

COMMISSION MEETING AGENDA BRIEFING

Meeting Date: November 7, 2025

Agenda Number: 7

Presenter: Stewart Liley

Corroborator: N/A

Agenda Title: Rule Making Hearing on Upland Game Rule (19.31.5 NMAC) for the 2026 – 2030 hunting seasons.

1. Summary of Agenda Item

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

Proposed changes include:

- Adjust hunts for calendar dates
- Divide Dusky Grouse into a North and South Zone- using I-40 as the dividing line
- Set Bag Limits for Dusky Grouse Zones
 - North- 3 Birds/Day; 6 in possession
 - South- 1 Bird/Day; 2 in possession
- Add special draw permit youth pheasant hunt on Jackson Lake WMA
- Open Bluebird and Pine River WMAs for upland hunting during grouse/squirrel season
- Open Double E, LBar, Navajo and River Ranch WMAs for upland hunting during quail season

2. Background Information

The upland game rule is amended every four years as part of the upland game rule development cycle. The current 4-year rule expires April 1, 2026. Proposed changes to the rule are made based on findings in scientific literature, data collected by Department staff, and public observations and recommendations.

3. Strategic Plan References and Possible Impacts of Agenda Item

The process as presented to the Commission meets the Conservation Services Program Objectives 1, 2 and 5 of the Department's Strategic Plan: FY 2019 – FY 2023

4. Considerations Regarding Duplications and/or Conflicts with Existing Rules or Statutes

None

5. Description and Summary of Public Involvement Process and Results

The Department has posted proposed changes to the upland game rule on the Department's website. Input has been gathered from mail and email. Hybrid public meetings were held May 21st in Albuquerque and May 28th in Las Cruces, and a

presentation was given at a virtual Quail Forever meeting to gather public comments on the proposed changes to the upland game rule.

Suggested Motion

The Department respectfully suggests the following motion unless Commission discretion indicates a different course of action:

“Move to repeal and replace 19.31.5 NMAC, as presented by the Department and allow the Department to make minor corrections to comply with filing this rule with State Records and Archives.”

TITLE 19 NATURAL RESOURCES AND WILDLIFE
CHAPTER 31 HUNTING AND FISHING
PART 5 UPLAND GAME

19.31.5.1 ISSUING AGENCY: New Mexico department of **game and fish wildlife**.
[19.31.5.1 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.5.1 NMAC, 4/1/2022]

19.31.5.2 SCOPE: Sportspersons interested in upland game management and hunting. Additional requirements may be found in Chapter 17 NMSA 1978 and Title 19 NMAC.
[19.31.5.2 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.5.2 NMAC, 4/1/2022]

19.31.5.3 STATUTORY AUTHORITY: Sections 17-1-14 and 17-1-26 NMSA 1978 provide that the New Mexico state **gamewildlife** commission has the authority to establish rules and regulations that it may deem necessary to carry out the purpose of Chapter 17 NMSA 1978 and all other acts pertaining to protected mammals, birds and fish.
[19.31.5.3 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.5.3 NMAC, 4/1/2022]

19.31.5.4 DURATION: April 1, **20222026** through March 31, **20262030**.
[19.31.5.4 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.5.4 NMAC, 4/1/2022]

19.31.5.5 EFFECTIVE DATE: April 1, **20222026** unless a later date is cited at the end of a section.
[19.31.5.5 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.5.5 NMAC, 4/1/2022]

19.31.5.6 OBJECTIVE: Establishing seasons on dusky grouse, Eurasian collared-dove, pheasant, Gambel's quail, Montezuma quail, northern bobwhite, scaled quail, tree squirrels, and setting falconry seasons.
[19.31.5.6 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.5.6 NMAC, 4/1/2022]

19.31.5.7 DEFINITIONS:

- A. "Department"** shall mean the New Mexico department of **game and fish wildlife**.
- B. "Falconry"** shall mean hunting game mammals or game birds using raptors.
- C. "North zone"** shall mean north of Interstate 40.
- CD. "Possession limit"** shall mean the number of game mammals or game birds in a person's possession regardless of the location stored.
- E. "South zone"** shall mean south of Interstate 40.
- DE. "Tree squirrels"** shall mean squirrels in the genera *Sciurus* and *Tamiasciurus*, including Abert's squirrel, red squirrel, Arizona gray squirrel, fox squirrel and eastern gray squirrel.
- EG. "Wildlife management areas" or "WMAs"** shall mean those areas as described in 19.34.5 NMAC, Wildlife Management Areas.
[19.31.5.7 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.5.7 NMAC, 4/1/2022]

19.31.5.8 MANNER AND METHODS FOR UPLAND GAME:

- A. Season and hours:** Upland game may be hunted or taken only during open seasons and only during the period from one half hour before sunrise to one half hour after sunset, unless otherwise allowed or restricted by rule.
 - (1)** On Bernardo, Casa Colorada, La Joya, and W.S. Huey WMAs, hunting hours shall be from one half hour before sunrise to 1:00 p.m.
 - (2)** For the special permit pheasant hunts on W.S. Huey WMA, hunting hours shall be from one half hour before sunrise to one half hour after sunset.
- B. State WMAs open, species that can be hunted, and days open for hunting:**
 - (1)** The W.S. Huey WMA shall be open for quail hunting on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays during established quail seasons.
 - (2)** Bernardo, Casa Colorada, La Joya, and W.S. Huey WMAs shall be open to pheasant hunting by special draw permit only.
 - (3)** The Edward Sargent, W. A. Humphries, Rio Chama, Urraca, Colin Neblett, and Elliot S. Barker WMAs shall be open for upland game hunting during established tree squirrel and dusky grouse seasons.
 - (4)** The Water canyon, Marquez, prairie chicken areas, and Socorro Escondida WMAs shall be open for upland game hunting during established quail seasons.

(5) Eurasian collared dove hunting shall be open during established mourning and white-winged dove seasons as defined in 19.31.6 NMAC Migratory Game Bird, and during established quail, tree squirrel, and dusky grouse seasons.

C. All Eurasian collared dove must have an identifiable feathered wing attached until the bird has arrived at the person's residence, processor, or place of final storage.

A. Upland game may be hunted or taken only during open seasons and only during the period from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset, unless otherwise allowed or restricted by rule.

B. Double E, Water canyon, LBar/Marquez, Navajo, prairie-chicken areas, River ranch and Socorro-Escondida WMAs shall be open for upland game hunting during established quail seasons.

C. Bluebird, Edward Sargent, W.A. Humphries, Pine River, Rio Chama, Urraca, Colin Neblett and Elliot Barker WMAs shall be open for upland game hunting during established tree squirrel and dusky grouse seasons.

D. Bernardo, Casa Colorada, La Joya, Jackson Lake and W.S. Huey WMAs shall be open to pheasant hunting by special permit.

E. Hunting hours for special permit pheasant hunts on Bernardo, Casa Colorada and La Joya WMAs shall be from one-half hour before sunrise to 1:00 p.m.

F. The W.S. Huey WMA shall be open for quail hunting on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays during established quail seasons. Hunting hours for quail shall be from one-half hour before sunrise to 1:00 p.m.

G. Eurasian collared-dove

(1) Eurasian collared-dove hunting shall be allowed on WMAs open during established mourning and white-winged dove seasons as defined in 19.31.6 NMAC Migratory Game Bird, and on those WMAs that are open during established quail, tree squirrel and dusky grouse seasons as listed above.

(2) All Eurasian collared-dove must have an identifiable feathered wing attached until the bird has arrived at the person's residence, processor or place of final storage.

[19.31.5.8 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.5.9 NMAC, 4/1/2022]

19.31.5.9 UPLAND GAME HUNTING SEASONS: Hunting seasons shall be as indicated below.

SPECIES	OPEN AREAS	DATES	DAILY BAG (POSSESSION) LIMITS
Eurasian collared-dove	Statewide	April 1 - March 31	no bag or possession limit
dusky grouse	Statewide North Zone	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31 annually	3 (6 in possession)
dusky grouse	South Zone	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31 annually	1 (2 in possession)
pheasant	Statewide	Dec. 8-11, 2022 Dec. 7-10, 2023 Dec. 12-15, 2024 Dec. 11-14, 2025 Dec. 10-13, 2026 Dec. 9-12, 2027 Dec. 7-10, 2028 Dec. 6-9, 2029	3 males (6 in possession)
quail	Statewide	Nov. 15 - Feb. 15 annually	15, singly or in aggregate; no more than 5 shall be Montezuma quail (possession shall be 30 singly or in aggregate - no more than 10 shall be Montezuma quail)
tree squirrel	Statewide	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31 annually	8, singly or in aggregate (possession shall be 16 singly or in aggregate)

[19.31.5.9 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.5.10 NMAC, 4/1/2022]

19.31.5.10 HUNT CODES AND PERMIT NUMBERS FOR SPECIAL DRAW PHEASANT HUNTS:

HUNT LOCATION	2022 SEASON	2023 SEASON	2024 SEASON	2025 SEASON	HUNT CODE	NO. OF PERMITS	BAG LIMIT
youth-only Bernardo, Casa Colorado, and La Joya WMAs	Oct. 15	Oct. 21	Oct. 19	Oct. 18	PHE-0-001	20	3 males
youth-only W.S. Huey WMA	Dec. 3	Dec. 2	Dec. 7	Dec. 6	PHE-0-002	40	3 males
W.S. Huey WMA	Dec. 10	Dec. 9	Dec. 14	Dec. 13	PHE-0-003	40	3 males

HUNT LOCATION	2026 SEASON	2027 SEASON	2028 SEASON	2029 SEASON	HUNT CODE	NO. OF PERMITS	BAG LIMIT
youth-only Bernardo, Casa Colorado and La Joya WMAs	Oct. 17	Oct. 16	Oct. 21	Oct. 20	PHE-0-001	20	3 males
youth-only W.S. Huey WMA	Dec. 5	Dec. 4	Dec. 2	Dec. 1	PHE-0-002	40	3 males
W.S. Huey WMA	Dec. 12	Dec. 11	Dec. 9	Dec. 8	PHE-0-003	40	3 males
youth-only Jackson Lake WMA	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	PHE-0-004	10	3 males

[19.31.5.10 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.5.12 NMAC, 4/1/2022]

19.31.5.11 FALCONRY SEASONS:

A. Open areas and season dates: The season for dusky grouse, pheasants, quail and tree squirrels shall be statewide and shall be open September 1 through February 28 annually. For Eurasian collared-dove, all areas statewide are open year-round, except as prohibited by rule.

B. Daily bag and possession limits: Daily bag limits for dusky grouse, pheasant, and quail shall be three birds (in the aggregate) and three tree squirrels (in the aggregate). Possession limits shall be: dusky grouse-six; pheasant-six; quail-30 (singly or in the aggregate); tree squirrels-16 (singly or in the aggregate). There is no bag or possession limit for Eurasian collared-dove.

[19.31.5.11 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.5.13 NMAC, 4/1/2022]