissioners, I hereby make a motion-- oops. Wait, before we make a motion, let's have some discussion about a good date. Today is August 15th.
Tirzio Lopez: Mr. Chair, I believe there is a motion and a second on the floor to table.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Was there a motion? Was that a motion?
Tirzio Lopez: My motion was a motion to table.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: You're correct. Thank you. My apologies.
Richard Stump: All right. As well. Do we have a second?
Michael Sloane: I believe Commissioner Fulfer seconded.
Gregg Fulfer: I seconded it.
Richard Stump: Gregg, it's really hard to hear you. You might want to speak a little louder, please. All those in favor say aye.
All Members: Aye.
Richard Stump: Motion passes. Item number 9 is tabled.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Mr. Chair, can we discuss when the special meeting might be? I have travel plans between now and September 1.
Richard Stump: What dates work for you?
[pause 00:38:10]
Sharon Salazar Hickey: I'm open August 18, 19, 20, and August 28 and 29.

Richard Stump: How about we do August 20th?
Sharon Salazar Hickey: August what?
Richard Stump: 20.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: 20?
Richard Stump: Commissioner Lopez.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Is that enough time? You only have five more days. Five more days is good?
Tirzio Lopez: How does department know? Can we discuss this after? We can get on with the meeting and look at our schedules.
Richard Stump: I would prefer that.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: You would?
Richard Stump: Yes.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Okay.
Michael Sloane: Mr. Chair, while we're looking at schedules, I would remind you that we do have to provide public notice of a special meeting.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: That's right.
Michael Sloane: We could do the special meeting virtually if that was easier, so two reminders. Lastly, we'll need a motion to approve the agenda as amended.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Mr. Chair, Director Sloane, are you suggesting August 20th?
Michael Sloane: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Salazar Hickey, I'm not sure that we can get the notice out in time for an August 20th meeting. I think we need at least three days, and being here today, the weekend, et cetera, I don't know that 20th works.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Mr. Chair, Director Sloane, how about August 28th?
Michael Sloane: I'm sure we could make the 28th work.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: That's a Thursday. Mr. Chair, Director Sloane, first let's make a motion to amend the agenda that we table agenda item number 9, the approval of the fiscal year 2027 budget proposal action item table that for another date to be determined.
Richard Stump: Do I have a second?
Gregg Fulfer: Second.
Richard Stump: All in favor?
All Members: Aye.
Richard Stump: Motion passes.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Mr. Chair and Commissioner Lopez, can we agree now just to say, so we can move on with business, let's make our special meeting on August 28th?
Richard Stump: That's fine with me. It's fine with the department. Everyone else, concur? All right.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Okay. Mr. Chair, Director Sloane, Commissioners, I hereby make a motion that we hold a special meeting to discuss the approval of the fiscal year 2027 budget proposal action item for our special meeting on Thursday, August 28th, and that can be virtual.
Richard Stump: Do I have a second?
Fernando Clemente: I'll second the motion.
Richard Stump: All in favor?
All Members: Aye.
Richard Stump: Motion passes. Item number 6 is the consent agenda. Director Sloane, could you briefly summarize the three items on the consent agenda?
Michael Sloane: Mr. Chair, the first item is the approval of the minutes from the June 13th, 2025, meeting that's in your book here, that we sent you. They are, I believe, the detailed ones we've discussed in the past. We have revocations of 31 individuals. Several of those are three years, some are a little longer. We have some stipulated agreements in there. Those names have been provided to you as well. Then we have approval of the asset disposal list. That's a list of things like vehicles and boats, and trailers that have reached the end of their useful life, but we need to have the Commission approve the disposal of items over a certain value before they can be sent to auction. That list was also provided in the packet we sent.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Director Sloane. Do we have any comments or suggestions?

Gregg Fulfer: Mr. Chair, I had a couple of questions.
Richard Stump: Commissioner Fulfer.
Gregg Fulfer: I just had a couple of questions on the revocations of one that's, I think it's the first. See the second page, number 5, the Kelly Martin. Can you tell me what the interference with the lawful hunt, what that consists of?
Shawn Carrell: In that particular case, on that one, I believe the person cited had contact with some legal hunters. They had a conversation exchange, and after that conversation, that individual started walking towards those deer to try to scare them away from the hunters.
Gregg Fulfer: On the first page, I think the fourth one from the top, the David Contreras, can you explain what a criminal trespass while hunting what that means?
Shawn Carrell: Chair and Commissioner Fulfer, in that particular case, that individual was hunting on private property. The Diamond A Ranch is down here in the Boot Hill. I believe is a ranch owner that actually caught him within the property. That property is properly posted, and he was also hunting in Unit 27 with the Unit 26 tag. Does that answer your question?
Gregg Fulfer: Yes, sir. Thank you.
Shawn Carrell: Just for the record that the criminal trespass is a mandatory three-year revocation that cannot be reduced according to statute.
Gregg Fulfer: Thank you.
Tirzio Lopez: Mr. Chair.
Richard Stump: Commissioner Lopez.
Tirzio Lopez: I do have a couple of questions for staff. Thank you, Colonel. Again, thank you, LT, for coming down today to discuss these cases. I do have a question regarding Aubrey Martin. Can you elaborate on that case?
Shawn Carrell: Yes. Aubrey Martin and I believe it's Thomas Hewitt are the same case. There's also Toby Hewitt, which was on the last hearing, but in that particular case, they were on state land within GMU 56 in the northeast part of the state. They're hunting antelope. Three individuals out of the four had killed in one spot. They all had proper license and were on public land. Another legal hunter observed three headless antelope in that area. The officers investigated that the next day. They contacted the hunters and found out the-- Thomas Hewitt only removed the head from the field. Aubrey Martin removed the head in hindquarters and left the front quarters and the neck meat. They contacted all those hunters the next day, and they admitted to their violations.
Tirzio Lopez: Mr. Chair, in light of the details that the revocation officer provided, I believe that Aubrey Martin and Thomas Hewitt should be increased from three years to five years based on the egregious of almost wanton, wasted game that they've-- Antelope is a hard hunt to draw. They did draw the license, but then they decided to leave it behind. Frankly, that's not cool. I believe that three years won't suffice for their type of egregious violation, and I wish the Commission to consider increasing that to five years.
Richard Stump: I actually agree with that.
Fernando Clemente: Thank you. Thank you for the information. Can you touch base on Kevin Escobedo? Can you touch a little bit of revocation violation?
Shawn Carrell: Kevin Escobedo, is that the one you're talking about?
Fernando Clemente: Yes, sir.
Shawn Carrell: Chair and Commissioner, that individual in the Magdalena area had gone out with a Barbary sheep license and killed what he thought was a Barbary sheep, but he actually killed a small bighorn sheep ram. A member of the public saw that, called that in. An officer went and interviewed him, actually, at the Magdalena gas station, and he still thought it was a Barbary sheep, but he misidentified that animal and killed a bighorn ram instead.
Fernando Clemente: I don't know if we're talking about the same one, but this one says big game hunting, big game without a valid license, and revocation violation.
Shawn Carrell: During that time, he was on revocation, or he was suspended for a different violation, and he was hunting while on that.
Fernando Clemente: He continued hunting without a license, correct?

Shawn Carrell: Correct. He didn't have a valid license to kill the bighorn he killed. He had a valid license for a Barbary.
Fernando Clemente: I would like to ask the Commission to increase that violation that we're talking about 60 points. I know the Department recommends three years, but I would like to ask the same to the Commission to increase it to at least five years.
Richard Stump: I have a question about the mistaken kill. What did he do with the meat and the carcass? Did he contact the department?
Shawn Carrell: We are required to sell that meat to someone not involved in the situation. I don't know exactly where that meat went, but it was [crosstalk].
Richard Stump: He didn't leave the meat?
Shawn Carrell: No.
Richard Stump: Okay.
Shawn Carrell: He took the whole ram.
Richard Stump: He did the right thing.
Tim Cimbal: He was under the understanding that he had killed what he was seeking to kill, a Barbary sheep, but it was indeed a bighorn. Like Lieutenant Carrell was saying, we'll salvage that meat, and we usually have a meat list of interested buyers, and we'll contact those people and sell them that meat.
Richard Stump: He was hunting with a suspended license at the time?
Tim Cimbal: That's correct.
Richard Stump: Anybody else have any questions or revocations before we make a motion on this? Would someone like to make a motion about these two individuals and apparently wanting to add to their penalty?
Tim Cimbal: Mr. Chair, you have three individuals that you just spoke about.
Richard Stump: Oh, because the first one was two different individuals?
Tim Cimbal: Yes, Chair.
Richard Stump: Okay.
Tirzio Lopez: Mr. Chair, I motion that the commission increase the penalty from three years to five years for the following individuals: Aubrey Martin, Thomas Hewitt, and who was the third one?
Fernando Clemente: It's Kevin Escobedo.
Tirzio Lopez: Kevin Escobar.
Richard Stump: Do I have a second?
Gregg Fulfer: Second.
Richard Stump: Any more discussion on the matter? All in favor.
All Members: Aye.
Richard Stump: Motion passes. Thank you, Commissioners.
Tirzio Lopez: Thank you, Colonel and Lieutenant. Again and thank you to all the field operation staff. We're going to get into a busy hunting season, so I know you all will be busy. Thank you for what you're doing and protecting the rural areas and wildlife, because sometimes you're the only call that dispatcher when state police or other areas can't answer the phone. Thank you so much.
Tim Cimbal: Chair, commissioners, I appreciate that. To follow up on that, like you're saying, hunting season is right upon us, and we always ask the members of the public to also be our eyes and ears through our Operation Game Thief, or if you just want to call your local officer because there's less than 100 of us across the entire state and we really do rely on the public helping us out reporting violations, and we appreciate it very much.
Tirzio Lopez: Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you, gentlemen. We appreciate your service and your work. Is there a motion to approve the consent agenda?
Fernando Clemente: I so move to approve the consent agenda as presented.
Richard Stump: Do we have to--
Michael Sloane: Mr. Chair, I think you want to approve the consent agenda as amended.
Richard Stump: Is there a motion to approve the consent agenda as amended?
Fernando Clemente: So move to approve the consent agenda as amended.

Sharon Salazar Hickey: I'll second.
Richard Stump: Any more discussion? All in favor.
All Members: Aye.
Richard Stump: Any opposed? Motion passes. Item number 7, the one where everybody's here for. Discussion regarding wolf management. Catron County has a presentation they'd like to give us to start this off.
[pause 00:53:01]
Buster Green: Yes, sir, Mr. Chair and fellow commissioners. Are you ready for us to proceed?
Richard Stump: Yes, Buster. Thank you.
Haydn Forward: Okay. Do you see the presentation on your screens?
Richard Stump: I'm sorry.
Haydn Forward: Do you see the PowerPoint presentation on your screen?
Richard Stump: Yes.
Haydn Forward: Very good. Thank you.
Buster Green: Perfect. Just to introduce myself again, Buster Green, commissioner for Catron County, lifelong resident, and we do appreciate your time for this presentation. Just want to preempt this, that this is something that is vital for our community, for our county. We would just like to put in your mind as well, because I know that there will be multiple public comment following this, and we just ask you to be cognizant of where those people are from and where they live. Because generally, when you're dealing with an issue and stuff and you're having to live with it, it wouldn't be very nice for somebody that is not having to live and not having to deal with that issue to explain to you exactly what you're going through and that the facts that you're stating are not the facts. We just invite dialogue, and we want people to understand the situation that we're going through here.
We have endured multiple death threats and intimidation as a commission. I can tell you that countywide this year, we have had multiple sabotage and destroying of equipment. We have evidence, and I'm still working with the Cibola County Sheriff's Office. I would love it if there were people arrested and held accountable for this. I know myself and all fellow landowners are wildlife lovers, and the fact that I would imagine that these people are doing these sabotage efforts that are destroying well equipment, fences, solar panels, these people, I would imagine that they feel like they're defending wildlife with the drought that we're in, and the fact that there is no available tank water at all. Especially in northern Catron County, wildlife would not be able to exist without the permanent waters that are being provided by livestock managers and owners. They're willing to kill the very thing that they say they represent to make a point. We'll begin with just a brief overview video. [silence] That's not coming up on that.
Haydn Forward: I've got the video on my screen. [laughs]
[pause 00:57:12]
Buster Green: You want to just go right again?
Haydn Forward: Commissioners, we did practice this this morning. It worked well.
Buster Green: Did you click on this?
Haydn Forward: Not working. We may have to forego the video.
Buster Green: Okay. Unfortunately, we aren't able to get the video to work and to be broadcast, and we would make that available for anybody that's interested afterwards, and we would also invite you to view that on your own time. The basis of the video was just establishing the fact that residents in Catron County have had to alter the way that they live their life. The introduction of the wolf has not only caused financial stress but also emotional stress and changed the way that people have had to live and make choices here in Catron County. Just as a basis, as of December 2024, 286-plus Mexican wolves roaming in New Mexico and Arizona in 60-plus wolf packs.
Haydn Forward: [unintelligible 00:59:21]
Buster Green: Let's just go. All right. This is what the US Fish and Wildlife estimates are. They are saying that Arizona has a minimum of 124 wolves, New Mexico has a minimum of 162 wolves. The US Fish and Wildlife estimate this number to be understated by at least 10%. Catron County officials and the people that we have on the ground, we believe that these minimum numbers are understated by more than 10% easily. This map represents the location of the Mexican Wolf Recovery Act.

This does not show the area that goes down into Mexico, that right now we are tied to with unless they reach a particular target number. We cannot be de-listed or anything changed unless Mexico reaches that number. We are seeking to have that changed because we do not think that we should be penalized if we reach the target number by a foreign country that we have no jurisdiction and no control over, and we are being penalized for that.
More than 80% of New Mexico collared wolves are in Catron County. That number used to be higher. The amount of cross-fostered pups that are put in is heavily skewed, and the majority of them are placed in Catron County. Yes, that's all right. As we spoke about before, as this number expands-- Catron County has been facing the brunt of the Mexican Wolf Recovery Act. As this expands into other counties, they are going to start going through what we have been going through the last number of years. We want the information out there so that the other counties can prepare for this, prepare for the financial impact, and prepare for the impact that will be to their communities and for their outlying residents.
Haydn Forward: Thank you, Commissioner Green. Commissioners, the wolf issue that we have been dealing with over the years has migrated truly into a public safety issue. The wolf numbers continue to increase in Catron County. Public safety is becoming a very important aspect of our education process to the citizens of Catron County. Commissioners, I personally, sat and listened over 20 hours of testimony in Catron County, Socorro County, and Grant County relating to Wolf encounters, 20 hours of testimony. It's becoming clear that this endangered species is habituated. The human encounters that the wolves have do not actuate a flight or fight response in these animals. They are truly becoming habituated.
If you take a look at the screen here, I'm not going to read each one of these bullet points to you, I will tell you that in 2024, Catron County absorbed over 24 cross-fostered pups, which are fed through human food caches. This is the foundation of the beginning of habituation in wolves, and this is the reason we are seeing more and more encounters. It's not just that the saturation of wolves that we have in Catron County, but it is the way humans are forced to respond to them. We have had, so far this year, 13 calls to our Sheriff department about dangerous encounters with wolves. Now, you all know, when you receive a letter on a particular issue, that one letter represents 20, 30 of other folks that are not making contact with you.
I personally know of a young man that was backed up against a tree by three wolves, and he did not call the Sheriff's department. These 13 calls that we have represent how many? I'll let your life experiences tell you. This is an example-- and please do take a close look at what you see on your screen. This is an example of the public education process that Catron County has developed for Wolf encounters. We're reaching out to school children, we're reaching out to businesses, we're certainly posting notices on trail heads, and this is because of the saturation of wolves within Catron County.
We have been accused from time to time of this being a PR stunt. It truly is not a PR stunt, and it's not drama. We are educating people on what their actions should properly be when they encounter wolves, and they're going to encounter wolves. I'm going to repeat this again, it is not a PR stunt. We have already saved wolves and people from encounters because of the education that we've developed. If you take a look at your public service announcements, over 500 public service announcements. This is how seriously we're taking it. It's taking a great deal of time and effort, and I hope you recognize the reason behind it. Can I introduce Commissioner Audrey McQueen, please?
Audrey McQueen: Thanks, Haydn. We're going to move on to the livestock crisis. Cattle production in Catron County generates over $17 million a year, annually, and is vital to the local economy and wildlife habitat management. Yet, we are facing a critical crisis, significant cattle losses, drastic changes in land management practices, and growing safety concerns. This isn't just an economic issue, it impacts wildlife, public safety, and the sustainability of our grazing lands. The decline in cattle is eroding tax revenue and threatening the balance between ranching-wildlife conservation and community health. Immediate intervention is essential to protect our resources, livestock, and the future of Catron County.
In 2025 alone, we have already experienced more depredations than in all of 2023 and '24 put together. This rapid escalation threatens over $17 million in beef production, the economic backbone of our county. Cattle losses are soaring, land management is disrupted, and safety concerns are worsening. This is a crisis spiraling out of control and demands immediate action. Delay will only deepen the devastation, our livestock, our wildlife, and our community's future at risk. Next slide. Okay, next slide. Here, and you'll

have it in the book to show the kills. With 120 confirmed kills already this year, the concerns are escalating, and this will give you the numbers through the years of how the depredations are going up. Next slide.
Here's the cattle loss, more confirmed depredations in '25, and the grid of how it's going up. Next slide. All right. Next, I'm going to talk about producers that are not fully compensated. I just want to say, if producers were getting fully compensated, we wouldn't be screaming about it financially. There's no way we're even coming close to the devastation. CLLA pays only on applications for compensation. Those applications require a depredation report. There are producers who don't want federal agents on their property for any reason, including depredation investigations. They don't get compensated at all. For those who do apply, CLLA pays on livestock that are found and deemed to be confirmed or probable, not all animals that are killed.
For instance, right now as it's hot, if you don't find that animal within three or four days, you're not going to get it confirmed because it's already decayed and past the point of getting it confirmed on it. That payment is not available on cattle carcasses that Wildlife Services says are too far gone to make a finding on. That means the payment is really only available on relatively fresh depredations. Even when eligible for that payment, the payment does not include value of the calf she was carrying if pregnant, the time value of the money lost because don't have the calf to sell sooner than you will with a replacement, reimbursement for the cost of finding a replacement or pay for genetics in the herd that cannot be replaced by buying a new cow.
I'm going to add, I actually just had a wolf kill on a 400-weight calf 3 days ago that was confirmed wolf. The mental anguish that we're going through to drive up on that calf, I had just put it out, it hadn't even been on the pasture five days, to see a 400-weight calf, completely healthy, torn apart by the wolves, the mental anguish you go through as a rancher, it's hard to take. The CLLA will shortly make a payment for indirect damages in the amount of $600,000, which the legislature authorized. That payment is intended to cover the decrease in conception rates and the decrease in weaning rates because of wolves. The CLLA works closely with Fish and Wildlife Service to calculate those losses based largely on the intensity of wolf interactions.
What CLLA pays understates actual damages for the indirect losses from wolves because the CLLA does not have the sufficient funding. CLLA doesn't pay for active conflict avoidance, value and cost of rancher time, or expense to keep wolves away from cattle in current active conflict situations with wolves, horseback time to keep cattle and wolves apart, feed, if need to do that to keep them apart, transportation, if need to haul them away. CLLA doesn't pay for missing cattle. CLLA doesn't have the funds to do that. FSA's LIP program does, but it is inadequate. Must have a third party verify the cattle they're missing because of wolves. Sometimes, this isn't possible.
LIP payments are not market value. See Table 2 behind Tab 6 in your notebook. Note that the 5.1 comes from Fish and Wildlife Service. Evidence indicates that 5.1 understates actual numbers of missing cattle due to the wolves in our large, rugged pastures in southwest New Mexico. Okay, next slide. Next, I'm going to go into ranchers are trying to coexist. Ranchers are risking everything to coexist with wolves. Calving in the summer amidst the elk calves, altering grazing patterns to avoid wolf dens, and riding herd daily to protect their cattle. They are adapting under immense pressure, but those efforts are no match for the escalating depredations. Without targeted management and intervention, our sacrifices will continue to be in vain, and the crisis is only going to worsen.
Next slide. I'm going to go into the impacts on wildlife. Outfitters and hunters are alarmed by the declining number of deer and elk, directly linked to increasing wolf activity. Wolves are pushing elk outside of their historic range, displacing them from the Gila, and onto private lands.
Frequent encounters with wolves raise safety concerns, while the overall quality of wildlife and hunting experiences is on a sharp decline. This escalation threatens our natural resources, ecosystem balance, and the economic vitality of outdoor recreation. I, personally, am also a big-game outfitter and have spent a lot of my time with elk, especially in the rut, September and October.
I'm going to say, 8 out of every 10 encounters whenever you're calling the elk, whenever they're rutting, wolves come in. As far as the quality of the hunting and the elk actually acting like they did 30 years ago and bugling and coming in, they're quiet. They're probably 70% different. The elk act different. They don't

talk as much because if they do, and when they go to talking, like I said, 8 out of every 10 times, wolves come in. Next slide.

Buster Green: Just summarizing things, and here's where on the sheet, because we're talking about confirmed kills and stuff, that the true costs go much beyond. They go further beyond than what we've discussed here because we're dealing with pastures that are 20,000 acres in size here. This isn't Kansas, where you can drive out and you see all your cattle in a 10-acre field. For every cow that we find that has been taken, and that's confirmed, we're estimating that there's five that had been taken. Those numbers will be backed up by, and we can provide anyone who's interested, every ranch that's here that runs their business professionally. They preg check in the fall. They maintain and put out cows that are 100% tested-bred.

There is a normal 2% to 6% mortality rate, whether that calf is absorbed or given live birth. You take that out, but then when you have ranches that are weaning under a 50% rate, say they only got 10% of that calf crop confirmed killed, you're dealing with basically 30% to 40% that is unconfirmed, and those are in wolf-heavily-populated areas. Then, just the emotional cost and the change to the way of our lives. I know that for myself, personally, we have wolf tracks all around our house that have been documented, and have lost livestock there, but it's caused-- When you can't let your kids go out to the trampoline without being supervised just because you don't know-- and I don't live out in the middle of anywhere. I live right off of a paved road.

It's impacted the entire county and the way that we live, so we hope that those considerations will be taken into account. Yes. Well, no, I was just going to say, right now, for whatever reason, and I applaud and I'm grateful, but they had some depredations in Cochise County, and I'm grateful for these individuals that introduced themselves that showed up here. In some manner or way, they got the Fish and Wildlife Services to remove the wolves from Cochise County. We aren't afforded that luxury here in Catron County. We're not sure how that happened, and we're looking into that because, as part of the Wolf Recovery Act, and as part of the designated area, everybody should be enjoying what we are, but unfortunately, we are enduring the brunt of that program here in Catron County.

Haydn Forward: Thank you, Buster. I'm glad Buster spoke specifically about what we're experiencing in Catron County. This is important. If you'll all go to Tab 7 in your books, take a look at the map, Catron County is not alone in this. We have been discussing what we're experiencing with our neighboring counties, and they are professional government agencies. They're looking at fact-based confirmations of what is happening in Catron County, what economic impact, what personal impact, public impact, pets being snatched off of people's porches, horses being killed 100 yards away from their main entrance to the home. This is concerning.

If you look again at the map, you'll see that 12 of our surrounding counties have passed resolutions for their own concern and in support of Catron County. It's important that this issue is addressed. Now, just last night, I received a notice from Grant County Soil and Water Conservation District. They passed a resolution. I've got a copy right here, and I think one of the representatives from Grant County Soil and Water is going to show you the resolution. That makes 13. 13 in support of the issues that Catron County is facing, and that they know is running towards them, that they're going to be facing soon. That's 13. On the 19th, Sierra County is going to vote on their own emergency declaration. That's going to be 14, so we're looking, in a week, potentially 14. In a month, we're going to have 16. We're going to other counties, this time north of I-40. These are items that you all have the ability to address. In example, right now, if a wolf goes north of I-40, if that wolf is chasing livestock on private property, you cannot legally shoot it. You can if it's south of I-40. We know that wolves are migrating. We know it's happening, so we need to pay attention, or I hope we'll pay attention to the expansion of concern.

Let's move into a summary. You've been very patient listening to all this. I will move this along quickly. I don't believe it's necessary for me to read the notes that you see here, but please do focus on population control. We're saturated. We have met our standards for endangered species within Catron County. If you look at the 10%, 15% over the actual count, we've met the standards that we need to. We are definitely seeing the saturation. Because we're tied to Mexico, we cannot take the wolf off of the endangered species list. You all have a voice with Fish and Wildlife on when is this going to be addressed. The habituation, we need to somehow get the fight or flight response back into the wolves.

If you take a look at the next slide, collaboration with Fish and Wildlife is what we're hoping we can get from New Mexico Game and Fish, more collaboration, and please involve your stakeholders, your county governments that we're not working off of emotion. We're working off of fact-based data. Please involve your stakeholders rather than isolating us from communication. You all have a tremendous amount of leverage with Fish and Wildlife. There's something else I need to mention. I hesitate to do it, but I'm going to.

Range riders, that's something that you all can implement very quickly. Hazers, range riders, we know that range riders pushing wolves onto your neighbor's allotment is not the answer. What is the answer is real-time GPS, where we know where the wolves are. We've proven over the years that our ranchers are not going to go out and shoot wolves. They are trying to work. They're trying to coexist. That's the keyword. If we have range riders with real-time GPS, you can see a cluster of the packs. You know what's happening. You can go take a look, and you're not going to haze them, but you're going to see what they're feeding on. It'll give us an opportunity to identify the kills.

Right now, the 10-J rule, what is it, 11, was shifted to 11.1, where **[unintelligible 01:23:43]** subcutaneous hemorrhaging is required. That makes it extremely difficult. With that, I think you all realize that for every confirmed kill, we have data that shows up to 12 kills go unconfirmed because you can't find them. Range riders can find them if real-time GPS is made available, where you see the clusters. It's going to benefit the fact-based counts on the wolves, the fact-based counts on what they're feeding on. It's going to benefit our ranchers because they will get paid for those animals that have been killed.

I know this is going long. I hope that you look at the next slide. This is probably the most important slide up there, and it is Catron County saying thank you. Thank you for paying attention. Thank you for giving our stakeholders a conduit directly in with you. Thank you for your collaboration that you're going to have with Game and Fish. Thank you for getting ahead of the problem.

Richard Stump: Commissioners, that was a well-done presentation. Thank you for all that information. We appreciate that. There's certain things you're asking for that can be done by statute, but we appreciate all of this input and all this information. I think it's important everyone here knows what people that live with wolves have to go through, and I believe it's true your lives have changed. I think it's really important for all of us to realize that, and I can see the trauma in your community. Commissioners, do any of you have anything to say or input?

Tirzio Lopez: I have a comment. Mr. Chair, members of the commission, and commissioners of Catron County, thank you for the presentation.

Haydn Forward: I was asked to run the video, and we're going to dismiss that, please. Now you've got the audio. I am handicapped when it comes to IT. Where is my savior?

Tirzio Lopez: Not so excited to see the video. [silence] Thank you, though. Again, thank you for the presentation. Our job as commissioners is to hear both sides of the story, and apply that story to **[unintelligible 01:26:41]** somewhere there's a truth in there, and being scientifically based. Living in Rio Arriba County and being a very small sheep producer, I'm concerned regarding what's happening in Colorado. It's not if they're going to cross the state line. It's when they're going to cross the state line. CPW does put out notifications on their website. Interestingly enough, there was a gray wolf that did get close to Archuleta County, just right outside of Pagosa. As a crow flies, between that and Rio Arriba, it's very close. We will be looking to you to see how we're going to manage that in the years to come. It's concerning. I see in the cost that Catron County is going through, I hear the science base of the people who want wolves, they are part of our ecological basis, they need to be part of the landscape, but at the end of the day, we need to try to find a way to work together. That's why we're here, because everybody has a voice. Once again, thank you for your presentation, and thank you for hosting this here in reserve. Thank you so much.

Haydn Forward: One other quick note, Chairman Stump. I understand the concern about statutory confinements and restrictions. If you go to Tab 1, and we made sure it was in Tab 1, we are making recommendations on what you can do, and we will offer all the support you need in those categories.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner, and thank you, Commissioner Lopez. You made a valid point. We need to all figure this out together, because we are in this together. You guys are living it because they're here with you, but I think it's really important we think out of the box and try to come up

with some solutions for the wolf. The wolf's the bottom line here. That's what we're talking about, but it's also the social aspect of your community. Any other commissioners have anything to say?
Fernando Clemente: I want to say thank you for the presentation. Very good information. As a wildlife biologist, I'm going to say, the concerns are there. I just want to put in everybody's mind how valuable a species can be for an ecosystem. With that, that doesn't mean that-- It should be well-managed. It should be sustainable. With that being said, I hear everybody's concern, and I hear everybody's point, everybody has a strong point and a concern, but we need to understand that the key here is the species here. If we work together, we can make it very successful. What I'm saying is, let's come up with ideas or recommendations where we can coexist.
That species, I believe, is very valuable. I lived in countries that once you lose one species, you realize what you lost. Everything changes just like everything changes when you introduce it. I think here is we choose the communication, and we need to work together. Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Clemente.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Mr. Chair?
Richard Stump: Commissioner.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Commissioners, Mr. Chair, I do have something to say, and I hope the commissioners that are online might also want to say something. I'm going to try and make this very brief. Thank you very much for coming forward today, county commissioners. I also want to thank every single person that's present here today. Those of you who introduced yourselves and those of you who did not introduce yourselves, still takes courage, it takes a desire, a passion to speak up and be present. I think you started off your presentation with a very important point, and that was how this issue has generated fear, some threats of violence, and worry, just a lot of worry. That's my word.
I think that it is time that we dispel that. We cannot live in a civil society where we cannot speak to one another civilly and with respect. I'm very happy to see everybody here. As far as I can see, it's going to be a respectful meeting, and I want to say thank you. Now, I also want to say that trust is very important. Trust does not come easy. It is earned. I'm not liked by many people for who I am or what I do, but at the end of the day, I hope I have some respect, and I have some trust in that people know that I will be who I am and I will speak honestly.
That said, my comment, that's my foundation, what I want to say is that your material here today is very professional and it's very helpful. Thank you. For the sake of transparency for the public, it would be helpful for them to know that your material, this wonderful notebook, the first half are the slides that were presented, then the tabs include other material. If you could, commissioners, Commissioner Green, Commissioner Forward, Commissioner McQueen, if you could assure us that all of this material will be on your county website somewhere, so there's, again, transparency, and we're all working together honestly and respectfully.
When I say honestly, I want to say that because I have heard anecdotally, "Oh, they're lying. Those aren't facts." I hear it from both sides. Before coming to this meeting, a number of commissioners, people reach out to us, and they say, "Oh, they're threatening us." It's on both sides, everywhere. To start building trust and working towards civility let's be transparent, and let's try and build that honesty, whatnot. I'm not accusing anybody, I'm not saying anybody's a liar. Please forgive me. I'm saying that I'm not. Was that my time up? [laughs] I have a couple of questions, if not now, because I had a lot of questions.
You have data here. At some point, if you could, not at this meeting, but somewhere else-- We have the US Wildlife. I don't remember their titles, but I'm going to mention their names. Stewart, Paul, is it Brady, and Seth. I'm not sure if they're going to be speaking. No, they're not. At at some point, can y'all work together? It'd be nice to know that some of the data's confirmed by the US or the Department of Game and Fish. Numbers are very important, and statistics, building on truth. Another comment or question that I had, fight-flight response to wolves. That reminds me of growing up in Los Alamos. We have bears, we have mountain lions, you name it, bobcats, they're all there. They can be very intimidating, threatening, let's say. I don't think that has ever changed. We always have fight-flight, we know how to do that. Range riders, I know you're looking for solutions. I thank you for being a bit more specific, maybe hearing from people today, having that specifics. I could go on, and I won't, because I think I'm going to hear another beep if I keep going. [laughs] Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you all.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Hickey. Commissioner.
Deborah Mahler: I was just going to answer Mrs. Hickey. I will say, and we didn't mention it, that we have worked very well with U.S. Fish and Wildlife, with Stewart Jacks and Brady McGee, all very good people to work with. They've been very helpful, and actually enjoy working with them. Just wanted to mention that.
Richard Stump: Thank you very much for mentioning that. I appreciate that.
Haydn Forward: I just have one question, just for my knowledge. You mentioned here, no more adult wolf release into saturated areas. What do you mean by that?
Buster Green: We mean on those areas that already are saturated with population count that we know are there, to not reintroduce or not add to that.
Haydn Forward: The reason why I'm asking is, is that constantly done? For it to be a bullet point of concern, is adults being introduced? Those adults comes from where? Is it captivity? What is--
Buster Green: Well, we can tell you that there is instances where there will be problem wolves, and they'll take them to another area and release them with other wolves where there are. Essentially, if you take a criminal from one area that's been doing bad things and you introduce him to another area, unless he's confined, he's probably going to end up doing the same things that he's done in that other area.
Richard Stump: Okay, **[inaudible 01:38:22]**
Buster Green: Sorry, can I just make one comment, Mr. Stump? We've only sought for solutions and to coexist with these animals, and they are. They're a creation of God. Wolves are. They are acting on their natural abilities and their inclinations. What we're asking is that they're allowed to go to those natural inclinations. We think that a lot of the problems that we're enduring is because they have been raised by humans, they have been fed, and then they've been introduced. Then to acclimate to the wild, some don't adjust as well as others. Hopefully, these things, these concerns will change with time. We understand and we know the problems that we're going through here, and we definitely want to be respectful.
If somebody from Santa Fe or Silver City that is in support of this, if they would take the wolf pack that's by my house and put it by their house, I'm all for it. We're about sharing. You can have my wolf pack. I'm sure Audrey would share her eight wolf packs. We're all about sharing, and we want people to understand the issues that we're presenting. Thank you.
Deborah Mahler: I'd like to answer Fernando as well. As far as the packs go, I just think, like you take Cochise County, they had six depredations. They removed the collared animals. To make it more fair for everybody, when you get a ranch that has 4 or 5 packs on them and they're getting 50, 60 kills a year, how is that rancher being treated like you get someone else 30 miles away and they have no depredations? They've got to be able to, as part of management, spread the packs out. I don't think it's even fair to the wolves and their families to have to have five or six packs, and they're killing each other and fighting, which I'm hearing from Fish and Wildlife is starting to happen, because there's a saturation of packs. I think they need to be spread out. Just wanted to answer the question.
Haydn Forward: Thank you, Commissioner Clemente. Thank you for that question. You see me scrambling. I'm looking through the notebook here. We do have your answer in the notebook. It's science-based. When we say no more introduction of male wolves, there are reasons to introduce additional wolves, whether it's for gene improvement. I will find the data that we supplied in the notebook, and I'll share it with you. Our point is, we have hit the number required for North America. To continue to take some of these 350 wolves that are in captivity and continue to push them in North America, when we were right on the bubble of hitting the number required, I think the only reason for introducing a new animal at this stage would be for gene improvement. I will show you that data as soon as I find it. Thank you.
Richard Stump: Commissioners, thank you for that presentation. We have a ton of public comment-- Do commissioners have anything else to say? No.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Mr. Chair, commissioners, yes, I do have a comment. If we could take a break, it's 10:54, that will give others an opportunity, but we could-- No, you don't want to take a break?
Richard Stump: I'd rather take a break after the public comment. Anybody else have any feelings on that?

Sharon Salazar Hickey: The public comment is going to be about two hours, isn't it, if we have at least 70--
Richard Stump: That's going to be a while.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Oh.
Richard Stump: Okay, if you want to take a break, we can take a break.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: No.
[sound cut]
[silence]
Richard Stump: Okay, we're going to start public comment. I'd just like to remind everybody, let's be civil and respectful and try to make this thing happen. I'm going to start with Molly Swan. Yes, I think she is.
[pause 01:43:20]
Molly Swan: I want to thank everybody for this opportunity to share, and just say that we're in a time where we're so split with what we believe. What I'm hearing in this room is people listening to each other. I want to remind us that that's how we're going to come to a solution, that there's more than one side of the truth here. It gives me such hope to be in this room with people from such opposite points of view. Thank you all for listening to each other with your hearts open. I care about the wolves. I've been thinking about Noah's Ark last night, how Noah was told to take two animals of each species in a time of great crisis on the earth because all species were made by God, and God wanted all species to make it through.
I think we need to be careful as human beings, that we think of ourselves as more important than the other species. I don't think God thinks that way. I hope that our solution for this problem will be everybody's needs will get met somehow by compromise, and that these beautiful creatures that lived here a long time before we got here will have a chance to keep on living somehow. Thank you.
Richard Stump: I'm going to go ahead and call five names so you guys get in line and we can keep this moving. David Heft, Louis Sanders, Tom Paterson, Anna **[unintelligible 01:45:11]**, Maresa Pryor-Luzier.
David Heft: David Heft. During my career, I served as an ADC specialist with USDA in Sequoia County. Wildlife biologist, BLM, covering Sequoia and Catron counties. Retired as a district wildlife biologist out of the Magdalena Ranger District here for the Cibola, also here in Catron County. I'm fairly familiar with the area and the wildlife in it, and the issues. This past New Year's, I was on a ranch between here and **[unintelligible 01:45:53]**, trapping coyotes for a rancher.
The ranch has two main roads through it, subdivisions on two sides, fairly well-settled. Fish and Wildlife said they had a radio-collared wolf run part of the ranch. We avoided that part of the ranch when I was working on it. Still, in 12 nights, I turned loose 6 wolves. All of them released unharmed, none of them collared, none of them marked in any way. I was absolutely shocked. I've been in wolf country up north in Alaska and Canada. In some cases, actually hunting for wolves. I've never seen that kind of wolf density. As a biologist working in this area, the rancher's estimate was he had 11 wolves on 30,000 acres. Okay, that's not a natural density for an apex predator.
About the only good thing that came out of that was he got six wolves with an aversive conditioning to humans now. The bad thing is, if you have to put them in a trap again, it's going to be a little tougher if they do something they shouldn't be doing. My advice to the rancher was, "I wouldn't worry about coyotes," he's probably going to have a wolf and also a lion issue during calving season. These people are not exaggerating. What I saw as a biologist on the ground, like I said, I was dumbfounded. Apex predators don't naturally exist at those densities on the landscape. Some of the solutions they've suggested are very reasonable to me as a biologist.
Working with local communities in my career was extremely important. We have to listen to them because they're the ones that live with the wildlife and the problem. Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Mr. Heft. Louis Sanders.
Louis Sanders: Commissioners, thank you for having this and listening to us. I own a ranch up in northern Catron County. I've lost nine head confirmed to the wolves since January 17th. Eight were calves. One, eight-year-old cow. Not only does those calves and that cow dead and gone, but it's disrupting my breeding program. It'll disrupt the cycles to them heifers that I lost calves out of. They're not going to breed back. If they do, it's going to be really late. That's going to throw my program in turmoil.

That's part of the way that it's affecting us. Then, as everybody knows, you're out all night running around trying to keep your livestock safe. That's abnormal.
My main concern is this deal with Mexico. There's no officers from here going down and regulating what they're doing. They're probably shooting them right away, and we'll never get **[unintelligible 01:48:33]** 200 heads down there. Somehow, we need to address that is my thought. Something's got to change. I don't mind the coexisting thing at all. I'm not here to say I want to kill them all. Surely, we can find a way to balance it out. Right now, it's very, very heavy on the wolf side, and that is detrimental to all the ranchers in the county and Arizona, and anywhere around.
Also, Mr. McGee worked with me quite a bit, and I appreciate that, sir, but I do have a problem. There's a certain female wolf that has killed, been confirmed three on my place, and then two on Farr Cattle Company right next door to my place. It used to be a three-strike program. Now, she's just known killing and keeping killing. I would like to address that, sir, if we could. Thank you very much for your time. God bless Catron County and New Mexico.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Mr. Sanders.
Tom Paterson: Good morning, commissioners. My name is Tom Paterson. I serve as president-elect of the New Mexico Cattle Growers. This year, among other incidents, wolves killed a 500-pound yearling steer 300 feet off my kitchen deck, which is where my grandson plays. On Sunday, wolves were chasing my calves just south of Luna, not far from where we have an elderly resident, and also, a family with young children. This morning, wolves were right there where my cattle are, south of Luna. Public policy about wolves matters. I've worked hard for years to educate decision makers and the public about the reality of living with wolves.
One of the obstacles we've faced is the public's lack of information about what it's like to actually live among wolves. Catron County and many others have encouraged a public education program over the last several months about that reality. We're working to develop solutions that place recovery in the context of real coexistence. That's all since your April 25th meeting in Roswell. In the past, unfortunately, Game and Fish has worked against rural interests on wolves, such as advocating against us on evidence standards to confirm depredations. My question is, what has Game and Fish Department done since your April 25th meeting to address our concerns?
Those of us here in rural New Mexico live with the wolves. Rural New Mexico has a right to exist. We have a right to be heard. On Wednesday, the governor fired an outspoken leader on this commission who had been committed to educating the public and to making sure this commission hears from rural New Mexico on wildlife issues. Again, and especially in light of that firing, I ask, what is the department doing to protect our citizens and our livelihoods from Mexican wolves? What are you, commissioners, directing it to do? Despite what may have been claimed, we have never advocated for extermination. Rather, we have purposefully and deliberately advocated for management, for coexistence. Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Mr. Paterson. Anna **[unintelligible 01:51:59]**.
Ali Morse: Good morning, commissioners. My name is Ali Morse, and I am speaking on behalf of Anna **[unintelligible 01:52:11]**, who could not make it here today. She's from Mimbres, New Mexico, and I'm speaking as an advocate for the Mexican wolf. I want to thank you, commissioners, and the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish for the recent release of Asha and her captive-born mate and pups. It has been 19 years since this successful practice was stopped due to pressure from the cattle industry. I'm sorry I don't have time to go into the many subsidies available to ranchers and the millions of dollars they already receive in deep grazing discounts on public lands, and a variety of reimbursements beyond depredation compensation.
The Mexican gray wolf has a right to be here, just as the ranchers believe they do. The commission should promote tolerance and coexistence, not removal and extirpation. I respectfully ask the commissioners to stop trapping wolves for removal and halt the euthanizing of wolves that have killed livestock. Wolves are too often blamed for livestock deaths due to starvation, disease, poisoning, or injury. Any livestock that have suffered this fate should be immediately removed and disposed of properly to discourage scavenging by wolves. This sensible practice ought to be a requirement for all livestock owners using public lands.

I respectfully request that the commissioners retrieve all government-owned telemetry receivers on loan to ranchers. Furthermore, the codes to locate collared wolves should absolutely not be shared with ranchers or county officials. This would undoubtedly contribute to an increase in the illegal killing of wolves. Finally, I ask the Commission to address the concerns of Catron County ranchers thoughtfully, using verifiable facts and science-based evidence to guide your decisions. The future of the endangered Mexican gray wolf lies in your hands. Please do not allow it to approach the brink of extinction again due to fear, misinformation, and hysteria. Thank you.

Richard Stump: Thank you. Maresa Pryor-Luzier.

Maresa Pryor-Luzier: Good morning. As a resident of Catron County, wolves have not altered my life nor my neighbors. Before I begin, I feel betrayed by Commissioner Pack's actions. It is time to put science-based facts above political influence. For now, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife should remain responsible for managing the Mexican wolf. Let's focus on the facts. In New Mexico, there are 162 wolves organized in 37 packs, of which 16 are breeding pairs. About 39% of these wolves are collared. Most packs are made up of two wolves, each weighing between 50 and 80 pounds, compared to a gray wolf, which is 40 to 175. To start, research shows Mexican wolves need access north of I-40, in areas where historically, intergradation zones existed. Expanding the range will improve genetic diversity. Locations like Mount Taylor and Valles Caldera National Preserve offer promising options for both wolf preservation and potential tourism. Second, it is critical to maintain family groups. Relocating pups to dens is not a solution, and wolves with the strongest genetic profiles must be protected. Preventing accidents is crucial, and many thanks to everyone who helped release Asha with her mate and pups. This marks a hopeful new chapter for the Mexican wolf. Remember, numbers are about genetics, not borders.

Third, ranchers with telemetry access who abuse it, lose it. It's like having a fox in the hen house. Cattle prices are at record highs, yet with public lands nearly reduced to dust bowls in some areas in this county, I have never seen hay supplied to these cattle. We are having antelope, bighorn sheep showing up where never before in our backyard. We ride our horses all over Catron County and have never seen a wolf. Our neighbors have recently seen one, but we understand we live in the wild, and we respect that. Thank you very much.

Richard Stump: Okay. Next slide up. Kelly Schilleman, Nina Eydelman, Adrienne Seltz, Leah Barrett, and Greta Anderson.

Kelly Schilleman: My name is Kelly Schilleman. I'd like to just give a quick, confirmed, happened to me, I lived it, story about my 10-year-old horse that was killed by Mexican gray wolves. The local county wildlife confirmed the kill. The US, I guess the feds confirmed the kill. I received a call from U.S. Fish and Wildlife with their condolences that they also confirmed the kill. It's not money. It's not a numbers game. It's not us versus you. It is I live this. I found my horse killed by wolves. I saw what they had to do to prove that it was wolves that killed my horse. We had two others. We moved them home, and they have been hazed. You can tell when they're hazed.

I can tell when the wolves are around by the way they act, by the way the elk act around us. You don't hear coyotes. When the wolves aren't around, you hear coyotes all the time. Again, this is something that I live daily in Catron County, as does Audrey. It's something that we, actually, are going through. It's not a story that we think is cute that we're making up. I just want to share that. Thank you.

Richard Stump: Nina Eydelman, please.

Nina Eydelman: Good morning, commissioners and everyone. My name is Nina Eydelman. I'm the chief wildlife program and policy officer for Animal Protection New Mexico. Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. We ask that you base your decisions about Mexican wolf management on sound science and data. We would first like to thank everyone involved in the recent release of Asha together with her maiden pups. This marks the first time since 2006 that a bonded Mexican wolf pair with pups was released, and we ask that this continue to be done in the future. The release of such bonded wolf pairs with pups has proven to have a much higher success rate compared to the release of lone pups into wild wolf dens.

We must also allow Mexican wolves to naturally expand their range north of the I-40 boundary. Wolves like Asha have repeatedly crossed this boundary to seek suitable habitat, and we must allow them to expand and establish themselves in areas where they can thrive. This would help create more distinct yet

connected populations that support greater genetic diversity and relieve wolf population pressure on places like Catron County. We request that you reject management strategies that rely on removing or killing wolves for having taken livestock, and instead work with ranchers to implement non-lethal strategies to protect their animals.
An important proactive measure is to require livestock owners using public lands to properly dispose of the carcasses of animals that die from disease and other non-wolf-related causes before wolves scavenge on the carcasses and are drawn to places where vulnerable animals are. Hikers and campers are required to leave no trace, and livestock owners should be held to the same standards when they're using public lands. Wolves are apex carnivores invaluable to the health of New Mexico's ecosystems. We therefore urge you to instruct the department to help US Fish and Wildlife to make these improvements to Mexican Wolf Management. Thank you so much for listening.
Richard Stump: Thank you. Adrienne Seltz. Was that you? Adrienne Seltz? Okay.
Adrienne Seltz: Hi, everyone, and thank you for the opportunity to be here. You've heard a lot of the facts and everything. The bottom line is we need these animals on the ground. We need every wild animal and every wild land that we can have right now because of the condition that we have turned our earth into. I'll get a little heebie-jeebie on you, but I've worked with wolves. I am associated. I work with Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary. I have raised wolf dogs, high-content wolf dogs, amazing, amazing creatures.
That being said, I hear you guys. I hear you. The main reason I wanted to come today is I want to hear what's going on. We don't get to talk. Nobody likes to talk. Everybody's been nasty and fighting a lot. I wish that we could all find a way, whether we make some advisory stakeholder committees or something. We could sit down and start talking about how we can make this work together.
Like Colorado, they made a license plate. My friends have all bought them. That money goes toward coexistence methods that they provide for the ranchers, and these things work. Up in Idaho, there's a project called the Wood River Project. It's been going on 18 years. They're sheep. They've been using fladry and range riders. This is the fourth year they've had zero sheep killed and zero wolves lost to depredations.
The removal of these animals, the killing of these animals, we can't be doing that. That doesn't do anything. There's a study, 2020 Kira Cassidy et al., and they proved that when you kill a wolf in a pack, it disrupts the pack, especially when you're killing the mamas and the papas. Then you've got these juvenile animals that they don't learn how to hunt right. They don't have the pack to hunt right. Then you have increased depredation. I just want to say thank you, and God, let's talk.
Richard Stump: Leia Barrett(ph).
Leia Barnett: Thank you, commissioners, for taking the time to talk about lobos today and for your thoughtful consideration regarding the complexity and importance of this issue. My name is Leia Barnett. I'm a lifelong New Mexican, born and raised in a little valley called Chupadero. I'm an avid outdoorswoman, a hunter, hiker, skier, climber, general lover of wild spaces. I also work on public lands and wildlife issues for an environmental advocacy organization.
Despite what some would have you believe, I'm not, in fact, a soft-handed, naive city dweller. I've spent hundreds of days in the backcountry, including countless nights camping or hunting, many times solo in wolf country, here, in Catron County. I've met some wolves. They couldn't have been more disinterested in me. I've killed and processed and eaten game animals, turkeys, goats, cows, and even a squirrel or two. Some of the most devoted conservationists I know are, in fact, farmers and ranchers.
I don't have any misconceptions about the way the wild world works. It's not fluffy and soft. There's violence and pain and cruelty and suffering, but the people I know who are acting out a version of conservation that I most want to uplift are those who recognize that we are not the only life that matters on this planet. Currently, humans and our livestock make up 96% of the total mammalian biomass on Earth. In other words, our wild neighbors, including animals like blue whales, sea lions, bears, and yes, wolves, account for only 4% of the total weight of mammals in the sea or on the land.
That number astonishes and devastates me. We have been prioritizing and perpetuating ourselves and our own interests for too long, and this human-centric agenda has come at the expense of the very systems we rely on for clean air and water and at the cost of the diversity of life that sustains a habitable

planet for us and for generations to come. We need healthy, functioning ecosystems, and that includes healthy, thriving populations of apex predators like Mexican gray wolves. Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you very much. Greta Anderson.
Greta Anderson: Thank you again, commissioners, for holding this hearing today. We appreciate it. My name is Greta Anderson, Deputy Director of Western Watersheds Project. I hail from Tucson, but we represent 15,000 members and supporters around the West who also support the reintroduction and recovery of Mexican gray wolves. I want to extend my thanks for your efforts and support in releasing Asha. That was a huge, significant event. We couldn't be happier for her and her family. We wish them all the success.
I also want to say that I'm a mom of a 12-year-old daughter and a 11-pound Chihuahua. I spend a lot of time in the backcountry, and I'm concerned about the safety of all of my beloved pets and family members. I understand the concern that you all have. I truly deeply feel for the kids who are afraid to go out in their yard and use their trampoline. I also need to point out that trampolines kill two people a year in the United States and cause countless injuries and are not without risk. My point is to say living is not without risk, and you guys are facing a new risk, and there's ways to mitigate that risk. That's what we're asking you to do.
I also wanted to say that I don't doubt that you all have wolf encounters, but we did a public records request, as we're slightly known to do, and ask for all of the reports from the Sheriff's Office for the last year and a half, and my numbers are quite different from Commissioner Haydn Forward. Out of 20 wolf things classified as wolf calls, there were 6 that involved an actual wolf encounter. Two of those encounters, the wolves were already in traps, and they were being called [chuckles] to report that. I just think that facts do matter. Thank you for listening to the facts.
Richard Stump: Thank you. I'm going to call five more. Leah Barnett again? No? Clive Tuell. Brian Bird, Jesse Deubel, Marilyn Stoke(ph), and Nelson Shirley.
Cindy Tuell: [unintelligible 02:08:31] might be Cindy Tuell, T-U-E-L-L. Is that me? Not Clive.
Female Speaker: Can you say that again, please?
Cindy Tuell: Cindy Tuell, T-U-E-L-L. Is that me? Okay.
Richard Stump: Yes.
Cindy Tuell: Okay. Thank you very much. Thank you, commissioners. Thank you, everybody, for being here today. I'm Cindy Tuell. I work for Western Watersheds Project. I just want to say wolves are and have been a part of our communities for a very long time. Wolves are a part of our communities, just as the deer, the elk, the birds, the trees, and the people. We are all part of this community.
When we live in community with each other, we often have choices to make about how we share our resources. Some folks think wolves shouldn't be part of our community, and I disagree with that, and it's okay if we disagree. Some folks want wolves to go to live in wild places and leave those of us who are in towns alone, but we need to ask ourselves and answer honestly, where have we left for them to go? Where in the Gila have we kept a space free of people and cows so wolves can be truly wild and be wolves?
When we put cows on every piece of available wild land, what choices do we leave the wolves? We have the choice. We can and do choose to have livestock graze on nearly every acre of public lands, and it's also at the sweetheart rate of $1.35 per AUM. When we make that choice, we need to know that we are putting private profit over the public good, of the good of the larger community. We're choosing to have one cow-calf pair or one animal unit month instead of two elk, instead of seven deer, instead of 10 pronghorn, and instead of untold numbers of birds, insects, wild flowers, and instead of clean water and healthy streams.
When we choose cows over wildlife, we leave wolves with no choice because the cows are displacing the prey base of the wolves. We shouldn't blame the wolves for that. We need to take responsibility, and we need to work towards being better community members. I have some numbers about the number of livestock and grazing leases in New Mexico.
For example, there's grazing on 13.5 million acres of BLM lands in New Mexico. In the Gila alone, there are 4.2 million acres grazed, and there's over 38,000 cows, and there's just under 200 wolves. I think we

need to look at these numbers and get a better balance in place. We also have lots of public records to share on the Cochise County depredations, if anyone's interested. Thanks.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Cindy.
Brian Bird: Hello, chairman and commissioners. Thank you for having us here today in Reserve. My name is Brian Bird, and I represent the organization, Defenders Wildlife, with about 22,000 members and supporters in the State of New Mexico. Defenders has been engaged in the Mexican Wolf Recovery Program from day one. We are unique in that we spend a large portion of our annual budget in New Mexico helping ranchers offset the costs of operating in wolf country. These funds are leveraged by the state to secure additional federal assistance.
Before the state and federal compensation programs were established, Defenders of Wildlife administered a livestock loss compensation program until 2012. Since then, we've worked with the federal and state agencies to address issues related to compensation and conflict reduction. These cooperative efforts, and I emphasize "cooperative," have demonstrated success and contributed to the slow recovery of this important animal.
While wolf numbers continue to grow, the ratio of confirmed depredations per 100 wolves is declining. The recovery program has shown a growing wolf population for at least eight years now. From zero wild wolves in the 1970s to around 286 today, the Mexican wolf illustrates that what we can achieve when we're working together, guided by science and sharing the responsibility to solve these problems, it's proof that long-term dedication can bring species back from the brink.
We all want the program to succeed while making it acceptable to the residents of Catron County, but the wild population remains highly fragile, and more work remains. Any unscientific or reckless changes in the program at this point puts the recovery at risk as well as many years of hard work by the Department of Game and Fish, as well as US Fish and Wildlife Service, and ranchers here in Catron County.
We appreciate the challenges Wolf Recovery presents to the people living and working here and there are resources and solutions available to address those concerns. Defenders of Wildlife asks the State Game Commission and Department of Game of Fish to remain committed to the recovery program. Thank you all very much.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Brian.
Jesse Deubel: Mr. Chair, commissioners, Jesse Deubel, executive director of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation. The New Mexico Wildlife Federation believes strongly in the North American model of conservation. One of the tenets of that model, of course, is that wildlife management must be based in science. I want to commend the Commission and the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish for cooperating with and working with US Fish and Wildlife Service on the Mexican Wolf Recovery Program. I'd like to add that the Endangered Species Act is very, very important, but success is being removed from the list. That's ultimately what the New Mexico Wildlife Federation really wants to see is the success of the Wolf Recovery Program so that the management of this iconic species can be returned to the state. While the Endangered Species Act is critically important, I also want to emphasize how efficient it is to prevent wildlife from going on the list to begin with.
In that regard, I want to thank the agency and the Commission for your continued work on the State Wildlife Action Plan and your increased emphasis on species of greatest conservation need, because when we can prevent species from getting ESA protection, I think everybody wins. Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Jesse. Marilynn Stoke.
Female Speaker: Stone.
Richard Stump: Stowe?
Marilynn Stone: I'll be brief. Thank you for letting us give comments. I support many of the conservation groups here; Center for Biological Diversity, WildEarth Guardians, the Sierra Club, Animal Protection New Mexico, the last gentleman that just spoke, and the gentleman before him. New Mexico, we need ranchers. We need ranchers. We need wolves. We need science.
As we have federal employees here across the country, New Mexico is kind of seen as a backwater, kind of, when really, we have two incredible national laboratories here. I ask you, when you make your decision and policies on the Mexican gray wolf, use science. We have a history of that in our state, and I

would like the federal employees to know that we apply science, not hysteria. Everybody else has mentioned all the different things, so I won't go into that, but thanks for letting me talk.
Richard Stump: Thank you. Nelson Shirley.
[pause 02:15:49]
Nelson Shirley: Commissioners, ladies and gentlemen, my comments are fairly short here. Well, I'm on the County Livestock Loss Authority. I'm the vice chair of the board. One of the things that didn't get expressly said in the presentation from the commissioners was the lack of funding that's going to be available for both depredation and for indirect losses and conflict avoidance.
Currently, in this next year, we will have a shortfall of at least $400,000 to pay for projected depredations and indirect damages. Out of the 1.5 million from the state of New Mexico, we're going to spend 600 this year, plus almost another 100 for depredations. Depredations are running and are projected to run the same, over $420,000 a year. The federal government is only providing about $90,000. We don't know what the next tranche of money is going to be in the '25 grant.
That means we're going to be talking about nearly a million dollars per year in depredations and indirect losses. That's the first thing. The second thing I'd like to comment to everybody that's in this room that's a rancher and livestock producer, I think everyone needs to be aware that fish and wildlife has actually taken wolves. At this point in time, we're actually making constructive moves to remove wolves that are problems, that are killing livestock.
The idea of downlisting this animal under a 4(d) rule and turning it over to the state is probably a really bad idea. We need to keep it under the Fish and Wildlife Services auspices, whether it goes to a 4(d) or a revised 10(j) rule. It's something everybody in this room needs to be aware of. Thank you very much.
Richard Stump: Thank you. Next five, Rex Stone, Carolyn Nelson, Laura Schneberger, Tommy Christiansen, and Roy Farr.
Rex Stone: My name is Rex Stone. Thank you, commissioners. I drove down from Albuquerque today just to get a feel for what's going on. I support the Mexican gray wolf effort. I support all the environmental groups that are here. Their leaders are quite capable. I wanted to be here just to be a face of those dumb city dwellers that are expecting too much from people down here. What I've seen is Catron County looks like they've done a lot. I'm actually impressed with the education efforts that you're doing to learn to live with the gray wolves. I'm actually very encouraged with the suggestions they put towards the Committee to say, "Hey, this is how we can do a better job of learning to live together."
I spent several years living in Europe. My job took me there where they didn't have wilderness. I was shocked that there was no wilderness in Western Europe. I went to a national park there, and the national park was like preserving traditional ways of life for people, in this case, sheepherders. So proud that here in New Mexico we actually have wilderness. That wilderness deserves a mature ecosystem with Mexican gray wolves and the apex, and it deserves your lifestyles, and learning to live with those, I really appreciate your efforts to do that. I hope that we can get there. Please, continue that effort. Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you. Roy Farr.
Roy Farr: Thank you, Chairman and commissioners, for showing up. I hope you can do us good. I wanted to come up with some analogy to help convey our position to you, and I couldn't. All I could come up with was the word "insanity." I don't know how-- You do the same thing over and over and over and hope for a different outcome. I don't know how many wolf meetings I've been to, and it just gets worse for the rancher. It doesn't get any better. The Fish and Wildlife's game plan is flawed unbelievably. You got to have so many wolves in Mexico. Mexican people are smart. There ain't nothing going to happen down there. [chuckles] Their plan can't work. It's impossible.
I go back to the spotted owl. It had to have old-growth timber. Anyway, ask all the loggers in Reserve how that went for them. The wolf is the same thing for the rancher as the spotted owl was for the loggers. Now, you drive in, look at all the dead trees. Now, you hear on the news every day, "Wildfires. Wildfires." Now, it's flooding because there is no grass or timber to stop the water, to soak it up. That's all I can think of is insanity, and I hope you guys can do us some good. Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you, sir. Tommy Christiansen? Is Tammy here today? [silence] Thank you. Laura Schneberger?

Laura Schneberger: Sorry about that. Mr. Chairman and commissioners, thank you for having us here today. We really appreciate you coming into our neck of the woods. I live in Western Sierra County. There are at least six ranchers in Western Sierra County that are suffering the impacts of the wolf recovery right now. Our first wolf depredation was in 1999. We had the Campbell Blue Pack come all the way across from Arizona into our ranch in Western Sierra County, where our little kids were, and circle the house while they were doing chores.

This is not new, and nothing has been done to come up with a policy to deal with habituated wolves and children. My daughter was held up horseback by two Mexican wolves when she was 13 years old. This is not new. Do something about this, please. Come up with a policy, encourage US Fish and Wildlife Service to come up with a realistic policy to deal with this. Our kids shouldn't have to be afraid.

Next, I think we've had at least six litters born in Western Sierra County in the last three to four years without any collaring, any counting. We have one collared wolf in Western Sierra. He is a livestock depredator. I have him on trail camera killing a calf on our driveway right there at our house. He has been the only collared wolf for quite a long time now, and we are going to be the ones who have Asha and her family, as it said in the media.

I don't think she's going to make it. We're saturated with wolves. They're just not collared, and they're not counted. Now, I do mitigate as best I can. I barely go to meetings anymore, do anything anymore because I run livestock guardian dogs. I am an unpaid range rider almost constantly. I am out there in my cattle trying to keep them out.

We ended up getting these dogs in 2021 as a gift from people who really were worried about us surviving. We were having major depredations. I can't even remember how many we had, but we would lie in bed at night and listen to them howling while they were killing our yearlings on the hillside in two feet of snow. I'm urging you guys to make sure that the science is followed, not just one side of the science.

Richard Stump: Thank you very much. Carolyn?

Carolyn Nelson: Hello. I like to study. I was a teacher, and I like to do research. These public lands that we're on right now, these are mineral lands where grazing is not prohibited. If you look up in the US Forest Service, I don't know it's the handbook or whatnot, but it says that the national forest is inside our ranches. When everyone says, "These are national forests," well, yes, they are. You have the right to enter, but you do not have the right to hurt our business.

A rancher's job is to feed the nation, not the wolf. If you go to the Endangered Species Act and you read within the first section, it says that it's based upon four treaties. If you collectively read these four treaties, they will say that it is not to harm agriculture. The first part of the Migratory Bird Treaty was to actually protect the farmers by protecting the insectivorous birds that would eat the insects that were eating the crops.

Collectively, this wolf program should not be harming agriculture. We have to look is when we do not remove the animal right away, as it says in the treaties, are we following the law? Now, you guys gave somebody a ticket for not following the law. Are we following the laws when we do not allow removal of the animal right away? Undue economic hardship is also in the Endangered Species Act. I think it's specifically under hardships. I don't know. I guess that's about all I have to say. I have a brochure here. $1.35 per animal unit, [chuckles] will that work?

Richard Stump: Thank you. Thank you, Carolyn.

Carolyn Nelson: Sorry.

Richard Stump: Tom Shelley?

Tom Shelley: Thank you, Commissioners, and thank you all for being here. I'm Tom Shelley. I'm a Grant County Commissioner and also a supervisor on the Soil and Water Conservation District in Grant County. I'm also a fifth-generation rancher. We homesteaded and have been ranching in the wilderness for before there was a national forest or wilderness.

I read through the entire wolf recovery plan that's been updated in 2022, that's the most recent I could find, to see if there was any mention or any thought put into public safety. There was nothing in that document that I could find. I read the entire thing, and I was astounded that that was not a thought process. It was probably written by biologists, and they're really good at "What are we going to do to recover the wolf itself?"

In this country, we know we're going to have conflict, and that needs to be addressed. To me, a recommendation is that going forward with all these species, but especially apex predators, there absolutely should be a very well-thought-out public safety aspect. That's why, regardless of all the controversial comments that were made, Grant County did pass a resolution in support of Catron and Socorro County's declarations because mainly, we perceived and believe that our families have not been put at the forefront of "Okay. What are you going to do?" or "How are you going to be-
Richard Stump: Thank you, Tom.
Tom: -considered?" Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you. Mike Wear?
?Speaker: What?
Richard Stump: Mike Wear?
[pause 02:29:51]
Mike Wear: Sorry. I didn't hear. I had to go to the restroom. Wow. Now I'm out of air. Mike Wear, Willcox, Arizona. I believe that this Wolf Program has been very successful. To all the NGOs here, you guys have done a great job. You're just not counting your on collars, and you need to count the on collars because that's where a lot of this population boom and these clusters are taking place.
You also got a problem with the Wolf Program, with the hybridization. Y'all talk about the genetic purity of the wolf and wanting to maintain it. Now you've got them cross-breeding with coyotes. We've got coyotes in Southern Arizona that are running 32 to 36 to 38 millimeters in the canine spreads. Coyotes win 40 to 45 pounds. Absurd. Unheard of. I, too, have a biology degree in wildlife, New Mexico State University, July 1981, Mr. Clemente.
I do understand a little bit about the genetics that took place with what's taking place. If you really want to do justice to your program, you need to start really looking at it from a different point of view. As far as the compensation programs, I hurt every time I lose a cow or a calf. Right now, I've got $22,700 in losses. One confirmed kill, just one confirmed kill, folks. That's pretty sad, but I've got a small ranch, an easy ranch, not a great big ranch. It's flat. It's grassy country. We could get around it in a real quick hurry, and I'm still missing six calves that I haven't found yet. That's due to these on collars and the hybridization of the wolves that are taking place today. Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Mike. Peter Schoenburg.
Peter Schoenburg: Thank you, commissioners. Thank you, everyone. My name is Peter Schoenburg. I've been on the board of WildEarth Guardians for 18 years as president, an outdoorsman, spent most of my adult life exploring New Mexico. I also had an encounter with f2475, the "Asha" in the Wheeler Peak Wilderness in a winter hike with my dog. It was an extraordinary experience and also recommitted me to the idea of coexistence with wolves.
They are beneficial to ecosystems. The studies in Yellowstone have made it clear, improves repairing environments, better deer herd, healthier elk herds, and they've given rise to a major tourism boost for little towns like Gardiner, Montana, lodging, outfitters guides, all the people come, particularly in the winter, which is typically not a busy season to see wolves in Yellowstone.
I'm a believer in protecting both wolves and the ranchers that have to live with them. I think one area is range riders, electric fences, and something we haven't talked about, which is Pay for Presence, P4P. I respect the comments by the ranchers about "It's not just depredations, it's loss in terms of the productivity of cattle herds." Pay for the presence of the wolves on their leased property, which could be a better way to coexist in this process.
I'd also ask Fish and Wildlife to do a better job by not releasing just pups but allowing families to be released to the wild and to improve the genetic diversity by upping the amount and the range of wolf area. I note that wolves have coexisted with agricultural and ranching communities in Europe, France, Italy, and Spain for centuries. Countries that are much more heavily populated than Catron County, and that there's no reason we can't achieve that kind of same coexistence. Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Peter. Tom Klumker. Tom Klumker and Zeno Kiehne after him. Wait. Let me see that again.
?Speaker: Okay.

Tom Klumker: Thank you, Director and commissioners and public. This is Tom Klumker. I have been hunting in the Gila Wilderness for over 50 years and professionally outfitting for 39 years. I don't want to blow everybody's bubble, but wilderness is not near where it used to be. The elk have been pushed out and killed, and the Game Department has cut licenses in the wilderness for three years now. On our bull elk harvest numbers for Unit 16B went from 2010, over 160 bull out killed, 184 clear down to-- 2019 was the last good year of the elk harvest in the Gila Wilderness.

In 2020, it dropped clear to 119 bulls. Thank God, Stewart. I don't know exactly what he used, but cut the 178 bull elk tags out of four of the upper units and 95 out of the wilderness. There's only two-colored wolves in the whole Gila wilderness. The wolves, we've got a lot of them in there. What I mean, a lot of uncolored wolves, but the wilderness is neglected. Game counts are very sporadic. The last count they done was-- it's not looking good in the Gila Wilderness, so all of the NGOs here today have some idea that the wilderness is such a wildlife mecca, and it is not.

Zeno Kiehne: I'm Zeno Kiehne. I'm fourth-generation rancher here in Reserve. I also was a principal of four different schools, one of them in Santa Fe, Cristo Rey. We always look for solutions. I have a solution for you all. You guys are buying all these property and make private property ranches and putting them into-- What do you call them? Different areas for animals to grow. I can't think of the term.

Anyway, if you would take one of those ranches and fence it, put concrete all around there, put all these wolves out there, everybody would be happy. Ranchers would be happy. You guys have taken it out of production, you might as well use them. Then you could have all the hippies environmentalists go in there and spend all the time they want with these wolves. They don't hurt humans, they say. They could camp with them. They could sleep with them. They could eat with them, take them to lunch, whatever they wanted to do.

Ms. Hickey or Commissioner said that this is elk country. This is not elk country here. Elk were brought in here, and I think you know that. They've ruined a lot of our properties. They're destroying our fences. They're eating our grasses. Had 100 cows down there on our place. We've got 20-some head now, and we haven't got any feed.

I think you need to address the real problems that we're dealing with. The EPLUS program is ridiculous. I have 482 acres down there. I've got one bull permit in 19 years. I sold an acre of land to a guy who lives in the middle of my property. He got two bull permits. Now, tell me you aren't a corrupt system. Tell me you guys are doing a good job. Thank you.

Richard Stump: The next five are Representative Gail Armstrong, Cindy Renee Provencio, Elena Farr, Cole Stoddard, Jay Platt.

Gail Armstrong: Thank you, commissioners. First of all, we know your job is not easy, and we appreciate you showing up here in Reserve, New Mexico. I am State Representative Gail Armstrong, House District 49, born and raised in Catron County, now live between Datil and Magdalena on a ranch, where my husband supports his ranching habit with a construction business. It is our way of life. I've been married for 42 years. We have four children and 13 grandchildren; wolf tracks between the barn and the house at six of my grandchildren's home.

My son-in-law is a wildlife biologist, and he's concerned for his children's safety. He has game cameras with his little girls, my granddaughters, walking up to a dirt tank, and 10 minutes later, the same game camera, there's wolves behind him. What we are asking for is to let us live the life that we're choosing to live in Catron County and Socorro County and Sierra County, and others. We choose to live here. We choose to raise our families here because we love it so much.

I also own a ranch with a conservation easement on it. Some people will frown on that. Well, guess what? We like it because it will never be subdivided. It will always be a ranch, and it will always be in our family. I also know that we have 200-resident elk herd on our ranch that competes with our cattle. I also know that we have thousands of miles of pipeline where we water the wildlife. If we didn't have that, that wildlife would not be there.

I also know that we are looking for solutions and we are looking for trust. The trust is the part you guys, that all of us are missing because of things that have happened in the past and things that have been said here today. One of the suggestions is that we redo the MOU with Mexico so that we can actually get to our numbers so that we can have successful wildlife management. Did the buzzer go off? Damn it. Also,

disappointed that the governor did not sign our emergency clause and that she removed Sabrina Pack. It's actually disgusting.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Representative. Cindy Renee.
Cindy Renee Provencio: My name is Cindy Renee Provencio, and I am a resident of Grant County, specifically the Mining District. I am also a descendant of the Chiricahua Apaches. Being an Apache descendant, it informs my desire to advocate for the Mexican gray wolves. I really lean on Apache elders' teachings that plant life and animal life are just as important as human life, and I really want to stress that today.
Also, we are no stranger to apex predators in the Mining District or in Grant County. We live at the edge of the forest, and we understand that living there, we're going to deal with things like bears and mountain lions and hawks and owls that prey on our pets. That is something that we deal with. We are no stranger to that. When I was in middle school, and when my grandfather retired, he would walk from Bayard to Hurley, and he encountered the Mexican gray wolves.
We are no stranger to Mexican gray wolf encounters as well. That was an encounter that was actually exciting for our family because we do respect all animals in our backyards. I do want to ask that the wolves be managed with science-based approaches and that in this management, that genetic diversity be considered. Although there may be a lot of wolves, we know that genetic diversity is not that great right now, and that needs to be addressed. Thank you. [silence]
Elena Farr: Hello, commissioners, and ladies and gentlemen. I appreciate you being here to hear us out today, and I appreciate everyone in the audience today for being so polite and generous in letting everybody have a fair share and being polite and listening. Point one, yes, I've been here a long time, too. My ancestors were here before some of your ancestors were here, perhaps. The wolves were probably here before my ancestors were here. Everybody has a prior commitment.
What we need to look at today is the world we're in today. I realize that all species are important, and all species matter, and there should be biodiversity and a balance, but I feel like the way the Wolf Program is going now, it's extremely skewed and extremely out of balance. Wolves should be wild. Seeing them, encountering them, coexisting with them should not be something that happens to us on a daily basis. Number two, we also matter as much as wolves. Just because there's more humans on earth than wolves, it doesn't mean that I don't matter, my neighbor doesn't matter, my grandchildren don't matter. We're a lot of people. I get that. People are taking over the world, but each one of us matters. Our lives matter. The freedom in our so-called free country matters to each individual person. Don't count us out. Take care of us, too. Thank you.
Cole Stuard: Hello, commissioners. My name's Cole Stoddard(ph). I'm a sixth-generation rancher. My family's been here since the 1800s. The Wolf Program is literally putting the Catron County ranchers out of business. Everyone has to have a second job to make ends meet. Since April, I've been hauling 100% of the water on my ranch, as well as a lot of other people.
Without the ranches, there would be nearly no water anywhere in Catron County or anywhere else. Without the ranchers, if they're gone, there is no wildlife. 90% of the water comes from the ranchers, where there's dirt tanks or manmade water. Without the ranchers around, there wouldn't be any ecosystem like everybody thinks there would be. I hope y'all keep that in mind whenever you decide to make your decisions on stuff, whether you're going to help us or not. Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Cole. Jay Platt.
Jay Platt: Good afternoon, commissioners. Like has been said, we appreciate you being here. I would just echo the sentiment that has been expressed that ties do need to be severed on the management plan with Mexico. It does not make sense, even from a scientific point to include Mexico in the management of what is happening in New Mexico.
I am a ranch broker in the area, and I would express to you, not only does it affect the cow situation and the hunting situation, but what ultimately is at stake here with such a strong wolf influence here is a decline in real estate values that is currently hinged primarily upon production of cattle when carrying capacities are diminished. The difficulties of producing solid calf crops year after year after year are on the decline. It does affect future and prospective buyers in agricultural properties.

We do know here in Catron County, really what is driving real estate values today are quality elk hunts. It's not quantity elk hunts, but it's quality elk hunts. We are noticing a decline in the quality of elk hunting, wolf-influenced, and maybe other factors that the Commission can address. I would just emphasize that the wolf influence and mismanagement is drastically affecting negatively the values of those that are present in the room. I would encourage you to take that into consideration with your objectives and your decisions. Thank you.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Jay. Next five up. Representative Luis Terrazas. Misty Workman. [silence] Okay. Thank you, Tom. Gabriel Ramos Cedar, Jennifer Jones, Colette Chandler, and Randall Major. Representative.

Luis Terrazas: Thank you very much, commissioners. You know this is hard to do in two minutes, so I jotted some things down. First of all, I want to thank you for allowing us to have the couple minutes in public input and director, staff, Catron County Commissioners for their presentations, and for everyone here for sharing their thoughts.

On my drive up here, I saw the beautiful landscapes and where the ranchers have provided for generations water infrastructure, not only to their livestock, but to all the wild game. I also am very disappointed on the dismissal of Sabrina Pack, one of your commissioners. I personally saw her try very hard to talk to both sides and trying to find some middle ground. I had great conversations with her in trying to find solutions to coexist.

Democracy is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Grant County residents are literally living among wolves and are urgently asking help concerning this issue. They're expressing their willingness to coexist with the wolf and need the Commission's support to make that happen. Other counties and residents are hearing of their cries for help with the impact to public safety concerns, financial burdens, and the overall impact to their way of life, and now are worried about their future when the wolf population grows into their communities.

I believe that our job is to listen to the people, but in any situation, we should hear the people who are directly being impacted. In this case, it's the people of Catron County. We must hear the public safety warnings by the residents of Catron County before a person or child gets seriously injured or even worse. Also, I would like to ask the Game Commission and the Department to please allow the legislators to have a question-and-answer session in the near future to give full public transparency and a conversation concerning this important matter. Lastly, I look forward to rescheduling the guided tour that we had for the Glenwood Pond and Hatchery. We need to work together to solve this problem. Thank you very much, Commissioner.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Representative. Gabriel Cedar.

Gabriel Ramos: Yes, sir. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. Commission, thank you very much for showing up here in Southwest New Mexico. It's exciting to have you here. I spoke with Senator Brantley yesterday, and she sends her regards and says that she really wish she could be here, but unfortunately, had a family event to take care of.

I, too, am sad that Sabrina Pack was removed from this important board. I really think there was some great balance in this board, and I think she added to that balance. Y'all have a really good board, and we could talk to you all whenever we need to, and we really do appreciate you.

I also I'm disappointed that we requested in April a meeting with the Commission for a question-and-answer meetings-type workshop with our Southwest legislators. Some of you might not know that, but we did talk to or request it from the director. We were told not that we weren't able to have this in public, but there was a Zoom that I wasn't able to get on, which would have only been the legislators, and I believe the director.

We wanted to actually have a good conversation as legislators to ask the hard questions and get the hard answers, and so you all could ask the questions, we could give the hard answers also. That didn't happen, so that was very disappointing. I hope that happens soon because I think it's very important to be transparent with all these people here when we have those big questions. Sometimes, you all are the only ones that have the answers.

Another thing that really concerns me is public safety. Public safety is number one for our communities. I don't want us to be meeting here one of these days to hear that a kid got mauled or a kid got hurt

because then, it's too late. Then we're going to be saying, "I wish I could have. I wish I would have." That's not what we're here for. We're here to prevent these types of incidents.
As elected official, that's our job. We take care of our community. If the only way we take care of our community is to really put together a good management plan, then I don't think that's too much to ask. I thank you very much for your time, and thank you for your presence. I'm looking forward to meeting with you all on a town hall-type meeting. God bless y'all. Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Senator Ramos. I'd like to apologize to you for not being able to read your card. I apologize. [chuckles] Randall Major.
Randall Major: Chairman, commissioners, Randall Major. My wife and I run livestock in three counties; Socorro, Catron, and Cibola. Unfortunately, we have wolves on us in all three counties on our ranches. Then I've been going to meetings since the 1990s where the Wolf Introduction Program promised the ranchers back then that they would not exceed 100 head of wolves.
A rancher will work hard and spend years to build up a herd of production cattle. When you finally go out there, it really sickens you when you see your calves and cows eaten up the behinds, flanks, ears chewed off, and just dead calves. People that want these wolves that are in favor of the wolves in reality have no skin in the game. You can compare it to an intruder coming into your house, killing your dog, stealing your property, threatening your children, and because of the law, you can't do anything about it.
The Wolf Program is not a fair program. Number seven that I have here, there's talk about trust, a lot of talk about trust, immediate release of real-time GPS location of wolves could be something that you could do immediately, that would help us out a bunch. I could find where those wolves are and be able to maybe protect my cattle. Everyone wants science-based. We must have accurate data. One way we could have that is collar every wolf. If we collared every wolf, it would meet the required number of wolves to delist. Then, also, I have hope that you will listen to the Catron County Commissioners, that have done such a good job of describing the problem and the ranchers here today. Thank you for listening.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Randall. State Representative Jennifer Jones.
Jennifer Jones: Thank you. I'm Jennifer Jones, state representative for District 32, which is Hidalgo, Luna, and Doña Ana. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you this morning, or actually, it's this afternoon now, I guess. I'm here to support the Catron County in their emergency declaration, but primarily, I'm representing my constituents in Hidalgo and Luna who've expressed the helplessness of not having being heard, not having their voices heard.
Among their concerns are, of course, the loss of their livestock and the difficulty in proving the depredations. Many losses go unreported, they tell me, because even if the depredation is proven, the compensation is entirely inadequate. Other complaints I've received I get pictures of their pets who've been killed by wolves. I have also received videos that are dark because they've been taken in the night when ranchers have had to stay up all night with their cows, who are calving out in the pasture, and you can hear the wolves surrounding them, howling. They're there to protect the calves. I think it's noteworthy, too, since a lot of us have shared about their personal experiences that I'm from a family of outdoorsmen, and my mother was an outfitter in the Gila for many, many years.
One of the greatest joys of my life as a nature lover has been hiking through a lot of the hundreds of miles, actually, of the CDT in Hidalgo, Grant, Catron, Cibola, McKinley. I've enjoyed that very much. I'm a nature lover. I'm an animal lover, and I think that it's important for us to understand that about each other. I also want to say I appreciate the respectful conversation very much. I think we do need to hear each other. I echo the disappointment of my fellow legislators about the removal of Sabrina Pack. I also hope to have an opportunity to speak with you all publicly about answering our questions. Appreciate your willingness to listen and support the changes for sustainable coexistence.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Representative. I'd like to apologize to you for not introducing you at the beginning of the meeting. I don't think you were here yet, but everyone, Representative Jennifer Jones. I have about a half an hour more of-- No, I have one more, sorry. Colette, come on, maybe I'm going to say.
Colette Chandler: Didn't want to usurp you. Thank you for coming today, commissioners. I'm a commissioner down in Luna County, and although we don't yet have the wolf problem that Catron went forward with, we can see that it's coming, and as Commissioner Buster Green said, it would be just silly of

us to not prepare for that. It's all around us, and we are part of the introduction protocol, although we haven't seen them there yet. My husband and I do ranch over in Sierra County, and we have seen firsthand the depredation that happens when the wolves come. We have wolves on us, and we have experienced back in 2021.
Although the wolves don't recognize the boundaries between private land and public, the wolf came on our private land, killed my father-in-law's dog. One of the realities that we have to face that nobody has been talking about here is that my father-in-law, even though he's since passed, so now I can say this safely without any repercussions, he was out to shoot that wolf because it killed one of his best friends. That's a reality that people need to realize that that's happening.
The wolf proponents, we need a safe coexistence agreement between both of us, because people will get to the point that they don't want to take it anymore, and they'll take action. Those are the kinds of actions they will take. Another thing that has only lightly been touched on is, 1.5% of this country is feeding 330 million people three times a day. We have to think about the reality of what it takes to produce that amount of food.
The cattle are part of that production, and when we're seeing depredation that's happening to our cattle and we aren't bringing those back somehow, some way, then that's not equitable, and we can't sustain that. Just think about that. I understand that you guys have the ear of the governor. If you could please recommend to her to recognize the emergency resolution that Catron County has put forward. Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Colette. I have about a half an hour of public speakers left. Do you guys want to take a break? Audience, want to take a break? Yes. All right. How about we do half an hour, grab some lunch. Thank you.
[sound cut]
Let's pick up where we left off. Hopefully, everybody's here. I'm going to call up Gregory Nash, David Jones, Kerrie Romero, Ginger Cheney, and Mark Mullins. Let's pick up where we left off. Hopefully, everybody's here. I'm going to call up Gregory Nash, David Jones, Kerrie Romero, Ginger Cheney, and Mark Mullins. Okay, that's weird.
Kerrie Cox Romero: You can let me go before those other two? Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Members of the Commission, Kerrie Romero, on behalf of the New Mexico Council of Outfitters and Guides. The outfittings industries' stance on Mexican wolves has not really changed much since the last time we did a meeting like this at the Game Commission meeting in Silver City in April of last year. Outfitters continue to be very concerned about the decreasing numbers of elk in the Gila. In fact, we just had our annual meeting at the end of July, where we discussed Mexican wolves for about three hours straight, and of the 30 outfitters that showed up to that meeting, roughly half of them operate in the Gila. Every single outfitter agreed that there are significantly less elk in the Gila now than there were even just 10 years ago. The Gila used to be number one for elk hunting destinations in the entire world. Today we're struggling to remain in the top 10. A reduction in the number of trophy bulls is to blame, and of course, the wolf is not exclusively responsible for the decrease, but they do seem to be having an increasing negative impact, especially on public land and in the wilderness.
All that said, we understand that this is a federal program and that there's really not much that this Commission has the ability to do. I think what we would like to see from this Commission and from the Department is just a closer monitoring of the elk herds in the Gila, so as the wolf numbers continue to increase, we won't be caught off guard by rapid loss in the elk population.
Our elk herds cannot sustain the uncontrolled numbers of wolves like Montana and Wyoming's elk have. If elk are reduced to the levels where the 10(j) says that the Agency can intervene, it's going to be very difficult for the Department to turn those numbers around, and, frankly, by that time, there will be no more elk hunting in the Gila. We really appreciate your continued attention to this matter. Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Kerrie. Gregory Nash, please.
[pause 03:07:38]
Ginger Cheney: Good afternoon. My name is Ginger Cheney, and I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to address you today. I am from Greenlee County along the Arizona and New Mexico border. I am the Greenlee County Cattle Growers president, a rancher, a teacher, a mom, a little bit of everything. We are

closing in on the magic 320 number that was miraculously made after lawsuits, when it was originally 100, and we're getting ready to, hopefully, start the delisting process.
The problem is that process takes eight years, and the last three years need to be an upward trend. I put together a document for you in the pocket of your folder, with numbers of wolves, the growth rate, the pounds of meat consumed yearly, and the number of prey species killed. It is variable because it is nature. However, the sheer numbers deserve attention.
For example, this year, with 286 wolves, they would consume 1,186,250 pounds of meat. In 9 years, when we would be able to delist, there would be about 902 wolves eating 3,292,300 pounds of meat. Experts have said that at least 10% of the wolves are not counted, so with those numbers in 9 years, the wolves would be consuming 3,624,450 pounds of meat.
As a commission, you should be very concerned about the wild ungulates. Can you forsake all the prey species, ignore the environmental impact, accept the revenue loss from hunting and recreation, and the economic loss suffered by agriculturalists in the name of one experimental non-essential species? The main part of that folder has some background information on our ranch and our losses and injuries from the last two years. It gives you some insight into what our sixth-generation family ranch is going through with the current number of wolves on the landscape. Sorry.
Richard Stump: Thank you.
Ginger Cheney: Thank you.
Richard Stump: Is Gregory Nash here? How about David Jones? Nash? David Jones? Mark Mullins?
Mark Mullins: Yes. Thank you. I'm on either end of the table on this thing. I'm mainly here for information. I have been having wolf issues. My children won't even go out and play in the backyard. I have to keep a German Shepherd with them at all times. My horses have been cornered. They've been actively stalked constantly by a certain uncollared wolf. This is in town, roughly three-quarter mile away from here. That's the main reason, just information. This wolf is not afraid of humans. I have been literally 20 feet away from him, throwing rocks, trying to get him to go away, and he just stands there and looks at me.
How was he raised? How was he introduced? He is uncollared, by the way. How has he become so familiar with humans that he's not afraid of them? That he will actively stalk them horses that are penned behind my house while my children are out playing, and I got to run them inside. They won't even go outside and play because that wolf will come up during the day, at night. It don't matter. He'll come up, and he will not deviate. He does not just go away. He sees a human, he just stands there and looks at you. That was just for information purposes. Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Mark. Mary Barrett? Deborah Van Buren? Bill McCarty? Christine Ratcliffe? [silence]
Christine Ratcliffe: Hello. Thank you to everyone for considering my comments. There was a lot of talk these days about our rights and how we may have been wronged, but I would like to talk about our responsibilities. First, I would like to address the responsibilities of Fish and Wildlife and New Mexico Fish and Game for Mexican Wolf Recovery. I believe your responsibility is to follow the science and not the desires of the livestock industry or environmental groups, but to think about what is best for the wolves. Don't impose boundaries on where the wolves may exist.
Let them cross I-40. Maybe they are seeking genetic diversity by encountering wolves in the Southern Rockies. Let them be wolves and disperse. Release intact wolf families at the right time of year so that the pups can learn how to hunt elk and deer. Again, this should be based on science. Don't give radio collar locators to ranchers who will be able to use that information, possibly to locate and eliminate wolves.
To the ranchers who use our public lands, if a cow does die from illness or starvation, yes, a wolf will take advantage of the carcass. Your responsibility is to remove the carcass so the wolves won't then hang around to prey on other weakened cows. It is your responsibility to protect your cows and know where they are. It is not the responsibility of the government or the National Guard, which is funded by the taxpayer.
What is my responsibility? I feel I need to speak up for the wolves who do not have a voice. They have been persecuted long enough. I am a vegan, and the overriding vegan principle is that animals are not on this earth to serve the purposes of man. That goes for both wolves and cattle. Many will disagree with me,

and that is fine, but I believe that I and we have a moral responsibility to let wolves be wolves to fulfill their own purpose. Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you. I think that was **[unintelligible 03:14:47]**. Bill McCarty?
[silence]
Bill Billy McCarty: I'm Billy McCarty. At the beginning, introduced myself as a fourth-generation rancher here in Catron County. We lived just a half mile north of reserve. The area that we had, I'm going to show you maps later in a presentation I'll be talking about, but our ranch is on both the Tularosa River and the San Francisco River, two main corridors of how the wildlife are coming into reserve.
It hasn't been mentioned so far about the number of lion sightings within the village and numerous other things. What we are watching happen is the wildlife is being driven out of the forest into the towns. It's across our private land. Unlike most of these other ranches that are here, our ranch is a private land ranch. According to the numbers that were presented at the beginning of this, almost 10% of the known wolf in Catron County would be on our private land.
I know that is not true because I know these other ranchers and what they are going through. The numbers do not reflect what is out there. With the encounters that we have had, what I have on game camera shows two wolves chasing bear. These are predators. They're dominating the other wildlife. You made a comment earlier about the ecosystem. What I am watching is these wolves destroy the local ecosystem.
What I'm going to bring about this today is, first of all, our rights as private property owners have been taken away by the 10(j) rule. We should have the right to defend our property. As the private landowners in this area, we did not ask for these wolves to be brought in. When you go through history, our family has been here since 1883. These wolves that are here now are not a native wolf. They are an invasive animal that has been brought in by the state. I recently watched **[unintelligible 03:17:12]** on TV with the Florida Everglades and the destruction that's being done there by the non-native species. I'm asking you to look at what you are doing through this.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Bill. Is Deborah Van Buren here? Deborah.
Deborah Van Buren: Hi. My name is Deborah Van Buren. I feel like an innocent bystander who's come to really find out what this is all about, what the disagreements are about, what the facts and figures are. I don't have any answers for you. I appreciate the Commission and the patience that you have to sit and listen to all these comments and try to find the reasons that you're going to use for the decisions you have to make.
I feel overwhelmed and at the same time, well-informed in lots of ways. As a citizen, I have to make a decision because I came here wanting to know how to support and who to support, the two sides that I see. The complexity of it is overwhelming. The impact of the decisions that we, as humans, have made in this particular instance, they just go beyond anything that most people would even think about, how it affects more than just the culture of ranchers and this environmental piece with the wolves.
Thank you so much for taking the time and being in a position of making hard decisions. I wish I had some ideas of how to help either group find a way to work together, but that's really the only thing that can happen to make it work, is that you work together. Thank you, everybody, for being here.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Deborah. Mary Barrett. Mary is not here? You already spoke? That was you. Okay. I think you just walked up. I didn't know you were. Christine Ratcliffe.
Christine Ratcliffe: Hello. I am Christine Ratcliffe of White Signal, New Mexico. I, and so many others who can't be here, ask for your support in protecting the glorious wolf. Please be its voice of survival. Wolves have tragically been brutally persecuted for generations, hunted, trapped, poisoned to near extinction. How very shameful? Going hand in hand with this brutality comes the rhetoric of miserable falsehoods, fear-mongering. Sadly, the cattle industry, along with those believing the wolf should be exterminated, need to become far more educated, informed through science-based studies and facts.
I urge everyone to hike into the wilderness, respecting and appreciating all wildlife we share life with, including the beautiful, mystical wolf. Yes, I have lived where wolves live, as many others have and do. I have hiked in wilderness areas for years and on my own soul. Notice that I'm here alive, able to speak for the wolf. I've never been attacked or faced any sort of wolf aggression. A passion in snow country was

cross-country skiing. Being able to swiftly glide through miles, hours of wilderness during a night ski adventure, I suddenly realized I was being accompanied by a pack of wolves.
They ran an incredible, magical unison all around me. It was an experience I won't ever forget. What a gift? I stopped to watch as they continued on in the frigid moonlight. The leader led them up a hill. This wild canine soul howled a most glorious wolf song into that night, on reaching the hilltop, all each broke into song together. The magic to be felt on that ice-cold moonlit night, accompanied by those wolves, was gloriously intense. My wish for everyone in this room to experience such as this. Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you. All right, Alex Simon, Jim McGrath, or James McGrath, Michael Robinson, Carol Ann Fugale, and Luke Koenig.
Alex Simon: Hi, I am Alex Simon. One of my hopes is to alleviate some of the concerns you have about wolves. If you do look at the data, so one study, I think it went roughly from '96 to 2007, looking at animal cause fatalities in New Mexico. Of course, you all wouldn't be surprised, zero wolf fatalities, but cows, I think there were about 11. What I was very surprised was sheep had killed 2 people, and so we could accurately say that sheep have killed 200% more people than wolves in New Mexico. Now, if one of our illustrious politicians were to say, "Bring out the National Guard. Protect us from sheep," we would laugh. We would call you a demagogue. A fear monger.
Well, anyhow, moving on. I know people aren't moved by data. I lived in, I guess, the environment that many of you fear is Juneau, Alaska, excuse me. Very dense with wolves, very dense with bear, never lost a cat, never lost a dog. Had many close encounters with both. Did everything you're not supposed to do while hunting, moving slowly through the timber, being silent.
I think what you should fear and what they do fear, in Juneau, you might have heard about the ice dams breaking, so climate change. My property was damn near flooded. Here, if you look at a thing, many of you have heard of the screw worms exacerbated from climate change, making their way up from Mexico. I'd be very afraid of climate change if I were a rancher, and I would have nothing but contempt for any politician who was afraid to address a real crisis and was focusing on a manufactured crisis. Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Alex. James McGrath here?
[silence]
Jim McGrath: I just want to say thank you to the commissioners for giving me the opportunity to express my feelings and beliefs. I want to thank all the people that have come here to address this issue. Let me just start out by saying that I'm basically a botanist and a naturalist. I have had a long-time passion for the preservation of natural areas. Natural areas, you realize that you want to have a properly functioning ecosystem. To have a properly function ecosystem, you need the keystone species, and that's where the wolf comes in.
I can also mention by the way, that during my career bouncing around in the Forest Service and the Park Service, I saw the wolves when they were first introduced in Yellowstone National Park in 1995, when I went to a pullout in Lamar Valley and seeing three dots in the distance. Then in the last about, maybe 3 years ago, I saw a wolf near Sandy Point on the Bursum Road, north of the Gila wilderness. I have a passionate love for wildlife and plants, but I think there are these conflicts that arise between the ranching community and the environmental community that can be solved.
The conflicts are real. There's valid points on both sides, and I believe that solutions can be created where there's a will, there's a way to create a satisfactory solution. I'm going to mention just a couple. I heard Peter Schoenburg mention earlier a suggestion about setting up some kind of compensation to ranchers for, simply, wolf presence. That's a possible solution. Another solution I've heard about is the fact that we understand the wolves are becoming habituated to cows, and one way you could resolve that problem would be to have the Fish and Wildlife Service, the game management, New Mexico Game and Fish, and--
Richard Stump: James, thank you. Your two minutes is up.
Jim McGrath: Okay. Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you for this. Michael.
Michael Robinson: Yes, good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and commissioners. Thank you for this opportunity. First of all, I want to thank New Mexico Department of Game and Fish for its efforts to get Asha and her family released. Very much appreciate that the department was on the right side of that and

weighing in. I want to thank the US Fish and Wildlife Service for that as well. That was a very important management act. In general, the Mexican wolf is being mismanaged by the US Fish and Wildlife Service with the cooperation of the Department of Fish and Game on behalf of the livestock industry.
That's the reason that there is less genetic diversity in the Mexican wolf population today than there was 20 years ago, is through this mismanagement. Through punitive wolf removals, shooting and trapping of wolves on behalf of the livestock industry. Through the shutdown until last week, a family pack releases. In fact, we still have not seen since 2006, two captive born adult male female wolves that are well bonded, released with their pups that was successful over two-thirds of the time when it was practiced between 1998 and 2006.
In contrast, taking the pups from their parents, captive-born pups from their parents, and putting them in the dens of wild born wolves is not significantly increasing the genetic diversity. Most of those animals were never seen again. Specifically, this practice began in 2016, and through 2023, there were 99 pups released, and only 24 of them were ever seen alive again.
That doesn't mean that 24 survived into adulthood or bred. That's a lower number, but 24%, initial success rate, 76% failure rate. That is unnecessary. The only reason it's happening is that the livestock industry does not want to see the genetic diversity of the Mexican wolf increased significantly, and so they're happy with the program that is not working. I've heard a lot about science and all that, but it's not being run according to science. There's no scientific reason for blocking the wolves from going north of I-40. There's no scientific reason removing them. Lastly, the livestock owners using public land should be required to remove [crosstalk]-
Richard Stump: Thank you, Michael.
Michael Robinson: -other causes, before they draw wolves in **[inaudible 03:29:45]**
Richard Stump: All right Carol Ann Fugale.
Carol Ann Fugale: Honorable commissioners and friends, my name is Carol Ann Fugale, and my family has lived in the Gila and Silver City area for over 25 years. We are in the middle of a climate and ecological emergency. The real threat to our children is the catastrophic changes occurring right now to our planet. One way to shield us from the most severe consequences is to build resilience in our ecosystems.
We need increased wildlife diversity, which means expanding the population health of the Mexican gray wolf. Releasing family packs can help ensure genetic viability so they have a chance to thrive into the future. Managing the wolves through science is sound thinking. Economic times for ranchers is hard, but it's not hard because of the wolf. It's hard due to a century of land mismanagement and overuse that has caused catastrophic soil loss, desertification, and vegetation type conversions across millions of acres throughout the West.
The current arguments preventing the recovery of wolves do not exempt us from the duty to restore the Mexican gray wolf from extinction because the condition in which we leave this planet is a reflection of what makes us human. Whether we cultivate a garden or one that we leave a ravaged landscape. You are in a very unique position. You can make a choice that will not just have a permanent impact on one species, but also on whether the wildness of our New Mexico lands remain wild, and the successful reintroduction of an apex predator is a hopeful place to start. Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Carol. Luke Koenig.
[silence]
Luke Koenig: Hello, commissioners. My name is Luke Koenig, and I work for New Mexico Wild, a grassroots conservation organization with thousands of dues-paying members around the state dedicated to protecting New Mexico's wilderness, wildlife, and water. Perhaps more than any other conservation issue, wolf reintroduction brings out strong emotions in us. I think there's plenty of evidence of that here today.
In some of us, including myself, wolves are a source of awe and wonder and drive a deep sense of responsibility for protecting the wild creatures with whom we share the landscape. In others, wolves are a cause of fear, bordering even on hysteria of an animal that has never once attacked a human in the wild. I think it's fair to say that no matter where you stand on the issue, wolves are an almost mythic creature that occupy remarkably outsized role in our psyches.

This has long been the case, as we see in the ancient fairytales of the big, bad wolf. Emotions about wolves can be so intense that they often prevent us from thinking clearly about the facts on the ground and their actual roles in our lives and what our relationship to them ought to be, but that is exactly what I'm here today to ask you to do, to think clearly, see past the emotions, see through the rhetoric, and recognize the facts. Really, the facts are pretty simple. Mexican gray wolves are one of the most endangered mammal species on earth for no other reason than a purposeful government-sponsored extermination campaign carried out on behalf of the livestock industry.
Today, they've made their miraculous but tenuous recovery for no other reason than scientifically informed action taken by the US Fish and Wildlife Service in collaboration with others, such as yourselves. The data has shown that, since 2019, depredations have significantly decreased, and to date, again, there has still never been an attack by a Mexican gray wolf on a human, so-called. Well, there's my time. Thank you for your work, commissioners.
Richard Stump: Okay, we're coming to the end of our auditorium audience. Shelby, is it Razan or Bazan?
[pause 03:34:29]
Shelby Bazan: Hello, my name is Shelby Bazan. I'm a statewide conservation organizer with New Mexico Wild. I started my career in conservation at the Albuquerque BioPark Zoo, where they have or a big role in the reintroduction and breeding program of the Mexican gray wolf. There, I quickly learned about these wolves and their important role as a keystone species in this ecosystem. This is also where I learned about the life-changing experience that Aldo Leopold had after killing a wolf and seeing a fierce green fire dying in her eyes. If this man, who believed all wolves were varmints, can learn to see the importance of these animals, then so can we.
I believe that there can be a world where ranchers and wolves can coexist. It will require cattle carcasses to be removed before it attracts wolves, coyotes, or mountain lions. It's important for all of us to know how to act around wildlife, not just wolves. Just as you would mountain lions, coyotes, bobcats, bears, and even other humans. These animals were here before we were, and we owe them the chance to live just as we do. Humans have done this to them and are far more dangerous than these wolves. They deserve a second chance. We have to manage these populations through science and not hysteria. Thank you for your time.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Shelby. Is Leah Barnett here, still? On behalf of Peter Osorio.
[silent]
Leah Barnett: Chairman Stump, commissioners, I'm reading this on behalf of Peter and Jean Osorio, who, because of a serious accident, are unable to participate either in person or on Zoom. Given the federal rule requiring an 8-year average of 320 wolves and the 2026 and 2027 provisions of SP5, this commission probably will not be the one in place when Mexican wolves are entrusted to state management. As we said in person last November, there's a lot you can do to prepare for the future as well as speed up the process. Four areas where your guidance to and support of the department's staff can move things in the right direction.
Genetics. Encourage US Fish and Wildlife Service to put more wolves into the wild population now to help lessen the genetic bottleneck by releasing well-bonded pairs with pups. The recent release of Asha onto private land is a welcome change, marking a nine-year gap with no adult releases in nearly 29 years since the release of a bonded pair with pups. Demographics grow the population by reducing human-caused mortality through a balance of education and law enforcement. This process should include internal department training as well as extending outreach to areas where wolves are naturally migrating, especially in areas north of I-40.
Geographic distribution. Spread wolves widely throughout suitable habitat to reduce their impact on any single part of the state. Here, the commission can play a leadership role by encouraging US Fish and Wildlife not to devote scarce resources to capturing wolves naturally dispersing North of the arbitrary I-40 boundary. Absent serious conflicts, they should simply be left alone. Lastly, conflict avoidance. First, acknowledge that horses and cows hurt humans, but that Mexican wolves have never done so.
Next, look at the fact that Arizona has far fewer depredations in conflicts per 100 wolves than New Mexico, and support proactive methods for preventing depredations in the first place rather than arguing

after the fact about causation and compensation. Finally, we are greatly encouraged by the comprehensive and thoughtful state wildlife action plan, which you improved in June. Thank you for your effort to recover the Mexican gray wolf.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Leah. JC Nelson here?
[silence]
JC Nelson: How are you guys today?
Richard Stump: Thank you.
JC Nelson: I've been coming to these things since I was about that big, and you guys look about as bored as I am, at least. Anyways, if you look around here, most of us who are opposed to having wolves here live here, most of us who don't, come visit. There's a few that are from both sides. I've been hearing a lot about coexisting and science on the deal. I've got a science experiment to offer you guys. I agree with moving the boundary with them.
Let's put a whole bunch of these wolves, one for one, everyone that we have collared, they have one uncollared, and we'll put them in their mountains right behind Santa Fe with the same rules we got here. They're causing problems. You just got to take it. We're sorry. There's a lot more people than there are here, but a person is still just a person, and they're important. Let's just see how long we coexist. If we get along, great. If not, we'll just see. That's just an idea to think about.
Richard Stump: Thank you, JC.
Richard Stump: David Jones back? David Jones? Gregory Nash. That's it for our auditorium. Do we have anyone online?
Wheeler Brunschmid: We do, Mr. Chair. Regan Downey, you are unmuted. You are given two minutes to speak on the topic.
Regan Downey: Thank you. Commissioners, my name is Regan Downey, and I'm speaking on behalf of the Wolf Conservation Center and our 2200 members who reside in New Mexico. We appreciate the opportunity to provide public comments regarding the essential role Mexican gray wolves play on the wild landscape, and the need for continued collaboration to save this endangered species. We'd like to thank the commissioners and department staff for working with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to release the Quartz pack just last week. The family's release is an exciting and much-needed step in the right direction.
We encourage continued family group releases to more quickly improve the genetic diversity of the wild population and give wolves the freedom they rightfully deserve. The US Fish and Wildlife Service previously reported that 66% of releases of bonded adults with pups were successful. Yet a captive-born family group hasn't been released since 2006, when a Mexican gray wolf was sent from the Wolf Conservation Center to Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge, where she paired with a male and welcomed pups. The family was released that July and was soon recorded consuming native wild prey.
Captive-born wolves can and would survive in the wild; they simply need the chance and support from the agencies tasked with their recovery. We additionally request that the commission focus on prioritizing education and outreach efforts to correct blatant disinformation about Mexican wolves and work to provide factual information about true coexistence. Coexistence cannot allow for wolves to be killed; it defeats the very meaning of the word.
Studies have shown that non-lethal methods are much more effective at reducing risk to cattle compared to lethal removal, and government-sanctioned killing of wolves can result in an increase in illegal killing, a direct violation of the Endangered Species Act. Our organization works tirelessly to create a world where wolves thrive, and we appreciate the opportunity to work with you to achieve our shared vision for Mexican wolves. Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you. How many do we have online?
Wheeler Brunschmid: Currently, we have eight people with their hands raised. Erin Hunt, you can go ahead and unmute. You have two minutes.
Erin Hunt: Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to speak and for your dedication to conserving wildlife for future generations. For all new Mexicans, for millions of people all over the world who care about wildlife in the state of New Mexico, my name is Erin Hunt, with Lobos of the Southwest, a collaborative effort of concerned community members, scientists, educators, and conservation

organizations working to save the Mexican wolf. People everywhere count on New Mexico to be a leader in science-based wildlife conservation and stewardship. New Mexico's wild heritage is irreplaceable. Thank you for ensuring it is preserved according to the best available science. Thank you for your support for the release of Mexican gray wolf, Asha, and her family, the Quartz pack. Asha showed us what Lobos need to thrive. Room to roam and freedom to choose the places they call home. Thank you for supporting this wolf family's return to ancestral homelands in New Mexico.
Please work with US Fish and Wildlife Service to remove the unscientific Interstate 40 boundary, so Mexican wolves can return to Northern New Mexico. Peer-reviewed science shows that Northern New Mexico and Arizona habitats are essential for recovery. Allowing for natural wolf dispersal, including unsuitable habitats in Northern New Mexico, would let the population more evenly distribute across the landscape and alleviate any concerns about high density in any particular area.
Please advocate with US Fish and Wildlife Service to resume the release of well-bonded Mexican wolf pairs with their pups from the safe program to the wild to increase gene diversity. While bonded family group releases have demonstrated success. Fostering alone will take too long to achieve desperately needed genetic rescue. Work with US Fish and Wildlife Service to end punitive wolf killing, which contributed to the loss of gene diversity and impedes improvement of gene diversity. Better solutions to livestock conflict include proactive conflict avoidance activities like grain traders and removal of livestock carcasses before wolf scavenge on them, then they're drawn into the proximity of vulnerable live cattle. On public lands, we all must be responsible stewards and leave no trace. Finally, please advocate for a fully funded and staffed Mexican wolf recovery program so New Mexico continues to receive resources needed to recover Mexican wolves. Recovery will be most successful when done through collaboration between states, tribes, and the federal government. Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you.
Wheeler Brunschmid: Mark, you can unmute yourself. You have two minutes.
Mark Mattaini: Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Mark Mattaini. I live in Laguna Pueblo and represent the New Mexico board for Backcountry Hunters & Anglers. BHA is concerned and has concerns for wildlife of all kinds, including wolves, and believe that science should be guiding us. Wolves are a part of our world, always have been. I lived with them in Minnesota and Alaska. Homo sapiens, people that's us, are estimated to have evolved around 300,000 years ago, turns out that **[unintelligible 03:45:38]** sometimes said wolves originated about 40 million years ago in North America, so this is their homes, it continues to be.
There are complications for sure. North America and Europe, however, we've only had two human deaths in the last 20 years. Dogs have taken about 40 per year during that time, so that's not a strong argument. There are a lot of other arguments that we're hearing today that are pretty valuable. We know that wolves are valuable for the health of ecosystems and for the balance of predator and prey populations. Maintaining that is our responsibility.
It's difficult, however. There are two things that make this really difficult, and we need to take into account. One is that everything that anyone suggests is going to cost some money. We're at a very difficult time going forward in state and federal finance. We got to do the very best we can. There is some strong science that can help bring people together who have believed they have entirely different kinds of values and beliefs to work together.
Wheeler Brunschmid: Thank you, Mark. It's going be a little bit more abrupt online. I'm sorry about that. Bill Addington, you're allowed to unmute yourself.
Bill Addington: Hello? Can you hear me?
Wheeler Brunschmid: Yes, we can hear you.
Bill Addington: I'm Bill Addington. I ranch in far west Texas, below New Mexico, below the Guadalupe Mountains in the Sacramento Mountains. I'm, again, a fourth-generation ranchers, and I do own land in New Mexico above Datil and Pie Town. Just a couple of quick comments, and I thank you for hearing everybody today. Wolves have been coexisting with all the wildlife for millennia. They actually help the genetic diversity, and the health of elk populations, and other prey species by killing off and disposing of weak, sick, and the less strong of the herd, helping. They have a synergistic relationship with prey animals that help the health of all of them.

The second thing is regarding dogs. We shouldn't really have dogs out just roaming around because if a dog will challenge anything like a coyote, a wolf, a javelina, well, any animal will defend itself. The other thing is, we've never had a loss of any of our cattle, especially during calving season, because we have protector dogs. Of course, we watch our animals. We haven't had a loss in 10 years. I think it's up to all of us ranchers to watch our cattle closer and understand that we're in an area that has predators and take care of them. I appreciate the opportunity to speak. Thank you.
[silence]
Wheeler Brunschmid: Chris Smith, you can unmute yourself.
Chris Smith: Good morning, Chair Stump, members of the commission, Director Sloane. Thank you for taking public comment today. My name is Chris Smith. I'm the Wildlife Program Director for Wild Earth Guardians. I was born and raised in New Mexico, and I love the Gila area, and I'm disappointed I can't be there today with you all. I am up in Santa Fe, and I would welcome Lobos up here in the Sangre de Cristos as the gentleman a few minutes ago suggested. I was surprised by the complaints about "invasive" Mexican wolves and ecosystem degradation being attributed to an animal that predates ranchers, domestic sheep, and cattle in this region by thousands of years.
That's a new one to me, and I've been attending these meetings for a long time. I'm also really pleasantly surprised by the civil tone of the meeting. I commend everyone down there in reserve for being civil. That's really refreshing in this world. I'd like to thank agency officials, both federal and state, for releasing Asha and her pack, the Quartz pack. That was a really important decision to make, and I'm grateful for that. We all wish Asha and her young family well. As has been noted, the Game Commission and the Department of Game and Fish have limited jurisdiction and authority on the Mexican Wolf issue, but there are a couple things which you can do.
One is allow for adult family pack releases to resume after a number of years of absence. That's not only beneficial to the genetics of the population, but intact packs are much more successful hunting elk and deer rather than other easier targets. You can lead in allowing wolves to roam north of Interstate 40. That's a boundary that was put in place to placate the states. You can have a role rescinding it. Unlike a lot of things, that seems to be something close to consensus in the room. I would advocate for you taking a lead on that. Thank you.
Wheeler Brunschmid: Thank you, Chris. Kate Scott.
Kate Scott: Good afternoon, Chairman Stump and commissioners. My name is Kate Scott, co-founder of the Madrean Archipelago Wildlife Center. As a resident of Cochise County, Arizona, our wolf family of Wonder and Llave and their pups were removed as the region's southernmost pack. My community reacted to and feels this loss deeply. We will work hard, and we will welcome wolves back. Today, however, I wish to express gratitude and thanks to the New Mexico Game and Fish for releasing Asha, Arcadia, and puppies, Kachina, Aspen, Sage, Kai, and Aala.
US Fish and Wildlife allowed and helped with this release, and Americans across the country are pleased to know that they have been heard. My hope is we all view this release in the positive light of having these rare endangered wolves in your county, state, and on our public wild lands, and to please continue having science-based, thoughtful, coexistence conversations. Wildlife is held in public trust for all of us. In closing, I wish to share a poem dedicated to the Mexican gray wolf by my friend, Las Cruces-based New Mexican artist, Virginia Maria Romero.
Wolf song, a primal chorus that I dance to
As the fullness of my heart empties into dreams that come with the son's last breath
Before buried beneath purple mountains
These dreams tell me the wolf song will be kept alive by our voices
A primal song that fills my spirit
[foreign language] Piercing a primal call
[foreign language]
Thank you for your time and my opportunity to share my comments with you today.
Wheeler Brunschmid: Mary Catherine Ray.
Mary Katherine Ray: Hello, commissioners. I'm Mary Katherine Ray, wildlife chair for the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club. I live in a remote part of Socorro County where wolves now roam. Every time

I've seen wolves, they run away as fast as their legs could carry them. The terror of wolves that I'm hearing expressed in Catron County does not square with my experiences. I'm not afraid to see wolves or for them to see me. I carry pepper spray, but in 35 years of hiking here, the only two times I've come close to using it were on aggressive domestic rangeland cows.
In contrast, I looked up the statistics about the dangers to which people, especially children, are exposed on agricultural operations. Nationwide, a child dies on a farm or ranch every three days in an agriculture-related accident. Every single day, 33 children are seriously injured in agriculture-related accidents. On ranches, children are hurt by machinery, especially ATVs. They're kicked and thrown by horses and they're injured by cattle. In 27 years, no child or adult has been hurt by Mexican wolves.
I once marveled to hear a pair of wolves howling in the night from our front porch. That those howls could be silenced again would be a tragic and dismal failure of conservation, of stewardship, and of our human obligation to nature. Wolf restoration is a moral imperative. I and many others want to be able to hear, see, and photograph them. Wolves, as a native species, belong. Their management protocols must be based on legitimate scientific findings, not fear, not loathing, and not politics. Moving forward, we strongly urge this commission and department to promote coexistent strategies and to further, and not undermine, this program. Thanks so much for hearing it.
[silence]
Wheeler Brunschmid: Thank you. Glenn, you can unmute
Glenn Griffin: Commissioners, I am Glenn Griffin of Silver City with Grant Countians for Democracy. It was just last April 2024 at the Silver City Cayman Fish meeting that I sat and listened for nine hours until I could speak up for releasing well-bonded pairs of wolves along with their pups into the Gila. A year-plus, and that has happened. Thank you. They stand a 50% better survival rate than catering to the cattle industry's cross-fostering failure.
It was also Commissioner Pack's first meeting, so ethics should be part of the appointment process for commissioners. Pack was not alone in whipping up anti-wealth hysteria. Catron County commissioners have been very busy against our wolves, making multiple trips to influence our Grant County and Luna County Commissioners. The problem is there have been no wolf interactions in either county. I know this from Grant County taxpayer-funded wildlife services agents' own reports stating no wolf interactions and no wolves at all in Luna County. Like Pack, the agent is now gone. He had a major conflict of interest in privatizing our public land hunting.
Despite Grant County commissioners knowing there were no wolf problems, the Catron County Commissioners pressured Grant and Luna County Commissioners into voting for Catron's anti-wolf resolution. Crazy. No wolves, not even on Catron County's wolf location map today, but lots of hyped up fear. The same anti-government forces are now asking you, our game commission and federal agencies, to join the made-up fight using the very government they despise against our wolves. Don't do it. It is just a manufactured emergency. Our governor said Catron's wolf problems are not an emergency. Commissioners, thank you for listening. Rely on science.
Wheeler Brunschmid: Mr. Chair, we have three hands raised. Bernadette, you have permission to speak.
[pause 03:58:22]
Bernadette?
Bernadette Maldonado: Sorry about that. Good afternoon. I'm Bernadette Maldonado, author, illustrator of *Why Asha Goes North*. Asha did not have a voice when she came to New Mexico. I wanted to become her voice in a kind way. The spirit of a wolf is a magical thing. Legend says wolves represent courage, strength, and loyalty. Wolves are teachers and protectors.
The wolf controls the wild herbivore population, which in turn affects vegetation growth and overall biodiversity. In my books, I talk about the spirit of Asha and the journey she takes through New Mexico by showing the wonderful place we live, our state, through her eyes. I believe Asha wandered here to our state twice to protect us with her spirit, not to harm us. Thank you for listening to Asha's story and for being generous with your time here today.
Wheeler Brunschmid: Dr. Neils.
Aletris Neils: Can you hear me?

Wheeler Brunschmid: Yes.
Aletris Neils: I also have Aurelia here with me as well. She's a registered participant as well, but her Zoom link isn't working.
Wheeler Brunschmid: Following your two minutes, Mr. Chair, can we provide the guest to also present? Thank you. Go ahead.
Aletris Neils: Hello. My name is Aletris Neils. I have a PhD in Wildlife Management. My specialty is mitigating conflicts between carnivores and livestock. I've worked as an apex carnivore ecologist for multiple universities and academic institutions, and I'm hired to help ranchers co-exist with large predators around the globe. I'm sorry I can't be there in person. I had a commitment yesterday at Yale. I live in Cochise County, Arizona, and ranch on our own private land, coexisting with predators.
I am here to ask you to please let scientific data dictate management decisions pertaining to Mexican gray wolves. I've heard a lot of panic and misinformation today, employing a dramaticized tactic of hatred and fear. I have personally handled wild Mexican gray wolves since 2000, and have never once felt afraid. The presentation given with lots of dead animals, that were sad, but most were obviously not killed by wolves. There's been a lot of false statements and pseudoscience talking about wolf saturation and density. However, the very definition of an apex predator is that they're self-regulating. Please, do your own research based on facts.
I also request that the Game Commission rejects trapping or killing wolves that have or are more likely suspected of killing livestock. I was recently disgusted by the unfortunate decision in Arizona to remove a pack of wolves from Cochise County, where we live. These wolves naturally recolonized Cochise County after being extirpated for decades. The decision to remove this pack was made because of yielding to pressure from lies and embellishment, and not based on scientific data or any authentic justification. We need wolves back in Cochise County, and the residents are outraged by this poor decision.
In addition, ranchers should absolutely never be given frequencies or GPS signals to locate radio-collared wolves. I want to remind everyone that there has never been an attack from a wild Mexican wolf on a person ever. Yet, there have been many deaths of wolves illegally by ranchers. I absolutely agree that we should do everything to help ranchers prevent losses from wolves on their private lands, will offer my assistance in any way possible, but public lands belong to public wildlife. It is a privilege to be able to graze on lands belonging to all Americans. These wolves are worth their weight in gold in ecotourism potential and absolutely priceless in their ecological values.
Thank you very much for your time.
Wheeler Brunschmid: Aurelia, you'll be given two minutes. She's on here.
Aurelia: Hello. My name is Aurelia. I'm eight years old. I live outside of Tombstone, Arizona. I farm, barrel race, ride on horseback, and spend all my time outside observing nature and jumping on a trampoline. I would like to talk with you about wolves. Unlike most people, I have been fortunate to watch wild wolves ever since I was a little girl. I have spent time with wolves and felt their howls vibrate through my body and warm my heart.
I am not sure why so many grown-ups are afraid of Mexican gray wolves. They aren't big or scary. My dog at home is much bigger than Mexican gray wolves. Where we farm, there are a lot of mountain lions and coyotes on our land, yet we have never had any losses. We have livestock guard dogs, remember, these are the same species as wolves, to protect our livestock. When mountain lions come, they get chased away. However, if a mountain lion did eat one of my animals, I would not blame the mountain lion. Instead, I would take responsibility for my mistake and do a better job protecting animals next time.
It makes me feel very happy to know that there are still wild wolves. Wolves are the key to a healthy forest. I want to grow up always being able to hear wolves howl. Thank you for releasing Asha and her family and for making my future better.
[silence]
Wheeler Brunschmid: Barbara?
Barbara Marks: Thank you so much for this opportunity. My name is Barbara Marks. Wolves have been affecting us since 1998, so we have real on-the-ground experience with wolves. Our forefathers removed wolves and grizzly bears for a reason. They are vicious killers so far beyond anything lions, coyotes, and

black bears do. We have tried working with groups, but they have all eventually stopped involvement, starting with attaching strings and them preferring to act through the courts.
Ranchers and their partners improve habitat through wise forage management, water improvements, and salt placement at great expense, also improving the success of wildlife. Comparison by U of A in Colorado of grazing fees to private pasture leases reveals that because we maintain and build improvements like fences, waters, et cetera, and the grasses are different, our costs per animal unit month are higher than private leases that provide the aforementioned. Sometimes the pastures are irrigated. Taking ranchers away and those improvements will go into disrepair.
We all love seeing wildlife. The fact is, if our cattle do well with a healthy environment, we do well, and so do the wildlife. However, these groups who make their living off of the public and from the court system do nothing to help the animals or the habitat. Now, because of the hatred against us, we are, in New Mexico and Arizona, suffering from the actions of agro-eco-terrorists sabotaging our water systems.
However, they aren't only hurting us and our cattle, but the wildlife as well. We have photos of a big-horned ram looking for water in a sabotage tank that we've since repaired. It would be nice to coexist, but so far, ranchers are the only ones trying. A goal is reached, and then the goalposts are moved again and again. Ask any of the agency people how we have tried everything to avoid wolf problems, and then come help us doctor wolf-injured calves and cows. Thank you so much. I appreciate it.
Wheeler Brunschmid: Mr. Chair, that's all we have for online comment.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Wheeler. That was a lot of a heartfelt discussion. We are where we are. Let's see what we can do with this. I just want us to have success, all of us. Any other commissioners have anything that they'd like to say?
Commissioner Hickey: Mr. Chair, commissioners, I'm very glad that we had that time together. I am surprised that we did not hear from some people here that are very important to this very topic. I'm looking at them. I don't know why they didn't want to speak. I'm hoping they may want to come up and say a few words, Stewart, Paul, Brady, Seth. Just a few words. If not, that's fine too. I'm just surprised nothing was said. Yes? No? Director Sloane? Oh.
Richard Stump: Yes, sir. Did you register? Maybe I called your name and you didn't hear me. What's the name? Come on up.
[pause 04:08:29]
Billy McCarty: I want to thank you for letting me speak. I'm 84 years old. Still hunt when I can get an elk or deer tag. Haven't drawn and tagged for four years. Usually, put in for Nevada--
Richard Stump: Excuse me, sir. You're not up right now. This is just about wolves. You need to speak during general comment. Sorry, I apologize.
Billy McCarty: I just thought she was getting by me.
Richard Stump: [laughs]
Commissioner Hickey: Mr. Chair and Director Sloane, commissioners, if we have no other persons willing to come forward to speak, that's fine, but I know this was a discussion item. Thank you, former Commissioner Sabrina Pack. I know she was interested in this topic. Because we heard so much today, and it was very informative, I made a lot of notes, lots of notes. I don't count so much for quantity. I look for quality, and I look for ideas. I look for key things. I think you all do too, like they said, science-based. Mr. Chair, commissioners, Director Sloane, maybe even Chief Liley, is this a springboard? What's the next step in your thoughts? Great meeting, what's next?
Richard Stump: Commissioner Hickey, I think we got a lot of input today, important input. I think that we are going to take all this in and see where we can go with it, and look at the future. We've had conversations with Service, and they're really keen on having a close relationship with us, which, I think, is a positive element to all of this. Director, do you have anything you'd like to say?
Michael Sloane: Mr. Chairman, I agree that we heard a great deal today. We'll continue to take that in and work towards recovery and see how we can make life better on all fronts.
Richard Stump: Commissioner Witt, do you have anything you'd like to say?
Christopher Witt: Yes, I have a few comments. I just want to say that I listened very carefully to all the comments that were made, and I really appreciate all the contributions. I first want to echo some of the earlier comments of my fellow commissioners. I want to tell everybody that I think that the commissioners

on this commission are really unified in their approach, in terms of the need to find solutions and to work with everybody. I think on the management side, since we oversee the management, I think it's clear that managers, at the state, federal level, and local level, we need to adapt.
We as a commission need to be asking questions to the department and the Fish and Wildlife Service, and others that have management roles. Some of the questions that I think we need to ask, based on the comments that I heard today, include: Are we doing everything we can to minimize habituation? Are we taking proactive measures to avoid conflicts? For example, are we making the Range Rider program as effective as it can be? Are we communicating well enough with the public and with stakeholders, so that everyone has access to the best evidence-based information that's available?
I think we heard some things in some of the comments today that were not helpful. Maybe it's important to point those out too. I think we heard some claims made without evidence. I think we heard some claims made that could be refuted by available evidence. I think we heard some confusion between anecdotes, which are helpful in their own ways, and scientific data. I think we also heard some heated rhetoric, which is, maybe, unfortunate, some terms like insanity or disgusting. Before you use those terms, I think you should remember there are really good people on both sides of the table here.
If you're tempted to raise the rhetoric like that, you're probably misunderstanding some of the nuance in these complicated issues. I think scientifically, people talked about genetics and it's really important. I want to know and I want to ask what are the levels of inbreeding that are occurring? What is the genetic health? The levels of homozygosity that are out there across the landscape right now. What is the evidence that there's inbreeding depression? Do we need to take measures to address those genetic problems?
I want to ask, are we releasing bonded families onto the landscape that, as we heard today in lots and lots of comments, are clearly the gold standard for succeeding in the reintroduction program? I want to know also, because I heard a lot of confusion about this, I want to know what's the evidence regarding the population estimates and the uncertainty around those estimates, in terms of the uncollared wolves. If we know that number really well, can we disseminate the evidence for that in such a way that it would dissuade some of the fear that's clearly out there about those numbers?
Similarly, we heard this assertion that there was coyote hybridization going on that could be creating problems. I personally don't know about that. I'm going to ask about that. I want to know, is there data that can be disseminated to address that, so we can dissuade that fear, or do we need to collect data about that to understand what's happening there? There were a lot of other things that were raised.
Lastly, I want to hear, can you help us to form a coalition, perhaps of ranchers, biologists, citizens, NGOs, that would be able to work together to expand the range of the Mexican wolf north of I-40? Because it's clear that there is support for that on both sides of this really difficult issue. Lastly, I think as a member of that coalition, the eight-year-old, because I think the most compelling comment that I heard today came from an eight-year-old. That's all I will say. Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you. Commissioner Fulfer, do you have anything?
Gregg Fulfer: I just want to thank everybody for the comments. I think there's a happy medium to be found. The ranchers they do provide a lot of infrastructure, especially water infrastructure for wildlife. Without that, we wouldn't see as much wildlife we have because of this dry state. That's an important side of it. The other side of it is important, but I think overpopulation, I think sometimes we try to put a basketball in a coke bottle and it just don't fit. It's got to be analyzed and figure out where you're at. You can't just force nature into a situation it can't go into. I think there's a lot of work to be done. A lot of things got to be done to make this work.
Richard Stump: Thank you for that, Commissioner Fulfer. I feel compelled to get a few words from Paul Souza, if you don't mind. Please.
[silence]
Paul Souza: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair, and to the commission. Again, we're deeply grateful for our relationship with New Mexico Game and Fish. I can tell you, as a career conservation professional over 25 years, today's been a terrific day for me. To see the difficulty in the community, the challenges, and the passions around wolf conservation, I think it's heartening that people can come together and have this conversation. I can tell you, deep in our core and our philosophy, we care about the people in wolf

country. In the Fish and Wildlife Service's culture, we have a deep relationship with farming and ranching. In our view, they are part of the solution.
We also have a strong passion for endangered species conservation. Taking a step back and looking at the big picture, we have now approaching 300 Mexican wolves. The last generation's improvement in the wolf population is undeniable. It is because of the work that's been done by passionate advocates that you've heard from today, and the people that live in wolf country. Now, in some ways, we're facing the challenges of population increases. We're seeing depredations increase. We're seeing high densities, particularly in the Gila in this county. How do we work together to find the balance?
I heard coexistence so many times today. On behalf of our agency, I could not agree more. Successful recovery of endangered species, particularly apex predators, requires not only population sustained over time, but a public that lives in these places that accepts it. I promise, we are committed to being a partner in this endeavor. We have a no daylight between us policy with New Mexico Game and Fish, and are just humble partners and grateful for the chance to listen and learn today.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Paul. Appreciate that. Anybody else have anything you'd like to say? Commissioner Clemente?
Fernando Clemente: First of all, I want to say thank you to the representatives of US Fish and Wildlife Services for being here today, and for the state and county officials that were here today. That means a lot. Obviously, they care. They care about their constituents, and they represent them well. Thank you for that. As well as Dr. Wade was mentioning, there's one thing that I would like to know from Fish and Wildlife Service, is that part Mexico? Because it is the secondary habitat for the recovery of the Mexican gray wolf. Obviously, it does carry at least 70% of the critical habitat for the species.
I hear a lot of things of the wall. Is the wall going to come up? Is it going to stop the migration of the species, the expansion of the species? Maybe that will be something that we need to address, and all of you should take that challenge. With that is what play is going to play Mexico? Where is it standing, and what is being done to get successful recovery, if that's the secondary habitat for the area for the recovery of the species? Thank you.
Richard Stump: I'm going to bring up Chief Liley to answer that question. He just came back from Mexico.
[silence]
Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Clemente, as Chairman Stump said, we just met down in Mexico, end of July, 1st of August, or two weeks ago. Working with the Mexican government on trying to figure out strategies to increase the Mexican wolf population in Mexico has probably been one of the better means that I've had with the government of Mexico in a long time. They actually committed to releasing 15 wolves in Mexico in the state of Durango this year.
They're moving south into the more traditional forested areas, where wolves were last caught in the wild. I think that's an important aspect too. The very last wolves caught in the wild that were brought into captivity were in Durango, and bringing them back to that area where the last remaining ones survived. Not as much of a cattle ranching area as it is more of a timber industry. Prey base should be a lot higher, but Mexico is fully on board towards recovery.
Mexico is hoping to get to recovery faster. We did have a delay different last four or five years. Definitely, not as much activity going on, but they hope to release multiple packs in the next few years in Mexico as well. Working in cooperation with both the Fish and Wildlife Service, the state of Arizona, and New Mexico on maybe trying to bring wild wolves from the United States down to New Mexico, wolves that have experience on the landscape to try to help improve the situation and release there.
They're also looking at southern Chihuahua as where we've had some radio collared wolves show up on camera, non-functioning radio collars anymore from their original releases about six years ago. As I spoke before, they're looking to redo their posse or their endangered species plan for Mexico. Mexico is committed towards wolf recovery to try to get to recovering in Mexico as well.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Chief Liley. That's good news. I guess that wraps up item number seven. Thank you all. That was incredibly profound. I appreciate all of your input today. Item number eight is a discussion of the proposed rule for shed hunting presented by Colonel Cimbal.
[pause 04:23:39]

Colonel Cimbal: I wasn't expecting that reaction when I set up here. All right. Chair, commissioners, this is going to be the second discussion of the proposed rule for shed hunting. Very similar in setup that we did in our June meeting, with a couple different things. Again, the background on this. During the 2025 legislative session, new legislation was passed. Those were: 17-3-2, classes of licenses, added the shed hunter license. The wordage in that is "entitled the licensee to shed hunting, provided that a shed hunter license shall not be required for shed hunting by a resident." Then, in 17-3-13, it set the fee for said license. The nonresident shed hunter fee was set at $200.

We looked at this in June. It's very similar. There was a good public comment that came in that was a necessary change. Basically, what this is allowing: possession of game animals found in the field. The way it currently reads pre any changes, "It is unlawful to possess heads, horns, antlers or other parts of protected species in the field without an invoice or permit, with the exception of obviously shed antlers. Then it would go on to say, past that green, "All shed antlers collected in violation of any state or federal land closure, in violation of criminal trespass, Habitat Protection Act, driving off road on public or on a closed road will be seized and remain property of the state of New Mexico."

Obviously, currently it's accepted, but with the new legislative law, we need to change that and create a license for it. Then the way I was looking at moving forward with it is possession of more than two, obviously, shed antlers found in the field, requires a valid nonresident shed hunter license from the department for any nonresident. Residents do not require a shed hunter license.

This is where I changed a little bit here. It now reads, "All shed antlers collected in violation of commission rule," and then it goes on for the other ones. The reason for that was basically if you're found in the field with four shed antlers and you're a nonresident and you get checked for your license, you do not have the license, technically, two of those shed antlers are legally possessed, should we move forward this way. The wordage in there prior made all four of them illegal. Basically, fixing it this way in violation of commission rule would allow you to possess two of those four. The other two would get seized, and you'd potentially get written a citation.

I did go out to public comment. We had a meeting in Albuquerque and we had a meeting in Las Cruces. Probably hard for the public to see that. In the comment summary, we added it should cost more and should cost less. Both of those, we can't change because it's set in legislature at $200. We had 13 comments just completely against the whole thing. We had four that were completely for it. Again, against completely, it's difficult. We've got legislation that made it exist, so it is there. It exists.

There were various comments revolving around seasonal restrictions, everywhere from closing it for both residents and nonresidents for certain times of the year to closing it for just nonresidents, to closing it for everybody and then opening it for only residents for the first week or two, and then opening it to everyone else. There were two comments about requiring an online ethics course that comes out of Utah. The way they structured it, you sit down and take a free online ethics course. This is the one that I picked up on fix the language about violation of commission rule. That is in there.

There was one to make an exception for guides and outfitters who operate in New Mexico, to not need one. That'd be a nonresident guide here. Can't really do that. It's set in legislature that a nonresident needs it. Another one, if you had a big game license for nonresidents, to not need the shed hunter license. Then we had one comment to end all shed hunting. That's all I've got. If you want me to go back to any of those slides, just let me know.

Richard Stump: What is the department recommending? What is the recommendation by the department?

Colonel Cimbal: The recommendation from the department right now would be to require the nonresident shed hunter license. That license year would go from April 1st, starting April 1st, 2026, and then run through March 31st. It's basically the same license year we currently have for our other stuff, like a fishing manual license. That license would only be required for a nonresident. Of course, no license for a resident. That was very clear in the language in the legislation.

Then I would like to allow any nonresident at any time to be in possession of two shed antlers found in the field. My reasoning for that is, you have campers, CDT, trail hikers, recreationalists. I don't want a hiccup of having a 12-year-old kid pick up a shed antler and then having one of our officers having to use their discretion. I don't want to set something along those lines because right now I'm in the position I am. I can

give direction, "Okay, this is the way it is. Don't be writing 12-year-old kids if they find one," but to set it in regulation and basically law, that would leave that when I'm long gone, so that hopefully that direction exists.
I just don't like the idea of a hiker, somebody not being able to pick one or two of these up. I don't want that to be against the law.
Michael Sloane: Maybe you could go back to the specific regulation language slide.
Colonel Cimbal: The specific which one?
Michael Sloane: Regulation language.
Colonel Cimbal: This would be the way we would like to take it forward at the current time.
Fernando Clemente: I have a question, Chair.
Richard Stump: Please.
Fernando Clemente: Where it says possession of two and more, possession, do we define possession? What about a home? People that, for example, have a lot more than two.
Colonel Cimbal: Chair, commissioners, my intent on this, I think it's got difficulties to enforce, but this is pertaining more to you're in the field. Perhaps the game warden is watching you in the mountains like we do fishermen or anything else, and they witness you pick up three, four. They're going to go down. You've probably got them hidden by then. They're going to ask you for your license and make their case. Also, they could just walk up, approach on you when you've got four in your possession, ask you for your license, make their case.
I think my intent on this is the found-in-the-field because once you've got them to your house, it gets a little bit more difficult unless you've been watching the individuals over time and you're making a case on them. If you're interested in investing the time to follow somebody because you think they're a nonresident commercializing this and you are able to follow them on multiple trips, witnessing and documenting that they're picking up maybe two this time, stashing them at home, next day two, stashing them at home, I think you could make the case.
I don't think our intent here is going to be we see a pile of antlers in somebody's yard or hanging on their fence and go knocking on their door or getting a search warrant because that exists right now. There's shed antlers that look pretty fresh for a few years, especially when they're taken care of in the shade under a tree, kind of thing. I think more of these cases would be made likely in the field or if we have intel guiding us that somebody's truly making a habit of going and getting the limit and not buying the license and stashing them in their house or the garage, in which we would investigate.
Fernando Clemente: Thank you. My other question is, I had phone calls, and people have concerns with turkey hunting. They were saying, as it is, it is difficult to turkey hunt. Then whenever you have a lot of people out there scaring the birds, they get quiet, you don't get successful. That is one. The other one is, for commercial, why we don't match the other states' commercial picking? They choose, instead of be moving state to state and competing, we don't pick the same date. Their suggestion was May 31st to start with commercial.
Colonel Cimbal: Most of those other states that have closures like that they're based on biological reasons. It's not just a closure to shed hunting. The whole mountain or whole forest is closed. You can't hike in it. It's enforceable. Somebody is in there; you go take care of it because they're in there illegally. The enforceability would present challenges. You figure we're looking at shed hunting on both private and public lands.
A closed season that would apply to private is an enforcement nightmare because you don't hear a gunshot that gives you some reasonable suspicion or probable cause to walk over there. None of that exists. You need to find a way to get on that private land without any probable cause if you don't have anything, so you don't have a warrant. That presents difficulties nowadays to be able to patrol private without any kind of reasonable suspicion or probable cause.
Yes, under the turkey thing, we probably could figure out a way to have a closure during turkey season. Probably possible. I've heard some of that. I honestly think the majority of the problem that turkey hunters are seeing is OHV use. We do have tools to combat that. We try to ramp it up more and more. We've been focusing more on special operations, utilizing the OHV grant funds better in time.

Like I said earlier, we've got less than 100 officers, so we need the eyes and ears to help us enforce things. I just don't think if we had a shed hunting closure during turkey season that all the turkey hunters would be like, "Sweet, you guys fixed it." I think it would still be a lot of hecticness with OHV users in the forests.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Clemente. Commissioner Lopez, you have a question?
Tirzio Lopez: Chair, Colonel Cimbal, what would be the point violation for a nonresident in opposition with a $200 permit?
Colonel Cimbal: Chair, commissioners, if we went this route, it would have a penalty assessment option. A penalty assessment option means that you can issue a penalty assessment in lieu of a court appearance. You give the option to the person, you explain what the penalty assessment is, you send your payment in via mail. That's one option. The other option, you can choose court.
If they went the penalty assessment option, you would be paying $125 fine for the penalty, and then on top of that, you would have the cost of a license because the way a penalty is, just like a fishing license, you're actually purchasing the license that you needed while you were doing that activity. You'd have the $200 license, $125 fine for a total of $325. Violation points with a penalty assessment like that would be five.
Tirzio Lopez: Another question I have, we obviously can't change the amount set by the state legislature, but let's say you find a pristine set, since we're here in the Gila, what's the market value on those?
Colonel Cimbal: It's averaging about $16 a pound. We've had it up $18, $19 a pound. You can get a single seven-point antler that's worth quite a lot of money.
Tirzio Lopez: They make a profit by just paying $200.
Colonel Cimbal: Potentially could. They pay none $100 right now.
Tirzio Lopez: Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Lopez.
Wheeler Brunschmid: Mr. Chair? Sorry, Commissioner Witt has his hand raised.
Richard Stump: Who did? Go ahead, Commissioner.
Christopher Witt: Thank you. A couple of quick questions for Chief Cimbal about this. First of all, the text that you have there, the first sentence appears to be contradicted by the second sentence. Can you help me reconcile that? It says that you can't possess horns, antlers, or trophies without a license, permit, or invoice, but then it says, if you're a resident, you don't need a license.
Colonel Cimbal: I do see what you're saying because the way it originally read it lists antlers, and then it exempts antlers. You're saying the fact that, yes, it would require a license, invoice, or permit, and then there would be no license for the nonresident.
Christopher Witt: Would it be fixed if you just put nonresident in the first sentence?
Colonel Cimbal: I think we'd have to spell it out because you still can't possess the other things as a resident, like the heads or other protected parts. Yes, if we put on the antler section, it is unlawful to possess heads, horns, antlers for nonresidents or other parts out on the field without a license. Let me look at that a little bit. I do see what you're saying, though.
Christopher Witt: It seems like there'd be a simple wording fix, maybe.
Colonel Cimbal: Playing with the word antlers in there in the first part. I think I can fix that pretty quick.
Christopher Witt: Okay. Cool. I have two other quick questions. About the comments. It seemed like there was a block of comments in there that were subtly different, but they all seem to be saying basically the same thing, which is we need seasonal restrictions on the first half of the year, basically the first five months. What's your response to that? What's [crosstalk]--
Colonel Cimbal: You've got the New Mexico Council of Outfitters and Guides. They commented that they would like to see a season. Then, on top of that, you've got one, two, three, four, five, six, seven additional comments that would like to see some kind of a season varying in what that is. They vary both by dates and vary by whether it's resident or nonresident only. It is something we could do. As I mentioned, it has enforcement difficulties, very much so. It's not necessarily the recommendation that we're bringing forward thus far, but it is something we can discuss and see if that's the best option moving forward.
Richard Stump: Commissioner Witt.

Christopher Witt: One more follow-up real quick. Just generally, Chief Cimbal, when you get a set of comments like this, how do you weigh comments from individuals versus comments from a group that represents many members, like the Council of Outfitters and Guides?
Colonel Cimbal: Chair, commissioners. Obviously, it comes with more weight, because that's a good backing. I think that Kerrie Romero has a comment that she wants to bring, so that'll give an idea of what their viewpoint is on it. It carries more weight. You've got a group of individuals versus a single individual.
Christopher Witt: Thank you.
Michael Sloane: Mr. Chair, just one quick comment if I can. I think philosophically we've been thinking about this in terms of what will be the impact of the $200 license, and will that address the concerns we've heard, versus trying to create a season as well as the permit license, and what effect that would have. Trying to parse that out and look at it in a stepwise process. Does just having the permit requirement for $200 solve the issue, or do we need to do a season, maybe two years down the road, after we've seen the impact of the license fee?
It's largely because of those enforcement issues and challenges that we see in trying to craft a season. That's something I think of the philosophy behind why we're proposing, just let's start with the license and see how that goes. Then, if that doesn't solve it, we can maybe tweak it a little bit and better understand what needs to be done to actually solve the problem.
Christopher Witt: That's very helpful. Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Director Sloane. I'm going to go ahead and bring up Kerrie Romero and Billy McCarty and hear their comments.
[pause 04:43:14]
Kerrie Romero: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Like Colonel Cimbal said, we are proposing that you all discuss at least a season. I know that might come as a shock to some of you because you'll remember that in the past, the Council of Outfitters and Guides has been very hesitant to take a position on shed hunting. That's because we are an advocacy group for nonresident opportunity and nonresident hunters.
That seemed a little bit out of step with our normal stance. However, when the legislature took the initiative to put the shed hunting license into statute, it made a situation where you all have to establish a rule, and that forced us to actually take a stance on the issue. During our annual meeting, where we had about 30 outfitters in attendance, we discussed this issue at length to try to determine where the industry really was.
We found that the majority of outfitters really do think that commercial shed hunting is in general having a negative impact on the state. It might not be a measurable biological impact at this point, but it's definitely a negative ecological impact. We are recommending that the department do, like many other states have done, and implement a season. The season, in our opinion, should go from May 1st through December 31st. That would essentially close the season from January to May.
We would propose that you institute the two-shed provision into that season. Therefore, you're not going to criminalize the 12-year-old kid from Texas who's on a turkey hunt with his dad or whatever and picks up some sheds in the woods, so you wouldn't criminalize them. The season really should apply to both resident and nonresident from our perspective. That would reduce the burden on the game wardens and prevent them from having to determine whether or not someone is a resident or a nonresident. It just would apply to all commercial shed hunting.
More importantly, that would keep the heavy shed traffic off the public land during the critical months when ungulate populations are already under a lot of other natural stresses. That's our proposal. Thank you very much.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Kerrie. Billy McCarty.
Billy McCarty: I'm Billy McCarty. I'm late in coming into this discussion on this because it looks like a lot of this has already been taken care of through legislation stuff, but what I'm concerned with is as a landowner being asked the access onto the public lands because they've got to cross the private land to get to that. How do we regulate different things of, if it's a season or not a season, resident or nonresident? When people are asking permission to go onto our private land in order to go shed hunting, how are we supposed to keep track of who is allowed when? It does concern us from that.

In general, my opinion on this is public lands are accessible to the public. They're picking up something that they're not harming any game or anything. To me, it shouldn't even be a consideration. A person should be able to pick up a shed whenever he wants to, but we're already past that. Anyway, I couldn't read what was up there, but with the discussion I'm hearing today, I am concerned with the amount of private land that we have and the access that we have to the forest through our private land, and the people wanting access. How are we going to be able to manage that?
Richard Stump: Thank you, Mr. McCarty. Can you address that?
Colonel Cimbal: Yes. The idea of having to cross, and it goes beyond that, too, just the possession idea. You've got a truck that is going to cross public-private, public-private. I guess wherever you make that stop could make a difference. I think if you've got a nonresident individual and they are picking it up, they almost need to be watched. It's just like the fishermen. Once the bag limit's five, they catch their fifth fish, they walk to their truck, put it in the cooler, and go catch their sixth, walk to the truck, put it in the cooler. If you don't watch them, you are never going to catch them.
If you're able to watch these individuals in the field, invest that time, you'll be able to determine what the status of the land they're on, whether it's public or private. Obviously, if it's private, you might have some trespass issues, and then you need to determine resident versus nonresident. I think the idea of them crossing through public and private, though, because we're requiring, on top of written permission if you're on private, that a nonresident needs the nonresident shed hunter license to have more than two, regardless of whether they're on public or private.
Moving the way we are so far, it's not saying, "Okay, on private, this doesn't apply." Does that address it? Chair? Commissioner?
Richard Stump: I think that Mr. McCarty's concern is--
Michael Sloane: Mr. Chairman. I think what Mr. McCarty was asking about was how does he know who he should or shouldn't let go and when he should or shouldn't let them go. I guess ultimately that's the responsibility of the individual asking for access. If the landowner lets the person through during a time when they can't shed hunt, that would be on that individual and not the landowner. The landowner wouldn't have any liability. The individual would.
I understand Mr. McCarty's concern related to "I don't want to do something wrong," but ultimately, other than saying yes or no to crossing the property, I don't think he would have any liability.
Colonel Cimbal: Yes, Chair, commissioners, certainly he would not be similar to if somebody was asking for permission to hunt on their land for deer and his dairy hunt doesn't start for two months. It's not going to fall on the landowner granting permission. Understand and I appreciate his concern for wanting to make sure he's allowing legal activity to occur, but it wouldn't have any ramifications on him.
Richard Stump: The OHV issue is a huge problem all over the state. From what I understand, in the **[unintelligible 04:50:29]** it's really a big problem. That's what preempted all this, is that true?
Michael Sloane: Mr. Chairman, I think people feel like it's shed hunters, but I have a suspicion that it is a lot of OHV use and a lot of inappropriate OHV use. As Colonel Cimbal noted earlier, we've done a bunch of swarms and we'll do a bunch more in particular in the spring and see if in combination with the license requirement for shed hunting, that makes any sort of a difference. I suspect that given the massive increase in OHV use, we've seen that that's likely at least part if not most of the cause of the concern.
Richard Stump: We, as the commission, need to direct the department, is my understanding, to move further in the process with this, correct?
Michael Sloane: Mr. Chairman, yes, that's correct. Do you like the proposal as it stands with that one tweak that Commissioner Witt pointed out? Do you want us to explore a season? The next time we would bring this before you, if there wasn't a significant change, would be in November for a hearing. If you decide that you want to do something very different from where we are, we might have to put that off till January, but in any case, we need some clarity on what you like and don't like, so we can put together a proposal.
Gregg Fulfer: Mr. Chairman, I have one question.
Richard Stump: Commissioner Fulfer.
Gregg Fulfer: I'm confused on the limit. Is it two sheds per day? Is it two sheds per year? What's that?

Tim Cimbal: It's going to be two sheds that were found in the field in your possession. That would apply if you find them in the field and they've got three, you got them. If you find them at their house and you can prove that more than two of those came, were found in the field, so you watched them on various trips or the same day, they would need the non-resident shed hunter license.
Gregg Fulfer: You're saying per year then or per season or whatever?
Tim Cimbal: Correct.
Gregg Fulfer: I would think that need to be written in there. It's confusing. I would think it's per day like a fish limit. So many per day, per possession.
Tim Cimbal: Chair, Commissioners, I think I could fix that one pretty quick by saying, the green part, possession of more than two obviously shed antlers found in the field per license year requires a valid non-resident shed antler license. I also think Chair and Commissioner Witt, if I leave everything the way it is where the red says-- I would have that red in there and it would just say, with the exception of obviously shed antlers for residents, that would fix the other part.
Gregg Fulfer: Thank you.
Richard Stump: To be clear, a resident that picks up two sheds, that has more than two sheds at his house, that's acceptable?
Tim Cimbal: For a resident, yes. Chair, Commissioners, there would be no limit on the number of sheds a New Mexico resident could pick up and keep in the field.
Richard Stump: Keep in the field or--
Tim Cimbal: Find in the field and keep at their house. On their person, they have five, not a problem. They have 100 on them, not a problem. It's at their house, all okay.
Richard Stump: Thank you. Commissioners, do you have anything else?
Christopher Witt: Yes. I thought of one more question regarding the resident exception. I think that Kerrie Romero mentioned that the outfitters recommend that there not be a resident exception, and so is there some other residents that are shed hunters, commercial or not, that have weighed in on this or that would be upset about there being a license? I can imagine that there might be some shed collectors who would be in favor of it even though they're in state. Can you weigh in on that Chief Cimbal?
Tim Cimbal: Chair, I don't know that I caught that entirely.
Michael Sloane: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner Witt, residents are statutorily exempted from a license requirement. Only residents are required to have a license. Ms. Romero was talking about closure of all shed hunting for both residents and non-residents during that period, but the license requirement applies only to non-residents by statute.
Tim Cimbal: Chair, Commissioners, I think her recommendation, as she mentioned, would still allow for the two limit. Resident or non, during closed season, they could still have two.
Richard Stump: Commissioner Witt, do you accept that?
Christopher Witt: Yes, I trust that the director's interpretation that the statute prevents the implementation of a license on residents, even though it doesn't prevent the implementation of a closure that would also affect residents. If that's correct, then we can move on.
Tim Cimbal: Chair, Commissioners, that interpretation right there would be correct. It states that it would never require a license for a resident, only for a non-resident, but if you as a commission made a closed season regardless that you would need a license or not, it's just like deer hunting. If deer hunting's closed and you don't need a license, you can't go get a deer, so it'd be the same thing.
Christopher Witt: Excellent.
Female Speaker: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Witt, other commissioners, and Colonel Cimbal, what's the purpose of the first sentence in 19.31.10.9E. Could we strike that sentence and just begin with possession of more than two dot, dot, dot?
Tim Cimbal: Chair, Commissioners. That's original language from it. What that applies to is pretty directly like your dead head in the field. A hunter or hiker comes across a dead carcass of a deer, and they want that, it is unlawful in the state of New Mexico to pick that up. You would need to contact your local conservation officer and arrange to be allowed or not allowed to possess that. That's what that covers.
Female Speaker: Thank you.

Richard Stump: I'm going to recommend that we go with the department's recommendation on this. Just to start out with no season, implement the $200 fee for non-residents and see how it goes. It seems like a lot of complications that enforcement's going to have to deal with. I think that that sounds to me like the best way to start this. Anybody else?
Fernando Clemente: May I? My recommendation will be to add a commercial season. That will be for sure.
Tim Cimbal: Chair, Commissioners, that was discussed quite a bit in the public meetings that we had. In my vision, the way that that would occur is if there was legislative action to give the commission authority over commercial shed hunting, then you can set higher, lower fees depending on number that they possess, number that they sell. You'd have it all.
Michael Sloane: Mr. Chairman, commissioner, the challenge with regulating the commercial collection right now is that, as Colonel Cimbal said, we don't have statutory authority. You could regulate it, but we could only charge the cost of administering the program, so the fee really would be pretty minimal and I don't think it would have the desired effect.
Tim Cimbal: Chair, Commissioners, yes. Director Sloane is correct. The way that we can make a permit or a certificate to require something like that, by statute and regulation, we can't exceed the cost or what it costs to administer the program. You run into things like, we have certain importation permits that are $5, because it takes three minutes to do it. This would be a similar one. It'd be pretty easy. You'd have a tough time charging so many more than $20 for a commercial shed hunting license, under the parameters that we're set with now.
Richard Stump: [silence] Any more input on that? Commissioners? Commissioner Lopez?
Tirzio Lopez: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do strongly suggest that the Department consider setting a season, kind of what the representative from Council Outfitters for Guides recommends. It might be a little bit difficult to enforce, but I think a season would be appropriate. Starting May 1st, I believe would it be, and then end, I guess to the next year, like April 31st? Is that what we have now, right?
Tim Cimbal: Chair, Commissioners. I think the most popular one right now would be January 1st through May 31st, opening April 1st. Which is conveniently the first day of the new license year.
Tirzio Lopez: You're saying that it would open April 1st?
Tim Cimbal: Chair, Commissioners, correct.
Michael Sloane: Mr. Chair, Commissioner, just for clarity, that is not the recommendation of the New Mexico Council of Outfitters and Guides. Theirs is a closure from for January through May, which gets you out of the turkey season. I think Tim was referring to the one that we've had the most comments towards was opening.
Tim Cimbal: Chair, Commissioners. I think we're talking the same thing so it'd be that first dot. It would be a closure from January 1, through May 31st for non-residents and residents, and then open April 1st through December 31st.
Fernando Clemente: It allows a turkey hunt to at release some type of--
Michael Sloane: Tim, I don't know how you open a season April 1st when it's closed till May 31st.
Tim Cimbal: I'm sorry. I'm one month behind on myself. Yes. Would June 1st. Sorry.
Richard Stump: The problem I see with that is that, all the sheds they're not going to be prime, right?
Tim Cimbal: Chair, Commissioners. Rodents are going to-- true, rodents eat on them. People are going to pick them up and stash them and then come June 1st, it's not going to be shed hunting season. It's going to be shed pile hunting season to find somebody else's stash. Should be quite a rodeo.
Fernando Clemente: I don't know [crosstalk] close January to May 31st. Now that you mentioned about rodents, [chuckles] it is part of habitat, right? I don't know. I think I like, because of the wildlife does goes through hunting season, they rest, then they go through breeding, calving and all of that. Am I correct? Calving, imagine you're right.
Tim Cimbal: Chair, Commissioners. If your priority or decision would be to implement some kind of season rather than just going without wanting to test it for a few years and see how it goes, see if it mitigates issues, I think the suggestion I would have is we could test the waters by closing it for Turkey season. I think January 1 and then opening June 1st, it's a pretty long closure, but just a suggestion.

Richard Stump: The other thing issue we all have is that we're going to have a January bow hunt and if we have hunters out there and they see a shed, they'll be illegal if they pick it up.
Michael Sloane: Mr. Chair, I think the proposal was that even during the closed season, it would still have that two antler limit. A hunter could pick up a couple and be within the allowable thing.
Richard Stump: Well, both residents and non-residents?
Michael Sloane: Correct.
Richard Stump: Roger that.
Gregg Fulfer: I wouldn't want a season for the first starting this out. I think we'll have it open January to January.
Richard Stump: I'm in agreement with that. Commissioner Lopez would like to have a season. How about--
Michael Sloane: It appears Commissioner Witt has his hand raised, or maybe it's left over from before, but maybe he has a thought.
Christopher Witt: I still have it raised, but my comment is evolving as this discussion goes. I don't mean to belabor this about the timing, but I do want to get it right because it says the outfitters and guides, suggested that it open on June 1st. I think we might want to ask Ms. Romero to clarify, because in her oral comments she said that the closure would go until May 1st, not May 31st. That might mitigate the issue about condition a little bit. I just want to make sure we get those dates exactly right.
Second of all, with respect to the issue of whether we should implement the closure now or not. I would be inclined to go with the Department's initiative and go with what Chief Cimbal's been working on, which is to do this in steps and implement this first step as a trial with the intent that we evaluate, then the possibility of implementing a closure as a second step.
Fernando Clemente: I do agree with Commissioner Witt. You start with the recommendation and then move from there. This gets moving. As well, yes, a clarification on May 1st or May 31st.
Tim Cimbal: Chair, Commissioners, Kerrie Romero just indicated, make sure you're right, but it would be a closure of January 1st through May 1st. You did this. [chuckles]
Michael Sloane: That is what is in your letter of August 7th.
Kerrie Romero: All in the letter. Yes. The closure would be January through-- Opening May 1st so that people could still be in the spring shed hunting season, the commercial shed hunter. You're not putting too much burden on them. June 1st is kind of late, but then you're also preventing them from being all over the woods during the winter months when the weather's harsh and the animals are stressed and they're potentially chasing them around, trying to make them drop their antlers, et cetera.
The two shed provision should stand, because you don't want to criminalize people who are just hikers and they don't know game and fish law, and they just pick up a shed. Our proposal would be, two shed provision with the closure from January, opening May 1st. Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Kerrie. I would like what Commissioner Witt suggested, is take this in steps. I think there's four commissioners that agreed with that. Three other commissioners, four plus Commissioner Witt, and we haven't heard from Commissioner Hickey.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Mr. Chair, Commissioners. I'm always in favor of keeping things simple. Okay. This is a new provision and I respect what you all put together. It was a lot of work. I thank you for all the comments that we've received to date. Yes, I like the idea of just keeping it simple and not going with additional changes, just what we have now. No season.
Richard Stump: The license fee for non-residents and no season.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Correct.
Richard Stump: Director Sloane, Officer Cimbal, can we direct you guys to come up with something for our next meeting, too?
Michael Sloane: Mr. Chair, we'll prepare a rule that addresses some of the changes that we've talked about today, that make sure this is good and tight, and bring forward a rule for a hearing that does not have a season, but does require the license for non-residents and has the two-shed limit or exception. No season, it's what I'm hearing. I'm hearing the consensus seems to be no season. **[unintelligible 05:10:48]**
Christopher Witt: You guys are going to regret. It's going to be a mess. **[unintelligible 05:10:54]**

Michael Sloane: Here's the issue. The issue will be that if we get to the hearing and everybody decides that we should have a season, we'll have to essentially table it, go back out to public comment and come back around with a new rule, because I think adding a season at the point of a hearing would be considered a substantial enough change that we would have to renotice everything. As I said, it's very close, but the consensus at the moment appears to be no season. If you're thinking that you might want to change your mind come the hearing, then we might want to put a season in. I recommend that we pursue a regulation that includes a season now, yes.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Mr. Chair, Commissioners, Director Sloane, let's say we didn't do a season now. The field officers, the game warden, how would they monitor it for this trial year?
Tim Cimbal: Chair, Commissioners, we would go off of a few things. We would be able to see how many licenses we sold and what revenue we made. We'd also be able to see how many citations were written for a non-resident not having their non-resident shed hunter season license. On top of that, we always take into consideration any complaints that go through you as commissioners or come to us directly, if those are involving, because I think we just brought a lot of light to it, and a lot of attention.
People that are paying attention are now going to say, "Oh, there's a huge group with Utah plates. Maybe I'll keep an eye and see if-- I'll call the game warden and then we'll go." Is it just four-wheelers? Are they just trailing off side by sides, or when they came back, or their pickup that's full of shed antlers? Then maybe we'll get an idea on what we're really up against.
I'm being told some people see it a lot. I haven't seen it a lot, and I've talked to a lot of folks that haven't seen it a lot, but it sure certainly does exist, especially like people who are saying when Utah closes because of a hard winter or Colorado, similarly, it's pushing somebody here to pick up sheds when they can't hunt there.
Richard Stump: Look, and what about other states? What are their seasons? Most states don't have a season. Is that correct?
Tim Cimbal: A lot of the big mountain Western states do, Wyoming or Colorado's, but what those are, everything's closed because there's 8 feet of snow, and the critters can't move around. The added stress of somebody pursuing them up to and including-- people will chase them into Aspen groves with snowmobiles, hoping that they hit their antlers during the right time of the year, and then they go in and pick them up. You can imagine the stress on an animal during that time of the year.
Utah, when there's a bad snow, they'll implement a closure, but if not, they will not. The key thing is, with those ones, it's much more enforceable, because the whole area is closed. You can't be in there photographing. You can't be in there shed hunting. You just can't be in there. If somebody's in there, pretty easy to go make a case.
Richard Stump: Easy to enforce.
Haydn Forward: I had said no season because I wanted to move this forward, but now with the explanation of the director, that is better to choose if I'm going to change my mind. I haven't seen a lot of people picking up sheds as you mentioned that you haven't seen. I do live right in the border of Texas, and believe it or not, I have heard, I'm not kidding you, probably 60 people from Texas saying that they come and they shed hunt.
It is unbelievable whenever you start working on something, because your ears open up. It's like when you have a new truck, you think nobody has it, and as soon as you buy it, you see it everywhere. The same thing with this. As soon as this came up, I started hearing people about shed hunting, and that's what it caught my attention. That's one of the reasons why I suggest, as it was presented by Ms. Romero, closing that season, I think, since we cannot put a season for commercial, but I think that will be my recommendation.
[pause 05:15:35]
Michael Sloane: It's been a very productive conversation. I feel like we're still leaning towards not a season. Unfortunately, I didn't keep track of who was on which side, but it still feels like there's four commissioners leaning one way and three the other, or I guess it's-
Christopher Witt: Four, two.
Michael Sloane: Four and two, maybe, maybe three and three even. I'm not sure how to address that. I'm not sure getting additional public comments can be helpful.

Tim Cimbal: Chair, Commissioners, I truly feel like the intent of this when it was made in the legislature was to not withhold or hold back the resident. I don't know what will come out of it if we made a season and made it so residents could not hunt during the prime season. I feel like the intent was to allow the residents to hunt sheds in their home state during the prime season.
Richard Stump: I completely agree with you. I think that was definitely the intent. With that in mind, seems we have four commissioners that want to do no season and two that do. Am I correct? Why don't we move--
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Mr. Chair, Commissioners, and Director, we want to proceed. Director, I know we have the administrative process of rule-making. Hypothetically speaking, if we could just move forward today as is, and in November at the hearing, let's say four commissioners vote against and two-- four in favor of this, and two against, then have a new rule.
Richard Stump: Correct.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Now, if the two members today feel so strongly that we need the season in this, we cannot have the hearing in November. Is that what I heard you say?
Michael Sloane: If we wanted to include a season in the rule, we would need to know now so we can draft a rule to put out to the public saying this is what the rule would look like and what the season would be, so that we can receive public comment in advance of the hearing, and so folks can come to the hearing and give comment on it. It's really about us understanding what's going to be in the rule before we have the hearing, because if we make significant changes to the rule during the hearing that weren't noticed, we would have to essentially cancel the hearing, go back out, and re-notice everything. The rule really need to have a clear direction on what rule you want presented at the hearing today.
Richard Stump: Circling back to Colonel Cimbal's point is that this statute was not introduced to limit residents from collecting sheds during the prime time. I'm suggesting that we move forward with no season and see how this all works out in the end. In a year or two, we'll have more information, basically.
Michael Sloane: Chair, Commissioners, a year, or two years from now, probably a year to start with, and if it's the second year, I can sit down here and throw up a seven-minute presentation to show what those stats look like each year, if that helps. Sound good? Mr. Chairman, it sounds like we have our marching orders. Tighten this up a little bit, no season.
Richard Stump: Okay. Thank you, Colonel Cimbal. We didn't have any comments online, right, guys?
Tim Cimbal: No, Mr. Chair.
Richard Stump: Okay. Let's move on to Item number 10, which is now item number 9 now. Discussion of proposed changes to the hunting and fishing licenses and application rule 19.31.3 NMAC given by Chief Varela.
Paul Varela: Agenda item 10 is a continued discussion of the hunting and fishing licenses and application rule 19.31.3 NMAC. During the legislative session in 2025, the legislative passed the bill called Senate Bill 5. Senate Bill 5 provides a 25% discount for all license fees for New Mexico residents who receive Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program benefits. The new law requires that a commission rule establish eligibility and verification for that SNAP discount.
The department has worked closely with the healthcare authority to receive the information or to gather information about how the information should be received and applied for those people that are receiving SNAP benefits. Currently as we stand right now, the department would receive a data dump at the end of December for the people that are eligible to receive SNAP benefits. We would compare those SNAP benefits to people that are applying for hunting during that following year, and we would verify whether they're eligible or not.
Richard Stump: Can you put the microphone closer to you. Thank you.
Paul Varela: Sure. Currently, as it stands, the rule would read Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program discount. New Mexico residents participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance program are eligible to receive a 25% discount on all licenses as established in 17.31.3 NMSA for the following license year. The department will qualify individuals for the following license year discount between January 1st and January 10th annually.

If not qualified by the department in January, applicants may approve eligibility in person at any department office to have the discount applied. No refunds will be offered for full fee purchases made prior to verification of eligibility. The rule is pretty straightforward as it stands right now.
Richard Stump: Do we have any public comment on this agenda item?
Tim Cimbal: Not at this time, Mr. Chair.
Richard Stump: How about commissioners?
Tirzio Lopez: Mr. Chair, members of the commission, I'm glad the legislature was able to get this bill across. It expands access for numerous families that might be struggling. The sad part is that we have struggling families still in this state. At least it shows the department along with the legislature and the executive are considering them being able to participate in the outdoor recreation. I think it's a good thing to do. The question I have for Mr. Varela is, Mexico Healthcare Authority, they're going to give you data, right? Are they going to give you all the applicants that are currently on SNAP?
Paul Varela: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Lopez, only the people that are on SNAP that are currently active at that time at the end of December.
Tirzio Lopez: That's including all state residents?
Paul Varela: Yes.
Tirzio Lopez: They're going to dump from the Aspen system and give it to the department to compare when they apply in January?
Paul Varela: Yes. Via an electronic file.
Tirzio Lopez: That's a lot of data.
Paul Varela: Yes.
Tirzio Lopez: Thank you. That's all I have.
Michael Sloane: Mr. Chairman, commissioner, there's a chance that we'll do something called an API, which would allow us to access the database. The last price I heard on that was $350,000, so we said we can't afford that. They've subsequently come back and said, "Well, how much could you afford?" We're still having a little bit of discussion about that, but as of right now, it looks like the data dump option is currently the best.
Tirzio Lopez: What you're saying, chair and director, is that staff would have access to the Aspen system to verify a potential licensee's eligibility.
Michael Sloane: Sort of. What I'm saying is if you got onto buy your license, the computer system would automatically take your name over to Aspen and check it against the list and say, oh, you're eligible for a 25% discount and come back and give you the discount or it would say you're not, and just charge you the regular fee. It wouldn't be staff looking at the list, but the system would look.
Tirzio Lopez: Okay. That would require additional training by our staff to meet the federal requirements to access Aspen.
Michael Sloane: That that's why the API would be doing it. That's, I think part of the reason it's so expensive, but I think based on our last communication just this week, that that's the healthcare author's preferred method if they can squeeze enough money out of us.
Paul Varela: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Lopez, in discussions and emails going back and forth today, the price is still 350,000. If there was any additional amount over 350,000, they would be willing to contribute. That's what I've seen today. It's still 350,000 right now.
Tirzio Lopez: This is discussions with Secretary Armijo, I believe?
Michael Sloane: With her staff.
Tirzio Lopez: That's all I have. Thank you.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Mr. Chair, Commissioners, I have a question with regard to the language. 25% discount on all licenses purchases for the following year if qualified by the department between January 1st and January 10 annually. Does that mean the only time these persons can receive the discount is if they've been qualified by the department between January 1 and January 10?
Paul Varela: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Hickey, no. If they have not been qualified between January 1st and January 10th, they are eligible to come into the office and provide verification at a department office, and then they would receive that 25% discount.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: What if somebody doesn't come in during that period of time, then what?

Paul Varela: Chairman Stump, Commissioner Salazar, then they wouldn't be eligible until they came into the office and wanted to receive that discount and provide a verification.
Michael Sloane: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Salazar Hickey. The January dates are, because that's when we would get the data dumped and we could get most people that have an account qualified. It would be those individuals that either don't have an account and come in in June to buy a fishing license that would need to prove up that they have SNAP benefits to get the discount, or those folks that that have an account, but get SNAP benefits in February or March or something, they would need to come into the office, because we're going to get that bulk data in that January timeframe, apply it to our current accounts, and then, like I said, anybody who got benefits after that period or that didn't have an account with us and had benefits would have to come into an office to qualify at any time during that license year.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Thank you.
Greg Fulfer: Mr. Chairman, I have a question.
Richard Stump: Go ahead, Commissioner Fulfer.
Greg Fulfer: This is just for the license application fee, we're not guaranteeing them a license yet, are we?
Paul Varela: Chairman Stump, Commissioner Fulfer, no, we are not guaranteeing them a license.
Greg Fulfer: How much did we raise the license fee from the legislator? Didn't they allow us to charge a little more on the license. How much are we looking at getting from that fee increase?
Michael Sloane: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner Fulfer, I believe the overall revenue expectation was around $9 million of new revenue coming in even after the SNAP discount was applied to the folks that we anticipate, the percentage we anticipate taking advantage of that discount.
Greg Fulfer: Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Fulfer. Anybody else? Thank you, Paul. Let's move on to item number 10.
Michael Sloane: Mr. Chairman, just for clarity on that last one, everybody's okay with proceeding the way that we have it drafted at this point? That's a yes. Great.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Yes.
Michael Sloane: Thank you.
Richard Stump: Discussion proposed changes to the Game and Fish License Permits Rule 19.30.9 MAC. Go ahead, Paul.
Paul Varela: The proposed changes to 19.30.9 would add a license vendor fee per transaction of $2. The current vendor transaction fee is $1 per fee right now. It would also add an additional dollar for $1 per carcass tag per issuance. Currently, that is not charged at all by the department or by third-party vendors. That would only apply to third-party vendors charging that $1 fee. The department would not charge a carcass tag issuance fee because it's easy for the department to just print the tag, whereas certain vendors, they have to handwrite the tags.
The department in Maine, we surveyed all of our vendors. We received 54 responses within 35 vendors, and the majority were in favor of increasing the vendor fee. The majority of the vendors supported a $2 per transaction fee and $1 carcass tag fee. However, at our last discussion in Red River, the department was requested to receive public comment. We issued public comments from July 11th to July 25th with three proposals presented in that public comment.
The first proposal is $2 per transactions fee for licenses sold either by the department or a third-party license vendor, and $1 for each carcass tag sold by a third-party license vendor. Proposal number 2 is $1 per transaction fee for licenses sold directly by the department, $2 per transaction fee for licenses sold by a third-party vendor, and $1 fee for each carcass tag sold by a third-party license vendor. Proposal 3 is no per transaction fee for licenses sold directly by the department, $2 per transaction fee for licenses sold by a third-party vendor, and $1 for each carcass tag sold by a third-party vendor.
We received about 200 public comments. 43% of those comments supporting proposal number 3. 44% supported proposal number 1, which is the department's preferred proposal. 12% supported proposal number 2. 22% were undecided, and they just decided to comment without choosing a proposal. The department is seeking direction as far as which way we would like to proceed as far as increasing the vendor fee and charging the carcass tag fee.

Richard Stump: Why does the department want to add $2 per transaction fee?
Paul Varela: The department would like to charge $2 per transaction fee because the department is considered a vendor itself. If vendor fees are desired to be increased, we would like the department to be considered a vendor as well. We would like to follow suit with what the vendors are doing. Since it's written in statute, we would prefer to choose $2 per transaction as well.
Michael Sloane: Mr. Chairman, I think there's also the matter of all of our costs have gone up. We have an IT staff. We have to update software. We have to update servers. We have to do all of that work to maintain and operate our system. I think we heard at our last meeting it was $140,000 that we raised with the $1 fee. That's been in place for many years. As you know, inflation has hit hard.
We feel like in order to keep up and try and keep somewhere close to balancing our budget, although as I understand it, that's only maybe 20% of the cost we spend on IT services, we feel like it would be appropriate to raise the fee in the same way that vendors around the state feel like they're getting squeezed.
Paul Varela: Mr. Chair, in 2024, the department received $147,000 in revenue for vendor transactions. In 2023, $134,000. I'd also like to point out that our state is one of the only states that operates internally with our own online licensing system. Other states contract out their licensing systems, which is a huge cost to us. Any increase in revenue that we can take in will also help benefit to improve our processes in IT.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Chief Varela. Commissioners?
Haydn Forward: I do have a comment that I got to say, disclose this. I am the owner of New Mexico Specialized Wildlife Services and Salmon Archery. I am a vendor for New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. I will be sustaining from voting on this item.
Richard Stump: I'm inclined to choose Proposal 1 because I understand the cost of doing all this within the department and we struggle enough as it is. To me, $2 is not much to ask of our public. Anybody else have any input?
Tirzio Lopez: Mr. Chair, I have some comments. Five minutes ago, we just recommended that the department give SNAP benefits 25% discount. We have public support here saying that 43% don't want the department to be charging a fee. We have a license fee increase that just came from the legislature to give us $9 million in excess revenue. I think the department should find a way to do without the $2 fee. Like I said before, I believe we're nickel and diming the public to use their data, their ink, their information if they're buying it from the department. Private vendors, yes, they do deserve to be compensated. If they're going to walk into our office and buy a license from our staff, the staff are public servants, we are public servants and we still want to charge them a fee. If they get online to buy it from us, we're still going to charge them a fee.
There's money that we can move around with the department with the license fee increase that are coming. If 43% of the 200 public comments say that we shouldn't do it, we should probably think twice. We just heard in the last three hours from people giving public comment how they feel about wolves and cattle and losses. We heard them. I think we should hear the people that said that the department shouldn't be charging them a fee. That's all I have.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Lopez. I'm stuck on the 22% that's undecided as well. Any commissioners have anything else that they want to add or have their input on this?
Christopher Witt: Yes, please. Can I make a comment?
Richard Stump: Please.
Christopher Witt: It was very well said, Commissioner Lopez. I understand the sentiment. Based on the facts and the amounts in this particular case, I disagree. I think a $2 transaction fee is really small. I think people will recognize that as being really small. We pay service fees all the time for things we do online. We know that the cost of processing a transaction like that and maintaining the IT to do that is higher than $2. I don't think that that particular fee is going to be seen as out of line. I think it's still low compared to most fees that we pay.
I'm in favor of option 1. I know that the majority of respondents preferred option 3, which is in their economic interest. I understand that. I think option one is the right way to go because I think the

department could effectively use those $2 to improve their IT and improve the user experience that we get from using the department's webpage and licensing system. I think that's really important.
I also think that Proposal 3 has a potential trap that could actually hurt the third-party vendors. We don't want the third-party vendors to lose out, to have fewer transactions here as a result of the incentives that we set up with our fee system. The savvy frugal hunters and fishermen will all go and purchase their licenses from the no-fee system, knowing that they save $2 instead of patronizing our vendors. If we maintain the transaction fees exactly equal from all sources, then our helpful vendors will still be patronized by our residents. That's another reason why I support Proposal 1.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Witt. I do have a question I just thought about. Vendor fees, are they covered by-- or not vendor fees, but credit card fees, or vendor fees and transaction fees.
Paul Varela: Chairman Stump, transaction fees are paid by the department as well. Generally, it's in the neighborhood of $800,000 is what we pay with our payment gateway through Wells Fargo, so there is also a cost for the Department to do business just on a regular basis.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Chief Varela.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Mr. Chair, Commissioners, and Commissioner Lopez, I lean towards Proposal Number 1. The numbers presented by the 200 public comments caught my eye, too. What I find interesting is that the Proposal Number 3 is equal the cost associated in Proposal Number 3 is the same as Proposal Number 1. They're going to pay $2 anyway for the license sold by a third-party vendor, or $1 for each carcass tag by a third.
They're going to do it regardless. Proposal Number 3 is just not the Department. In terms of what you were saying and the cost to people, they're willing to bear that cost anyway. I'm like, "Let's just go with Number 1." I do agree that the Department has added costs. Let's recognize that it could go to the Department or the third-party vendor for $2. Then the second comment that I wanted to make was a very big shout-out to Commissioner Clemente. Not Lopez, excuse me. I was looking at you.
To Clemente. I want to say thank you for recusing yourself and making the disclosure that you just did. I appreciate that. I think as Commissioners, we always need to be mindful of those conflicts that we can have and be very open and transparent. Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Hickey. Commissioner Fulfer, do you have anything to say?
Gregg Fulfer: No, I'm open for any of them, but the $2 to the third party and the dollar to the Department is kind of where I lean.
Richard Stump: Are you talking about Proposal 1?
Gregg Fulfer: Yes, put those back up. I couldn't remember which one. Proposal 2.
Richard Stump: Okay. [silence] We have Commissioner Clemente, who has recused himself. That leaves us with 5 votes, and we have 3 for Proposal Number 1 and 1 for Proposal Number 2. I think you were proposing Number 3. It looks like we're going to go with Proposal Number 1 if the Department can set all that up for us for the next meeting.
[pause 05:43:00]
Richard Stump: Thank you, Chief Varela. Appreciate your time and your good work. Item Number 11 is discussed and proposed changes to the Fisheries Rule 19.31.4 NMAC and Manner and Method Rule 19.31.10 NMAC. Can we take a quick five-minute break? Sorry. [silence] Okay, moving along here. Chief Patten, go ahead with your presentation. Thank you.
Kirk Patten: Thank you, Mr. Chair and Commissioners. Good afternoon. I am here today to present the next phase of the rule development for the Fisheries Rule, as well as fisheries-related concepts within the Manner and Method Rule. As a reminder, the Fisheries Rule is on a four-year cycle, meaning that it was last adopted or went into effect in 2022, and it is set to expire on March 31st, 2026.
As is customary, along with the Fisheries Rule, we also consider changes to fishing-related topics in the Manner and Method Rule. We earlier this year at your April meeting, I "opened the rule" for your consideration to give you proposed concepts and back, presenting the outcomes of public outreach. Not long after this current rule that we're in went into effect, we started to collate ideas that we had internally, concepts we received from interested anglers.
We routinely maintain databases where we can check our fisheries data against management plan objectives. This is an ongoing process along the way. These proposals are slightly different than I

presented to you in April, related to the Fisheries Rule. In April, I mentioned that we were considering a prohibition for natural or artificial scents added to artificial or barbless lure or fly.
After conversation internally, we decided we're not ready to proceed with that sort of prohibition, but we still want to proceed with clarifying the definition of barbless lure or fly to make it consistent between the Fisheries Rule and the Manner and Method Rule. Over the years, they had somehow been inconsistent.
We are also moving forward with, or recommending moving forward with, a proposal designating three Rio Grande cutthroat trout populations as Special Trout Waters within the realm of our Native Trout Conservation Regulations.
In that case, they are Jack's Creek, the upper limits of Rio Chiquito, as well as the Rio San Antonio near Lagunitas Lake. In this case, the proposed regulation would be catch-and-release for Rio Grande cutthroat trout, unlimited harvest for non-native brown trout, in this case, as well as limited terminal tackle to protect the Rio Grande cutthroat trout. We've had a list of these waters for some time now.
They are popular with anglers who want to get engaged in native trout conservation efforts, where, if they catch a brown trout while fishing those waters, they can keep them and contribute to native trout conservation efforts. For the Fisheries Rule, we are also proposing to remove specific waters mentioned in the prohibition to ice fishing. The specific waters are Santa Cruz, Bonito, Monastery, and Springer Lakes.
Santa Cruz is managed by the federal government, and then these other three waters are Open Gate properties where we can not specifically call them out in rule. We can sign them and have an enforcement ability there for the officers. Then, after internal discussions, we've also recommended adding a definition of a Special Trout Water just to call out the significance related to those waters in rule.
This is a summary of our Manner and Method proposals at this time. Again, similar to the Fisheries Rule, we are seeking to clarify the definition of barbless lure or fly. Same thing with ruling specific references to ice fishing in the Manner and Method Rule. We're also proposing to prohibit the use of bait fish in an area down near Roswell called the BLM Overflow Wetlands. If you recall last spring, I presented to you Pecos pupfish conservation efforts.
This prohibition would help us in carrying out the conservation efforts in that area. It would drastically reduce the likelihood of accidental introduction of bait fish or unwanted bait fish into those areas, which may affect Pecos pupfish. We are also proposing to allow electric trolling motors at Jackson Lake Wildlife Management Area. We've been working on a project where we're trying to enhance motor access, and so we want to allow at least some trolling motor, electric trolling motor access in that WMA.
Probably the most significant this round related to the Manner and Method Rule is we are recommending expanding the Director's authority for relaxing or further restricting whether it's temporary closure of a water, angling limits, possession limits, as well as size limits for water. The purpose of this is to allow a little bit more flexibility and responsiveness to changes in environmental conditions.
One example could be something like a native trout water during low-water conditions. It's just intermittent pools, and we feel like we need to protect that fishery temporarily. We could do that through a Director's Order. Right now, we would have to go through a formal either an emergency rulemaking process or a formal rulemaking process. If this were adopted, the language that we're proposing would be limited to six months.
During that time period, if we felt it was necessary for a more permanent rule, we would go through a process like we're doing here. After I presented this to you in April, we got the proposed language and a summary of the proposed rule on the Department website on May 21st. We held two public meetings in a virtual format on June 9th and 13th. We had a total of 13 attendees between the 2 meetings.
I believe it was 11 attendees at the first meeting and 2 at the second meeting. This is a summary of the comments that we've received so far. There on my presentation, it says we have eight written comments. We actually got one in late last night or early this morning. We're up to nine written comments. This is just a summary of the comments that we received, and I'm just going to go through quickly how we have addressed those.
The first one was related to the definition of the changes in the definition of barbless lure or fly. One individual pointed out that there was a reference to a prohibition excluding a hard plastic, and we agreed with them and changed our proposal in order to be responsive to that, and that was not an intended

outcome of that proposal. We also saw a trend in some recommendations for expanding Special Trout Waters at this time.
A little bit of history back in-- I think it was the 2017 rule, during that rulemaking process, the Department had observed over time that I think we had somewhere around 19 different Special Trout Water designations, with anything from limited tackle, number of fish that could be kept, and it was a little bit confusing. At the times, we couldn't really articulate how those Special Trout Water designations were leading to an improvement in the fishery.
At that time, we went to a much narrower definition of different Special Trout Waters, which are designated there with our Red Chile water, Green Chile water, and our Christmas Chile water. These are not terms specifically used in rule, but they are common references that we've used in the Rules and Information Booklet through the years to help keep things pretty straightforward for the public and for our enforcement officers.
One proposal we received from one member of the public was to expand the number of Special Trout Waters in lakes across the state. Some examples were Monastery Lake, Morphy Lake, and Shuree Ponds. Shuree Ponds, we already manage. There's already a rule designated as a Special Trout Water. Morphy Lake, Monastery Lake are highly popular waters where we're meeting a mixed use, and we felt like limiting terminal tackle there or restricting harvest was not necessary.
We were meeting our management purpose there. We did not propose any Special Trout Waters in lakes. We also received some proposals to expand the existing Special Trout Waters on the Pecos River, as well as the Cimarron River. After internal discussions, we also felt like expanding those waters would cut into the regular regulation waters, and we would see a loss of opportunity.
We feel like there's a good balance of fishing opportunities for those who want to fish with a particular tackle versus regular tackle on those waters. We also received some questions about the utility of the native trout designations that I mentioned before for the Chiquito, Jack's Creek, and the Rio San Antonio. After discussing that with the individual, they better understood what the purpose of those regulations are, and we seemed to address their comments.
The last comment we received, it was really twofold. It was a proposal to expand the Special Trout Water on the San Juan River, and if you're familiar with the San Juan River, you would know that it's a world-class type trout fishery. There is about a 4-mile designation just below Navajo Dam, down to just above a boat ramp at Crusher Hole. The regulations there are catch-and-release and limited terminal tackle to artificial fly or lure only.
The proposal is recommending that we extend the Special Trout Water down just a little ways to address some resource conflict between individuals who are fishing on a boat ramp at the Crusher Hole versus people who are trying to launch a boat. After internal discussions with our officers up in that area, if we were to extend that Special Trout Water, they felt like we would lose a significant amount of opportunity for regular regulation, regular tackle anglers, or to anglers who want to catch and keep fish in the Cottonwood Campground area of Navajo Lake State Park.
The second part of this proposal was from the same group, and it was interested in expanding the Special Trout Water designation in the San Juan, in the lower part of the San Juan Tailwater Trout Fishery. I think approximate locations could be from the Rainbow Lodge parking and boat ramp area down through the Hammond Wildlife Management Area. The recommendation was either to do a catch-and-release type water or something with a little less restriction, potentially a 2-fish limit with no restrictions on tackle. Based upon the quality of the fishery in that area, we do not think that is warranted at that time. It is an exceptionally good brown trout fishery. I think the interest in that case from that group was it would expand the attraction of that area and would make it more attractive as a means for getting anglers on the river. It is certainly a perception issue. There's nothing wrong with someone floating that section of river right now, but we just don't think regulation is the way to go.
One option would be to start to promote that section of the river a lot better than we do, as well as see if we can improve access, say, through the installation of a boat ramp, and to make it more attractive to boaters in that section of the river. That is all I have for you today. Like I said before, we are in the second phase of the rulemaking process. Based upon your input today, we will draft up any amendments to our proposed language and be back for a formal rulemaking hearing at your November meeting. Thank you.

Richard Stump: It's too bad we don't have a map of what you're trying to indicate. Voila.
Kirk Patten: It just so happens, Mr. Chair. I do have a handful of slides at the end of this presentation, Mr. Chair, that could help explain the situation on the San Juan.
Richard Stump: Slides besides this one here?
Kirk Patten: Mr. Chair, yes.
Richard Stump: Would you like to show those now?
Kirk Patten: Mr. Chair, yes. The purpose of this slide is just to demonstrate different sections of the river. Tthe reason I have New Mexico State's logo up there is we've been noticing a shift in rainbow trout-brown trout interactions on the San Juan for a long time. We have actually hired New Mexico State to help us take a closer look at the rainbow trout-brown trout interactions and potentially help us modernize some of our monitoring in that area.
Starting off, can you see my cursor move? Okay, here's Navajo Dam. This is a Special Trout Water coming down. It is an exceptionally good trout fishery, depending upon the data set, brown trout, rainbow trout, trophy-sized fish. This is the Special Trout Water end. This would be the area where the boat ramp is. This is that Rainbow Lodge access area.
Richard Stump: Kirk, we're not seeing your cursor.
Kirk Patten: Oh, my apologies.
Michael Sloane: Mr. Chair, the black box on the top right is the dam.
Richard Stump: I know where the dam is.
Michael Sloane: The 4-mile section below it, ending at the first red line, that's the Special Trout Water. The red line is approximately where the boat ramp, Kirk mentioned, that Crusher Hole is. Then, that next section down, the next set of words on the left-ish says Rainbow Lodge. That's where they were talking about potentially starting a new Special Trout Waters and running that all the way down through the Hammond access to the red line down at the-
Richard Stump: Oh, apologies.
Michael Sloane: -bottom left. That helps you orient it all.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Director Sloane.
Michael Sloane: Kirk, if you'd go back to that last slide for just a second. I think some of those numbers at the bottom are important for the Commission's understanding.
Kirk Patten: Certainly. Mr. Chair and Commissioners, the reason I put these numbers in here is that every year we do a survey of anglers to try and estimate use, and it gives us an index of how popular these fisheries are. The San Juan Tailwater Trout Fishery is consistently the top three to four most-used fisheries in the state of New Mexico. The Special Trout Water generates 222, on average, is about a 20-year average, 1,000 angler days per year.
The regular regulation waters' beginning, again, at that red bar that Director Sloane pointed out, going down, generates about 126,000 angler days per year. These are significantly used fisheries.
Michael Sloane: Kirk, just one more thing. I think this is correct. Right below that first red bar, there is the Cottonwood Campground you were talking about that's part of the Navajo Lake State Park?
Kirk Patten: Correct. I've got that on my next slide.
Michael Sloane: Okay, thanks.
Kirk Patten: This is a zoom-in of the potential or the end of the current Special Trout Water, as well as Cottonwood Campground. If you would follow the yellow line, which goes out past the 2A, are you following me? That is the approximate location of the current end of the Special Trout Water. If you were to follow the river, the green line down and just below the 2B is the boat ramp that the Department enhanced years ago.
If you were to go north of the 2B, there is a sand wash. That is an area that the public uses from Cottonwood Campground. All the property to the left of that blue line is State Park or Cottonwood Campground State Park, and the public parks up there and walks down and fishes along that far bank and as well as the east side or the south side of the river. Our recommendation is to keep things as is. The recommendation of the proposal that we received was to extend that potentially downstream. Again, the San Juan is becoming an incredibly busy fishery with members of the public as well as guided boat tours, guided fishing tours, those sorts of things. There are some people who are fishing from the boat

ramp, which it's signed by State Parks. It is, in my opinion, not the best behavior to use a boat ramp to fish from, and we've talked to State Parks about increasing their enforcement and trying to educate those members of the public about this is for boat access and not fishing.
I'm going to go on to that lower reach now. Again, let's look at-- There's the second Rainbow Lodge access area. Again, that is a small parcel owned by the Game Commission, and we have a parking area and a boat ramp there. That is where the proposal, somewhere in that area, it's beyond the limits of Cottonwood Campground, and the significance of that area as far as use, the proposal we received was potentially doing some sort of Special Trout Water designation down there, which would create more attraction to fishing in that area.
[silence]
Richard Stump: Just circle back, from where to where to introduce Special Trout Water?
Kirk Patten: The proposal that we received was to create, and I hope I'm getting it right, some sort of Special Trout Water designation in that Rainbow Lodge access area, somewhere upstream, possibly at the end of Cottonwood Campground, possibly at the bridge that's driving from Navajo Dam, the town of Navajo Dam, up to Aztec, some clear landmark in that area.
Again, I would not recommend doing a prohibition on harvest in that area or a limit on terminal tackle use. A compromise could be something like a reduced bag limit, but allow any other regular tackle. That way, it could be promoted as "a Special Trout Water" versus just being a regular water. In my opinion, I think a first step would be to promote it as it's already a quality fishery, and let's work on promoting it rather than add a rule, which would restrict things that the public are already doing. We're looking for guidance from you as a commission.
Richard Stump: Who would we be restricting mostly? Residents of the area, you think?
Kirk Patten: Mr. Chair, that's a great question. This area is predominantly owned by private interests on both sides of the river. There are a couple of groups that I'm aware of that run fishing operations in those areas. I don't know what their real constituents are. There is a-- I believe it's called a rainbow-- What's the name of it? Soaring Eagle Lodge. They run a fishing operation out of there. It's probably a mixed group, and considering that it's regular regulation waters as is, there's probably going to be a significant amount of the public who seek to harvest and use regular tackle.
Michael Sloane: Mr. Chairman, at the very end of that is an area called the Hammond Wildlife Management Area. We stock that regularly. I think that's largely used by locals, both for duck hunting and for fishing.
[silence]
Richard Stump: Right. Wasn't there something? There's an idea that we want to access this river more to get the word out that it's actually good fishing, right?
Kirk Patten: Mr. Chair, yes. First off, it would be to promote the quality of the fishery in this area. The data that I've seen that New Mexico State generated there is close to a state record brown trout in that river. Approximately halfway between Rainbow Lodge, that access area, and the Hammond Wildlife Management Area, there is a chunk of state land that I have never been to, none of my staff has ever been to, but it looks like it could potentially be a good access area to work with State Land Office on considering designing a boat launch to try to increase access in that area. That's part of our thought is when I say promote the opportunity to increase access, it would be something that we could work with the State Land Office on doing.
Richard Stump: Has there been any conversation with them at all yet?
Kirk Patten: Mr. Chair, not yet. We are waiting on having this conversation and a few other things, but yes, we would like to have that conversation at some point.
[silence]
Richard Stump: Commissioners, any input?
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Mr. Chair, Commissioners, all I want to say is I like the proposed changes that you're making. What I'm pleased is that it's based upon public comment that you received during those two public meetings. It's good to know and see how the Department actually takes action when they do hear from the public. I know you always do, but I think this was very good, and I'd like the changes. Thank you.

[silence]
Richard Stump: Kirk, could you go over what the Department's recommending again, please?
Kirk Patten: Mr. Chair, are you referring to the entire proposal or? Okay.
[pause 06:08:12]
Kirk Patten: Okay. Again, we are proposing to clarify the definition of the barbless lure or fly definition in the Fisheries Rule at three Special Trout Waters focused on native trout conservation in Jack's Creek, Rio Chiquito, the upper limits of Rio Chiquito, and the Rio San Antonio, removing specific references to ice fishing for waters in the Fisheries Rule and add a definition of a Special Trout Water.
Again, in the Manner and Method proposal, we are seeking to clarify and make the definition consistent with the Fisheries Rule for barbless lure or fly, remove specific references or closures to ice fishing, prohibit bait fishing within BLM Overflow Wetlands Area, permit electric trolling motors at Jackson Lake Wildlife Management Area, and expand the Director's authority for relaxing, changing, at least temporarily, fishing-related activities in New Mexico.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Kirk. Does anybody have any opposition to any of this?
Fernando Clemente: I just have a question. Can you go to page number 1? Where do you release that fish?
Kirk Patten: I'm sorry?
Fernando Clemente: Where do you release that fish there?
Kirk Patten: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Clemente, I believe that was a near state record largemouth bass in a lake in this area. I think that's at Bill Evans Lake. It produces some of our consistently largest largemouth bass in the state.
[silence]
Richard Stump: It looks like we have Kerrie Romero for some public comment.
[pause 06:10:20]
Kerrie Romero: I'll try to be brief because I know everybody wants to get out of here. Again, I'm Kerrie Romero on behalf of the New Mexico Council of Outfitters and Guides. Yesterday, I re-sent you all a copy of our recommendation on the Fisheries Rule. We were a little bit disappointed that the Department did not include any of our recommendations on the San Juan.
There is a very serious overcrowding issue in the Quality Waters on the San Juan right now, and 80% of that is guided clientele. The outfitting industry, we would really love to extend our trips further down the river to alleviate the overcrowding. However, it's very hard for the outfitting industry to market and sell guided fishing trips that are not taking place on Special Trout Waters.
Outfitted demographic, they want to purchase quality water experiences. I was encouraged, in a wishy-washy way, to hear Chief Patton diplomatically say he might be interested in discussing a Christmas water designation through the private land stretch, which is that Rainbow Lodge down to Hammond that we were talking about. We do think this would be a good compromise.
Christmas water designation is a Special Trout Water. It allows for restricted take, but also open bait fishing, basically. I don't think it's really going to put a lot of the bait fishermen out. Instead of keeping 5, they can keep 2. Hopefully, that would be a compromise there and not an enforcement nightmare, but it would give our industry the ability to market special quality water guided experiences so that we could pull our trips further down the river.
We're really hopeful that the Commission will further explore that idea. The other major issue that we're having is actually the angler conflict taking place on the boat ramp at Crusher Hole. That was mentioned. This is a problem that we've been trying to address for many years. There are currently signs that say that you cannot fish from the boat ramp, but they are not enforced.
The Department says that it's the State Park's responsibility. The State Park says they don't have the manpower, so it's very common for outfitters to be pulling a boat out of the water, and there's a family camped out with coolers and lawn chairs, and it results in bad behavior on both sides, which is not a good look for the industry. Our recommendation to solve that was to pull the Quality Waters down just an additional 300 yards past the boat ramp.
That would encompass that access point that was shown on the map previously. I'm not trying to minimize that. We don't want to do anything to prevent the bait fishermen from accessing. That's not what

we're trying to do here; we are just trying to find a middle ground to solve the problem of people fishing from the boat ramp at Crusher Hole. I don't know if there's some way that we could pull the Quality Waters down past the boat ramp, but then on the other side, because that access point is on the opposite side of the river.
The opposite side of the river be bait fishing, I don't know if that's a possibility or not. We're just trying to think of solutions because it's just not working for us for the Department to say that they can't enforce that, and for the State Park to say they're also unwilling. Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Kerrie. Is there access on the other side of the river?
[silence]
Kirk Patten: Mr. Chair, yes, there is access on both sides of the river. What I believe Director Sloane is pointing out is a sandy wash area, and that is one of the more popular spots for people on that side of the river to access that point, because that is the side of the river that Cottonwood Campground is on.
Michael Sloane: Mr. Chair, as I was just noting to you, there's a road that comes almost up to that wash and a parking area. You do travel, I think, either through or near the campground, so it is a popular spot and very easily accessed for lots of anglers.
Richard Stump: What would be the negative of bringing down the Quality Waters down 300 yards past?
Kirk Patten: Mr. Chair, in the Department's opinion, it would be an encroachment on water where people that visit Cottonwood Campground are accustomed to using because of a few people who are inappropriately camping out on a boat ramp. I would prefer to try and encourage State Parks to enforce their signage there before we "punish" the folks who are abiding by good practices and resource management for resource use.
Richard Stump: Understood.
Michael Sloane: Mr. Chair, I guess the big significant difference is above the Special Trout Water line, it's catch-and-release only; below it, it's a 5-fish limit. If you pulled that down, you would make that area catch-and-release only, and that would be a very significant change.
[silence]
Gregg Fulfer: Mr. Chairman, I believe we should go with the Department's recommendation. A lot of people can't afford guides on the San Juan. If they want to get some type of recreational usage out of it while they're still paying their license and their vendor fee and their discount, we should not be restricting them or special interest groups that have large amounts of clientele and that they're making good money, and these people just want to go out and fish. It's a State Parks' issue.
Richard Stump: I agree with you. Why can't we enforce there?
Kirk Patten: Mr. Chair, we could ask Colonel Cimbal to help with this. I believe we have a rule which allows us to enforce closures of our signs on Game Commission property, and then we also have in rule that we have the ability to enforce closures of waters, but not areas.
Tim Cimbal: Yes, that's correct. A violation of posted signs would be on our property.
Richard Stump: Thank you, guys. Well, I agree with the Department. I'd like to support the Department on their recommendation on this, and hopefully get State Parks to enforce the boat ramp. I don't know how we do that. What about the Commissioners online?
Gregg Fulfer: Chairman, I just had the same question you did is why couldn't we enforce? I didn't hear Mr. Tim Cimbal's answer, really.
Richard Stump: Colonel Cimbal said that-- Actually, he's walking up right now, so I'll let him give his answer.
Tim Cimbal: Mr. Chair, Commissioners, Commissioner Fulfer, we have the ability to enforce a violation of a posted sign, but that applies to our properties. Our WMAs predominantly, Bernardo, Ladd. We'll have a "No Parking" sign, and we can write for that. It's also maybe interesting to point out that Simón Access Point is on BLM. It's one of the only places a fisherman can go park for free. They don't have to pay a park pass.
Gregg Fulfer: Is it allowed for them to fish from that boat dock?
Tim Cimbal: Chair, Mr. Commissioner, the Simón Access Point is on the opposite side of the river. It's pretty much straight across from it. That's got the parking area that's on BLM, walk-down fishing access

on BLM. If you waited across the river, straight across, you'd be close to the boat ramp. The boat ramp's in that same general vicinity, but you can't access it from that side of the river via car.
Michael Sloane: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner Fulfer, it is not legal, by State Parks rule, to fish from the boat ramp. They have a sign saying that. They're just not actively enforcing it, potentially due to a shortage of personnel. As Kirk noted, I think we're going to work with them and encourage them strongly to enforce that. Certainly, our guys can go and encourage people not to do that. Maybe they can't write them a ticket, but just their presence and pointing to the sign and saying, "Hey, you're not really supposed to be here," might be enough to get the point across.
Tim Cimbal: Mr. Chair, Commissioners, it's an excellent spot to write tickets because the people that don't adhere to the "No Fishing" sign usually do not have a license.
Richard Stump: Oh. I'm sorry, go ahead.
Fernando Clemente: There is no way that the Department can do an MOU or something with the State Parks for that specific area to assist with enforcement? Because we're talking about public safety here?
Kirk Patten: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Clemente, I've had a couple of conversations with State Parks about this exact spot now. They have been short-staffed with enforcement officers up there. They are hiring another one. They have committed to us to making this a point of emphasis for them, certainly personnel limiting.
[silence]
Richard Stump: Is everyone in agreement with the Department?
Kirk Patten: Mr. Chair, we have one more hand raised online if you wish to get.
Richard Stump: Go ahead. Thank you.
Kirk Patten: Dan Roper, you're going to be given three minutes to talk on this topic.
[silence]
Dan Roper: Good afternoon, Commissioners. Can you hear me okay?
Richard Stump: Yes.
Kirk Patten: Yes, we can hear you.
Dan Roper: I know it's been a long day for you. I will be brief and not take up the entire three minutes. We also shared a comment letter with the Commission yesterday on behalf of Trout Unlimited. I'd like to just offer a few comments in support of the new Special Trout Water designations on San Antonio Chiquito and Jack's Creek, all important native trout streams. I'd like to express support for the authority for the Director to take short-term actions.
In the interest of our fisheries, I think that's possibly the most important thing in front of you today. We're very much in support of that. I would also like to echo some of the interest brought forth by the New Mexico Council on Outfitters and Guides on adding new Special Trout Water on the San Juan. Internally, that idea is well-received in our ranks, within the guiding community. The individuals I've spoken to all think that is a good idea. If the Commission feels it's appropriate, we would be supportive of that. That concludes my comments. Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Dan. Commissioners? [silence] Commissioners online, you both support this, the Department's?
Gregg Fulfer: The Department, yes, sir.
Commissioner: I do as well. I am sympathetic to the request of Ms. Romero, and that was just echoed. I think ultimately I side with Commissioner Lopez. I think that Chief Patton's proposal, the proposed changes in the presentation, were really excellent, were very balanced, and are moving us in the right direction. I don't think I'm prepared to go along with the extension of the Special Trout Waters there, below the boat ramp. I want to say, yes, I took my 10-year-old on Jack's Creek last month, and we had a fantastic time with those beautiful cutthroats, a variety of sizes, and it's great to see that upgraded.
Richard Stump: All right. Everyone, thanks for your input. It sounds like we're going to go with the Department's recommendation.
Kirk Patten: Thank you, Mr. Chair and Commissioners.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Chief Patten, for your presentation. Item Number 12, Discussion and Proposed Changes to the Upland Game Rule 19.31.5 NMAC. It'll be given by Chief Liley.
Stewart Liley: Chief Patten **[unintelligible 06:24:46]** [chuckles]

Richard Stump: Trying to steal the show again.
Stewart Liley: [inaudible 06:24:55] [crosstalk] [silence] Apparently, Chief Patten broke the computer. [laughter]
Stewart Liley: He touched it last. Excuses, excuses. [silence] All right, it just came unlocked.
[pause 06:25:34]
Stewart Liley: Okay, Mr. Chair, members of the Commission, as you said, this is the Upland Game Rule. This is the second time that we've heard this. After today's meeting, we would go back, draft the rule for the Commission's adoption at the November meeting. We heard it last at the April meeting. We went and had some public meetings since then as well. Before I get into some of the proposed changes and what the Department's recommendations are, and some of the public comments I had, I want to go through a little background biology on Upland Game, specifically, really, on quail, too.
That's where a lot of our comments have come in from this rule cycle. The graphic you're looking at there is Breeding Bird Survey annual indices going back to 1965 for scaled quail. We picked this just as an example of just the large population variations you could see annually in these populations really driven by environmental factors, not harvest-driven, but really environmental factors.
What the graphic is, is that middle line is the mean with 95% confidence intervals around that index. Again, in poor years, these populations could have really significant population declines, but in good years, they could rebound really quick. You'll see that in that era right here, probably the best scaled quail hunting we had in the state around 2012, '13, when we just had an explosion of those populations. Timing of rain was right. Timing of precip, insects on the ground, et cetera, really helped improve that. As you see right now, more recently, drought conditions have brought that population back down, but really, a lot of factors do impact it. For example, Gambel's quail, more winter precip is driving population trajectories one way or another. I think it's important. Gallinaceous birds, quail, et cetera, really, even more so than migratory birds, can have much larger clutches, much larger young of the year, and really see that population explosion if you have the right climatic conditions.
Really, the point of this is that harvest is not driving the population dynamics in these bird populations; it's being driven really mainly by weather conditions. Again, some of the understanding now, you know that it used to be that all harvest was compensatory for Upland Game. There is probably some additive component. Hunting can have some additive component, probably in the quail species, more later in the season, February, March, et cetera.
That would be when you're having birds that survived. The young of the year surviving all the way to February, most likely, are going to have a chance to breed the following season. That's where we get that more additive harvest when they get late February, March, April. Our season does end February 15th for that reason: to try not to get that additive harvest in there, in those birds.
The other thing I think is really important, and what we see is that hunters really self-regulate for the most part. You'll see, and I'll have a graphic here in a minute, hunter participation tracks population trends for the most part. When we see more birds on the landscape, we see more hunters on the landscape. The one thing that we do, maybe, see is, there are some hunters that are very devoted hunters every single year go out no matter what.
Those devoted hunters that are in those low-period years might have a little bit more impact on the population than, say, definitely on a high year. Again, overall, we do not think we have an issue with harvest driving the population dynamics in these gallinaceous birds, quail, especially. It advanced on my slide. Okay, there we go. I just want to get to, real quick, a snapshot of across the west, where quail hunting occurs. I think the really important thing to look at is more Texas, Arizona, where we have similar quail species, Gambel's quail, scaled quail, bobwhites, and Montezuma quail. We have very similar, if you will see their bag limits and season dates, our surrounding states.
I think it's also important to note in the last 47 years in New Mexico, there was some comments that came about during the public comment that we should adjust bag limits on an annual basis based upon what we see in the population. There used to be some of that that happened a long time ago in the history of New Mexico's rulemaking. The reality is in the last 47 years, we've only had five years where we've been with a bag limit less than 15. It really didn't have any impact, again, on population trajectories the following year. We really see that that bag limit really is not an impact on our actual populations.

Again, if there was anything that maybe would potentially have some of an impact would be how late we're harvesting. Again, we end our season on February 15th for our quail species. Real quick, just on forest grass, we just have dusky grouse in our state. You'll look at the rest of the states across the west. We're basically the same season dates for the most part, and bag limits are very similar in the state of New Mexico compared to the rest of the Western United States.
Some of these other states have different grass species. We're limited to dusky grouse only in New Mexico, similar to Arizona. I mentioned that I get to discussion looking at harvest trends compared to population fluctuations. I do want to point out, this goes back to 1980 up until the 1991 season. You'll see this black line, this is the mean harvest. This is for scaled quail on the top graph.
That orange line is the population trend from the breeding bird index. You'll notice up to 1991, you actually see where harvest is over trending the population, but that was because up till 1991, we lumped harvest and didn't separate out by species. You'll see that the same exact trend on the bottom graph on Gambel's quail. When we split out the harvest reporting by species starting in the '90s, you'll notice more of a tracking of the breeding bird index with the mean harvest.
The other thing that's important to note, starting in 2006, the department started our own harvest reporting system. Prior to that, it was voluntary harvest reporting through a contractor. The take home message from that was just how the harvest is really tracked pretty well with the bird population in that given year.
This graphic here is looking at, from our reported harvest, the people that are reporting harvest, how many birds do they take on an annual basis? The daily bag limit is 15 birds, but what you'll see there is 85% of the hundreds that reported harvesting Gambel's quail, reported harvesting 15 birds or less in the entirety of the season. Very, very, very few people are actually getting up to the bag limit, and very few people are harvesting more than the bag limit in an annual year.
The majority of harvest across those species, 70% in scaled quail, 80% bobwhite, Montezuma is 63%. It's important to note Montezuma has a separate bag limit of five birds, not 15. The majority of hunters are harvesting less birds on an annual basis than what the daily bag limit allows them. Really, the bag limits are not driving hunters. You will notice there are a couple of hunters that are in there that are up to a 100 plus birds in a year.
It's also important to note, this is going back to the 2014 that also included that boom year of the scaled quail. You'll notice the higher bag limits are on the right-hand side of that graphic where you get into the 30 plus birds in a year. Most of that is scaled quail, and most of that happened in the years when we just saw probably the best scaled quail hunting in that 2015, '16, '17 era in New Mexico when we had huge population gains. We've come down, it really was just a right timing of weather in there.
On an annual basis, our reports for the number of scaled quail, that's our most common quail harvested in the state. For example, last year reported harvest was around 4,500 birds statewide. Again, harvest is not really driving the population dynamics in these birds, it really is weather that's driving that. Getting onto our actual proposals, what we're doing is, like all of our big game rules or our other game rules, we have a lot of Saturday start dates, so we just adjust the date of the open of the harvest based upon calendar shift. You get one day earlier every single year, two days on leap year, so just adjusting that like we do with all of our rules.
One of the bigger things that we are proposing is dividing dusky grouse into two different harvest regions in north and the south zone. The population in the south is here in the Gila, not a real large population. What we are proposing is setting a south a zone. It's really just, again, in Gila region, not even in the Sacramento's, just in the Gila, and making that a one bird bag limit per day and two in possession.
We've looked at trying to do a little bit more research on the birds down in this region, trying to understand it. Drought impacts are probably having more connectivity maybe to the north, or connectivity even to the west, into Arizona, looking at those kind of things, we'll look into the future. Birds in the north are doing really well. No need to really set that a different separate bag limit there.
We're also proposing creating a new youth pheasant season on Jackson Lake WMA. We have two different youth pheasant seasons, one on our Huey Wildlife Management area, and one on Bernardo. We're proposing doing that on Jackson Lake as well. We're also proposing opening Bluebird and Pine River WMAs for upland game hunting during the squirrel and grouse season.

Those are both two areas in the north of the state. Then opening the double **[unintelligible 06:36:53]** the Navajo WMAs, there's a lot of spread out ones throughout there, and River Ranch for upland hunting during quail season. There's maybe some scaled quail up on the Navajo WMAs. Maybe, maybe not, but we're proposing to open it as a potential opportunity.
We did have two hybrid meetings and a specific meeting with Quail Forever. You'll look at the number of participants in those meetings, both in person and online. Then we've received nine emails in addition to the public comments we received during the meeting. The vast majority of our comments that we'll receive, I have two pages up here, it deals with harvest reporting, and people wanting to get more information of harvest reporting.
If you'll recall, in order to qualify for putting in for the draw, you have to buy a game license. That game license then allows you to go hunt upland game. There was a lot of comments that suggest we make mandatory hunter harvest for anyone that holds an upland game license. We felt because the vast majority of people do not actually even come--
For example, non-residents are putting in for big game draws. If they don't draw an elk tag, they're not necessarily coming here to hunt quail. Making that a mandatory really doesn't make a lot of sense for just how many people do buy a license and never even hunt in the state of Mexico that year.
What we are looking at doing and trying to modify in our hunter system is when someone does click to purchase that game license for that year is basically a popup window, just like harvest reporting for waterfowl. "Are you planning to hunt upland game this year? Yes or no." Then we have a way to subsample those people at the end of the season, so we'll know who was planning to hunt later on in the season and be able to go out and collect more information.
Right now, it's pure voluntary. We don't know how many people for sure did or didn't hunt, but this will give us a better idea when we go to and ask, "Are you planning on upland hunting?" The rest of these comments either is one comment from an individual except for the support for creating the southern grouse season. You'll see some in favor of one thing and opposed to the same thing.
We have a little bit ending shooting hours at sunset. We really don't see an issue with the sunset. We do it 30 minutes after sunset right now for all of our upland game species. We don't see that as an issue. There was a comment about changing coils, so it doesn't open on deer seasons. Deer seasons change on an annual basis.
Quail has always been fixed on November 15th. It'd really be more of looking at our deer seasons if we tried to do that versus a quail season because of that changing variability in deer every single year. There was a comment to establish a crow season. We do have a little bit of concerns with that. We do get Chihuahuan Ravens into the state of New Mexico. Chihuahuan Ravens can be harder to distinguish from crows. They are ravens, yes, but size-wise they're not that different. Chihuahuan Ravens are a species of great conservation need and we just would be concerned of misidentification and harvest in that as well.
There was a comment that said to open grouse season on the Tuesday after Labor Day.
There was concerns that there's just a lot more people that are going up on Labor Day and hunting grouse. I think we actually feel that that's a great way for people getting out over Labor Day weekend to get out there and harvest. Yes, it is crowded, but it peters out right away after that Labor Day week. I don't think that's going to really change a lot. Again, I mentioned there was a comment to delineate a zone east and west of I-25. We don't have grouse south of I-40 and east of I-25s. We don't feel like there's a need to create a zone in there because there is no birds in the Sacramento's, for example.
Again, there is just some of these random comments reducing grouse harvest limits near the Pecos. I think where it's close to access to roads and trails, it might get a little bit heavy harvest, but there's a lot of refusion in the Pecos where you get into the wilderness and there is a lot more birds the deeper you get into the wilderness. We don't feel like that's necessary.
A lot of these, I'll say comments into restricting seasons or lengths or bag limits. Again, I don't think we have a harvest issue. Harvest is not driving population dynamics. This was a hope that they maybe see a rebound in populations. Again, we don't feel like a bag limit adjustment in one year is going to change the trajectory of the quail populations, but next it really is going to be dependent upon what Mother Nature does for us that year. There was a comment on trying to restrict non-residents to hunt periods.

Right now, it's just the season's November 15th to February 15th. There was a comment saying they would like to see residents only restricted to two different five-day hunt periods across that season. There were some people asking to increase the pheasant season. We really don't have pheasants in the state. Very few, a lot of those are stocked areas on our WMAs for hunting.
We really didn't see the need for it. We do not have a lot of harvest. There was a comment that said stock pheasants on public land, and there was a comment that said don't release any more non-native. People are contradictory on both of that. Our proposal for the pheasant date statewide over the next four years would be the three-day period.
We have those three-day hunts on there. You'll see what that is there. Here is our proposed youth pheasant hunts. The dates that we had that they're a one-day hunt. You'll notice in Jackson, like WMA, we have that as a TBD. We would ask to do that as TBD and rule to allow for when we try to determine the forage is right, that a cover is right when we're trying to create this hunt.
Those other hunts that are established already, we have a pretty well idea of when we need to hunt, how it works with the farming that occurs there in relationship to migratory birds coming in. I think we'll figure this out over the next four years. After this four-year rule cycle, we'll come back to you with specific dates. We do have other rules or we do do TBD dates. We will publish it in our reads on an annual basis and we will have a draw for those hunts as well. With that, I would take any questions you all may have.
Richard Stump: Thanks for that. That was a good presentation. I don't really have any questions. Anybody else? For commissioners online?
Christopher Witt: I could just weigh in and say that I support Chief Liley's view. His arguments make a lot of sense for most of these issues. The reduction in dusky grouse for the southern region is great. I think it's clearly warranted. These points about what regulates quail populations are right on, I think. The one comment about collecting more data from public game hunters, I think, I agree with that comment.
I think that those opportunities to get data from hunters are really going to be valuable going forward. I would support that kind of thing going forward. I agree that there shouldn't be a crow hunt because Chihuahuan Ravens would take it on a chin if that happened. I also want to point out there's some interesting science emerging, actually, at this conference about the effects of ravens as nest predators on birds of conservation concern, including in the Eastern Sierras. There are very important nest predators on Pinyon jays.
In the future, we may be looking at trying to help with regulating raven populations, both common and Chihuahuan if they're affecting other species of birds of conservation concern. I just thought I'd point that out, but overall, very much in support of Chief Liley's approach.
Richard Stump: Perfect, Commissioner Witt. Jesse Deubel would like to make some public comment.
Jesse Deubel: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, commissioners. Thank you for the presentation Chief Liley. Again, Jesse Deubel, executive director, New Mexico Wildlife Federation. The New Mexico Wildlife Federation submitted fairly extensive comments, so you all should have copies of those and hopefully you've had an opportunity to read them. In the sake of time, I'll be quick. I won't go through all of the details of our comments, but will mention just a couple of things.
The first one is Chief Liley said, we have a daily bag limit of 15 quail, and essentially nobody is shooting 15 quail a day. 15 quail per day, 30 in possession. The New Mexico Wildlife Federation would recommend we reduce the bag limit, not because we want to have an effect on quail populations, as has been stated, and we fully agree. Harvest by hunters is not really affecting the population, but if people aren't harvesting in any way, why are we setting that expectation for 15 as a daily limit?
I don't think it's necessary. They're not doing it anyway. I think we should just reduce that number to 8 per day and 16 in possession. The other thing I'll mention is there's been a pretty drastic reduction in quail populations in a lot of other states, particularly states with bobwhite quail. Quail hunters or Upland Bird Hunters in particular, are a very passionate group. They're very dedicated, they're very committed.
It's not uncommon to come down into Luna County during quail season and see non-residents, people from other states who are camped out for months at a time in their RVs, hunting quail day after day after day. I think the idea of setting different season dates for non-residents makes a lot of sense.
Again, it's not because of hunter harvest affected populations, but as Chief Liley often talks about when we talk about big game, he says, "Sometimes you manage for opportunity and sometimes you manage

for quality. The quality of the experience." We have plenty of opportunity. Quail season opens November 15th and lasts till February 15th. We have three full months to hunt. For guys like me that can't draw a big game tag, that's fantastic, but it's also unlimited so everybody can get there.
The opportunity is not an issue, but what we're experiencing is a decrease in the quality of the experience. A lot of that is because of overcrowding by non-resident hunters. If I go to the North Dakota or if I go to South Dakota, I have to specify what days I'm going to be there. In one state you have two seven-day periods you can hunt, in one state you have two five-day periods. As a resident of New Mexico, when I travel out of state, I'm subjected to different rules because I'm a non-resident. I'm a guest of that state.
I don't think it's inappropriate for New Mexico to prioritize residents and make some adjustments to those non-residents that we certainly welcome coming to our state to enjoy our wildlife. It would be ideal if we had two, 10-day or two, five-day periods that these non-residents could hunt, but it would start December 1st, so New Mexico residents would have two full weeks of just resident hunting opportunity before non-residents were able to hunt our same quail.
Then perhaps the season for non-residents could end on February 1st. At the end of the season, those later harvest that Chief Liley talked about, would be exclusive to residents from February 1st to February 15th. Thank you very much.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Jesse. Commissioner Clemente.
Fernando Clemente: Can you go to your chart where you have the population driven through the years, the fluctuation? The one before that, right there.
Stewart Liley: Yes. This is specifically for scaled quail, yes.
Fernando Clemente: For scaled quail, okay. How do you get these data?
Stewart Liley: That's the breeding bird survey index annual survey that happens every year at call counts, et cetera. They do all kinds of different species of birds on that, but it's being collected annually around Christmas. We are trying to do specific counts for quail as we've done during our Prairie-chicken surveys now, especially in the south east. This comes from the breeding bird survey that's an annual survey.
Fernando Clemente: You mentioned that harvest doesn't change population dynamics, but population dynamic does change the pressure by hunters. You don't think that one year that the population is in the upwards, you put that pressure, which is more harvest, and then you don't have that stability the following year for the birds to be able to reproduce. You don't think that is why the fluctuation changes so dramatically, because I've seen in populations that we manage whenever you have--
Yes, I agree with you, drought, feed, diversity on seeds and everything, that's what drives population, but whenever you have those droughts, if you maintain a certain amount of birds, then that is stable. It's more of a drastic of changes on population. By having these upwards on the population, and you having this increasing harvest, you don't think that affects where the actual species drops deeper the following year.
Stewart Liley: Commissioner Clemente, let me go to another graphic where it's the same, more or less graphic, that left-hand corner. It's without the 95% confidence interval. The upper left-hand corner, the orange line is your scaled quail bird survey index. Let's just take the 2010 era to '25. You'll notice right there, hunters weren't even able to keep up with that. The rate of increase happened so fast.
You'll see harvest went up when that population went up, almost a year delay, but they weren't even able to capture because the birds were able to just breed and reproduce so quick, but it came down real fast, not driven by harvest, probably because you just had one bad year. I don't think a function of harvest being to the point where you're keeping them at a lower level, lower level, and they aren't able to capture the resources and just explode.
I think what we saw in 2000, if you look at that, that's 2012, '13, you had about two or three years of stability, and then two years is what took us to a density that went an order of magnitude increase. Again, because harvest is so limiting, you're talking less than 4,000 or 5,000 birds across the entire state of New Mexico, it's not driving the dynamics. What could is, coyote predation or some other kind of predation, is having a bigger impact on these birds than hunter harvest is.
Fernando Clemente: Thank you for that. You take everything into consideration. That comes to my comment that I think more data should be created around upland game. Thank you.

Richard Stump: Commissioner Witt or Commissioner Fulfer, do you have anything that you'd like to say?
Christopher Witt: I don't.
Richard Stump: Commissioner Fulfer?
Gregg Fulfer: Oh, I just would say that the way Chief Liley used the breeding bird survey is totally appropriate. That's the gold standard for population abundance. It's based on a set of surveys that are geographically distributed. Each one is a 50-mile route that involves three-minute point counts, done a half a mile apart, the same time of year, every year, repeated exactly the same way. It produces really nice trustworthy data.
Richard Stump: Thank you. Commissioner Witt? All commissioners? Nothing? Terrazas? I just want to touch on something that Jesse Deubel brought up. Maybe we should talk about it a little bit. I'm not saying so much agreement with bringing down the harvest or the limit, but other states do have a non-resident season and we've never talked about that. I've never thought about that. I'm not saying let's do that now, but something to look at maybe. Do you guys have any opinions?
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Mr. Chair, commissioners, I agree with what you're suggesting. When I heard Mr. Deubel speak, I tend to agree with the changes he was recommending. Director Sloane, Chief Liley, if you were to make some of the adjustments that he recommended like to those numbers, could those be considered minor adjustments and we could proceed as is with the proposal?
Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Salazar Hickey, no, I don't think so. I think the expectation for the last, again, 37 out of 40 years, we've had 15 bird bag limits. The expectation is going to be that we keep it at 15. There are people that harvest 15 birds in a day. He is correct that the average people don't. Just like fish, the daily bag limit for fish is five, but the average is between 1.5 and 2. There are people that harvest five a day as well.
We didn't hear comments about if we made a proposal to reduce the bag limit, you're going to hire the comments from those people that will come out and say, "No, don't release. Reduce the bag limit." There wasn't a lot of comments out there that said reduce the bag limit. Again, we do not think it's a biologic thing. If we thought it was like the dusky grouse in the southwest, we did propose reducing from three to one.
Again, there are people that do go out there and kill a bird limit every day. There are going to be people, if we go to half the bag limit, they'll say, "No, we want it actually at 12." It's just we didn't go out to public comment. I think changing that at a later time at a hearing would require us to go back out to public comment because we did not make that proposal.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Thank you.
Speaker: I'd just like to add to that, that I'm not in favor of bringing that down either because I think the reasons aren't right as Chief Liley said, the biological justification for bringing it down is not there. Why limit the opportunity for those few people, even if it's 1% of hunters or even if it's just that 1% of hunting days that you have a great, great day, you should be able to take 15 quail, it's not going to affect the population.
I'd be against bringing those down. In terms of making a special accommodation for in-state hunters versus out of state, I'd be interested in considering that, but I don't think we'd want to make that change right now. Again, it hasn't been deeply considered so much.
Gregg Fulfer: Mr. Chairman, I'm the same way as Chief Liley. I think once you start changing a season, the other states start looking at that also and you end up reciprocating in the same direction. I've seen it even in the state senate when we passed some bills, we're reciprocating with different contractors and surveyors and things, the other states will either work with you or against you on those things.
I think a more level playing field is more fair than not. The bag limit always seemed to be that way. I agree with, you you have people that maybe get the 15 birds, but you have the other group that doesn't. I totally agree with Chief Liley on that.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Fulfer. We need to give direction to move on with us, so I'm going to agree with the department on their recommendations. Commissioners?
Speaker: Agree.
Speaker: Agree.

Richard Stump: Thank you Chief Liley for presentation. I still see there's a few people waiting here for public comment, I believe. Do we have people for public comment?
Speaker: Yes.
Richard Stump: Yes. Yes, I know. I have four. Oh, thanks for hanging in there, everybody. Let's start with Bruce Gillerman.
Bruce Gillerman: Thank you. I thank you for letting me speak. I am 84 years old, still hunt when I can, get an elk or deer tag. Haven't drawn an elk or deer tag for four years. Usually put in for Nevada, Idaho, Wyoming, New Mexico. I got lucky this year and drew an elk tag in New Mexico. At one time, you could buy a tag over the counter when you arrived in the state you wish to hunt. We now have bow hunts, muzzleloader hunts, youth hunts, handicap hunts, rifle hunts.
I am asking this board of New Mexico Department of Fish and Game to be the first, and have a senior hunt, 75 years or older, have their pick every year, automatic license and have a pick of antelope, deer, or elk in the great state of New Mexico.
As a hunter for 75 years or older, we just don't have that many years left. It seems to me, it's about time Fish and Game realizes, we're the ones that have supported the system for many years, yet it is almost impossible to draw a tag.
[pause 07:01:07]
By adopting a new law, I would hope the New Mexico Fish and Game realizes the importance of a law like this when a hunter has paid into the system all his life. At 75 years of age, we deserve a senior hunt. At 75 years of age, let's face it, we certainly wouldn't hurt the game population, but look at the joy you would put into a hunter's life knowing he or she could hunt every year.
Also, look at the revenue it would put into the state. As a resident of the state of New Mexico, the last three years, I am very proud to present this to senior hunt to you. If it is adopted, just think of the joy you have put into an old hunter's life. I wish you would look at and be the first to have a state where, once you were 75 years of age, you could still get out and hunt, when you have supported hunting in New Mexico all your life. I thank you all.
Richard Stump: Thank you, Bruce.
Bruce Gillerman: I've tried for two years, and you're the first ones that listen at all.
Richard Stump: Thank you. Bill McCarty.
[pause 07:03:01]
Richard Stump: Thank you, Bill.
Bill Billy McCarty: Commissioners, I thank you for this opportunity to speak with you. I apologize to those that are virtual because I can't hand you these maps that I've just handed to the rest of the commissioners. What I've handed out is maps of two of the EPLUS branches that our family owns right here in the edge of reserve. The way the EPLUS is set up, it states that it's based on acreage.
We own two of the larger EPLUS SCR ranches. One, in the way the game department splits it up, part of it is in unit 15 and part of it is in 16D. These are river bottom, private land ranches that are overwhelmed in elk. I have gone through the appeal process in order to get the best ranch score that we can. It's been limited at the score of 10 with the multiplier of 1.5.
It's the maximum they'll give without recognizing commercial agriculture. There's also a letter attached there from the state engineer's office, because of the permanent pasture that we irrigate that it is recognized by the state engineer as commercial agriculture. I am here just wanting to start the dialogue on getting the procedures changed in order to recognize that when we're out there raising 43 acres of irrigated pasture that have hundreds of elk on them, the benefit that we are providing to them.
Right now, we are not getting tags for that property. I go through the incentive program, I go through the EPLUS draw, and we are not getting the tags. We can go through the website and look at site after site where their entire ranch is smaller than our irrigated pasture, and they get tags year after year. We've got to do something. If the way you're going to compensate us for taking the grass that we grow is through tags, we've got to do something in order to be issued those tags.
If you're not, we've got to come up with something else because we cannot have hundreds, if not thousands of elk on our private land, destroying it, and not have a means that you guys are using because, right now, you're just stealing our resources. We've got to put an end to that. The second

comment I wanted to make on that is concerning the private land access. I've welcomed every hunter that wants to come onto our property. I don't have any problem with that. The way it is set up, it's very confusing to the hunters on whether or not they have to have permission to get on our property. Personally, I feel like if a hunter has enough dignity to come and ask, they're welcome there. Even your own officers, when they recently had reason to come on our property, they asked to come. We need to get it where, yes, I'll welcome the hunters, just have them ask for permission to come. Let's start that dialogue, please.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Bill. Tommy Christensen, or Tammy. She has two in there. Tammy Christensen is not here. Kerrie Romero.

[silence]

Kerrie Romero: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I promise it's the last time you'll hear from me today. This is not what I want to say, but I do agree with the previous gentleman that spoke on the loophole in EPLUS. I agree that's a loophole that we need to close. The way that it works right now is they only get the agricultural point if they sell hay. Irrigated cropland, that is just permanent pasture, is not included. I do think it should be.

My real comment is that I wanted to have a little bit of a policy creation refresher, partially for the commission's benefit, but then also partially for my benefit, because the process has changed a little bit over time. I think I'm just still trying to figure out how best for our organization to communicate with the department and with the commission.

When these rules that we've discussed today, like the shed rule, the upland game rule, the fisheries rule, at the next commission meeting, those rules are going to hearing. They will be on the public register for 30 days, and they need to remain that way unchanged. When you go into the hearing, you can only make non-substantive changes. You can change numbers, you can change letters, you can change wording here and there. You cannot make big policy changes during a hearing.

I'm telling you this because we really, really want to see Christmas waters on the private land segment of the San Juan. The reason you guys did not get bombarded with comments like that is because we were in conversation with the department, and it was not a proposal that the department had set forth at that particular time.

This is the meeting where you guys do need to do your deep dive into the discussion for things you want. I can't even believe I'm going to say this out loud, but to Jesse's point about the restrictions on non-residents, I'll probably get hung by my board for saying that, but his proposal also it seemed like there was some commission interest. By the time that goes to hearing, you guys are done.

You can't make any changes at the hearing. You have to make the changes that you want to go back out for public comment today, or even the previous meeting, because in the next two weeks, I'm going to send you guys a bunch of emails from a bunch of different people saying that we want Christmas waters, and it might change your perspective in the hearing. Honestly, it's a disservice to the regular fishing public because they don't know that I'm going to do this, and then you only hear from one side and you go into the hearing and you've only heard from one side of the issue.

I'm not saying that you need to change what you've done today, I'm just kind of giving you a heads up that I think that the process is not working, and it's not working the way it has in the past and it's a little bit clumsy right now. I think everybody's just trying to figure out how best to engage with the commission on rule changes. Thank you.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Kerrie. You needed to register but go ahead.

Male Speaker: Thanks a lot. I know I didn't register. I didn't anticipate being in this position. I did go to the Upland Game Rule and I did write comments on behalf of the Wildlife Federation. I agree with Kerrie, it seems like a catch-22. We're told, "This is not the time to make a substantial change," but you guys are going to be considering the final rule at which you can't make a substantial change, so I don't know when the time would be when could we consider making a substantial change?

If not going to a meeting and submitting comments and then told, "That cake is baked, you can't even comment on it." I think that Jesse made in his limited time some very good points. I wanted to point out that with the quail hunting, you've got a lot of hunters who are passionate bird hunters who live in the

northern Rockies. They're coming down to the **[unintelligible 07:11:33]**, and they're bringing every dog they own, every ATV they own, and every RV they own, and they set up shot for weeks.
Our quality of hunting is being diminished as resident hunters. I think you guys, it's not a matter of other states looking at this and saying, "We'd have to reciprocate if New Mexico limited us to non-residents to a period of short hunting dates." They're doing that in the Dakota. It's already doing that to New Mexico hunters. If you want to hunt in these other states, you're subject to those restrictions.
I think you guys really ought to consider this global question of how we're going to regulate upland game hunting, quail hunting in particular, considering that southern Arizona and southern New Mexico are mobbed by quail hunters from around the country. It's having an effect not just on the population, I know the population had rebound.
I said that in our comments, but it's having an effect on the quality of hunting. Some of these areas in the **[unintelligible 07:12:32]**, very limited camping areas, very limited resources for New Mexicans to enjoy, particularly going after Montezuma quail. Frankly, I feel like we got short shrift here. I don't know what else to do, go into meetings and writing comments, but it shouldn't just be off the table to consider what we're talking about. Thank you.
Richard Stump: Thank you. [silence] Do we have anyone online for a public comment?
Male Speaker: Not at this time, Mr. Chair.
Richard Stump: Commissioners, do you have any comments about anything?
[silence]
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Mr. Chair and commissioners, I'd like to say thank you to everyone that stuck around the entire day today. I'm sorry I didn't write your names for those of you that spoke in the last 10, 15 minutes. I think that the commission makes every attempt through a due process of listening during general public comment. Today before we go to a hearing, Director actually, could you please speak to some of this because I think it'd be very helpful for the record and for them to clarify what we are doing.
Michael Sloane: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Salazar Hickey, so the process goes something like this. We have a first meeting where we bring you, this rule is opening, this is what we're thinking, we're going to hold some public meetings. We go forward and hold public meetings. We often meet with individual groups and/or individuals to talk about their proposals.
Those that we think are good proposals, we often include in our recommendation. Those that we are not excited by, we put into the public comment and note them, so that when we come to our second, so much usually what we've been calling subsequent up until I wrote this recent agenda, we present a revised version of what the first presentation was that includes changes we might have garnered from the public as well as present what those comments were that we chose not to incorporate.
At the first meeting, the commission has the opportunity certainly to have input and to say, "We'd like to see you put this out there as you did with the license vendor fees." You weren't really comfortable giving us any direction at the last meeting, so you asked us to go forward with three different proposals.
We did that. That's the thing that can happen between the first and second. Again, at the second one, it's really the time where we're pretty refined on what we want to propose. We note those proposals that we didn't include that the public presented, and we ask the commission of all of these things, either ones we've presented or ones you've heard about, is there anything else you want us to do? Do you want us to go in a different direction? Do you want us to do something else?
We get that final direction at this subsequent discussion point and move forward with developing a draft rule, putting it out for the 30-day comment and going to the hearing. Again, at the hearing, you'll hear, "This is the proposal, this is the rule, here are some comments we've gotten for or against," at which point it's more or less a thumbs up or a thumbs down on the entire rule.
It's really this subsequent discussion point where you can make substantive changes and give us direction. One of the things that we have to be careful about is the timing, because if you give us a really radical change at this point on some of these rules, not all of them, the fisheries rule, for example, could run a little longer. We would have to go back out to public comment, might miss the November date and have to have a hearing in January. We have to be careful about when rules expire and when they need to be into effect. That's the process. Any of the chiefs have anything different they want to add to that? Doesn't look like it.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Director Sloane. We're now at the point of executive session. Can I have a motion to enter into the executive session?
Fernando Clemente: I'll move to.
Fernando Clemente: I'll also move motion to adjourn into the closed executive session, move to adjourn into closed to the public, pursuant to Section 10-15-1, NMSA 1978, to discuss property purchase, acquisition, or disposal, pursuant to Section 10-15-1(H)(2), NMSA 1978, to discuss limited personal matters.
Richard Stump: Director Sloane, please call the roll.
Michael Sloane: Commissioner Witt.
Christopher Witt: Here.
Michael Sloane: I'm going to assume that's a yes to enter executive session.
Christopher Witt: Yes.
Michael Sloane: Commissioner Lopez.
Tirzio Lopez: Yes.
Michael Sloane: Commissioner Fulfer.
Gregg Fulfer: Yes.
Michael Sloane: Commissioner Clemente.
Fernando Clemente: Yes.
Michael Sloane: Vice Chair Salazar Hickey.
Sharon Salazar Hickey: Yes.
Michael Sloane: Chair Stump.
Richard Stump: Yes.
Michael Sloane: Motion passed.
Richard Stump: We're now adjourned into executive session.
[silence]
Richard Stump: [unintelligible 07:18:23] we should adjourn into executive session, closed to the public. **[inaudible 07:18:28]** no matter specified in its motion to adjourn, it took no action as to any matter. Thank you to all who participated in today's meeting. We really appreciate it. Our next meeting is November 7th in Los Alamos. This meeting is adjourned.
[07:18:50] [END OF AUDIO]

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

NEW MEXICO STATE GAME COMMISSION

August 15, 2025

Reserve Independent Schools Gymnasium,
24 Mountaineer Rd., Reserve, NM 87830

Michael B. Sloane, Director — Date: 11/7/2025

Richard Stump, Chair — Date: 11/7/25

New Mexico State Game Commission