



**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, June 13

**Red River Conference and Visitor Center
[101 W. River St.](#)
[Red River, NM 87558](#)**

9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XotJf1SqzX8>

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1: Meeting Called to Order

09:11:37 a.m. (00:00:00/00:00:14 on video)

Called to order by Chairman Richard Stump.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2: Roll Call

09:11:48 a.m. (00:00:11/00:00:25)

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

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3: Pledge of Allegiance

09:12:33 a.m. (00:00:56/00:01:10)

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4: Introduction of Guests

09:13:05 a.m. (00:01:28/00:01:43)

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

09:24:36 a.m. (00:12:59/00:13:14)

Motion: To revise and approve the agenda to include the swearing-in of Commissioner Witt prior to Agenda Item No. 6.

Motion by: Vice-Chairwoman Salazar Hickey.

Seconded by: Commissioner Pack.

Approved: Unanimous by voice vote: Chairman Stump, Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey, Commissioner Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer, Commissioner Lopez, Commissioner Pack and Commissioner Witt.

Commissioner Christopher Witt was sworn in by Red River Deputy Municipal Clerk Renee Martinez at 09:25:50 a.m. (00:14:13/00:14:27).

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

09:28:29 a.m. (00:12:59/00:13:14)

The Department presented the minutes from the Jan. 10, 2025, and April 25, 2025, State Game Commission meetings for the Commission's approval.

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.

- 70 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.
- 242 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.

- 12 individuals accrued 20 or more points in a 3-year period. They were mailed a notice of contemplated action and did not request a hearing.

Motion: To approve the consent agenda.

Motion by: Commissioner Clemente.

Seconded by: Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey.

Approved: Unanimous by voice vote - Chairman Stump, Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey, Commissioner Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer, Commissioner Lopez, Commissioner Pack and Commissioner Witt.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7: Approval of the State Wildlife Action Plan (Action Item)

09:32:06 a.m. (00:20:29/00:20:44)

The Department presented on the draft final 2025 State Wildlife Action Plan for New Mexico (available at <https://wildlife.dgf.nm.gov/download/2025-state-wildlife-action-plan-for-new-mexico-draft/>) and requested the Commission's approval of the document. The U.S. Congress mandates that these plans be comprehensively reviewed and revised every 10 years (Public Law 106-553, Appendix B Title IX, Section 902) and the final revised document is due by Oct. 1, 2025.

Motion: To approve the Department's 2025 SWAP and its submission to USFWS.

Motion by: Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey.

Seconded by: Commissioner Clemente.

Approved: Unanimous by roll call - Chairman Stump, Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey, Commissioner Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer, Commissioner Lopez, Commissioner Pack and Commissioner Witt.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8: Hearing and Adoption of the Migratory Game Bird Rule 19.31.6 NMAC (Action Item)

11:19:21 a.m. (02:07:44/01:44:10)

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

- Changes to regular waterfowl season dates based on public comments and calendar dates.
- Change certain season dates to be later in the year because of calendar shift
- Based on population survey data, increase Sandhill crane permits in MRGV and SW draw hunts by 12 total, to be distributed among existing hunts
- Bag limit for northern pintail to increase from 1 to 3 per USFWS regulatory framework

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

Motion by: Commissioner Clemente

Seconded by: Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey.

Approved: Unanimous by voice vote - Chairman Stump, Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey, Commissioner Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer, Commissioner Lopez, Commissioner Pack and Commissioner Witt.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 9: Initial Discussion of Proposed Rule for Shed Hunting

11:32:38 a.m. (02:21:01/01:57:27)

Pursuant to recently passed legislation, the Department proposed a change in the Manner and Method rule, 19.31.10.9.E, to require a shed hunter license for non-residents to possess more than two obviously shed antlers found in the field.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 10: Reserving Two Elk Licenses for Non-Profit Wish-Granting Organizations (Action Item)

11:41:43 a.m. (02:30:06/02:06:33)

The Department recommended that the Commission reserve two elk licenses to be distributed through non-profit, wish-granting organizations for two individuals with a life-threatening illness. Under 17-3-13.5 NMSA 1978, the State Game Commission is directed to reserve no more than two elk licenses a year for persons under the age of 21 who have been determined by a physician to have a life-threatening illness and who have been qualified through a non-profit, wish-granting organization.

The reservation of two elk licenses will not negatively affect the distribution, abundance or other elk population parameters. It will contribute to local economies wherever the hunters may choose to stay

or eat during the hunt selected.

Motion: To accept the Department's recommendation and reserve two elk licenses for the two applicants to be sponsored by the non-profit, wish-granting organizations, or the alternates, should the primary individuals not be able to participate in their elk hunt.

Motion by: Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey.

Seconded by: Commissioner Fulfer.

Approved: Unanimous by voice vote - Chairman Stump, Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey, Commissioner Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer, Commissioner Lopez, Commissioner Pack and Commissioner Witt.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 11: Initial Discussion of Proposed Changes to the Hunting and Fishing Licenses and Application Rule 19.31.3 NMAC

11:46:24 a.m. (02:34:47/02:11:13)

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

AGENDA ITEM NO. 12: Initial Discussion of Proposed Changes to the Game and Fish License/Permits Rule 19.30.9 NMAC

11:50:07 a.m. (02:38:30/02:14:51)

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.

The Commission took a lunch break at 12:09:54 p.m. (02:58:17/02:34:43) and returned at 13:02:12 p.m. (03:50:35/02:34:48).

AGENDA ITEM NO. 13: Approval of the Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (Action Item)

13:14:32 p.m. (04:02:55/02:47:07)

The Department sought Commission approval of the Capital Project Plan. This agenda item was brought forward as the Department must update its 5-year capital plan and submit a 2027-2031 capital request by July 1, 2025, to the Department of Finance and Administration. The Department will need to incorporate any modifications or additions by the Commission on the appropriate forms prior to the July 1 deadline.

Motion: To approve the FY27-FY31 Capital Plan as presented by the Department.

Motion by: Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey.

Seconded by: Commissioner Clemente.

Approved: Unanimous by voice vote - Chairman Stump, Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey, Commissioner Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer, Commissioner Lopez, Commissioner Pack and Commissioner Witt.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 14: Results of the Customer and Community Survey

13:26:13 p.m. (04:14:36/02:58:49)

In 2025, the Department commissioned ongoing, repeating quantitative research to help inform its Information and Education Division's goals and track progress against its efforts. The research aims to produce an ongoing look at key health measures for the Department including awareness and satisfaction levels, attitudes toward conservation, outdoor participation trends, hunting and fishing trends and community and customer demographics.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 15: General Public Comment

13:57:22 p.m. (04:35:45/03:29:58)

AGENDA ITEM NO. 16: Commissioner Comments

14:21:38 p.m. (05:10:01/03:54:11)

AGENDA ITEM NO. 17: Executive Session

14:39:50 p.m. (05:28:13/04:12:25)

Motion: To adjourn into executive session, closed to the public, pursuant to Section 10-15-1(H)(7), attorney-client privilege, litigation update; Section 10-15-1(H)(8) NMSA 1978, to discuss purchase, acquisition or disposal; and Section 10-15-1(H)(2) NMSA 1978, limited personnel matters (director's performance evaluation).

Motion by: Commissioner Pack.

Seconded by: Commissioner Clemente.

Approved: Unanimous by roll call - Chairman Stump, Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey, Commissioner Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer, Commissioner Lopez, Commissioner Pack and Commissioner Witt.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 18: Action(s) from Executive Session (Action Item(s))

16:36:04 p.m. (07:24:27/04:14:06)

Motion: To permit Chairman Stump to sign an easement granting NextEra Energy Transmission a right-of-way across the Black Hills Wildlife Management Area in Roosevelt County, New Mexico, for purposes of constructing and operating an electric transmission line.

Motion by: Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey

Seconded by: Commissioner Clemente.

Approved: Unanimous by voice vote - Chairman Stump, Vice-chairwoman Salazar Hickey, Commissioner Clemente, Commissioner Fulfer, Commissioner Lopez, Commissioner Pack and Commissioner Witt.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 19: Adjourn

16:36:58 p.m. (07:25:22/04:15:00)

Richard Stump: Good morning. Welcome, everybody. New Mexico State Game Commission meeting in Red River, New Mexico. I now call this meeting to order. Director Sloane, please call the roll.

Michael Sloane: Vice Chair Salazar Hickey.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Present.

Michael Sloane: Commissioner Clemente.

Fernando Clemente: Present.

Michael Sloane: Commissioner Witt.

Christopher Witt: Present.

Michael Sloane: Commissioner Fulfer.

Gregg Fulfer: Here.

Michael Sloane: Commissioner Pack.

Sabrina Pack: Present.

Michael Sloane: Commissioner Lopez.

Tirzio Lopez: Present.

Michael Sloane: Chair Stump.

Richard Stump: Present.

Michael Sloane: We have a quorum.

Richard Stump: I'd like to take a minute, [clears throat] excuse me, just to introduce our newest commission member, Dr. Christopher Witt. Welcome, doctor. How about we stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

Richard Stump: As is our custom, let's introduce all our guests. I'll start with the commissioners. We'll work through the commission and then around the room. How about we start with Commissioner Fulfer?

Gregg Fulfer: Glad everyone's here today. I'm Gregg Fulfer. I'm from District 1, from Jal, and I'm--

Christopher Witt: I'm Christopher Witt. It's an honor to be here to join the commission. I'm a professor at University of New Mexico, a biologist with wide-ranging expertise, especially in birds. I'm here as an individual, not representing my employer, the University of New Mexico.

Tirzio Lopez: Tirzio Lopez, District 3, Rio Arriba County, [unintelligible 00:02:43], New Mexico.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Good morning, Mr. Chair. Good morning, commissioners. Good morning, Commissioner Witt. It's nice to have you. Welcome. Welcome, members of the public and all of those who are on stream. Typically, I just say I live in Santa Fe County. I'm a commissioner in the District 4. I'm a vice chair. If it's okay, I'm just going to try and say in 25 words or less. Don't count. As an introduction to you, this is the first time I'm getting to meet you. I am a native New Mexican. I've had the privilege and honor of living in New Mexico since the '50s. I am very honored and blessed to live and be in New Mexico.

I've been the chair of the commission. I've been on the commission since 2020, and I now serve as the vice chair. It is an unbelievable honor to be on this commission. I think you're going to love it. The people that come to the meeting have a passion, and they are all very respectful. They speak with their heart, but they speak with an expertise. Serving on the commission, I think it's important to listen and to actually be very fair-minded and look at everything before we make our decision. I welcome you. Thank you, everybody, for your patience with my 25 words or less.

Richard Stump: Okay. That was definitely under 25 words. I'm Richard Stump, appointed at-large. I live in between Santa Fe and Pecos, New Mexico. I'm very honored to be here, and I appreciate all of you being here as well.

Fernando Clemente: Good morning, everyone. My name is Fernando Clemente. I am commissioner at-large. I am from Sunland Park, New Mexico. The southern city of New Mexico. I want to welcome Dr. Witt to this commission. It's an honor for us to have you on this commission. Thank you for everyone for being here today. Thank you.

Sabrina Pack: I'm Dr. Sabrina Pack. I live in Silver City. I represent District 2, which is the southwest part of New Mexico. I just want to welcome our newest commissioner, and also thank all the public for being here today.

Michael Sloane: Good morning, everyone. Mike Sloane, director of the Department of Game and Fish.
[silence]

Stewart Liley: Good morning, everyone. Good morning, commissioners, members of the public. Stewart Liley, chief of wildlife, Department of Game and Fish.

Paul Varela: Good morning, commissioners, members of the public. My name is Paul Varela, I'm the chief of administrative services for the department.

Joseph Miano: Good morning, commissioners, members of the public. My name is Joseph Miano, I'm the budget director for Department of Game and Fish.

Jeremy Martin: Good morning, commissioners, members of the public. I'm Jeremy Martin, I'm the department's general counsel.

Bob Nordstrom: Bob Nordstrom, Albuquerque.

Tim Cimbal: Good morning, commissioners, members of the public. Tim Cimbal, I'm the colonel for field operations with Game and Fish.

Shawn Carrell: Good morning, commission and the public. Lieutenant Shawn Carrell, over Revocations.

Tristanna Carrell: Good morning, Mr. Chairman, members of the commission. I am Tristanna Carrell, I am the department's chief of the information and education division.

Dela Joyner: Good morning, everyone, commissioners. I am Dela Joyner, and I am the public information specialist for New Mexico Game and Fish.

Joe Ray: Good morning, commissioners. Joe Ray from Eagle Nest, Hollenback Ranch.

Kaitlin Haase: Good morning, commissioners and the public. My name is Kaitlin Haase from Santa Fe, and I am here representing the Xerces Society.

Bryan Bird: Good morning, commissioners, everyone. Bryan Bird, Defenders of Wildlife out of Santa Fe.

Teresa Seamster: Good morning, commissioners, everybody. My name is Teresa Seamster, I'm with the Northern New Mexico, Water Sentinels Group from Sierra Club.

Ginny Seamster: Good morning, everyone. Ginny Seamster, I'm the assistant chief for technical guidance over the planning section at New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, and the lead on the State Wildlife Action Plan.

Ron Kellermueller: Good morning, everyone. I'm Ron Kellermueller with New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, the mining and energy habitat specialist.

John Hickey: Hi, good morning. John Hickey from Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Dave Pack: Good morning, everybody. My name is Dave Pack. I'm a transportation specialist for Commissioner Pack. [laughs]

Josh McDonald: Good morning. Josh McDonald from Albuquerque.

Chuck Risky: Chuck Risky, Eagle Nest, New Mexico.

Jesse Deubel: Good morning, Mr. Chair, commissioners, Director Sloane. My name is Jesse Deubel, I'm the executive director of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation.

Darren Vaughan: Good morning, commissioners, members of the public. I'm Darren Vaughan, I'm the communications director for New Mexico Game and Fish.

Valente Meza: Good morning, commissioners and members of the public. I'm Valente Meza, application developer at Game and Fish.

Wheeler Brunschmid: Good morning, commissioners and members of the public. I am Wheeler Brunschmid, assistant chief of information, and we currently have two members online who wish to introduce themselves. [silence] Brandon, you're allowed to talk at this time.

Brandon Wynn: Thank you. Good morning, commissioners, members of the public. My name is Brandon Wynn. I live in Commissioner Witt's district, and I'm happy to have Commissioner Witt as my representative on the commission. Very happy about that. Thank you.

Wheeler Brunschmid: Thank you, Brandon. Mark, you're allowed to unmute yourself.

Mark Mattaini: Good morning, commissioners, staff, members of the public. My name is Mark Mattaini, I am from Paguate Village, Laguna Pueblo. I'm the Northwest Regional Board member for the New Mexico chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, and I also am a member of the Citizen's Advisory Committee for what will be called the Wildlife Department. With the work done there relates to fundings for habitat. I'm having some connection problems. I will keep trying to connect. If I miss anything, I will watch

the video when it comes back. I do hope to have a chance to say a few things at Item Number 7 on the agenda. Thank you.

Wheeler Brunschmid: Thank you, Mark. Erin Hunt, you can unmute yourself.

Erin Hunt: Good morning, everyone. My name is Erin Hunt. I'm here representing Lobos of the Southwest, and happy to be here. Thank you.

Wheeler Brunschmid: Thank you, Erin. There is a number on here without a name. I'm going to unmute you.

Mary Katherine Ray: Good morning, everyone. Can you hear me all right?

Wheeler Brunschmid: Yes, we can.

Mary Katherine Ray: Thank you so much. I'm sorry I have to join by phone. I'm Mary Katherine Ray, I'm wildlife chair for the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club, joining from the remote part of Socorro County where internet connection is pretty iffy. Thank you.

Wheeler Brunschmid: Thank you. Christopher Smith. You can unmute yourself.

Christopher Smith: Good morning, Chair Stump, members of the commission, Director Sloan, and members of the public. My name is Chris Smith. I am the wildlife program director for WildEarth Guardians. I wish I could be there today, but some family matters have me stuck in my hometown of Santa Fe, so I will follow along online. Thank you.

Wheeler Brunschmid: Thank you, Christopher. Tom Paterson, you can go ahead and unmute yourself.

Tom Paterson: Good morning, Mr. Chair, commissioners. Tom Paterson from Luna, New Mexico, where we are burning up and hoping for monsoons. I serve as the president-elect of the New Mexico Cattle Growers Association.

Wheeler Brunschmid: Thank you, Tom. Last one. Quin, you can unmute yourself.

Quin Baine: Good morning. Thank you to the chair and to the commission, and welcome to Dr. Witt on the commission. My name is Quin Baine. I am the Species Survival Specialist of Invertebrates at the New Mexico Bio Park Society based out of Albuquerque. Thank you for having me today.

Wheeler Brunschmid: Thank you, Mr. Chair, members of the commission. That is all of the participants who wish to introduce themselves.

Richard Stump: Okay, thank you. Anybody else in the audience here that has not been introduced? We're all good? Okay. Again, thank you for being here. Item Number 5 is the approval of the agenda. Are there any questions, comments? I think we're going to swear in our newest commissioner.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Mr. Vice Chair, for the record, can we please amend the agenda? I think it requires a vote. Is that correct, Mr. Secretary?

Michael Sloane: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Sharon Salazar Hickey, yes, you'll have to vote to approve the agenda or a vote to approve the agenda as amended.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Okay. Mr. Chair, commissioners, I would like to recommend that we revise the agenda to have a swearing in of our new commissioner prior to the consent agenda and immediately following this approval of the agenda. That's the only amendment that I have. That is my motion.

Sabrina Pack: I second that motion.

Richard Stump: Is there any more discussion? All in favor?

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Aye.

Commissioners: Aye.

Richard Stump: Any opposed? Okay. Motion passes.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Mr. Chair, commissioners, and Commissioner Witt, would you please move to the table and sit next to or stand next to the Red River Deputy Municipal Clerk. I thank Renee Martinez for attending with such short notice. I think it's very important that we go through this presentation. Thank you.

[pause 00:15:02]

Renee Martinez: As a commissioner-

Christopher Witt: As a commissioner-

Renee Martinez: -of the New Mexico State Game Commission-

Christopher Witt: -of the New Mexico State Game Commission-

Renee Martinez: -and that I will faithfully and impartially-

Christopher Witt: -and that I will faithfully and impartially-

Renee Martinez: -discharge the duties-

Christopher Witt: -discharge the duties-

Renee Martinez: -of the appointment as on which-

Christopher Witt: -of the appointment as on which-

Renee Martinez: -I am about to enter-

Christopher Witt: -I am about to enter-

Renee Martinez: -to the best of my ability-

Christopher Witt: -to the best of my ability-

Renee Martinez: -so help me God.

Christopher Witt: -so help me God.

[pause 00:15:57]

Richard Stump: All right. Dr. Witt, would you like to say a few words?

[silence]

Christopher Witt: Yes. I just want to say that it's a great honor to join this commission. I have great respect for my fellow commissioners. I join this with great humility, and I aim to be a productive and helpful member of the commission to achieve the goals of managing and protecting New Mexico's fish and wildlife to the best of our collective abilities. Thank you for having me, and I'm excited to join this task.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Dr. Witt. Next item is the consent agenda. We have three items. The revised minutes from the January 10th meeting, the minutes from the April 25th meeting, and revocations. Is there any discussion, consent agenda? Commissioner Lopez.

Tirzio Lopez: Revocation staff here available?

Richard Stump: I believe they are. Revocation staff is here?

[pause 00:17:34]

Tirzio Lopez: Morning, Colonel, Lieutenant. How are you?

Tim Cimbal: Good morning.

Shawn Carrell: Good morning, Commissioner.

Tirzio Lopez: I was reviewing your list of revocations this morning with you, Lieutenant, and I noticed there was a lot of violations regarding hunting in the wrong unit. Can you describe the one we were talking about regarding the Burro Mountains, I believe?

Shawn Carrell: Yes. There are a couple. Would you like me to explain them all, or just that one specific?

Tirzio Lopez: Two. That one for sure, and then one more. The one we talked about.

Shawn Carrell: The one particular to the Burro Mountains is Harrison Smith. He was helping his son hunt deer. They were actually on Red Rock Road, but that morning they had hunted Castle Rock and Saddle Rock, which is part of the Burro Mountain hunt area. They had, in Unit 23, there's two types of tag. Burro Mountain tag and a 23 excluding the Burro Mountains. They had a 23 excluding the Burro Mountains, and were hunting within the Burro Mountain hunt area.

Tirzio Lopez: Okay. The one we were discussing regarding the antelope.

Shawn Carrell: The antelope, Toby Hewitt. It was actually a group of three individuals. The other two went through on the last commission meeting, but they're in Unit 56, near Capulin. Toby did have a license. They harvested three antelope. The tag was not notched, but attached to the antler. He had removed the head and hide without the tag, or with the tag. It was wrapped around and there was no edible portions removed from the field. That's why the waste to the game was there. His total points was right at 40 points, which is the threshold to ask for **[unintelligible 00:19:38]**. We decided to recommend that three year revocation timeframe.

Tim Cimbal: It was a first offense as well on that.

Tirzio Lopez: That was a first offense?

Shawn Carrell: First offense, yes.

Tirzio Lopez: That's all the questions I have. Thank you all for what you're doing out there. I know you guys are busy this time of year, wrapping up from hunting season in court and getting ready for fishing season now. Just a quick reference. Everybody, buy your license. It's cheaper to buy a license than pay a penalty assessment. Do you agree, Colonel?

Tim Cimbali: Commissioner, I do agree.

Tirzio Lopez: [laughs] Thank you so much, gentlemen.

Tim Cimbali: Thank you, commissioners.

Richard Stump: Any other discussion? Is there a motion to approve the consent agenda?

Tirzio Lopez: I move to approve the consent agenda.

Richard Stump: Is there a second?

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: I second.

Richard Stump: Any more discussion? All in favor?

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Aye.

Richard Stump: Aye.

Tirzio Lopez: Aye.

Richard Stump: Any opposed? Motion passes. [silence] Next item. Excuse me. Next item is approval of the State Wildlife Action Plan. It's going to be a presentation by Chief Stewart Liley. Chief Liley, whenever you're ready.

[silence]

Gregg Fulfer: Chairman, I had-- never mind. I just seen it came on, so I didn't know if we had control of this screen.

Richard Stump: I don't think we do. Only looking at it.

Stewart Liley: Good morning, commissioners. Yes. We're going to start off this morning with the approval of the State Wildlife Action Plan. Before I begin, I'd like to thank Ginny Seamster, within the department, that did an amazing job on getting the work done to get this plan in front of you. Working with an extremely amount of members of the public and working with constituents to revise this plan. A little bit of background.

State wildlife action plans are required in order to receive federal funding for state wildlife grants. It's really important to note that these are not regulatory documents. The State Wildlife Action Plan is not a regulatory document. It's revised every 10 years, and it provides for federal funding, like I said, for Species of Greatest Conservation Need. It also, with some of the new legislation that was passed this year and last year in the legislature, it allows for general fund funding on Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

The state legislature called out the need for additional funds of Species of Greatest Conservation Need and put forth almost \$6 million on an annual basis for the state to spend on Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Again, it's not a regulatory document. It's not intended to guide statute, rule, or policy. It is really a roadmap for us to work on Species of Greatest Conservation Need, work on conservation actions to maybe delist federally listed species. Work on those actions to prevent species from being listed.

I'll use two examples on that. That's the Rio Grande chub and Rio Grande sucker. They are currently listed as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need. We've been using state wildlife grant money to fund the conservation of those species, and recently, the federal government decided not to list the species as endangered or threatened based on the conservation actions that we have taken. It provides a roadmap for how conservation actions could potentially be undertaken within the state for the species that are under conservation need.

There are eight required elements that a state wildlife action plan needs to make according to the federal government. You have to list your Species of Greatest Conservation Need. You actually have to spell out what those species are. We'll get into a little bit more details on each of these key required elements in a minute. It also has to list the habitats, the key habitats for those species, the threats that those species face, and the threats those habitats face, and the actions that could be done to conserve those species or their habitats, and a plan to monitor their habitats and the species, and that it needs to be reviewed and basically revised every 10 years.

This will be our third State Wildlife Action Plan. The last revision was completed in 2017. Then it also requires coordination of agencies and tribes that manage significant land areas within our state. We'll get to the public participation aspect and that coordination that we did in further detail. Once the SWAP is approved, we will turn it over to the federal government to get approval from them. Before, then they will

also send that to a state within our region, the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies region, to review, to make sure we've met those eight required elements.

Given that this is a revision, and we don't have massive changes to the document, we don't see any issues because our previous SWAPs, State Wildlife Action Plans, have met those eight key required elements. Just going into a little bit of comparison from our current State Wildlife Action Plan to the State Wildlife Action Plan in front of you today. There is a new chapter. We included a new chapter in the State Wildlife Action Plan, on regional conservation. It recognizes the importance of working with other state wildlife agencies, adjoining the state of New Mexico on working on Species of Greatest Conservation Need that have crossed jurisdictional boundaries with other states.

Noticing that wildlife do not recognize sovereign boundaries or state boundaries, and working to conserve those species that are shared conservation need. You'll notice the new State Wildlife Action Plan is significantly longer. Part of that is a lot of new material on climate vulnerability for species, and also because the number of species increased, especially since we included pollinating insects in this State Wildlife Action Plan, a lot more tables and charts that go through those species, et cetera. Again, comparing the current State Wildlife Action Plan to the one in front of you today, the ecoregions that are described in the State Wildlife Action Plans remain unchanged.

There were six ecoregions within the state. Ranging from the higher Southern Rocky Mountains, the ecoregion that we're in now, to the Chihuahuan Desert. Those ecoregions haven't changed, but we have seen just a slight change based off the US National Vegetation Classification updates on the number of habitats. That's just, in a terrestrial habitat, combining what used to be described as two different habitats into one. You'll see it goes from 47 to 46, but the number of aquatic habitats, at eight aquatic described habitats throughout the state remains unchanged.

You'll also see a significant increase in the number of Species of Greatest Conservation Need. We'll get into that in more detail here in a minute of what that is. Again, the majority of that's going to be pollinating insects. It's also to recognize that the threats described in the State Wildlife Action Plan are the same threats that are in the current action plan. Those remain unchanged. The 10 categorical threats that we recognize today remain unchanged in this draft State Wildlife Action Plan. It updates, it mainly updates those threats based off of new information and new data that has come about.

Those threats, also for the majority, are anthropogenic and are mainly human-caused threats across-- whether it be residential development, to solar or wind development. It's mainly threats driven by humans. You'll notice also, too, we include 13 more conservation actions. That is to address multiple threats and trying to work through what other actions could be potentially undertaken. Again, these are not mandated actions, they're actions that if undertaken, it might help save a species, it might help get a species off an endangered species list, or prevent it. It lists conservation actions that if undertaken, may help with the conservation of those species.

In the revision, there was the key task, if you recall, the eight required elements. We did review and revise the selection criteria for how we selected Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Again, I'll get into that in a lot more detail in a bit. It updated the list, and we really did another aspect, too, of bending or categorizing where those species fall into. Into four different categories, which I'll discuss in more depth in a minute. The biggest, again, is adding pollinating insects into the Species of Greatest Conservation Need. As I discussed, we updated the key habitats. Overall, ecoregions didn't change, but some of those macro grouping descriptions did change, some based off of new information.

In the threat section, as I said, the 10 categorical threats remained unchanged, but the specifics in the threats to account for emerging threats or threats with increasing impacts or stressors were updated in this document based off of new research or new activities on the ground. As you see, maybe transmission and solar, et cetera, going at a much larger scale now than it was 10 years ago. It increases the threats to some of these species that we work on. We updated the threats in habitats and the threats to Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the tables and appendices and included case studies on climate refugia. A big thing that we did within this State Wildlife Action Plan is updated the threat of climate change and looked at where refugia could potentially exist for some of these species as we see a much drier, warmer kind of seasons. Some of the megadroughts that we're seeing, and how we could potentially moderate that with some of the Species of Greatest Conservation Need. We also worked on the actions to conserve

SGCN and their habitat, including updating the best management practices based off of new research and information. Again, a greater emphasis placed on climate change adaptation and how species may be able to adapt to that and then pollinator conservation.

Moving down to the required elements, we did update the Species of Greatest Conservation Need monitoring table, as required. Then most likely, we will be, or someone will be, and we'll see if I'll still be here. In 10 years, someone will be updating and revising the State Wildlife Action Plan. Again, it's a 10 year document. Every 10 years will be updated and approved. One of the big things that we did do, and I think it's important, is we had a core team that really reviewed the SWAP material. The core team, and I'll show a slide of all the core team members, but we held five core team meetings starting almost two years ago, from December of '23 to February of '25.

The majority of you heard from me about a year ago on the update to the State Wildlife Action Plan and the progress we were making. Since that time, we did hold two more core meetings to discuss new material. The core team did review the species of greatest conservation list, the threats chapter, the climate change chapter, the conservation action chapter, the monitoring table, and the regional chapter. The core team received all that material ahead of public review and ahead of that public comment period they had. We did make changes to those chapters and material based upon input from core team members prior to this document going out to public review.

It was reviewed by a significant amount of people, again, I'll get to the numbers and the groups in a second, prior to even going out to the public. Again, the core team reviewed all the key components of the State Wildlife Action Plan and made comments to help enhance the document prior to going to public comment. The core team's purpose really is, and who it consists of is agencies with significant management authority over lands or wildlife. It's required as an element of SWAP revisions, from the Fish and Wildlife Service. We had ongoing dialogue with individuals and organizations with relevant expertise or interest in state wildlife action plans, or Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

Again, we received input all along the way, improving the document prior to going out to public comment. The core team consisted of 32 different organizations, and right at 50 individuals participating within that. I won't read through all the core team members, but if you could take a look here to see all the different entities that were invited to participate on the core team in the SWAP developments. Just pause for a second while you take a look. [silence]

We also, as a component of the state wildlife action plans, and a requirement, we did formal tribal consultation with the tribes. You'll see all the tribes that had an interest in the State Wildlife Action Plan. They're listed here. During that process, a formal tribal consultation information was added in the State Wildlife Action Plan based on the input from the tribal consultation. There is a section in the State Wildlife Action Plan that discusses Indigenous knowledge, et cetera, that came directly through our formal consultations with the tribes and requests from.

I want to summarize the public comments that we did receive. We received 187 public comments on this document. If you could look at some of the other rules that you all make or different actions you take in terms of public comment, this received a significant amount of public comment compared to some of those. Broken down, those numbers do not add up, because someone might have commented in multiple places. What it is, we had 155 comments in support, just blanket that. Just support the document as written and maybe nothing else.

We also had some comments that maybe said a support of the State Wildlife Action Plan, but ask the department to do more. For example, include plants in the State Wildlife Action Plan. We don't have authority over plants, so we didn't do it, or include all insects in there. We took into account some of those comments and we did make some changes, some minor tweaks and changes I'll get into in a second in that plan, based off these comments. We did have four comments that were just incomplete, or really didn't have comments that dealt with the SWAP. It was more on hunting-related comments, et cetera. It was commenting on something that had nothing to necessarily do with the SWAP. Then we did have four comments in concern about the SWAP. Mainly, those comments were concerned on how the SWAP could potentially be used as a regulatory document. We really went and tried hard to get out the fact that this is not a regulatory document. In fact, based off of some of those comments, we did add language to

address that. The specific language that we added-- Wildlife Action Plan, in the very beginning said, "This is not a regulatory document, it's a planning document."

We added a statement that said, "This is not intended to guide statute, rule, or policy development." It really is a clarity that this is our Wildlife Action Plan. It is how we are trying to conserve species on the ground. What we're trying to do, it is not intended, the intended use is not to be a regulatory or used by other agencies or persons to create rule, statute, or policy. The summary of the comments broken down by themes. You'll see there, there was the main themes on there where it's just the support for the SWAP and its context. That was the majority of those comments.

You also saw some comments on request to protect certain taxa of SGCN, for example, more insects or plants or certain taxa that we felt was not appropriate on there, that we didn't think it met the criteria of Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Then we saw comments for support of certain SWAP-related activities. Some of the conservation actions, et cetera. Then we did receive some comments on request to highlight specific topics in the SWAP. For example, we made some minor tweaks to the language to recognize that. Any of the comments that we made tweaks to the State Wildlife Action Plans were really clarifying language tweaks to the document.

It wasn't changing the overall arching guise of the document, or the messaging of the document. It was more clarity. For example, on request to highlight specific topics in the SWAP, we had an individual requesting that we highlight the importance of conservation actions currently being conducted on private land. We did include that in there as a sentence. Then we also had comments that wanted us to highlight the role that urban areas can play in the conservation of Species of Greatest Conservation Need, for example, on pollinating insects and planting in urban areas, and using different species of plants can help those pollinating insects.

We did have some requests to add information into the SWAP. We did account for one of these. That was a specific comment related to airstrikes of birds, really. Asked to include regional and state-specific data instead of just national data. We included, we were able to get the state data for that, to improve the actual, what airstrike data on birds is in New Mexico versus kind of a regional or national wide. Again, more clarifying. Then we also tried to address some of the concerns that was raised. Such as the use of expert opinion.

There was concerns over, we used expert opinion in this document. Most documents are going to use expert opinion, but we added a clarifying explanation on that and all in quotes. "We use expert opinion when relevant data had not yet been published." If it was an unpublished study, but we had to weigh in on it, we used expert opinion at that time. Anytime there's new publication, and in the State Wildlife Action Plans, when we update, revise that, obviously, we will use the citations on any published data. A lot of biology. A lot of what we do is based upon our biologists and their expert opinions.

It may not be published in a document at some time. Our biologists that work on these, we consider as expert opinions on that. Overall, the vast majority of the public comments, as I said, were very much in support of the State Wildlife Action Plan, commending the process that was done and the time that we allowed. Participation from core team members of the SWAP was very complementary of it. Again, from the comments we received, we made minor revisions to more get a clarity of the intent of the document, but not any kind of revisions that changed the overall scope of the document.

Some of the key revision tasks that we undertook that are not required elements of the State Wildlife Action Plan, but we really thought it was important into this, is looking at riparian conservation areas. Riparian areas in the state of New Mexico hold a disproportionately high amount of Species of Greatest Conservation Need. As you all know, we're a fairly dry state, and these riparian areas serve as great refugias for, whether it be birds, or insects, or fish, or small mammals, and so trying to look at where those areas are on the state and where conservation actions potentially can take place.

Again, all conservation actions are voluntary, and we recognize the importance of the voluntary conservation actions that could be undertaken, especially on some of those private lands. As I mentioned before, we also undertook a regional chapter that looked at our shared Species of Greatest Conservation Needs species with our adjoining states to figure out, what species can we work on on a regional basis to help improve their status? Then we also looked at, because of climate change, threat to many of our

Species of Greatest Conservation Need. We looked at climate change refugias within the state where we could work in conservation areas to help improve the potential status of it.

Looking specifically at the selection criteria for our Species of Greatest Conservation Need, we looked at seven factors to see if a species fell within it. For example, climate change vulnerability, if a species that was less likely to be able to acclimate to changing climatic conditions, it was included as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need, or a decline if a species that was either currently experiencing decline or has historically experienced a sharp decline in the population or numbers, or a disjunct, which would be a species that has populations that are geographically isolated from other populations of the same species and are thereby disproportionately susceptible to local decline or extinction.

Four, endemic species. Those are those species that are just limited to the state of New Mexico.

Keystone species, or the species that may contribute more to ecosystem conservation or biological diversity through their impacts on other species than expected based on their relative abundance. Their loss is likely to lead to a reduction in species' diversity, or change in community structure or dynamics.

Vulnerable species were those which some aspect of their life history and ecology makes them disproportionately susceptible to decline within the next 10 years.

Factors include, but are not limited to, concentration to small areas during migration or hibernation, low reproductive rates, or susceptibility to disease, habitat loss, wildfire, or anthropogenic overexploitation.

Finally, core range is New Mexico represents a substantial portion of the species' range and is found in multiple counties within New Mexico, or New Mexico represents approximately 10% or more of the species' entire range. I mentioned something we did new in this State Wildlife Action Plan from the current one, is we categorized our species into these four different categories, trying to really spell out where we think these species fall into.

For example, our current focal species are those species for which, based on their status, population trends, or other factors, the department is currently either implementing conservation actions, including active monitoring, or anticipating the need for conservation work within the next 10 years. The department recognizes the importance of these species and other SGCN categories and will shift focus as species and new information arises. Then our conservation impact species are those that where conservation actions taken in New Mexico is likely to have a substantial positive outcome for the species and their associated ecosystems.

This may include endemic or geographically restricted species and habitat specialists that utilize specific patches of habitat that are either narrowly distributed or highly disjunct. This category may also include species that are impacted by threats that can be more readily addressed or resident species that carry out their full life cycle in New Mexico. It's really ones where New Mexico can make a big impact on the species as a whole population across the region. Then data needs species. You'll see this is where the majority of the species fall into.

This category includes species for which the primary conservation need is to obtain additional biological data and information. More data needed to understand the current status and ecology of these species within New Mexico, and/or their range-wide and identify species conservation needs and actions.

Implementing new or updating outdated surveys or monitoring efforts will be especially beneficial for these species. I think this is an important one to look at, is when we start seeing listing decisions or petitions for listing from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, if we don't have data on those species, it's hard for us to even say what the status is.

It's hard to work through the species status assessments that happen when a listing decision is made. As I mentioned on like the Rio Grande chub and Rio Grande sucker, it was a data needs species at one point in time. The data we were able to collect on that precluded the need to list, because the status of those species were better than just not knowing. That's the problem with a lot of species. New Mexico is the fifth most biologically diverse state of any state in the nation, and we have a lot of species. Trying to get at understanding all of them is a task.

The legislature recognized that this year. They passed a bill that provided, like I said, almost \$6 million of funding for Species of Greatest Conservation Need work. The department just advertised eight positions to work on Species of Greatest Conservation Need. A lot of their work is going to be trying to either, on our current focal species, trying to get them in a better status, or on our data needs species, to try to

understand what's actually going on with them. Finally, our last category is our limited conservation opportunity species. Those are species that have documented conservation need, but the potential for conservation actions taken in New Mexico have much less impact on the species as a whole. Just mainly as those species that might be rarely in New Mexico, migratory species that do come here every once in a while, but overall, the main population, they don't breed here, or winter here, or summer here, but maybe stop over here, and actions taken for those species just are not going to have a population-level impact if we undertake them. Looking at the species, here is a comparison between the current State Wildlife Action Plan and the draft action plan of the species themselves, grouping by the taxonomic group. You'll see the majority of the increase in species, again, is in pollinating insects, followed by birds, then mollusks, and then mammals.

Birds, over the last 10 years, have seen some steep declines. They've seen historic declines over the last 30 years, and that's why you see an increase in that bird section. Again, the majority, almost 35% of the increase of the Species of Greatest Conservation Need is through pollinating insects. New Mexico has seen some listing decisions from the Fish and Wildlife Service recently on insects, and some of those pollinating insects. Trying to get a better conservation handle on that, I think, can help improve their status and hopefully prevent listings in the future.

Looking at the categorization that I described a minute ago, you could see where we lump those species based on what we know. You'll see, as I stated, the majority of those species are in data needs. Our hope is to have these new people on board and move some of those species around. Some of those species might be proposed to come off from Species of Greatest Conservation Need, as we learn more information about them, or it might, in the new revised State Wildlife Action Plan, put them into a focal species or conservation impact species.

Just trying to learn a lot about these species, now having the funding and the ability and capacity to do that should help improve conservation status of animals that we know need the need. Also, our understanding of species across New Mexico, where they actually fall on the spectrum of conservation need. With that, I'll take any questions.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Chief Liley. That was a lot of work to put that together, and appreciate that. Is there any public comment, actually?

Wheeler Brunschmid: Mr. Chair, members of the commission, we do have two hands raised, and other members who emailed in.

Richard Stump: Do we have anyone online?

Wheeler Brunschmid: Currently online, yes, Mr. Chair.

Richard Stump: Let's start with them.

Wheeler Brunschmid: Mark, you can unmute yourself. You're given three minutes. Go ahead.

Mark Mattaini: Thank you. I don't think I'll need three minutes. I only have two things to say. The first one is that I went through the 400 pages from 10 years ago, and the 778 this year, I didn't read everything, but I skimmed everything and read a lot. I was very impressed with the quality of the work that was done here. One of the important things I think is for people to know about what the department is doing. I remember, for example, one meeting I was in that Mike Sloane was leading when we had some people who would be called "greens" who really had seemed to think that all the money was spending related to licensing for hunting and fishing and so forth.

Most of the money does come from that, of course, but what the department does is enormous, I think it's important. That takes me to my second point, which is I think this offers a tool, or more like a lot of tools, for advocacy. For talking about what needs to happen. One hates to bring it up, but we have to. We know things are going to change over the next couple of years in terms of forests, in terms of streams, in terms of wildlife, and so forth. Funding is going to be a big problem, so I just want to encourage us.

When I presented this material to our board, the state board for Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, people were really surprised about the quality of the things that we're talking about, and what the meaning might be. I think we can find the same with a lot of other people, so to look at this as a potential for advocacy, I think, is very important at this point. Thank you for doing so much wonderful work. I think that's really all I have to say. Thank you.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Mr. Mattaini. Anyone else online?

Wheeler Brunschmid: Yes, Mr. Chair. Let me start this over again. Brandon Wynn, you're allowed to unmute yourself. You have three minutes to talk.

Brandon Wynn: Thank you, commissioners, for the opportunity to speak. Can I be heard? Am I being heard?

Wheeler Brunschmid: Yes, we can hear you.

Brandon Wynn: Okay, thank you. What this SWAP, what it reminds me of is, I have a collection of New Mexico at statehood for 30 or 40 years, would issue a game warden's report to the legislature and the governor every year. What it was is an inventory, and I have the first copy. The first edition was for the years 1910, 1911, before we were even a state. So it was prepared while we were a territory. While we were a territory, we felt that the wildlife of the state was worth inventorying, and that's what it was. It was an inventory. It said, "Here's the status of the wildlife."

You read that 1910 and the 1911 report, and then for the next six or seven reports, eight, nine reports, the wildlife, the big game, especially, was non-existent. This SWAP, I've looked at it, I haven't read it. It's obviously 700 and something pages. I looked at it for like five or six hours, and what I really noticed about the report, and was really happy about the report and proud of the game department biologists and all the core group that put it together, was the quality of the report. It's really an outstanding document.

I've read a lot of different wildlife documents, academic stuff, and everything, and this is top-flight. It's written with hard science in it, but in a way that idiots like me can understand it. I think it's important for the commission, when you vote on this, to recognize one of the first things that Chief Liley said was that this is not a regulatory document. This is an inventory, and it's something we've been doing in New Mexico before statehood. It's really well done, and it gets federal money to cover these Species of Greatest Conservation Need, to study them.

One of the things that sticks out that Stewart said was that they need more data to head off endangered species designations from the federal level. What this document does is it gives New Mexico the ability to head off non-voluntary measures implemented by the federal government. I think that ranchers and the public should before that, and I think the commission should just pass this document. It's really innocuous from a regulatory standpoint. Thank you.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Mr. Wynn. Anyone else online? Wheeler?

Wheeler Brunschmid: Yes, Mr. Chair. We have seven more hands raised.

Richard Stump: Online?

Wheeler Brunschmid: Online.

Richard Stump: Okay.

Wheeler Brunschmid: Nina, you can go ahead and unmute yourself.

Nina Eydelman: Good morning, commissioners. My name is Nina Eydelman, chief wildlife program and policy officer for Animal Protection New Mexico. Thank you very much for the opportunity to address you today in support of the State Wildlife Action Plan. As you've heard from the really good presentation, the plan demonstrates a deep understanding of the connection between land health, biodiversity, and community involvement. Its review and revision included input from diverse entities, including state, federal, and tribal agencies, universities, nonprofits, and others.

APNM is particularly glad to see the inclusion of pollinating insects in the plan for the first time, recognizing their critical role in the viability of our ecosystems. We applaud the inclusion of the 302 data needs species to be proactively researched to preserve them before they become endangered. We also provided a written comment about the plan, emphasizing the importance of keystone species such as beavers and requesting the prioritization of their reintroduction efforts to foster the resilience of our riparian areas and increase water availability for both people and wildlife.

This is increasingly important as our state continues to face threats from droughts, wildfires, pollution, and habitat fragmentation. We believe this plan represents a vital update toward protecting New Mexico's extraordinary biodiversity and ensuring healthy ecosystems across the state. The approval of this plan is necessary to secure federal funding for this necessary work. We therefore urge you to vote in favor of the proposed State Wildlife Action Plan. Thank you.

Richard Stump: Thank you.

Wheeler Brunschmid: Mr. Chair, we have six more hands raised online.

Richard Stump: Go ahead.

Wheeler Brunschmid: Okay. Mary Katherine Ray, you are allowed to unmute.

Mary Katherine Ray: Hello, commissioners. My name's Mary Katherine Ray, I'm the wildlife chair for the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club. We very much urge that you approve the State Wildlife Action Plan. On a personal note, and one example, we live in a remote part of Socorro County that we love for its beauty and diverse wildlife. Pinyon jays, they're not exactly melodic, but iconic calls just sound like home to me, but these birds are in trouble, and rightly, are included on the list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

The pinyon jay is a keystone species. They disperse pinyon seeds by caching them in the ground. Those they don't eat, regenerate the pinyon forest. The trees depend on this bird. Other vulnerable species that depend on the pinyon forest and thus on the pinyon jay also include the juniper titmouse and gray vireo. The number of animals, birds, and reptiles that use this habitat is extensive. Aldo Leopold wrote that the first sign of intelligent tinkering is to keep all the pieces. Sierra Club founder, John Muir, expressed much the same sentiment when he wrote, "When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world. The Wildlife Action Plan is a guide to help us see those connections, to conserve them, to ensure that future generations can enjoy the same wildlife we do, and that the Pinyon forest will never go silent of Pinyon Jay calls and disappears. Again, we urge your approval. Thank you.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Mary.

Wheeler Brunschmid: Thank you. Mr. Chair, we still have five more hands raised online.

Richard Stump: Go ahead.

Wheeler Brunschmid: Christopher Smith, you can unmute.

Christopher Smith: Hello again, Chair Stump, members of the Commission, and Director Sloane, and welcome to Commissioner Witt. I'm looking forward to working with you. I'll try to keep my comments brief here. Again, I'm Chris Smith. I'm the Wildlife Program Director for Wild Earth Guardians out of my hometown here in Santa Fe. I'm here on behalf of our several thousand members and supporters across New Mexico, who care deeply about the future of wildlife and biodiversity in our state.

I participated as a core member of the SWAP review team, but the fact of the matter, is that there was so much expertise within that group that you assembled, that I had very little to contribute. The level of knowledge was really impressive, and it's heartening that New Mexico has the kind of brain trust to help study, manage, and conserve biodiversity moving forward.

The investment in that process from scientists, land managers, and other experts was really, really impressive, and Ms. Seamster ran a very comprehensive process that ensured significant input and dialogue among members of that team. This document is a great resource that reflects that process, and that input. It should help track, study, and ensure that New Mexico's wildlife continues to survive and thrive, despite the threats that we are facing, so I congratulate the Department on the document, and I urge the Commission to approve it. Thank you.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Christopher Smith.

Wheeler Brunschmid: Thank you. Mr. Chair. We have four more hands raised online. Jonathan Hayes, you can unmute.

Jonathan Hayes: Thank you. Good morning, Mr. Chair, Commissioners, Director Sloane. My name is Jon Hayes, calling in from my home in Placitas. I'm the Executive Director for Audubon Southwest, the regional office of the National Audubon Society. I oversee our operations in New Mexico and Arizona, which includes two nature centers, a research ranch, 25 staff, and around 40,000 members who all care deeply about birds and wildlife in the Southwest. I'm also a trained wildlife biologist myself, and served as a member of the SWAP revision core team that was so ably led by Ginny Seamster.

I'd like to thank Ginny, Director Sloane, Chief Liley, and the rest of the staff who contributed to that process. I've been involved in a number of these SWAP revisions in different states over the years, and in my experience, I have not seen one ran in such an open and inclusive manner as this one. The care the team took to gather ample data and facts to provide to the core team, and the time they took to consider and address all the comments and suggestions they received was really quite impressive. This was truly a science-led process with expertise coming from across taxa and sectors.

The core team and staff should be proud of the final product, and the direction it will point the agency in in the coming years. To those that may oppose the adoption of this revision, allow me to reiterate a point made by Chief Liley. The State Wildlife Action Plan carries no regulatory authority. It's simply a list of species and places most in need of conservation in the state.

Having the plan in place makes New Mexico eligible for federal state wildlife grant funds. That's it. Including pollinators and other invertebrates does not change their legal status in any way. This is not the state's threatened species list, which is governed by a different process, and requires a game commission vote to change. The SWAP has no relation to federal threatened and endangered species listing decisions, which are carried out at the federal level by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

If anything, the SWAP will help keep species off that list. The potential for this to lead to any new regulations or restrictions on what a landowner can do on their property simply does not exist. Ranchers and other private landowners manage the majority of wildlife habitat in the state. They need their support. They need our support, and their work to steward these vital resources. This plan will do just that. For that reason, Audubon Southwest eagerly endorses the SWAP revision, and we encourage the commission to adopt it. Thank you.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Jonathan Hayes.

Wheeler Brunschmid: Mr. Chair, we have three more members with their hands raised online. Tom Paterson, you can go ahead and unmute.

Tom Paterson: Thank you, Mr. Chair, commissioners. Tom Paterson, President-elect, New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association. Cattle Growers appreciates the work that has gone into this project, and the courtesy with which Dr. Seamster has always treated us. We are concerned, however, about the source of data used to double the number of species of greatest conservation need, and the impact the SWAP will, in fact, have on land management agency rules and regulations.

During the last legislative session, we heard repeatedly, as I recall, that the department had only one ornithologist. Is that person responsible for the birds on the SWAP, or have you taken your guidance from advocacy organizations whose interest, presumably, is to have as many species on the list as possible? If the latter, we really have no assurance that this document is based on credible science.

The second concern is with the implications of this report on land management agencies, such as the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. We raised this issue in our public comments, as well as in our reply to the department's response to our comments. Our experience is that it does.

Asserting that it does not impact Forest Service or BLM, for example, regulatory actions, seems surprisingly naive.

Given the representations we've also had from the department this year, that all cattle should be removed from the forest, we are very apprehensive of the agenda the department has concerning livestock use on public lands, and how the SWAP may be used to further that agenda. Thank you.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Tom Paterson.

Wheeler Brunschmid: Mr. Chair, we have two more members online with their hands raised. Simon, you're allowed to unmute.

Simon Doneski: Hello, commissioners. Welcome, Commissioner Witt. My name is Simon Doneski at the Museum of Southwestern Biology. I just want to thank the department, and thank Ginny for all the hard work and science that went into this document, and especially, for the addition of pollinating insects, and the data needs list. I think that the data needs list is an essential step in keeping wildlife in the state off the Endangered Species Act, and preemptively conserving them before they're at dire risk of extinction. I thank the department for recognizing the importance of pollinating insects in the state.

As much as a third of all crops are pollinated by insects, and three-fourths of all wild flowering plants, which makes them keystone species in our state, and we're already seeing declines, especially in butterfly populations. I thank the department for their step ahead on this SWAP, and urge the commission to approve it.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Simon Doneski.

Wheeler Brunschmid: Last one, Mr. Chair, members of the commission. Quin, you're allowed to unmute.

Quin Baine: Hello. Thank you again to the commission. As I introduced myself earlier, I'm a Species Survival Specialist of Invertebrates, and I work for the New Mexico BioPark Society. I want to speak in

support of the approval of the SWAP in its current form today, and I'm going to especially address any concerns about adding pollinating--

Richard Stump: Is that it, Wheeler?

Wheeler Brunschmid: That is all at this time, Mr. Chair.

Richard Stump: Let's go to the audience here. Let's start with Dan Roper. [silence] Please.

[pause 01:09:10]

Wheeler Brunschmid: Over here.

Dan Roper: I'll save that one for another day. Good morning, commissioners. For the record, Dan Roper with Trout Unlimited. Glad to be with you here this morning. I'll be with you most of the day. I hope to make a comment later in the day during the general public comment portion of the agenda. There is not much that remains to be said in my opinion in support of the SWAP. I think Chief Liley did a great job, as well as other commenters.

I will mention just a couple of things important to us, and that's the inclusion of aquatic species, the emphasis on repairing habitat, and also the acknowledgement of water management as a species conservation tool. I think over the life of the SWAP, it's going to be increasingly important for the department to engage more in decisions about how water, and where water is used in this state. I will also just mention, it's been mentioned before, just the importance of proactive conservation in addition to Rio Grande chub and sucker mentioned by Chief Wiley, Rio Grande cutthroat trout, where another species that the US Fish and Wildlife Service found in the fall, was not warranted for a listing.

That is entirely due to the work of New Mexico Game and Fish, and other partners like Colorado Parks and Wildlife, the US Forest Service, in doing the kind of proactive conservation work envisioned in the SWAP for more species. You have more resources to do that work these days through the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund, through the recent \$10 million appropriation to support non-game species in North American beaver.

This is really a new era, I think, for wildlife conservation in New Mexico, also with the passage of Senate Bill 5, and I think the SWAP is well timed to move that work forward. The last thing I'll mention, there has been, I think you heard one comment and concern about the number of species listed in the SWAP. We actually think that's okay. I think it just means we have a lot of work we need to do in the years ahead, but also if you keep in mind that the work we do to conserve species, to conserve habitat, to invest in good data, to restore habitat, those projects benefit species up and down the list. Projects that the department undertakes, they're not limited to a single species. Often, it benefits biodiversity across the board. With that said, we ask for your support. Thank you.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Dan Roper. Next Bryan Bird.

Bryan Bird: Mr. Chairman, Director, members of the commission. My name is Bryan Bird. I am the Southwest Director for Defenders of Wildlife, based out of Santa Fe, New Mexico where I live, and I'm here obviously to support the SWAP revision. I just want to say a couple things. A lot has been said already, so we want to keep this brief. I participated in the 2017 revision. I also was on the core working group of this revision, and I want to just really commend Assistant Chief Seamster, Chief Liley, Director Sloane. This process was far more transparent, and open than the last time this was done.

It has also been more transparent and open, and inclusive than any other really state-level process I've been involved in. We started the meetings for the working group two years ago, as was stated by Chief Liley. There were 50 individuals in five different meetings over the two years, and it was just, I think again, the amount of public input you have been able to receive on this is pretty impressive.

I feel very good about that, and I think you should too. I also just want to once again emphasize this is non-regulatory. I don't know how it could have any particular impact on other federal agencies, other than trying to prevent the listing of wildlife and plants on the endangered species list. Thank you again, and I encourage you to go ahead, and vote in favor today. Thank you.

Richard Stump: Thank you Bryan Bird. Next is Kaitlyn Haase. [silence]

Kaitlin Haase: Good morning, commissioners. My name is Kaitlin Haase, and I'm here speaking on behalf of The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation. Xerces is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to the conservation of wildlife as invertebrates, and their habitat. I am a pollinator conservation specialist for the southwest region with Xerces, and I work to support landowners and

managers in creating, and improving pollinator habitat in a variety of different landscapes, from rural to urban, to private lands and public lands, agricultural and natural spaces.

I am excited to report that I was also part of the core team working group along with another Xerces colleague, and want to echo everyone's delight at how well Ginny Seamster was leading that working group. It was truly one of the best professional working groups I've been part of, and want to thank the department and Director Sloane for their work to make this plan very transparent, a collaborative, and thorough process.

I want to also commend them for including pollinating and sex in this plan. This is a really underrepresented group of wildlife in most conservation organizations, and working agencies. I want to highlight the importance of these animals in our ecological systems. Just in my outreach and education efforts throughout the state where I've met with thousands of new Mexicans over the past five years, people really do see insects as wildlife, and find them very valuable, and want to see them be protected by state agencies.

I also want to say that this plan itself is a really invaluable resource for other conservation practitioners like myself, and for the department. With that, I urge you to pass this 2025 SWAP today, and thank you for listening.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Kaitlin Haase. Next up, Jesse Deubel.

[pause 01:06:09]

Jesse Deubel: Thank you Mr. Chair. Members of the commission. Jesse Deubel, Executive Director of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation. Well, I didn't serve on the core working group of the State Wildlife Action Plan. I did follow the work closely, and participate throughout the process, providing input to Ms. Seamster. As others have already said, her professionalism and attentiveness was very, very impressive. Her responses were on time, her explanations were very thorough, and I felt like the needs and requests of our membership were taken very, very seriously, and that feedback was implemented into this final plan. We are very, very supportive of the draft that's in front of you today, and we're looking forward to seeing that adopted by this commission. I'll also say that the New Mexico Wildlife Federation for the last five years hosts an event the second Wednesday of every month. That's called Wildlife Wednesday. We do it in Albuquerque. It's a free event. It's from 5:30 to 7:30 at the Marble Brewing, Northeast Taproom on Montgomery and Eubank.

Two days ago, that was our June event, Ms. Seamster was our guest speaker. What she did was she presented the SWAP plan to a group of interested members of the public, to the audience, and the feedback that I received from that entire group was unbelievable, overwhelmingly positive. People really, really appreciate the work that went into this. People appreciate this plan, and we look forward to seeing it adopted. Thank you very much.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Jesse Deubel. Next up, Garrett Veneklasen.

[pause 01:17:57]

Garrett Veneklasen: Good morning, Chairman, members of commission, and welcome, Commissioner Witt to the team. I'm Garrett Veneklasen with New Mexico Wild. New Mexico host approximately 6,000 documented species of native fish, and wildlife occupy our vast deserts, grasslands, forests, alpine, tundra, and riparian, and aquatic environments. This rich wildlife heritage gives rise to a heightened responsibility for thoughtful stewardship.

The updated SWAP provides a critical framework to help us this soon-to-be Department of Wildlife meet that responsibility. SWAP incorporates the best available science and diverse subject matter expertise, and it provides an accessible, high-level overview of the status of species, and their habitats across New Mexico. SWAP sets forth the conservation blueprint that will facilitate the department's work to prevent the decline of imperiled species, and support viable populations of New Mexico's 505 species of greatest conservation need.

The SWAP also provides tools for agency stakeholders and partners. For example, the SWAP identifies conservation opportunity access to assist both the department and others, including non-governmental organizations to focus on wildlife and habitat restoration efforts in locations that will address New Mexico's most critical wildlife needs.

Additionally, the SWAP qualifies New Mexico for critical federal funding, including state wildlife grants. Unfortunately, the continued availability of federal funding for species of conservation is uncertain, making the state's role in wildlife conservation even more important. Fortunately, New Mexico is rising to meet this challenge. In the 2025 legislative session, the New Mexico legislature passed Senate Bill 5, which enacts a holistic wildlife stewardship model, and appropriated \$9 million for implementation.

These state commitments to wildlife and SGN stewardship, build upon reoccurring funding from the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund. These measures, along with the updated programmatic SWAP, will go a long way towards ensuring New Mexico's non-game wildlife thrive well into the future. New Mexicans have consistently demonstrated their overwhelming support for protecting our state's wildlife, including non-game species, and pollinators as an irreplaceable and vital resource.

We applaud the department for considering the conservation value of non-crustacean arthropods, especially, the important ecological rule of pollinating insects. New Mexico Wild is proud to have participated as a member of the department's core team to update the revised SWAP. We commend the department staff for conducting a timely, professional, and incredibly inclusive SWAP.

We especially thank Ginny Seamster and her entire team for the outstanding work that they had done. Approval of the SWAP will prevent New Mexico's diversity of wildlife species from declining, and will keep our rare imperiled and keystone species healthy for current and future generations of New Mexico. Thank you very much.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Garrett. Thank you, everybody for all your input. Commissioners, would anybody have any input or questions? Commissioner Pack.

Sabrina Pack: Thank you, Chairman. I want to congratulate the work that's been done here. I think that it's been amazing. Last summer, I had the opportunity. I attended one the public meetings, and I saw the great work that was in process then. I do have a couple of questions, so I'll get to those in a second. At that meeting, I can remember Advocates for Snake Preservation, and National Park Service talk about New Mexico Wild, Wildlife for All, US Forest Service, Wild Earth Guardians, New Mexico Wildlife Federation, and Defenders of Wildlife.

I've written comments down happening in that meeting, and I appreciated all that was going on at that meeting, and knew that it was going to lead to probably a very good plan. Just thank everyone who's participated. I also want to thank, I think the commissioners would probably agree with me. We received a lot of emails recently, and it's really important that we get those emails, so we know what the opinions are. Just some things that stood out, Animal Protection in New Mexico and Animal Protection Voters had emailed us, New Mexico Cattle Growers, a group of concerned entomologists, and scientists from UNM, and we had the Sierra Club, Defenders of Wildlife, New Mexico Bio Society, even I think yesterday. There was many others. I commend that, because it takes that to put this kind of work together.

I do have-- My question comes, and I talked to Dr. Seamster earlier. We had public comment close on Monday, and I know that you mentioned Chief Liley that, I believe you said that you've been through all those comments now since the ones that closed. I just want to make-- One of my concerns is making sure that everybody who had public comment, even the last here, had been considered, and if they were considered, and if it changed the plan anyway, what were those changes?

Stewart Liley: Mr Chair, Commissioner Pack. Yes, we took into consideration every public comment, and we took into consideration, I would consider the core team, and the public meetings public comment too, and we adjusted the plan, revised it up to the point of when it was officially 30-day comment period. Then, during the 30-day comment period, we received, like I said, 187 comments.

Most of those comments were just, "We support the plan." There are some substantive comments, any of those comments where we felt like we need to make clarifying statements. That's really where we went into, was clarifying statements. For example, like I gave on, it's non-regulatory document, shouldn't be used for statute, shouldn't be used for policymaking.

We made that minor change into the document, emailed back that commenter, and showed him what the change was as well, and so anyone that had specific ask that we felt was a good addition to the document that made it stronger and clarified it, we made that change, and immediately went back to the person that made the comment, and showed them what the change in language was to make sure it addressed that comment.

Some of them were very appreciative. For example, the information on New Mexico Bird Strike data specific came from a public comment, that we took that information. The concern was using the national data, didn't get at the picture of what's going on in New Mexico, and the impacts to New Mexico birds, so we took the data and were able to find the data for New Mexico specific, put it into the document to further enhance it.

It wasn't-- Didn't strip any of the national data, and then went back out to that commenter. That commentator then appreciated thanked, appreciated the input. Again, nothing in the comments changed the substance of the State Wildlife Action Plan, the direction of the State Action Plan. It was almost all clarifying. We made about 25 of those, and we went back out to every entity that had specific questions, concerns, or comments, and showed them exactly what that change was.

Sabrina Pack: Good to know. You said there's 25 revisions to the plan that we've seen then.

Stewart Liley: Commissioners, excuse me. Chairman Stump, Commissioner Pack. Correct, and very minor. Some of them are even adding a new citation. A new citation that someone commented like, "Hey, you missed this research paper. You should put that citation." Again, nothing would have changed a threat. Nothing would have changed a conservation action.

Nothing would've been an additional conservation action that was considered before. It would've been a clarifying statement that would have said, "Oh, conservation actions on private land are voluntary." That would have been one of the new sentences that we would have added in the section of conservation actions on private.

Sabrina Pack: I appreciate the clarifying language. It seemed like with the closing on Monday, that would give you very little time to make sure we addressed everybody, and I'm very much supportive having public comment be heard, and it be valued, because I value that, and so if that was all able to be accomplished since Monday, that's another testament to a great team.

Stewart Liley: Yes. Chairman Stump, Commissioner Pack, as everyone stated, Ms Seamster did an amazing job. Ms Seamster was on top of this when comment came in, and she was either in my office discussing it, or making changes within minutes of it. The last two years of her life have been this, and that's the truth. She's done an amazing job on this plan, has been more responsive than everything I've ever seen, and so I could assure you that every single comment was looked at and considered, and with the most consideration on how it should fit, and can address those concerns.

Sabrina Pack: I do appreciate this morning, she and you both clarified that, I guess in the preface now, you have included additional language to support the definition of non-regulatory document. I appreciate that, because the few individuals that reached out were concerned just that it would be used in other agencies as an official capacity, and they were concerned of that.

I'm glad that that's-- I know that has been the agenda along, it is a non-regulatory document, but I think that additional language you have now inserted will assist in that, and I appreciate. I want to make a comment to even Brian's presentation when he-- Talking about transparency in the process. I've heard a lot of people talk about that, and I appreciate that.

I feel much better about that, and I certainly have supported this from the beginning, and all the way through to now. Thank you, and I think we should stand up, and give her a round of applause. [laughs] [silence] Chairman Stump, that's all I have got.

Richard Stump: Thank you for that. Commissioner Pack, any other commissioners to have anything to say? Commissioner Clemente.

Fernando Clemente: All right. I hate being the last one, because I keep all these things, thoughts in my head, and now I'm confused, but hopefully I make sense. [chuckles] Thank you for your comments, Commissioner Pack, and your questions. Great report. Amazing report. It is unbelievable. I want to congratulate everybody that formed part of this report.

Great things to see on that report, like the riparian areas being taken into consideration. Climate change, amazing. Data needed species that is really, really good. Keystone species and pollinators, and with other many other species. That is something very important. I see that this report is being more of an acting report versus reacting. This is trying to prevent, as it was mentioned before, for those species to be listed. It is a lot easier for us to maintain, and to prevent any species going into danger, than once it gets in danger to be able to recover it. That is the difficult task. I want to thank everybody for that. On the

questions that I have, I just have the simple questions. You answered some of the ones that I already had, but why the reduction of habitat? That is a little bit of a concern to me.

If we're increasing the species. I saw some mammals, the list that increase, and I see birds that they increase, where a lot of it, of the threats to species, to wildlife species, is because of habitat fragmentation. When I see a reduction in habitats, can you explain a little bit of that?

Stewart Liley: Yes. Mr. Chair, Commissioner Clemente, we, the previous SWAP, had 47 described habitats. This one has 46. The reason being, it came from a revision from the-- I'm trying to get the name of it. When the US vegetation surveys are done on an annual basis, they combine two habitat types into one. It might have been like mountain xeric habitat and scree fields, and they combine that into now just mountain habitats.

It actually doesn't reduce any of the habitats per se across the state. It's just the description of those, and combining the two descriptions. It doesn't have any-- We're not excluding any one habitat out of the state. Now, it's just a reclassification as the organization does that.

Fernando Clemente: Thank you, and the other question that I have is, since obviously, this is revised every 10 years, in the last 20 years, let's put it from the list of 20 years ago, how many species have been, let's say, been come off of the species? I mean, if there are some. Are they listed on this document?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Clemente, the majority of the species that were listed previously are here. Some of the original State Wildlife Action Plans included things like mule deer on it, and so there's been different directions through time in the last 20 years of what species really should be our species of greatest conservation needs. The conservation status of some of those species haven't necessarily changed. It's the decisions around what species should be on there.

I would say there are definitely some species where the conservation status has definitely gotten better in time. Gila trout, for example. They went from 20 years ago, a few populations to a hatchery we have today that's stocking Gila trout, and a threatened-status federal. There's definitely seen some improvements in species status on there, but the exact number that have gone on and off is not a function of conservation actions. It's sometimes a function of the selection criteria at certain periods of time.

Fernando Clemente: The reason why I'm asking this is, because maybe if we're spending all the time money into a species for a long period of time, we should be looking at that species, why it's not recovering, and why it's not in the status that we should have it? What else should we intensify the management to be able to get to the goal, right?

Stewart Liley: For sure. Commissioner Clemente, we have taken 14 species off the State Wildlife Action Plan from the last one to this one, and then including one that we're now hunting. It is Gould's Turkey, for example. Gould's Turkey was a species of greatest conservation need under the previous, or the current State Wildlife Action Plan, because it was a state-threatened species.

With conservation actions undertaken in the last 10 years have allowed us to delist it, and start a hunting program again. You're absolutely right, and I think the other big important aspect is funding. We historically have received about a million dollars of federal funds a year for all of this work. We use hunting and fishing license fees as well on a lot of this work, but the new funding that's coming into play, almost is an order of magnitude more than what we previously had, and so I think you'll see more species come off in the next 10 years.

I think you'll see a lot more information gained on species where their status is, what their status isn't, and that's why you see 300 species of data needs. We need to know what's going on with those species. It doesn't mean that they're plummeting, or they might be increasing. I think through the next 10 years of leading up to the next revision, you're going to see a much tighter list, because of the amount of funding that's being dedicated in the state of New Mexico towards these species of greatest conservation need. America, the beautiful-- Excuse me, recovering America's Wildlife Act in Congress, that's been trickling along for a few years. If it gets passed, it would have dedicated almost \$30 million of federal funding on an annual basis to the state of New Mexico to work on these plans, and so we hope that one day it passes, and gets through there. I don't think it's going to go through this Congress right now, but there's a recognition out there that there's a lot of work to be done for species conservation across all the United States.

Fernando Clemente: Thank you. That's all I have.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Clemente, and Chief Liley.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Commission Chair.

Richard Stump: Sure.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Thank you, commissioners. I do have a couple of questions. Chief Liley, you made it very clear that the purpose of the State Wildlife Action Plan is assisting us in qualifying for program funds. Is that correct?

Stewart Liley: Chairman Stump, Vice Chair Salazar-Hickey, that is correct. If we do not have it, we cannot receive the Federal State Wildlife grant money.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: What you did not include in your presentation is, approximately, and I know I could get this, I should have asked earlier, approximately how much funding are we looking at here?

Stewart Liley: Chairman Stump, Vice Chair Salazar-Hickey, it's approximately a million dollars of federal funds a year. I think the other important part, as I mentioned, the new House Bill 2 this year includes \$10 million of funding specifically for species of greatest conservation needs. Without a State Wildlife Action Plan that doesn't list the species, we can't spend the \$10 million on that.

That money starts becoming available on July 1st. The other thing is the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund money, which is approximately another \$2 million annually, is dedicated towards species of greatest conservation needs. The list ties back into really a funding mechanism for us to do work on the ground, both federal and state.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Thank you, Chief. I have another question, actually, two more questions. Thank you, and I'll make it brief, eight required elements that you have in putting together the State Wildlife Action Plan. Is that correct?

Stewart Liley: Chairman Stump, Vice Chair Salazar-Hickey, that is correct. There is a required elements.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: You're pretty much confined like others in addressing just those specific eight required areas?

Stewart Liley: Vice Chair Salazar-Hickey, that is correct. We must address those. Every state in the nation addresses those eight elements as well, and so the threats, the species, et cetera. Every state's wildlife action plan must meet those key components.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: The reason I asked that question is that some of the comments that we had received, I thought were delving into other areas outside of those eight, like Commissioner Pack, I was wanting to make sure that all comments were heard and addressed, but I think that, yes, it was very good. Then, the third comment, or maybe it's not a question, is the due process, the exhaustive effort that you made in putting this together.

It was very helpful to see this document on the website, 700 pages, oh my gosh. Almost close to 800 pages, and I do hope that the department Director Sloane, that there will be some, additional recognition rather than just an applause here in the meeting for the outstanding work of the department, and that leader that we have in, Ms. Seamster Yes, so that's it. I don't have-- Yes. [chuckles] No more comments.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Hickey. Excuse me. I think Commissioner Witt has some comments.

Christopher Witt: Yes. First, I have a small technical question for Chief Liley. You mentioned the comment about airstrikes. Are you talking about airplane collisions, or more broadly?

Stewart Liley: Chairman Stump, Commissioner Witt, yes airplane strikes. Sorry, like at airports and those kinds of things. The concern came from backcountry pilots on, it didn't represent the number of these bigger airports that have way more airstrikes than say, New Mexico, and so we got specific data for New Mexico.

Christopher Witt: Got it. Well, that's probably a minor issue, but it's good to be thorough in these things. I understand. I just want to comment on my overall impression of the report. I think this third SWAP is a great leap forward. I support it, and I don't want to repeat the many supportive comments, but I agree with most of them, and in response to some of the concerns that were expressed, it's my scientific opinion that the foundation of this report is robust.

It's consistent with the current science, it meets the eight federal requirements solidly. The citations that are employed in the report are thorough, and they're also appropriate. The document itself, and especially

the many maps and tables that it contains, is an outstanding reference on its own, so a really useful piece of work. The doubling of species in this list is absolutely warranted, and it's true that it will certainly be in flux in the future as environments, and wild populations of the state are also in flux.

I have scrutinized the bird list in particular, and I found it to be a great working list. The list and the document itself together present a roadmap toward preventing declines that could lead to federal endangered status otherwise. I want to express thanks, and admiration for this work to Assistant Chief Seamster, Chief Liley, Director Sloane, and also the dozens of experts that poured their effort into this. I want to give a special shout-out to the scientists who guided the arthropod editions, which are particularly challenging. Quin Baine, Simon Doneski, Dave Lightfoot, and others. The excellent list that we've assembled is made possible by the deep natural history knowledge of those experts. I'm grateful for what they brought to the table. That's all I'd like to say. Thank you.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Witt. Commissioner Fulfer.

Gregg Fulfer: This is a great report. I just had a few questions on one of the comments from the cattle growers. Were they a member of the core group, anyway?

Christopher Witt: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Fulfer, yes, they were a member of the core group.

Gregg Fulfer: Okay, great. I was just listening to some of their comments there earlier. I wanted to make sure that they had the chance to prove input. Thank you.

Richard Stump: Commissioner Fulfer, thank you. Any other commissioners have anything to say? I'd like to just thank everyone for all the hard work they did. That was a long two years for everyone. Thank you for your presentation. I think that it's time that we just move forward. How about [unintelligible 01:42:47]. Excuse me. Because I want to make a motion.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Mr. Chair, I hereby move to approve the department's 2025 State Wildlife Action Plan and its submission to the US Forest and Wildlife Services.

Richard Stump: Do I have a second?

Christopher Witt: I'll second the motion.

Richard Stump: Director Sloane, please call the roll.

Michael Sloane: Vice-Chair Hickey.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Yes.

Michael Sloane: Commissioner Clemente?

Fernando Clemente: Yes.

Michael Sloane: Commissioner Witt?

Christopher Witt: Yes.

Michael Sloane: Commissioner Fulfer?

Gregg Fulfer: Yes.

Michael Sloane: Commissioner Pack?

Sabrina Pack: Yes.

Michael Sloane: Commissioner Lopez.

[silence]

Tirzio Lopez: I'm looking at Garrett. [laughs] We're locked eyes. Yes.

Michael Sloane: Chair Stump?

Richard Stump: Yes. Motion passes. I think we need a break. I need a break. Let's take 15 minutes, please. We're going to move to the hearing and adoption of the Migratory Game Bird Rule 19.31.6 NMAC. This hearing will come to order. My name is Richard Stump, Chair of the commission. I will be serving as a hearing officer, and be advised by the commission's counsel.

The purpose of this hearing is for the commission to receive public comment on repealing, and replacing the Migratory Game Bird Rule, title 19, chapter 31, part 6, New Mexico Administrative Code, which will become effective on September 1st, 2025. These hearings are being conducted in accordance, and with the provisions of the Game and Fish Act. The State Rules Act.

These hearings are being audiotaped and video recorded. Anyone interested in a copy of the audiotape, or video recording should contact Darren Vaughan with the Game and Fish Department. Public notice of this hearing is advertised in New Mexico Register, New Mexico Sunshine Portal, and on the department's website. Copies of the proposed amendments have been available on the department's website.

Those wishing the comment here today must have registered to submit public comments. The rule hearing will be conducted in the following manner. Staff will present pre-filed exhibits. Exhibits admitted into evidence are available for review by the public on the department's website. After all exhibits are answered, we will proceed to the presentation of the proposed rule, after which testimony will be taken from the audience.

Participants are asked to wait until they're called upon to speak. In order to ensure that the hearing is accurately recorded, only one person at a time shall be allowed to speak. Any person recognized to speak is asked to identify yourself by name, who you're affiliated with for the record each time you are recognized. Speak loud and clear to accurately record your comments.

After a person has offered comment, they will stand for questions from the hearing officer. The audience may also ask questions of anyone offering comments after being recognized by me. These hearings are not subject to judicial rules of evidence. However, in the interest of efficiency, I reserve the right to limit any testimony deemed irrelevant, redundant, or unduly repetitious. The commission may discuss the proposed new rule after the public comment portion of the hearing.

Final commission action, including adoption of the rule, may occur after the conclusion of the presentation and public comment period of each hearing. In the preliminary matters of hearing item number 8 by Migratory Game Bird Rule 19.31.6 NMAC hearing. This hearing is now open. Are there any exhibits for the rule hearing on the Migratory Bird Rule 19.31.6 NMAC for the record?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, I wish to enter six exhibits into the record. Exhibit number 1, the notice of the rule making. Exhibit number 2, the initial proposed rule that was posted on the website. Exhibit 3, the presentation that I'll be giving today. Exhibit 4, the summary of the proposed changes. Exhibit 5, the technical information we relied upon to develop the rule. Exhibit 6, the three public comments we received during the rule-making process.

Richard Stump: Six exhibits are admitted into the record. Chief Liley, can you go ahead with your presentation?

Stewart Liley: Mr. Chair, members, the commission, most of you have seen this at two different commission meetings this year. We opened this meeting rule-making process in January. Had a follow-up in April, and then again, the hearing in front of you today. Like everything with Migratory Game Bird Rules, we adjust our seasons and dates according to the Fish and Wildlife Services federal frameworks, working within the flyway confines.

We also adjust our season dates based upon the number of exposure days we're allowed for waterfowl hunting, and public comment on when they would like to see hunting seasons open, and/or closed as long as it's within the federal frameworks. That typically means in the Central Flyway opening the North Zone earlier, and closing a little bit earlier because of potential freeze-out conditions, and extending the south zone, southern portion of the Central Flyway, all the way to the last allowable day that's allowed by the federal frameworks.

We also adjust any bag and possession limits according to the frameworks. We'll get into one of the bigger changes this year on that. Then, the proposed federal frameworks were published by the Fish and Wildlife Service on the Federal Register. Those are already out there. As I already stated, changing the dates at which we open or close seasons based off public comment, and fitting within the federal framework.

The bigger one, I think that's up there, is a pintail bag limit increase from one to three, as we spoke about at the last commission meeting. That was due to a new a framework that the federal government set forth in consultation with the flyways on how we manage continental pintails. It really has not changed. Pintail numbers have not been changing much over time, but it really is just a new framework that recognizes that the need to go from a one to two to three, that we've been seeing through time, that fluctuation really isn't the best biological framework they had.

We went into a process over almost six years before that framework changed. We'll probably be at that three-bird bag limit at a much more higher frequency than we were previously. That, again, like I said, some years we'd be two, then one, then back to three. It really didn't make biological sense as much as some of the other frameworks we have for others species. Then we also are proposing increasing the sandhill crane permits for the Greater of the Rocky Mountain Population to the sandhill cranes by 12.

Those are draw hunts in the Middle Rio Grande Valley in the southwest portion of the state, extending down to the Mexican border. Those will be distributed amongst the current hunts that we already have. Our allocation did increase from 1,063 last year to 1,135. We did not extend those permits all the way out to push the limits.

There's two things. We want to be under our allocation. If we reach our allocation during the season, we actually have to shut down the crane hunting harvest. That's why we run the check stations. We always are under our allocation. We want to ensure we're under that allocation. The other aspect of it is probably a hunter density issue too. There's a concern, especially in the Middle Rio Grande, if we run more and more hunters on there, the success might decrease actually because of just hunting pressure on there, birds figuring out refugia, and just not having as much opportunity.

Again, we increased that by 12. Our estimate of Greater last year was approximately 700 to 800 birds that we harvested. With this increase, we'll probably be in that same-- That's really weather dependent when the birds get here, when the first hunt start occurring, if the Greater have come down yet or not. Those Greater then typically get here a little bit later than the Lessers.

We did receive three public comments. We held a hybrid public Zoom meeting with one member of the public attended in Albuquerque. The comments really were focused on crane hunting, and some comments that wish that we didn't crane hunt at all, and then other crane hunters wishing that we would have increased the limit a little bit more. Again, we'll see where we get with this increase in the 12 this year to see if we'll adjust that next year. Most likely, given the population status of sandhill cranes, it's been an upward trend in the Greater through time. We don't see that changing necessarily. If it does, we'll most likely get a higher allocation again next year. Because we check in with all those hunters, we have a pretty good idea, check stations, was density too high, those kinds of questions, so we could adjust this again on an annual basis.

Then there was some concern around pintail harvest limit. I think that's a hunter concern that we went from one to three. They just saw that jump. Again, it wasn't a change in the birds. It's just a change in the federal framework. The federal government and us feel that that harvest will not have a population-level impact. It's just change in that framework that will see more consistency through time, we believe, not these weird fluctuations from one up to three, back down to one, without much change in the biology of the bird.

Real quick, these are the dates that we're proposing opener and closing. A lot of those openers are on a Saturday, and that's why you see just a one-day shift, a calendar day shift. Then again, that January 31st is the last day that we could harvest according to the federal framework. Our southern zone, we push that as late as possible on that.

Here's the Pacific Flyway. Pacific Flyway, we're allowed a little longer exposure days than we are on the Central Flyway.

With that, I'll take any questions.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Chief Liley. Do we have anyone on the internet for comments or questions?

Wheeler Brunschmid: Mr. Chair, we do not have any questions at this time.

Richard Stump: Okay, thank you. We don't have anybody from the public either. How about commissioners? Any questions or comments? Commissioner Witt?

Christopher Witt: Thanks for the presentation, Chief Liley. I just wanted to say that there are a lot of northern pintails in the Middle Rio Grande Valley this last year, December and January, and a duck blind at La Jolla. There are hundreds and hundreds of pintails going back and forth over that area daily. I think that increase to three is going to be really helpful for hunters in that area as well as throughout the state. I think the decision to increase the number of crane permits by 12 to be cautious and not go all the way to what you could go to with that federal guidance is really smart too, and to be a little bit conservative with those numbers for the reasons that you mentioned.

I just want to say, we have some research, we've been doing research at UNM on sandhill cranes at the check station in cooperation with hunters and biologists from Game and Fish for a number of years, and we've got a really exciting new genetic data set that's also going to help to improve the identifications of cranes to the Rocky Mountain-- their assignment to the Rocky Mountain Population versus the Lesser sandhill cranes that come from further north. I think that's going to show that there are a few more birds

that are part of the Rocky Mountain Population than we're currently counting, but I don't think it's going to fundamentally change these numbers or put us out of line with the quotas. I'll be excited to, hopefully, work with you on that then during the next year. That's all I have. Thanks.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner [inaudible 01:56:08]. Any other commissioners? Okay. Thank you again, Chief Liley. The final tally of six are admitted into the record. Those that registered and participate in this hearing will be included on the attendance sheet. At this time, the attendance sheet shall be marked and admitted as Exhibit 7. The comments submitted and testimony heard during this rule hearing will be reviewed by the commission and discussed during the open session of today's meeting. The commission will vote on the proposed amendments at that time. I would like to thank everyone. Thank you, Chief, for your participation. Let the record show that this rulemaking hearing is adjourned at 11:32.

No more discussion, obviously. Can I have a motion, please?

Fernando Clemente: I so move to make a motion to adopt the Migratory Game Rule 19.31.6 NMAC.

Richard Stump: Is there a second?

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Second.

Richard Stump: All in favor? Aye.

Fernando Clemente: Aye.

Richard Stump: Any opposed? Motion passes. Thank you, Chief Liley. Next item is the Initial Discussion of the Shed Hunting Rule, presented by Colonel Tim Cimbal.

[pause 01:57:34]

Tim Cimbal: Morning Chair, Commissioners. This is Agenda No. 9, so the initial discussion for proposed rule for shed hunting. During the 2025 legislative session, the one that we just closed through, new legislation was passed. In that was a new class of license that was defined and added. It added the shed hunter license. What that does is it entitles the licensee to shed hunting; provided that a shed hunter license shall not be required for shed hunting by a resident. What that also did was set that non-resident hunter license fee at \$200.

What we would do, and it's up for discussion, is in manner and method under the possession of game animal parts found in the field. I think this would be a good spot to change some language to allow for this new shed hunter license. It currently reads that it's unlawful to possess heads, horns, antlers, and other parts of protected species found in the field without invoice or permit. Then it goes on to [inaudible 01:59:21] obviously shed antlers. By striking that exception and putting in a language along the lines of, possession of more than two obviously shed antlers found in the field requires a valid non-resident shed hunter license from the department for any non-resident. Again, residents do not require a shed hunter license.

I think using this language here, we would require that \$200 shed hunter license. This would fall under 17-2-7(A)(2) for the actual statute to tie this regulation to. If we did this route, what we'd be looking at is a penalty assessment ability. It would be similar to a lot of different citations that we have, where we can offer a penalty assessment. That means, if you're caught in the act, the officer witnesses it, you're given the option to choose a penalty assessment where you admit guilt on the scene, agree to pay via mail, and you don't have to go to court. It doesn't tie up courts, doesn't tie up the officer's time, doesn't tie up the defendant's time. That would contain the \$125 fine. Then the penalty assessments also require the purchase of the required license for the activity that they were doing, so that'd be the \$200. You'd be looking around \$325 for that penalty assessment. They could also choose court.

With that, open it up for questions and discussion.

Richard Stump: Commissioners? I have a question. Are we looking at any kind of season?

Tim Cimbal: Chair and Commissioners. At this point, the idea of a season was not going to happen. There would be a license season similar to our current fishing license, which runs April 1st through March 31st, but as far as seasons, that would be it.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Colonel Cimbal.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Mr. Chair, Commissioners. Actually, Colonel, can you please give me an example, just for, yes, conversation's sake here, of how this would work? Just describe it.

Tim Cimbal: Okay. The reason we chose two, for the number that you-- Any more than two. One example is you're here and a family is here to go Jeeping or go hiking, shopping, whatever it is, but they go on a hike with a family and the kiddos. One of them, say, they're from Colorado, stumbles across a shed. Cool, it happens, neat. They're probably going to pick it up, and they're probably not "your classic shed hunter" that's going to be coming in to try and pick up dozens, hundreds of sheds to try and sell and make money. They're probably just going to hang it on their wall or forget it in the back of their pickup bed. That's one scenario where it would not be unlawful for that person because they have less than two. Another example would be a person from Colorado comes down, they set up camp, maybe they have horses, OHVs, whatever it is, and they're spending a couple days to a week actively looking for sheds. The officer comes up, sees their camp, they've got a pile of obviously shed antlers, and it's greater than two. At that point, we would ask to see the shed hunter license. If that person was a non-resident and they were unable to produce that, they could be issued a citation. I guess the third situation would be a person here from Red River hiking in Red River. They have a backpack full of sheds. You check them. They have a resident driver's license. No worries.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: That was excellent. I appreciate those examples. Thank you.

Tim Cimbal: Thank you, Commissioners, Chair.

Richard Stump: Commissioner Pack. Excuse me.

Sabrina Pack: [chuckles] Don't expire on us, Chairman. Just a clarification, because you asked, Chairman, about a season. I know there's been a lot of discussion, because I've had a lot of individuals from my district ask for this to come to being. The clarification, though-- This goes still out to public comment, right? We have a lot of public comment coming ahead of us.

I think if we- keep in mind if we get a lot of that, we can maybe address that as commission if we need to have a season, but I think this is a great first step to [unintelligible 02:04:25] the answers what we need to do for SB 5. This is a first step. If we get a lot of comment, maybe we need to address that, but we'll find that. Thank you for your work on this.

Tim Cimbal: Chair, Commissioner Pack. Of course, yes, we'll see what we get as far as feedback.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Mr. Chair, Commissioners, I apologize for one more question. What is the penalty to those that are violating this regulation?

Tim Cimbal: If we did it this way or a close variation thereof, this is a rule that allows for the penalty assessment option. If it occurs in the officer's presence, they can offer a penalty assessment. That would be \$125 fine, plus the cost of the required license for that activity, which would be \$200 for a total of \$325. They could also choose a court option where it'd be a misdemeanor and court fines, judge would set it, things of that nature.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: The reason I asked is I didn't see it in the markup, in the revised--

Tim Cimbal: Chair, Commissioners. Right, I didn't put the punitive, the penalty type stuff in here just yet, but it would be a regulation that would tie back to a penalty assessment option.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: I take it the commission would see those violations when we get the revocation notice, or not?

Tim Cimbal: Chair, Commissioners. If they did enough, this one is not-- It wouldn't be a 20-point violation, so it wouldn't be an instant suggestion for revocation. You could. This with a fishing without, potentially you could see their names in front of you, things of that nature.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Thank you.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Hickey. Do you have something, Fernando?

Fernando Clemente: No, [unintelligible 02:06:28]

Richard Stump: Thank you, Colonel Cimbal. Let's move on to the next item: Reservation of the Two Elk Licenses for Non-Profit Wish-Granting Organizations. Please proceed, Tim.

[silence]

Tim Cimbal: The next agenda item here is reserving two elk licenses for non-profit wish-granting organizations. This is one that I bring in front of you annually. This is a really neat and unique thing that we have through the ability for our commissioners to pass. It really is a really unique experience that these children-- as we get into this, you'll be able to see that we can provide.

The authority falls under 17-3-13.5, where it directs the State Game Commission to reserve no more than two elk licenses a year for persons under 21 who have been determined by a physician to have a life-threatening illness and have qualified through a non-profit wish-granting organization. Currently, we have six of these qualifying wish-granting organizations. They are the United Special Sportsman Alliance, SafariWish, which is through Safari Club International, Hunt of a Lifetime, Outdoor Dream Foundation, Catch-A-Dream, Holy Pursuit's Dream Foundation. Each organization selects their own applicants, and the applicants must purchase an elk hunting license to go on the hunt.

Our recommendation here would be to award the two elk authorizations to United Special Sportsman Alliance and SafariWish, SCI. The way that we operate this, those six, we do two a year, so they just take turns. We just go down the list and then start over.

Information about the tag, it's a really awesome tag. It runs from September 1st, 2025, through December 31st, 2025. It's any legal weapon type, and it's any area open to elk hunting, and it's an either sex bag limit.

A couple of pictures from some harvests in the past. The antlers on these are about as big as the kids' smiles when they do this, so it's a really neat opportunity.

With that, I'll hear any questions.

Richard Stump: Commissioners, anybody?

Fernando Clemente: Just for clarification is two tags where it goes. We're not adding two tags, correct?

Tim Cimbal: Chair, Commissioners, it'd be a total of two tags. One goes to one of the organizations and their selected individual, and the other goes to the other organization and their selected individual.

Fernando Clemente: I think you should go more tags, but thank you.

Sabrina Pack: Chairman, since I came in last time when I first became commissioner a year ago, this is what we were voting on, and I think it's wonderful. Where did it get set that it's only two? If you have six groups that you've identified, why is it only two, and is that a problem?

Tim Cimbal: Chair, Commissioners, I think it would take legislative action. We got to this point with the two, which is pretty neat. Should there be a bill that it was four, that could probably happen. We just go by the statutory language that says no more than two, so we do two a year.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Pack. Anybody else?

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Mr. Chair, I hereby move to accept the department's recommendation and reserve two elk licenses for the two applicants to be sponsored by the non-profit wish-granting organizations as presented or the alternates should the primary individuals not be able to participate in their elk hunt.

Richard Stump: Is there a second?

Gregg Fulfer: Second.

Richard Stump: All in favor?

Commissioners: [in unison] Aye.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Aye.

Richard Stump: Any opposed? Motion passes.

[pause 02:10:58]

Richard Stump: [unintelligible 02:11:09]

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: I recommend we continue.

Richard Stump: Next item. Oh, let's see what we have here. Proposed Changes to the Hunting and Fishing Licenses and Application Rule 19.31.3, presented by Chief Paul Varela.

[silence]

Paul Varela: Morning. The next agenda item is the initial discussions of the hunting and fishing licenses application rule 19.31.3. A little background. During the legislative session, the legislature passed Senate Bill 5, which, among other things, changes the department name and increases licensing fees. Another thing that it also provides is a 25% discount for all license fees for New Mexico residents who receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits, which is called SNAP benefits.

The new law requires that the commission establish a rule for eligibility verification for that discount. The department is currently collaborating with the healthcare authority for the SNAP verification process. Right now, we've had discussions about an application processing interface, and whether or not it'd be feasible

for the interface from the healthcare authority and the interface from the department to talk to each other so that we can verify eligibility.

The next two slides, I have two proposed rule additions to 19.31.3. The first one is if the API is successful with the healthcare authority, we would add this Section R to the rule, which would be 19.31.3.11 of NMAC. It would read, "New Mexico residents with existing online licensing system accounts who also participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program are eligible to receive a 25% discount on all license purchases for the following license year if qualified by the department between January 1st and January 10th annually, or upon creation in OLS," which is our Online Licensing System. "Applicants not automatically qualified for the discount in January may prove eligibility in person at any department office to have the discount applied. No refunds will be offered for full-fee purchases made prior to the verification of eligibility." That's if the application interface is successful.

This next language is if it is not, we took out a certain portion of that language, which means that basically we would establish a data dump before January, and we receive a list of all the verified applicants who receive SNAP benefit discounts. We would compare that to all the people that apply for a license and would like to receive that SNAP benefit discount. If they are on that list, we'll go ahead and apply that discount. If they are not, then they would be required to come into the office and show proof of eligibility that they are receiving SNAP benefits. It's just a pared-down version of the rule I presented earlier. With that, I'll stand for any questions. I apologize, I forgot to introduce our Assistant Chief of Licensing, Mr. Chad Nelson. He's here with me today to help answer any questions that you might have.

Richard Stump: Commissioners? Thank you, Paul, for that presentation. Next item is the Discussion of Proposed Changes to the Game and Fish License/Permits Rule 19.30.9 NMAC.

[pause 02:15:03]

Paul Varela: The next agenda item is initial discussions of the Game and Fish license/permits rule 19.30.9 NMAC. Again, in Senate Bill 5, there were language changes to statute, which allowed the department the ability to increase the vendor fee. For the longest time, the vendor fee for vendors has been \$1 per transaction. What the department is proposing is we would like to add \$1 to that current vendor fee to make the per-fee transaction \$2. We'd also like to add an additional \$1 for each carcass tag issued.

On May 1st, the department issued a survey to all vendors, and we allowed them time to respond by May 18th. We surveyed 135 vendors, and we received 54 responses. The overwhelming response was that the vendors would like to see a per carcass tag transaction of \$1. If we agree to these proposed changes, we would have the proposed rule on the department's website, and public comments would be summarized for the commission.

With that, I'll stand for any questions.

Richard Stump: Commissioner Clemente?

Fernando Clemente: I have a question on the vendor fees, and I think it's really good that that is being increased for our vendors that actually they barely make it-- I think they don't even break even with the \$2. My question is as a Game and Fish Department, Game and Fish Department charges \$1 vendor fee as well. My question is, why are we charging \$1 vendor fee from the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish when we are not vendors? We're the ones that manage for the people, right? Then that's one question. The other question is, well, would that \$1 increase to \$2 on the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish?

Chad Nelson: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Clemente. The \$1 vendor fee-- or the vendor fee is charged by the department. All of our area offices are vendors, so we sell licenses just like anyone else, just like external vendors do. Whether we charge it or not is optional, because we build all of our administrative fees or most of our administrative fees into the application fee for the draw. That fee includes most of our administrative and financial credit card processing costs. Our costs are not necessarily increasing, but vendor costs have. The reason that they're advocating for additional fees or the issuance of carcass tags is because we have to require them to handwrite every carcass tag. We don't have to do that, but we do charge **[inaudible 02:18:26]**

Paul Varela: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Clemente. It is possible to write into rule that the department may not charge a vendor fee, but that is at the discretion of the commission.

Fernando Clemente: Thank you for the [crosstalk]--

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Chair, Commissioners, can we hear from Director Sloane?

Michael Sloane: Mr. Chair, Commissioners. As was just said, we do in fact vend licenses, fishing licenses, all those kinds of things. We have some of the similar costs as a vendor would in terms of credit card fees and those sorts of things. Whether we need to go with the same fee as a vendor, that's a commission decision, but I think there is some cost to some of the licenses that we vend. I think we could skip the extra tag fee for sure. Since we just print that out, it doesn't really take a lot of time.

I think the vendor fee is probably an open discussion about how much it actually costs for-- We do sell significant number of licenses that are not just through the draw with an application fee, whether that's a small-game license or hunting fishing license. I think there's some validity to us charging a vendor fee; what that fee is, I think, is open for discussion.

Tirzio Lopez: Mr. Chair?

Richard Stump: Commissioner?

Tirzio Lopez: I feel that we're nickel-and-diming the public, because SB 5 added a license fee increase to cover the costs of the department that was going to go in the red here very soon. That fee increase was held hostage in a committee unless SB 5 passed, and now we're going to pass on that fee-- If someone's at home on the computer buying their own license, am I correct that we're still going to charge them that fee if they're doing all the work? Am I assessing it wrong or right?

Chad Nelson: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Lopez. Yes, they would be charged the vendor fee whether they buy it online, by phone, or in person.

Tirzio Lopez: I see that-- The private vendors, I understand them, because they have to hire seasonal staff, and they have their own-- they're booming here in Red River right now, as you see people fishing outside. I agree that the private vendor has to have a fee. That is without a doubt. They have to have a fee because they're doing our work. Back in the day, they used to handwrite the licenses. Now they're using our system to print them out and give them the piece of paper. If our department staff-- If a person goes into an office, let's say Raton, Las Cruces, Santa Fe, they're going to pay that vendor fee for going into our office, correct, as well?

Chad Nelson: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Lopez. Yes.

Tirzio Lopez: Okay. What is the approximate cost of the \$1 vendor fee that we have now? Is it significant if it were to be removed? Is it going to cause us to lose money since we're going to have a big license fee increase coming aboard now?

Chad Nelson: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Lopez. We currently bring in approximately \$140,000 a year in vendor fees. With the increased vendor fee to \$2, we would be losing approximately \$280,000 per year.

Tirzio Lopez: From public vendors?

Chad Nelson: Ourselves, the department. That's how much we bring in.

Tirzio Lopez: What would be [crosstalk]--

Paul Varela: Chairman, Commissioner Lopez. The reason that the \$1 vendor fee was charged is because it was written in statute that we needed to charge \$1. Now with the change in the language from Senate Bill 5; if we change the language to charge for- an outside vendor like Walmart to charge an increased fee, then we would also charge that fee, unless the commission decides otherwise, that we should not act as vendors as well.

Tirzio Lopez: I would like to see what the cost difference would be if we don't charge the fee for someone working at home, or sitting at home, sorry, or on their phone, getting it digital, and they're covering the cost of printing on their paper, on their cell phone, their megabytes, versus what we're bringing in from people going into the public office. Compared to that with the private vendors, Walmart, Big R, the local fish shops throughout the state, or down in the [unintelligible 02:23:07] and they're selling licenses out of the gas station.

It just feels like we're just putting more cost against the customer now that we just raised the fees-- oh, actually, we didn't, but the legislature approved the license fee increase, and now we're going to start charging them an additional \$2, an additional \$1. If the staff in our offices, they're selling them, and then they're at home, that's the realm I'm looking at. Nothing really on the private, because they do deserve to

be compensated for their efforts that they're doing, these mom-and-pop shops throughout the state of New Mexico, and big-box as well. That's all I have.

Michael Sloane: Mr. Chairman, maybe I can ask a clarifying question. I think you're saying that when a person buys a license at home, online, they should not be charged a vendor fee, but you would be okay with charging a vendor fee if they came into the office and we had to do it for them, in essence. Is that [crosstalk]--

Tirzio Lopez: No, I'm saying if they're at home on their phone, we shouldn't be charging them. Then if they're going to our office or our offices, they shouldn't be charged that either, but the private vendors still should be charged. We're providing a public service to them, and the license fees that were just approved through the legislature should-- If the stakeholders who worked on SB 5 conspired or planned it outright whether how much fees were going to come from these license fee increase, we shouldn't be charging the public coming into our office say, "I want to get a license." We're working or licensed staff is working there and they print it out and, "Oh, here's \$2." That's something I think we should look at.

Michael Sloane: You're advocating for getting rid of the vendor fee if the license is sold either in one of our offices or somebody goes directly online?

Tirzio Lopez: Correct.

Michael Sloane: Part of the process here is to get that kind of direction. Is that a direction that the commission wants us to propose to the public?

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Lopez, and other fellow Commissioners. If I understand, the New Mexico legislature passed Senate Bill 5 during the '25 legislative session. Senate Bill 5 provides that a license collector may collect and retain a vendor fee for each license or permit that's issued, provided that the fee shall be just and reasonable as determined by the commission.

Now the department conducted a survey of all the vendors in New Mexico, and the majority of the vendors preferred an increase in the vendor fee as well as an additional fee for the issuance of a carcass tag. Am I correct, Director Sloane?

Michael Sloane: Mr. Chair, Vice-Chair. That's correct.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Lopez, fellow Commissioners. It seems to me that what's being presented by the department makes sense, in my opinion. I thank you, Commissioner Clemente and Commissioner Lopez, for raising the questions that you have, but I think the focus here is how to keep this simple and how to address what was presented and passed in Senate Bill 5. I'm very comfortable with what the department is presenting.

Fernando Clemente: May I?

Richard Stump: Sure, yes.

Fernando Clemente: Thank you for that. I guess here, I'm looking at more-- and I understand what Bill 5 passed, but here I'm looking at administrative from the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. Hunters, fishermen, they pay a license for the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish to manage and to administer our wildlife populations. Within that is part of New Mexico Department of Game and Fish to provide those services to be able to sell the license and collect that money, those funds, to be able to operate. Here, to me, we're double-dipping.

I thought I had read somewhere within the department, that the department, whenever it was added the vendor fee, I thought that was exclusively for vendors that they were outside within the department, that they were private vendors. I think it's something that needs to be looked at. A while back, I remember that fee was not set for the department. It was set for exterior vendors. I might be wrong, but I believe-- I thought I had seen that.

Richard Stump: Go ahead.

Sabrina Pack: Mr. Chairman and Chief. I think this discussion is coming-- Because we're already getting comments from the public. I support Commissioner Lopez's-- The assumption is, yes-- I mean, not assumption. The Senate Bill 5 tells us the outside vendors, the private vendors need this increase. Then when you opened, you said something like you've already built into the application process some of our costs for the department, I think the concernment by the public is, to Clemente's point, our department, our offices are already set up to do this. This is part of what we do. We shouldn't be charging-- if we've

been charging-- Clarification. You said we've been charging all along \$1? We shouldn't be increasing it any more than that.

We may need to consider whether we charge \$1 anymore, but we certainly shouldn't be increasing it for our own services. I know I've had a couple ask me, "Why am I paying more money if I'm printing it on my cell or doing it on my phone?" That is a question that we should definitely, I think, look at. Private vendors, yes, it definitely needs to be given to them. Thank you.

Richard Stump: Thank you. What are the fees the credit card companies charge the department? Do we know that?

Chad Nelson: Mr. Chair, the interchange fees are built into the application fee: \$7 for residents, and \$13 for non-residents. Although that probably should go up for non-residents, eventually.

Richard Stump: Okay. Well, I guess we're in agreement. Let's look into that, maybe bring that forth again.

Michael Sloane: Mr. Chair, just for clarity, it sounds like the consensus is that the department should not charge any fee when we sell a license, but that we should proceed with the recommendation of \$2 per license transaction and \$1 per tag for private vendors. Is that correct?

Richard Stump: That's what I'm hearing from the commissioners.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: I really am confused, because I focused on the revisions that were presented to the code as presented by the department. Again, I appreciate the concern that's being raised, but I think what's being raised now requires major revisions besides those that are being presented. Is that correct, Commissioner Clemente?

Fernando Clemente: When you mention major revision [crosstalk]--

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Right.

Fernando Clemente: What do you refer a major revision?

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Well, I'm looking at 19.30.9.8, license vendors. A, financial obligations at the department. B, vendor eligibility application and procedures. C, director's authority. D, vendor fee payments. The department was very concise with the proposed changes, and what I'm hearing would be something very different that's being presented today. I guess I'm visualizing this and seeing big difference changes, a lot more changes than what's being here to the code. I'm focused on the code.

Fernando Clemente: Okay. I'm not looking at the code. To get this vendor fee, have to be passed by a motion by the commission, am I correct?

Michael Sloane: Mr. Chair, Commissioner. The vendor fee is in statute and has been changed in statute, and then there is rule that supports that statutory, so yes, the commission adopted a rule. I think-- and I'll ask you guys. I believe that there is -- and I thought we had the language, but we don't -- a place in rule that essentially says the vendor fee is \$1. We have interpreted that to apply to the agency. We would have to change-- obviously, we would be changing that language to reflect the \$2 and \$1 language, but we would also put in, except for the department. Yes, we would have to change rule, but this is going to require a rule change no matter what. Did I answer the question?

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Mr. Chair, Commissioners. I think you did answer the question, but maybe it's because there's a carbo lack here or a sugar-- [laughs] Maybe I just need to take a break. It's 12:08. Could we break for lunch for maybe half an hour or 45 minutes? I appreciate the people that are in attendance and those that are online, but could we just take a lunch break right now for half an hour, and maybe we'll come back after that?

Richard Stump: Are we in a place where we can move on when we come back from lunch, or are we still maybe discussing this [crosstalk]--

Tirzio Lopez: We table it for now.

Sabrina Pack: Mr. Chairman [crosstalk]--

Tirzio Lopez: Officially we'll table it [unintelligible 02:34:17] continue the discussion.

Richard Stump: Yes, continue with the discussion. Yes, that's fine.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Discussion [inaudible 02:34:23]

Richard Stump: Well, if you need to take a break, we can take a break. Let's go ahead and take a break, folks, for lunch. When we return, we'll continue with this conversation.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Return at [inaudible 02:34:36]

Richard Stump: Let's return at a quarter to 1:00, please?

[lunch break]

Richard Stump: Where were we?

Paul Varela: Chairman Stump, we were on the proposed changes to 19.30.9, which is changes to the Game and Fish license and permits rule 19.30.9 NMAC. Currently, there was a discussion of whether or not the department should waive the \$2 fee per transaction and \$1 carcass tag fee associated with printing out a carcass tag, and whether or not those fees should only apply to vendors such as Walmart or just private entities.

Richard Stump: There's one question that I wanted to ask about the total fees that we pay as the department to the credit card companies.

Chad Nelson: Mr. Chair, so we have what's called a payment gateway that routes all of our transactions, so there is a 14¢ per transaction fee associated with all transactions.

Paul Varela: Chairman Stump, the total cost of the department per year for those transaction fees is about \$900,000.

Richard Stump: Thank you, gentlemen. Fernando?

Fernando Clemente: Just for clarification, the discussion was only on the fees of the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, not the other vendors outside of the department.

Paul Varela: Chairman Stump, Commissioner Clemente, what we just described only applies to the department. There are fees, credit card fees and transactions that we pay per year on a yearly basis. There's also costs that are implied with the department for maintaining an online licensing system within our department because it's internal. Other states hire an outside vendor for the similar services that we provide as a department.

Fernando Clemente: What I meant was the \$2, whether the fees will be removed, it was just for the department, not for the vendor fees outside. That's what I meant, sorry.

Richard Stump: Well, if we're paying \$900,000 as the department, what's that going to do if we do away with these fees that we're charging right now?

Paul Varela: Commissioner Stump, as Chad had mentioned earlier, the department brings in about \$114,000 per year on the \$1 vendor fee. If we were to eliminate the \$1 vendor fee altogether, we'd lose the \$114,000 that the department receives. If we raise it to \$2, and we follow what Senate Bill 5 is saying, and we consider ourselves as a department to be a licensed collector or a vendor like the other vendors, then that number would double.

Richard Stump: We're talking about, what's that, \$600-and-some thousand that we have to come up with as a department to pay for all this?

Paul Varela: Commissioner Stump, yes.

Richard Stump: I think that's something that we should definitely keep in mind as we're talking about this.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Mr. Chair, Commissioners, can we hear from the director on this topic, please?

Michael Sloane: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Hickey, it's really, I think, a policy question. We do have costs like any other vendor, whether it's credit card fees, it's employing our IT staff, it's maintaining the database system, maintaining the infrastructure. There's clearly a cost associated with being a vendor and selling licenses. Whether you believe that that cost is inclusive in the fee for a license or whether there should be some addition to help support that, I guess that's the policy question that we have in front of us.

We have, for as long as I can remember, considered ourselves a vendor and charged the fee to offset some of those costs. We're not making money off of it. We do charge an application fee in terms of for a draw license. Not every license is a draw license, and so I think that maybe the application fee offsets some of the costs, but I think the intent of the vendor fee is to try and offset the other costs.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Thank you, Director Sloane. Mr. Chair, Commissioners, I think the question now is, where do we go forward from here? Do we want to have the department go forward with this particular proposal, the proposed changes to 19.30.9, or what I heard, maybe through the discussion, thank you, with the leadership of Commissioners Clemente and Lopez, and Chair Stump, do we want to recommend something different? We can just certainly go forward with the existing proposal.

Michael Sloane: Mr. Chair, commissioners, I think that's exactly right. The process here is that we are bringing you our initial thoughts and looking for some direction. We'll go out to the public, see what the

public says, bring all of that back to you, and say this is what we've heard, how would you like to proceed. Then at that point we would develop a final rule ahead of a rule hearing. We're really seeking from you this policy decision about how we should proceed to present to the public.

Richard Stump: Can the department summarize all that we've been discussing here and options?

Michael Sloane: Mr. Chairman, I'll give it a shot, and then these guys can correct me if I'm wrong. Our proposal is to allow for the charge of a \$2 vendor fee for all vendors, including the department, as well as a \$1 fee for each tag. An alternative to that would be to have the vendors charge those same fees, have the department only charge the \$2 license fee, and issue the tags with no charge. Another alternative is to not allow the department to charge any fees. What am I up to? The fourth one would be to just leave the \$1 fee that's currently in place for the department and allow vendors the \$2 and \$1.

Under any of those scenarios, I think that the private vendors have asked, and that's the reason that the legislation went through for an increase. I think the \$2 and \$1, based on our survey results, would be appropriate for private vendors. The real question in front of you now is, does the department charge nothing, \$1, \$2, or \$2 plus the \$1?

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: To add to that, Director Sloane, the department surveyed 135 vendors and received 54 responses, so you already have the input from them.

Michael Sloane: Correct.

Sabrina Pack: Chairman? I think what I'm hearing, Commissioner Lopez and Commissioner Clemente, see if I've framed this, I think what we are hearing is the concern about not the private vendor license increase at all, \$2 and \$1. We're not concerned about that, right? What we're concerned about is increasing New Mexico Department of Game and Fish by \$1. We're charging another dollar on top of the already dollar-vendor fee that has been standard. Is that correct? Is that how you interpret that? Is that the concern?

Is it then the consensus or could we get to a consensus or take this to public comment potentially that we're basically, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish only leaves a dollar in place that they've had and not increase that because that's part of what we're doing, that's our job. It's included in the application fee and all this other-- we're not losing any more money because we already have \$114 or \$140, whichever that number is, just we wouldn't be gaining any more money from that process. Is that a good summation?

Richard Stump: Yes, I think it is. The one thing that I'm a little stuck on is, so for the applications or for draw hunts, that's all worked in, but for fishing licenses and private land licenses, there's no fee for that, correct? Except for the \$1 at this point.

Chad Nelson: Mr. Chair, that's correct.

Richard Stump: How do you want to leave this for this meeting?

Christopher Witt: Mr. Chair, can I make a comment?

Richard Stump: Please.

Christopher Witt: Getting some feedback here. I want to make three observations and then ask a question to Director Sloane. First, the website infrastructure for purchasing licenses and tags and documenting those purchases right now is functional, it works, but I think it could be better. I think the simplicity of having one single fee structure, regardless of vendor, is desirable just because a simple structure is easier to understand and follow. I think in general, a \$2 fee with \$1 per tag is not high enough to be burdensome in itself as a nickel-and-dime issue on individual hunters.

I want to ask a question to Director Sloane. If additional funds were collected from these fees, would also additional funds be spent on improving the website, like the user interface, user experience on that website? Would things get better for hunters and fishermen?

Michael Sloane: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner, yes, we just did a major revamp of the public website we have been working on. We just got some money from the legislature to work on the license side of the website and hope to be improving that over time, so yes, we're clearly going to be investing in that.

Christopher Witt: If that's the case, then I would say I'm in favor of having the uniform \$2 fee for independent vendors and for the department.

Richard Stump: We're actually not voting on this today.

Michael Sloane: Mr. Chairman, maybe I'll make a suggestion if I could. Perhaps we should go out to the public with three alternatives and see what kind of feedback we get. One that applies to all vendors, including the department, one that zeroes out the department, and one that leaves the department at a dollar, and see if we can get some feedback from folks about what they think about that. It's not necessarily traditionally how we do it, but I think it could work.

Richard Stump: I like that idea. Thank you, Director Sloane.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Mr. Chair, Commissioners, Director Sloane, do we need a vote on that, or this is fine?

Michael Sloane: Mr. Chair, Commissioner, I think we just needed some general consensus from the commission, which we didn't really get, but I think we got to a place where we know we need to bring back some additional information, so I don't think we need a vote. Thank you.

Richard Stump: I think we have general consensus. Can I get a few nods?

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Yes.

Richard Stump: Yes.

Michael Sloane: Yes.

Richard Stump: Please proceed with that. Thank you, Director Sloane. Moving on. Thank you, everybody, actually. Approval of the infrastructure capital improvement plan, also presented by Chief Varela.

Paul Varela: Agenda Item 13 is the approval of the infrastructure and capital improvement plan. Each year, the department is required to submit an ICIP plan to the Capital Outlay Bureau by July 1st, 2025, in statute. This is separate from our FY27 operating budget request. The request for fiscal year '27 focuses on wildlife habitat restoration and management projects and off-highway vehicle projects.

The following four years, for fiscal year '28 to fiscal year '31, are anticipated projects. These can change each year. The legislature only approves one year at a time, so please keep that in mind. The only year that will be approved this year that we're looking at is fiscal year '27. The following years are ideas that the department has on how to spend some of that money, and we'll go through each year, but just keep in mind that the only year that gets approved is fiscal year '27. Once the capital funds are approved by the commission and the legislature, they're available for four years to be spent.

The first year is fiscal year '27. You'll see a total of \$7 million, which is for wildlife habitat restoration and management projects. These are to complete necessary landscape and wildlife habitat restoration throughout the state. The columns at the top are the funds that are being used to utilize these projects. You'll see \$2.5 million for the Big Game Enhancement Fund, \$2 million for the Habitat Management Fund, and \$2.5 million for the Sikes Act Fund.

In the second project, you'll see off-highway vehicle and recreational development improvement projects, which are to develop and improve off-highway vehicle recreational opportunities throughout the state. With that, we have \$500,000, which is coming from the Off-Highway Vehicle Fund. The total for fiscal year '27 is \$7.5 million. Keep in mind that each of these funds have restrictions, and so they're supposed to be spent on certain activities, which we are following. The major difference from fiscal year '26 and what was approved last year, for fiscal year '26, but fiscal year '27 was included in the overall plan, we added an additional \$1 million to the Sikes Act funding, and we added an additional \$500,000 to the Big Game Enhancement Fund funding for fiscal year '27.

For fiscal year '28, there is a total of \$5 million. \$2.5 million is included from the Sikes Act Fund for wildlife habitat restoration management projects. The second group of projects is for hatchery improvements. It totals \$2.5 million. \$500,000 from our BIRF Fund, which is Bond Interest and Retirement fund, which is generally spent on hatchery improvements, and game commission on properties. Then you'll see that we added \$2 million from the Game Protection Fund for fiscal year '28. The department decided to be conservative in our approach to spending Game Protection Fund. Even though we'll be receiving a license fee increase and our Game Protection Fund will be increasing, we would like to see that balance increase to a comfortable amount before we start applying Game Protection Fund to capital improvement projects.

For fiscal year '29, we have two projects. Again, \$6.5 million for Wildlife Habitat and Restoration, of which \$2.5 million is from the Big Game Enhancement Fund, \$2 million from the Habitat Management Fund, and

\$2 million from the Sikes Act. Those numbers are slightly different from FY27, but it follows a similar pattern. The second project is for the off-highway vehicle projects again, and it's \$500,000 from the Off-Highway Vehicle Fund.

For fiscal year 30, we're asking for \$2 million from the Sikes Act Fund for wildlife habitat restoration projects and \$500,000 from the Bond Interest and Retirement Fund for hatchery improvements. Finally, for the fifth year, we're asking for \$4.5 million for wildlife habitat and restoration projects, \$2.5 million from the Big Game Enhancement Fund, and \$2 million from the Sikes Act Fund. The HAMA Fund was not included as an amount in this scenario because by that time, we're not sure how much money we'll have in the Habitat Management Fund, so we're being conservative and not including that amount. With that, I'll take any questions.

Richard Stump: Commissioners?

Fernando Clemente: Just a comment. If you go back, we're talking about millions, correct? I think we can do a little better than that. I'm sorry to say this, but you are putting, if you see the number, it says 4,500 in any of them. Then you have your amounts down here that says dollars in thousands. That should be millions, isn't it?

Paul Varela: Yes.

Fernando Clemente: I'm just saying because this is a document.

Paul Varela: Yes.

Michael Sloane: Mr. Chair, Commissioner, that dollars and thousands, so 7,500, you'd add another set of three zeros to it, it would be \$7.5 million. It's the way that the state does their budgeting. It's just missing the extra zeros because that's the way they do it.

[crosstalk]

Richard Stump: He saw the asterisk dollars and thousands, that's why he pointed that out.

Michael Sloane: Yes. Every one of these numbers should have another set of three zeros after it. Where it says 500, that's 500,000; where it says 7,000, that's 7 million. Sorry for the confusion.

Richard Stump: Perfect. Commissioner Lopez?

Tirzio Lopez: Thank you, Chief Varela. I have a question for you on the lower part or the middle page of your presentation where you're talking about FY30-2, hatchery improvements. There's \$500,000 set aside for that. I know we keep on seeing this in every capital outlay request over the years. We saw the great work that the staff are doing down in Glenwood. What's your guy's name down there?

Michael Sloane: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner, Leonard Rice.

Tirzio Lopez: Give him a TSI. That guy's doing some great work. Really good work because we're seeing that improvement. I see that the process is working, but what other hatcheries, and maybe the director can answer this question, are going to be considered part of this \$500,000, because it looks like we already got cut a little bit from what we had before.

Michael Sloane: Mr. Chairman, commissioner, I know that we are spending a current BURF appropriation on the bridge at Red River Hatchery just down the road. I know that Kirk has some plans for housing issues that need to get fixed and repaired at various hatcheries and/or replaced. I would anticipate by FY30, we will have a good enough sense of what the revenue from the fee increases that this will actually change pretty significantly, and we'll be requesting a bigger chunk of money from the Game Protection Fund to do an actual hatchery renovation. As you know, those costs are pretty high, especially at the moment, so we need to build up the fund a little bit before we make that request. As Paul said, we're really just looking at that first fiscal year. That's what's going to go to the legislature this year. These out years, yes, they say something, but they're probably going to change as we see our fund balances change based on license sales and the fee increase, and that sort of stuff. I guess I'd say, take the out years with a grain of salt, and they will change because we need to bring this back to you every year to approve the next five-year plan, but you approve it annually.

Tirzio Lopez: Thank you, director. In reference to your comments you just made about, we're looking at FY27, it says to include maintenance and development and operation of game commission-owned properties. Are hatcheries going to be considered in that as well, or is it just going to be a totally different line item?

Michael Sloane: Mr. Chairman, commissioner, the Big Game Enhancement Habitat Management Fund and Sikes Act Fund, potentially, some of the habitat management fund by statute could be used at hatcheries. The rest is dedicated to habitat work. Sikes is dedicated to dealing with Forest Service, so very little of it would likely be used on a hatchery.

Tirzio Lopez: Habitat could be used if they needed to?

Michael Sloane: I believe that's correct. I believe it says commission-owned properties, and since hatcheries are commission-owned properties, I think there's that potential, though traditionally we have not used it on those kinds of projects.

Tirzio Lopez: Here's why I asked, because if we look out the window here, we see people fishing, not a lot of hunting is going on now, but these licenses that we've been talking earlier, potentially are generating revenue. If we don't have hatcheries that are going to get people outside and fish, then what are we going to do? What are we doing here? Just a simple observation and question.

Mark Mattaini: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Lopez, as I mentioned, the cost to renovate a hatchery, which we're approaching at some of our facilities, we're not quite there, I don't think, in general, is probably on the order of \$15 million at this point. We really do need to let that license fee take effect, let those account balances increase to the point where we can afford to take a chunk of money like that and go do an actual renovation. Our facilities are in pretty decent shape now. Kirk's been patching them together as we go, but yes, sometime in the next 10 years we're going to need to do a major hatchery renovation, and we're going to need to have the bank account to sustain that.

Tirzio Lopez: That's all I have.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Lopez, and thank you, Chief Varela. Is there a motion we do? [silence]

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Mr. Chair, Commissioners, I hereby make a motion to move the approval of the FY27-FY31 capital plan as presented by the department.

Richard Stump: Is there a second?

Fernando Clemente: I second.

Richard Stump: All in favor?

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Aye.

Tirzio Lopez: Aye.

Fernando Clemente: Aye.

Richard Stump: Any opposed? Motion passes. Thank you, Paul. Next presentation is results of the customer and community survey. It's public campaigning survey by the department and its contractor. Tristanna is going to be presenting with our contractor, and I'll let you introduce our contractor, Tristanna. Tristanna.

Tristanna Carrell: Thank you so much. We're excited to be here. Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, members of the commission. As we talked about in the last fiscal year, the department has started working on trend surveys with our customers so that we can evaluate customers, licensed buyers, and non-customers, and our interaction with them. This year, the department hired contractors. Jason Clement with Stepchild, and Tyler Banyay with Banyay to do the survey for us. They will be reporting on those results.

Jason Clement: Great. Thank you, Tristanna. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and commissioners, for having us today. We're excited to share this work with you. Just a bit on our backgrounds, my background specifically, I've worked for 25 years in brand and marketing strategy. A lot of outdoor brands, including North Face and Arc'teryx, as well as Nike, Tyler has worked on as well. This is our expertise. This is what we do, not just for government agencies, but for brands as well.

We designed this survey last year, and were excited to do it because we felt like there were a couple of things that had changed, at least in how we wanted to focus on information and education efforts. There's really two things. The first is to really start to measure our impact, and things like understanding of the people who are not our customers. We estimate about 16% of the state are our customers, so at least 84% that we don't typically talk to or interact to and get feedback on a large scale from.

We also, just in forms of a strategic perspective, reframed our INE efforts through a new model that we call 3Cs, which is an advancement of the traditional 3R model, and really seeks to, again, encompass the

community. We call those 3Cs are our customers, the community, and then the concern, those folks who are highly concerned. When we think about INE efforts generally, we want to make sure that those efforts are covering the 3Cs, we needed this research to help us understand that landscape.

What we set out to track are really five groups. The first is our awareness and satisfaction levels. How many people in the public are aware of the agency? How satisfied are they with us? That's both customers and non-customers. What are the general attitudes in the state towards conservation? What are outdoor participation trends? What types of activities are people doing outdoors beyond the hook and bullet typical hunting and fishing activities? For those who are hunting and angling, what is their satisfaction with, we'll call our product in the state? Then just general demographics of the makeup of the population.

Tristanna said that we were a key partner in this. We also partnered with Qualtrics, which is a global data collection platform and recruiting arm. They do a ton of government work, both federal, different state levels. They work with Mexico State parks as well. They're a trusted vendor for us. They also house the data so we can go back at any time and do additional analysis if we want to look at really specific cuts, so women, 25 to 35, what's their opinion on a particular topic.

We did 550 non-customers and 450 customers. This gets us to decent statistical significance. We get into smaller cuts, it gets a little less statistically significant, but we felt that that was a robust base for us to build on. We were in field in winter, so over '24, '25. Winter '24, '25, really from November into January. We'd like to continue to do these waves every year at least. The big part of the goal of this is to be able to track progress over time. Are more people satisfied or dissatisfied? Are more people aware of the department's efforts, or not aware of our efforts? The goal was to design something that we could repeat over time and really measure our own progress with.

We'll start by talking about just beyond hook and bullet. What are the outdoor activities that are being enjoyed by customers and non-customers? We'll specifically start with non-customers. We asked people generally, "Which of these activities do you participate in?" These are all non-hunting and angling activities. "Which of these do you participate in? Are you going to do more or less of this next year?" Turns out in all activities, everyone's planning to do more next year. Shouldn't be a surprise, but top activity that we expect to grow over the next year, day hiking and backpacking, birdwatching, and camping. These are non-consumptive activities that are going to bump up against the department's activities, so it's important for us to keep track of.

When we look at customers, pretty similar profiles, and we broke these into hiking and camping here. We looked at the top three activities of folks who say they have fished in New Mexico. Many of them camping, many of them also day hiking and doing motorized off-roading. When we look at hunting, camping also still popular, predictably. Hunters are into target shooting and archery, but they were also day hiking and backpacking as well.

Now we wanted to look at non-customers, what attitudes they have towards us, and also how aware are they of the agency. This is really interesting. The survey was done before the announcement about the name change towards wildlife. One of the things that we did, you'll see in here, is we asked people if they thought the Department of Wildlife existed. We've got some interesting data on that.

Awareness, large awareness broadly of the Department of Game and Fish. However, 22% of customers believe that the Department of Wildlife is the agency in New Mexico that manages fish and wildlife populations. Again, this was done before that announcement was made. Urban residents. You'll see this throughout the presentation. We've divided our residents into three groups.

We said folks who live in big cities, we gave them the example of Albuquerque, Las Cruces, and Santa Fe. Folks who live in smaller cities and then folks who live in rural areas. It's our urban residents, particularly our big city residents, who are most likely to identify the Department of Wildlife as primarily responsible as opposed to the Game and Fish. This is an opportunity for us to do more education in those urban areas about Game and Fish, or in the future, Department of Wildlife, and what we do.

We asked our non-customers too, do they try to keep up to date on conservation issues? What you see, vast majority agree. There are a lot who say they neither agree nor disagree. We throw those out. We look at just the agrees and the disagrees. The agrees, almost twice. These are folks who are, again, not engaged in hunting and angling, but want to keep or claim to keep up to date on conservation issues. The

trend follows it into those areas as well, so that's true even in the big city, where you've got 61% of people saying they like to keep up to date on conservation issues.

We asked this question, the government in New Mexico does enough to protect endangered and threatened species? Asked them if they agree or disagree, and strongly on a scale of 1 to 5. Overall, they're split. About a third of people disagree that the state does enough to protect endangered and threatened species, about a third of people neither agree nor disagree, and about a third of people agree, so really evenly split there. What was interesting is that males are more likely to agree that the state is doing enough, while females are more likely to remain neutral, and that's where started to see some splits when we broke that out on gender.

We also asked them, are they willing to contribute to endangered species conservation? Again, these are non-customers. They're not currently purchasing hunting or angling licenses. They may be purchasing license plates or contributing through other causes, but they're not engaged with us. They're not identified as a customer. 78% of the total sample answered "Often", meaning that they would like to contribute. Often, sometimes, or would like to contribute to conservation causes. I think it's really interesting because it's a massive pool of people in the state who would like to contribute more to these causes, but aren't necessarily doing so through us. When we talked about things like generating revenue, this highlights an opportunity for us.

We also wanted to understand how much of what we call detraction there is around hunting and fishing. How many people believe that hunting and fishing should not be allowed? We ask people, "When it comes to hunting and fishing, are you passionate about doing it? Do you like to do it sometimes? Do you don't now, but you want to try?" Then you'll see this big bar on the right side. This is, "It's not for me, but it's okay if others do." Then all the way on the right side, you'll see the, "Shouldn't be allowed." Unsurprisingly, there is a percentage of customers that do not think hunting should be allowed at all, and it's that 20%.

More importantly though, 50% of those who don't participate in hunting are okay if others do. They're accepting of that. I think, historically, at least from what I've heard in the two years we've been working with the department, is we get a little concerned in our information and education efforts of upsetting this group. It's a relatively small group, and there's a much larger percentage of the population that's permissive of those activities.

When we broke that down, that tolerance of hunting and angling, this was probably the most surprising finding, is that female respondents are significantly more tolerant or accepting of hunting, with only 16% of females who think it should not be allowed. Males were actually a lot more likely, or at least over females, anyways, that proportion of folks who think hunting should not be allowed, more prevalent on the male side. Then, predictably, the department constituents in bigger cities still represent the largest pool of hunting detractors. If you live in a big city, you're more likely to not want hunting to be allowed. I should know that very few people don't think fishing should be allowed.

Now we'll talk specifically about our customers. This was also, I think, surprising and should be a pat on the back to the department and the commission overall. Our customers are largely satisfied with the department. Compared to that even split that we saw with non-customers, where it was one third, one third, one third, this is more of a 2.2 to 1. 2.2 customers are satisfied for every 1 that's dissatisfied with the department.

When we asked customers the question about their view of, is the government doing enough to protect endangered and threatened species, the majority of respondents agreed that the state does enough. Remember, again, in the non-customers, it wasn't as clear there. With customers, they actually believe that we are doing enough there. 57% strongly or somewhat agree that the government is protecting wildlife.

When we get into their actual product satisfaction, so their satisfaction with their hunting and fishing in New Mexico in the past four years, 71% of anglers are satisfied with their New Mexico angling. Only 47% of hunters are satisfied with their hunting in the state. Again, we talk about this research, hopefully, you'll see now that this is why we want to repeat this year over year, because we'd like to see that satisfaction number increase. Come back to you in a future commission meeting and show you, "Hey, this has increased by three or four percentage points over time."

We gave a list of about eight or nine issues for folks to say what were most important or least important to their satisfaction in hunting. We also asked them what are their future hunting intentions in New Mexico. Again, are they planning to hunt less? Are they planning to hunt about the same amount? Are they planning to hunt more next year? No surprise, participation's going to increase here, just like camping, and day hiking, and bird watching. 97% of the respondents are saying that they plan to hunt at least the same amount or more.

When we asked about what are the issues that are going to be important to increasing their satisfaction, obviously, enough species available is at the top of the list. That makes sense. Etiquette of others was something that popped up here as well. Then, access, access issues, access to huntable areas was another top driver of their satisfaction.

Similar structure for anglers, so we asked them are they going to increase fishing or decrease fishing next year, or about the same. 63% plan to increase the amount of angling they do next year, either by a lot or a little more. Anglers are most concerned with access, water quality, and species availability. You'll see etiquette did not come up in the fishing side.

The things that were least important to anglers, so these are the things that were least important in driving their satisfaction, are the cost of participation. This is important relative to the conversation y'all just had about fees. Cost is not a driver of their satisfaction and social dynamics, so the etiquette of others, those types of things, were not as important for the angling side.

We also wanted to understand where we should place priorities in how we communicate with customers. We asked customers what are the most important channels to them in terms of interacting with the department. Email came up as the top way that they want to interact with the department, as well as the website. Perhaps no surprise there. Printed documents, that's why we have the picture here of the rule and information booklet, remain important to them. After that, it falls off a bit. Social media, things like what we characterize as neighborhood apps, like Nextdoor, were not important to them. Phone calls, a small percentage felt that that was important to them. This would be important in terms of where we invest and how we invest in communication channels, helping us guide that.

This will be the least biggest shock of this. We asked specifically about the draw and their satisfaction with the draw. 64% of draw participants are at least somewhat dissatisfied. This will be an important metric to track over time if draw mechanisms change. This was not a huge surprise. I think the surprise was that there were some that were satisfied. I will say, we've got a lot of data. It's about an 80-page report, so we've just pulled some excerpts for you here. The main driver in their dissatisfaction with the draw is, of course, not drawing. Those folks who draw are much more likely to be satisfied than those folks who did not.

That is what we wanted to present today. I'll say, as we deploy this next wave, we want to track the changes again in all of these metrics. The next time that you see these sets of data, we'll be able to show you how they have moved either up or down in each of those categories. We really want to focus on these three key areas. What are these non-customers awareness and attitudes towards the agency? Do they think we're doing enough on our core missions? Are they aware that we're even doing it?

What is the activity growth, and what are those customer-non-customer activity overlaps? We talk about things like camping that are really popular with both non-customers and customers. Those present opportunities for engage with communities, potentially get more people hunting or fishing. Engaging that kind of portion of the population that said, "Well, I might like to do it, but I haven't tried it."

Then, general, just customer satisfaction overall and byproduct. We also have the customer satisfaction down to the species hunted, the type of fish species that they were out fishing for. We've got some granularity down on that level as well so we can track how that satisfaction is trending over time. That's all we have prepared today. I would love to take some questions. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and the commission.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Jason. Any questions from anybody? Commissioner Lopez?

Tirzio Lopez: Mr. Chairman, sir, thank you for this presentation. I do have a question. How was this survey conducted? Was it email? How were the people selected? Just some real small-

Jason Clement: That's a good question, Mr. Lopez. On the non-customer side, our vendor, Qualtrics, does recruitment. They use digital ads and social ads for that recruitment. The respondents are then

pushed to a custom survey that we designed, hosted on a webpage. For our customers, they were recruited through an email. Both sets of respondents received incentives, so for the non-customers, that vendor manages the incentives.

It's typically a gift card, so a \$5 or \$10 gift card, and that's included in the price of the survey, and they can redeem that at different retailers. For our customer side, through our partnership, Tristanna has a strong partnership with OnX. We offer the customers a free month of OnX at no cost to the department. Thank you, Commissioner Lopez.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Lopez. Commissioner Hickey?

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Commissioner Chair and commissioners, I do have a couple of comments, but most of my questions are going to be directed at Director Sloane. I thank you very much for your presentation and the performance that you did. It's excellent. It's very good. It's the first time that I've seen something like that since I've been on the commission. You guys, thank you.

Jason Clement: Thank you.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: That said, on the why of this research, you indicated in your slide two things. You can go back to the slides if you want, it doesn't matter. It was one of the first ones on the why. Measure the impact and opportunities beyond the 16% of New Mexicans who are the department's customers. Second, help inform the department's efforts in the new evolved 3C model, which is customers, community, and concerned.

My experience with customer surveys, they can be a very useful tool so long as that as you're collecting data, you're going to act on the data. It's not going to just fall to the wayside. Maybe it is not falling to the wayside, but you just completely crank out surveys and see how are we improving but you're not really taking specific action on some of this. I think that, with regard to the why, it would be important for the department to maybe have some other measures or metrics that help with this.

I'm not going to go into grand detail here about my other comments or concerns, but I will give an example because what was not surprising in one of the other slides, we saw that the customer, we're not surprised with the non-customer, but with the customer, it's also not a surprise that there is some strong dissatisfaction with hunting. I think we all know what that's about. I think the department, again, it would be helpful to find how the department is going to take certain actions to change and make improvements from these customer surveys the next time we meet.

I don't know, for the non-customer, I'm going to make this up, for the non-customer improvement, maybe we want to have more newspaper articles to improve, so that they understand what's going on, conservation, hunting, fishing, whatever. For the customer improvement, how did we improve licensing tags, and specifically, what did we do, and did that improve the customer satisfaction? That's my reaction to what I heard. I'm just going to turn that over to Director Sloane. I hope I'm not being too pushy.

Michael Sloane: Mr. Chair, Commissioner, I think you hit on a lot of good points. I think that one of the things we wanted to get most out of this survey was how are we telling our story and to whom? Are we just in an echo chamber or are we reaching those folks who are strongly advocating for changing our department name and doing more with species of greatest conservation need? I think this will help us focus on figuring that out and making sure that we do touch those people and get their support. Long term the goal would be to try and get them to find a way to contribute to conservation in New Mexico.

From the hunting perspective, again, it was done sort of during that period when the draw occurred, so there may be some overinflation of dissatisfaction, maybe not. The bigger issue, I think, is we have-- I'll get the numbers wrong, but say 80,000 licenses across big game species that we give out annually, and we have close to 300,000 applicants. There's going to be somewhere on the order of 220,000 people that don't draw and aren't very happy. I don't know how we fix that without having more deer, elk, and other big game species to allow for more sustainable harvest.

Certainly, we've made efforts over time to diversify and show the variety of hunting opportunities across the state, what people can do with the licenses that they can get. There's been talk over the years about various forms of changing the draw in different ways. I think a lot of those are fraught with long-term issues. A lot of the states around us wish they had our system in that, you have the same chance of drawing every year versus having to put in for, I think, Tristanna, if I can use you as an example, you put in for how many years for the Kaibab hunt before you were even eligible to maybe draw? 18 years. A lot

of those other state systems are really challenging. We don't have the resources to just go over the counter with everything, so that's going to be a hard nut to crack.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Mr. Chair, commissioners, Director Sloane, when do you think the next survey might be?

Michael Sloane: Mr. Chair, Commissioner, I think that's a hard question for us to answer. I think we're still really digesting this one here and trying to figure out what do we change and how quickly would we want to see a response before we would go and do another survey that would make sense. I think there's probably one in the offing, but I don't think it's going to be real soon.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Director. Commissioner? Yes, go ahead.

Christopher Witt: First, I just want to say this is a great survey, really nice presentation, very concise. It's a great initiative to undertake. Buried in the data there was the fact that almost a third of all customers are dissatisfied with the department. That's really concerning. I hope that's something we can improve on. My question is, did you give those dissatisfied customers an opportunity to comment or to explain why they were dissatisfied, and what did you learn from that qualitative part of the survey?

Jason Clement: Yes, thank you, Commissioner Witt. We did at the end of the survey offer up what we call verbatims. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us? We got a rich set of data. Actually, a lot more kind of verbose and direct than I think we would have expected, and so we've passed that on to the department, but it was probably at least 200 specific responses, and they have to do with maybe specific units and specific methodologies, but that's been shared with the team as well.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Witt. Commissioner Pack.

Sabrina Pack: Thank you all for doing the survey. I had the background. I was working with Chief Pitman before he left, and I was able to review your questions, and we did some revisions on the questions. I think to do you justice on some of it, would you also go a little bit deeper into the methodology? I know the report we had posted prior to this meeting, and it's not included here.

You were asking about the methodology. You have 450 in one sample and 550 in the other sample, but you took a little more care even in that selection of that. You want to talk about the stratified sample that was existent or not, or when you got to the end, did you not find you had representation across different segments that you were looking at, so start with that one.

Jason Clement: Thank you for the question, Commissioner Pack. Yes, took great care in what we call screening in the process to make sure that we weren't overrepresented with any particular population. That included by gender, by those geographic areas that we talked about. We excluded people who lived on reservations, given that they have their own game and fish departments, and we didn't want to get any confusion because the non-customers who were taking the survey could not know that they were taking it for Game and Fish, because we wanted to know if they were aware of Game and Fish. We would blow the bag if we said they were taking that. There was great care taken in that. Also, just to ensure that when we did a subcut of something, that that was balanced as well. Is that what [unintelligible 03:26:01]?

Sabrina Pack: Yes. I visited with Tristanna quite a bit about this before this meeting, just because this has been something that's of interest to me. I teach research. I believe in strong research methodology that leads us to good strategic planning. If we have problems with methodology, we're not going to get the answers we need to make appropriate strategic decisions moving forward. That's why I took a specific interest in this.

In saying that and looking at the findings in detail, I look forward to seeing the greater data set because that way we can really see how that's represented. I think if you go to page 22 of your slides, this might help on one of the questions about dissatisfaction. Pages 22 or 16, those are two notes I want to take down. This is the dissatisfied. If you would refresh my memories and the rest, what was the question that was asked specifically for this? Do you remember that?

Jason Clement: Commissioner Pack, yes, we first asked if they had participated in the draw in four years. If they had, it was how satisfied are you with the draw process was, I believe, the language.

Sabrina Pack: Just a clarification, we could do a whole survey just on the ones that got to draw because I question now we have a starting point, wonderful foundation, nothing. Is it the process? Was it the actual process of going online that they didn't like and [unintelligible 03:27:30] Was it the logistics of it, or was

it the fact they didn't get the draw, they didn't get what they wanted? I don't think you answered that unless it's in the finite details of the 200 responses that came later.

That's the glory of research. We can get a starting point here, but I'm not sure if we answered specifically what they're dissatisfied about, you know what I'm saying? That would be something I would want to dig into because this is starting, but this doesn't tell us where to fix what might be wrong. We don't want to assume in research, but if we know that 800,000, whatever the number was you gave me. 220--

Michael Sloane: Thousand, yes, not drawing.

Sabrina Pack: 220,000 that are not drawn, we might assume that's why they're unhappy, but it may be something else, and we don't know that and that's what additional research would tell us. I want you to look at 16 real quick. I was going to make a comment about 16, I don't remember what it was. I don't remember what 16 was. Same thing. I was going to make the comment about satisfaction. I just know that we don't have-- we're always limited how many questions will the public actually go through and answer. This survey had a lot of-- we had a lot of spidering going on where they go down different levels. If we want to look at-- now that we've confirmed there is the satisfaction/dissatisfaction, we need to do additional research on that. I think your question-- I think they have a lot of data mining to do and strategy to talk about what is the next step to further assess what's happening here. I do applaud your efforts. I really applaud-- when I came in on the commission, I wanted to know this kind of information, and this certainly is starting us down that road. Good work. Thank you very much for your time on this too, and director, for doing this. That's all.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Dr. Pack. Anyone else? Well, I would like to applaud you as well. That's a lot of work doing this. I'm pretty sure why most anglers are dissatisfied. That's not just here, it's all over the West, right? It's a challenge. We have a lot of challenges in that regard. Again, thank you very much for your presentation. We'll see you the next time. Thank you, [unintelligible 03:29:49].

Jason Clement: Thank you, Chairman, and the Commission. Pleasure to be here.

Richard Stump: Next is a public comment. I think we'll start with online.

Wheeler Brunschmid: We currently do not have anybody with their haised rand. What? Hands raised. Sorry, as soon as I said that, we do have one. Erin, you are allowed to speak.
[silence]

Erin Hunt: Good afternoon. Can you hear me okay?

Richard Stump: Yes.

Erin Hunt: Thank you for the opportunity to speak and for your dedication and carrying out your mission of conserving wildlife for future generations. My name is Erin Hunt with Lobos of the Southwest, a collaborative effort of concerned community members, scientists, educators, and conservation organizations working to save the Mexican gray wolf. We have 6,000 supporters and over a million digital community members who care about Mexican wolf conservation.

I'm speaking on behalf of people all over the world, who look to New Mexico to be a leader in science-based wildlife conservation. We thank you for your investments in staff and programs that ensure New Mexico's wild heritage is preserved today, tomorrow, and into the future. Mexican gray wolf, Asha, or F2754, showed us exactly what Lobos need to thrive, room to roam, and freedom to choose the places they call home. She wandered peacefully and was welcomed on the Valles Caldera National Preserve when she made her historic journey to the Jemez Mountains.

She and other wolves like her could be welcomed in suitable habitat in New Mexico. Again, if the commission and department take action to give Lobos the freedom to roam the landscapes, they and their king called home for millennia. We call in the commission to work with US Fish and Wildlife Service to remove the unscientific Interstate 40 boundary so Mexican wolves can naturally recolonize Northern New Mexico.

Federal Management entails keeping the population south of Interstate 40, despite peer-reviewed science showing that Northern New Mexico and Arizona habitats are essential for recovery. We've heard the concerns of ranchers living with wolves in Catron County, including the concern that Mexican wolf population density is higher in certain areas. One solution to this would be to allow for natural dispersal, including in suitable habitats in Northern New Mexico, so the population could more evenly distribute across the landscape.

We also asked the commission and department to 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. The captive population retains releases 36% more gene diversity than the wild population. Well-bonded family group releases have demonstrated success.

Pup fostering alone will take too long to achieve the desperately needed genetic rescue. Resuming family group releases in new locations, including suitable habitat in Northern New Mexico, would also help alleviate the current uneven distribution of lobos in certain areas. It would allow for additional future opportunities to conduct pup fostering operations in new places instead of being constrained to the same areas where Mexican wolf density is already high.

Finally, we encourage you to advocate for a fully funded and fully staffed Mexican Wolf Recovery Program so New Mexico continues to receive resources and support needed to recover Mexican wolves. Recovery will be most successful when done through collaboration between states, tribes, and the federal government. Thank you for considering these actions that could make a real difference for Mexican wolves and the many other native species that benefit from their presence on the landscape, as well as the rural communities where wolves are returned.

[silence]

Richard Stump: Thank you, Erin Hunt. Is there anybody else on that?

Wheeler Brunschmid: We do have one more, Mr. Chair.

Richard Stump: Then we have a three-minute limit on this, right?

Wheeler Brunschmid: Three minute, Mr. Chair.

Richard Stump: Okay. Thank you.

Wheeler Brunschmid: Kerrie. You are unmuted.

Kerrie Romero: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and commissioners. Kerrie Romero, executive director of the New Mexico Council of Outfitters and Guides. I just wanted to quickly mention the fisheries rule, which, of course, wasn't on the agenda for today, but in the August meeting, you all will be hearing the subsequent discussion on the fisheries rule. Normally, we have not really engaged much on the fisheries rule, but we have in the past couple of years heard from a lot of the guided fishing industry on changes that they would like to see made to both the management and the four-year rule cycle.

I recently submitted some comments to the public portal, which I think you all have also seen, and just wanted to give you guys a heads up that we will be making a number of recommendations for the four-year rule cycle. This is just a preliminary recommendations that we've made. We might have some additional comments later on, but just wanted to bring it to your attention, and we'll talk more about it in depth at the August meeting. Thank you.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Kerrie Romero. That's it for online, correct?

Wheeler Brunschmid: Yes, Mr. Chair.

Richard Stump: Thank you, guys. How about we start with Dan Roper?

[pause 03:35:09]

Dan Roper: Thank you. Hello again, commissioners. I have a quick comment, similar to Kerrie's, also about the fisheries rule. This was not something that was really on my radar I was planning to put much time into. I've probably answered a phone call every day for the past two weeks from people in our community in the broader angling community, TU members, fishing guides, fly shop owners interested in sharing ideas with us related to the fisheries rule.

Our plan now is to continue soliciting feedback to see what ideas rise to the top, to take those to the department, to Chief Patten and his team and then bring those to you. Really, like Kerrie said, not on the agenda today, but wanted to keep it on your radar. If you're not hearing much yet, I think you will be including from us. We haven't had an opportunity to really distill those ideas down to really what is worthwhile to bring to you. We'll be doing that work in the coming weeks, and so just wanted to keep that on your radar.

I have one other, I guess, comment. A colleague of mine, Doc Thompson, was in the room for most of the morning, and he had to leave, asked me just to put a couple things out there for consideration. Doc is a board member of our local chapter. He's also the owner of High Country Angler, an outdoor fishing

business that's been based in New Park in the Cimarron since I think about 1995. He's also the director of a local group that connects veterans with fly fishing called Trout Warriors.

Doc wanted to share some thoughts with you. He couldn't be here, so I said I would just quickly put a few of those out there. One thing that is a priority for our local chapter has been a mobility-impaired fishing project on the Cimarron. To date, the chapters invested about \$10,000 in designs for that project. We'll be going to the department soon to try to talk about how we can actually get that to implementation. That's just over the hill here, and Doc asked me to bring it up today.

He also asked me to applaud or encourage, whichever word you want to use, the department to look into forest health work on the Colin Neblett Wildlife Area. I know very little about the status of that, perhaps the director and others do, but just an encouragement to take a look at that, both from a habitat perspective, but also from a wildfire risk perspective.

Related to the fisheries rule, there is some interest in extending the Red Chile Water designation, the special trout water designation on the Cimarron for about a half mile upstream on the Cimarron River. I think you can expect that that will be one idea that's taken to the department for inclusion in the fisheries rule. Then finally, a thank you to the department for their role and a lot of great habitat work that's been done on the Cimarron. I don't fish the Cimarron much, but what I'm hearing is it's fishing very well when there's enough water in the river. That's in large part due to the habitat work that's been done.

Also, an appreciation for the increased enforcement presence on the Cimarron. One of the things we hear a lot about in the fishing community is concern about-- I guess that's a signal, is a concern about enforcement and the disparity between enforcing hunting regulations and enforcing fishing regulations. It sounds like people appreciate the extra emphasis on this Cimarron lately. Anyway, channeling Doc's thoughts. He was here for about five hours and then had to leave. Thank you.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Dan Roper. Next is Carl Chavis. Carl's not here. He went out? Thank you. How about Joe Ray from Hollenback Ranch. He left. [unintelligible 03:39:15] tendency to do a talk.

Jesse Deubel, executive director from Wildlife Federation.

[pause 03:39:21]

Jesse Deubel: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and commissioners. First, I'd like to start by extending a very, very warm welcome to our new Commissioner Witt from the New Mexico Wildlife Federation. We are very enthusiastic to have you on the board. We're also very happy to finally have a fully seated commission again. This was a fantastic meeting, very productive. I appreciate all of you being here. Secondly, thank you so much for scheduling a June meeting in Red River. Can't think of a better place to be on a Friday in June than this particular community here. It's spectacular. Lastly, thank you all for your support of the State Wildlife Action Plan, and also the recognition of Assistant Chief Seamster and her great work and the great work of her team. It was really, really wonderful, and all of your support is very much appreciated. Thank you.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Jesse Deubel. Is Doc Thompson here? Dropping like flies. Bob Nordstrom? Not here. Bernard Inez. Oh, hang on a second. It's Bob Nordstrom.

Bob Nordstrom: Chairman, commissioners, director, thank you much for this opportunity. I usually don't get up and do this because it's not one of my favorite things. First thing is I'm one of your customers, the three Cs. What I'm interested in is finding information from the department. I have been working the last few weeks off and on when it's hot outside on the enhancement funds. It's \$23 million, that crazy people buy raffle tickets when auctioner auctioning items. I say crazy people because somebody paid \$1.5 million for a sheep tag in New Mexico.

Anyway, the issue is the website's not up to date. The latest information on sheep on dollars collected is fiscal year 2000. The latest date is 2018 for population numbers. We have one herd out there, the Hymas herd, which had two fabulous sheep killed out of it this past year that unbelievable sheep that were taken. There's nothing on there regarding elk. There's information about each hunt unit, which if anybody's wanting to know which of the good hunt units and which one aren't.

Then what comes to it, if you want information, when you call up there if you talk to some people, they tell you to fill out a Freedom of Information Act request. I'm not the enemy. I want to help you. I know some information regarding sheep and elk because I belong to both organizations. Why do I belong to those organizations? Because they put money back into New Mexico.

I've dropped organizations because they don't do anything for wildlife or habitat. My interest is in habitat. I still do a little bit physical work with, but my friends and people I work with watch me very closely. I'm interested in creating habitat, improving habitat because, if we increase habitat, we increase carrying capacity. If you increase carrying capacity, there are many more animals out there. If there's more animals out there, we might have more animals to hunt. Right, Stewart?

I'm looking at information that's dollars available to match to conservation groups. Army have funded two wildlife projects this year for them. I know the sheep have been funding projects here in the state. We're going to study the impact of wind turbines on elk. Anybody do that before? No. That's what I'm interested in. I don't need any secret data. I don't think there's any secret data out there that shouldn't be shared, but I'd like to see it available. If it's on the web, I'd like to be able to search for it to find it. Thank you.

Richard Stump: Well, thank you, Bob. Appreciate it. How about we move on to Bernard Inez?

[pause 03:44:37]

Bernard Inez: Good afternoon, commissioners, Director Sloane, Chairman Stump. First of all, for the record, my name is Bernard Inez. I know you guys got a new commissioner on board. Bernard Inez I'm with the Jicarilla Apache Nation, Director of the Jicarilla Game Fish Department. I do have a packet for you. I'll give it to you. It's just an update of what we have been talking about. First of all, I would like to thank you guys for this opportunity. I know I'm limited on time, so I'll just get to the meat and potatoes of this.

We have been meeting. We had the last meeting in southern part of Roswell. Let you guys know what Jicarilla-- our concerns are and what our end goal would like to be. Last week, I got a letter, a memorandum sent to me from Mr. Director Sloane. I have a response to this. I'm just going to go down for time purposes. We appreciate the willingness to reduce 2016 November licenses in Unit 2B by 20%. However, it seems our request may have been misinterpreted.

For clarification, our former request at the Roswell Game Commission meeting was a 20% reduction to all 2016 rifle licenses in Game Unit 2B, which would result in a total of 345 licenses that will be taken out of November rifle seasons. We feel that this will be most beneficial to our objective of restoring buck age class and abundance. The memorandum received via email from Director Sloane on 6/10/25 states that the reduction was only subject to the five rifle hunt codes in November. That is Deer Code 113 to Deer Code 117, which will only remove 175 licenses.

We are grateful for this opportunity to work together for the benefit of mule deer. The 20% reduction to the combined rifle hunt license quota in Game Unit 2B strategically removed from the five November hunt codes is our desired starting point for a real meaningful conservation measures heading into the next deer cycle. Moving forward, we continue to ask the following from New Mexico Game Commission, adapt quality deer management in 2B in the next deer cycle. That'll be 2017 to 2030.

The state commission direct New Mexico Department of Game and Fish staff to work cooperatively with the Jicarilla Game and Fish Department to develop a management plan for our shared deer resource. I'll say that again, for our shared deer resource, which will provide a clear path and continuity towards a meaningful solution for both parties. This will also serve as a meaningful collaboration that could be used in the next mule deer--

Richard Stump: I think your time is up, Bernard. Three minutes.

Sabrina Pack: Chairman Stump. Because we've had so much on this, and they've come so far--

Richard Stump: Absolutely.

Sabrina Pack: -can we please grant them at least a little bit of time?

Richard Stump: Yes, we can.

Sabrina Pack: Maybe five minutes.

Richard Stump: Absolutely. That's why the mic went off, though, because your time was up.

Bernard Inez: Thank you. I do appreciate you guys. We will appreciate the opportunity to host a special game commission meeting with you all. They're at the Jicarilla Chama Land and Cattle facility there in Chama, New Mexico. I think at this time we can clarify the significance of how important deer is to the Jicarilla Apache Nation culturally and how sacred this animal is to us.

At this work session, we will greatly appreciate a presentation from the state's mule deer management plan and the effort to increase our understanding of New Mexico's mule deer management strategy in

North Central New Mexico. I guess what I'm saying is I would like to invite you guys, and hopefully you guys will entertain a special meeting, and we will host that.

The other thing that I got from the last presentation is I would respectfully ask that all tribes, all nations, all pueblos be included on these surveys because we are New Mexico residents. This is our resource also. I stand before you representing 4,009 tribal members of the Jicarilla Apache Nation who are New Mexico residents. I hope you guys consider that. I did bring a packet that you guys have all the information, and I would like that to be accepted as public comment. It's the same information you guys already have, but I do have one for the new commissioner. Thank you.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Bernard. Next up is Kyle Tator, who is wildlife biologist for Jicarilla.

[pause 03:50:29]

Kyle Tator: Good afternoon, everybody. It's nice to see everyone again. Chair Stump and Commissioners, Director Sloane. It's nice to meet you. I look forward to getting to know you. My name is Kyle Tator, I'm the wildlife biologist for Jicarilla Apache Nation. I would just like to echo what Director Inez has said, is we appreciate what we have come this far with, with the 20%. That is a wonderful gesture. We do feel like this is a starting point of something much more meaningful to make much-needed adjustments in Unit 2B.

To be frank, I do think that, for continuity purposes, it would be very smart that we sit down and start talking about long-term relationships, resolving some of these issues that have created this issue today. With that, I appreciate your time. Thank you for hosting us in Red River, and we look forward to working with you in the future.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Kyle. I'm going to circle back around to Carl Chavez. Did he come back?

Carl Chavez: Hi, my name is Carl Chavez. I'm a taxidermist in Central New Mexico. What I'm coming to you guys with right now, and I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you guys right now, as a taxidermist, we see trends. When we see a trend, we try and speak out what is happening in certain areas of the state. I really liked what the Jicarilla is trying to do right now.

I know it's a little hard to hear, but trying to manage this herd for quality like it used to be-- because we see trends and I see-- what had happened in the years that I've been doing taxidermy, I'm seeing less and less and the quality going down and down. Historically, that unit was phenomenal, and I would sure like to see it in its glory days like this. I think managing the unit for quality is a step in the right direction. I wanted to thank you guys for the opportunity to speak to you guys right now in regards with other taxidermists that couldn't be here today like this. We talk and have the same sentiment about what is going on, and we'd like to help out any way we can. Thank you, guys. I appreciate it, and have a wonderful day.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Mr. Chavez. Commissioner Clemente would like to make a comment. He is not here.

Fernando Clemente: I'm just going to say, Mr. Chavez, thank you for coming. I know him. Actually, believe it or not, I'm a taxidermist as well. I know Mr. Chavez has been involved in the New Mexico Taxidermy Association for many years, and that's one of the voices that I always wonder why we didn't have, or I haven't heard up to right now. I thank you for being here today. Really good taxidermist by the way.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Clemente. I think that does it for public comment. How about commissioner comments? Do we have any commissioners who'd like to bring up anything? Talk about anything? Commissioner Lopez?

Tirzio Lopez: Thank you, Chair Stump and commissioners. District 3 has been pretty quiet since we last met, but I did have the opportunity to go tour the Jicarilla Nation with Director Inez and Biologist Tator, and did see all the documented and infrastructure work that they're doing out there for the betterment of wildlife, particularly mule deer.

What they're doing, they have a great project involving mahogany, where they had a hand crew out there go thin mahogany to make it grow better, which is a strong food source for mule deer. They have drinkers scattered throughout the reservation that are providing-- As you know, in that part of Rio Arriba County, it's scarce water, and they're feeding or providing water to various types of wildlife with the infrastructure.

They have a great staff out there. I was able to actually meet one of their game wardens this past weekend, [unintelligible 03:55:29], and I got to speak with her a little bit on how things are going for them. I believe that the commission should host a joint working session with the tribe in order to, if not have a conversation, but also to look at both sides of the story. They've been ignored long enough. It's very concerning what he said, our earlier presenter, that they didn't partake in-- and I say all Indigenous people in New Mexico, for the survey.

Although, they may have their own wildlife departments, but I think we've coexisted with them before. I think we should try to have a meeting, and not only to start or end with the Jicarilla Apache Nation, but other nations, if they do come forward with their concerns. I think this would be a good segue to better the department now that we're getting new money, license fees are coming in. We're doing customer surveys to improve the department, and also we're going into rulemaking sessions.

It's the perfect storm, storm for choice of better words. Other than that, our officers in there have been doing great work. I've gotten a lot of compliments or accolades for the work that's been done in the stocking in Region 3. Since Chief Patten's not here, but everybody is excited. Abiquiu stock, Rio Chama stock, the [unintelligible 03:57:11] lakes, the [unintelligible 03:57:12] lakes, Hopewell, El Vado, and Heron. Good job, director.

Please send the accolades down to the staff. As well as our men and women in gray and black back there, you guys are doing an excellent job throughout the state, and keep up the good work. Thank you.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Lopez. Anyone else? Yes.

Fernando Clemente: Well, it's been a busy month. As always, I've been interacting with the community. I've been meeting with members of the public, having meetings, phone calls, answering emails, and I apologize if I haven't answered some of the emails from some of the public. I will get there. Another thing that I've done attending meetings with nonprofit organizations regarding different issues, whether it is access, whether it is management, whether it is different things. I try to be on part of that all the time. As well, I attended the meetings with the Jicarilla Apache Nation as well to talk about mule deer populations and as well to the WAFWA conference in Utah. I was there as well, which I learned some of the other states' concerns. We're not the only state, and I think it makes me realize we're in better shape than other states. With that being said, thank you.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Clemente. Commissioner Pack?

Sabrina Pack: Thank you, Chairman. I don't know where to begin, but the thoughts of the Jicarilla-- I think four of us have now met with them since our last commission meeting. I appreciate the work being done and the consideration of their needs. I do think with the request today asking for the special meeting, I hope that we can do that. Actually, when I met with them yesterday, one of their request was this meeting, an invitation to come to see the work that they're doing, but to also hear more from what New Mexico Department of Game and Fish does and to work together on a plan together.

I think that's the right step forward. I think that we should support that move to develop a plan, but to also go meet with them and hear from them and us be able to talk as well. There's other things I've been involved with. Of course, some of my commissioners were at WAFWA. I went to the Cattle Growers Association Mid-year Conference early this month. I'm going to I attend the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. That's happening tomorrow night here, so that's going to be exciting, and I look forward to that.

If I can, I attend some meetings virtually. I attended the Upland Game Rule public meeting on May 28. I appreciate the department's decision to hold the meeting in Southern New Mexico. That was a request because many of the species that are discussed are concentrated there. I found the conversation insightful, particularly concerns raised about Ruidoso, RV Park. He talked about tourism and the impact of that. Then the feedback from David Heft.

The Fishery Rules public virtual meeting attended on Monday, again, thoughtful dialog. I encourage the continued participation. We're just now seeing the emails come in. Thank you to David Leung for his specific concerns about regulatory language. I think that'll be good. Kerrie Romero, she also had some really interesting action items that she's going to be presenting.

I look forward to our continued work together as we work through the needs of our public, our concerns of our public. My final thought would be to encourage the members of public to always reach out to us when

they have opinions or concerns, ideas, because your voice matters, and we're here to help you. Please continue to reach out. I always try to respond, so thank you.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Pack. Anybody else?

Christopher Witt: If I could just make a quick comment?

Richard Stump: Please.

Christopher Witt: I don't want to drag this on or repeat what you guys have already said. I want to second the comments of Commissioner Pack and Commissioner Lopez, and Clemente. I just want to say, again, I'm really thankful to be here, and I'm impressed with all the great work of the department and all the opinions shared by the commenters. I'm listening carefully. I just want to say my first impression is optimism for the future. There's a lot of to get things ahead, so I'm excited for that. Thanks.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Witt. Thank you, everyone, for being here. Thank you, the representatives of Jicarilla for being here. As they pointed out, they were in Roswell. I was to make a request of the commission to switch from an opportunity management paradigm to more of a quality management model in Unit 2B for the deer hunts. Commissioner Clemente and I also met with them in Socorro a few weeks after that.

The Nation, they originally asked us to open the Deer Rule a year early. The Commission doesn't feel that would be appropriate. As you know, the Deer Rule will open next year, and that will provide opportunity for bigger discussions with all stakeholders regarding this issue, as well as all the other issues and concerns regarding deer. There seems to be quite a bit of support for the Jicarilla Nation, both from the public and from the political.

That's when we decided to, in the interim, cut back 20% of the deer licenses for Unit 2B for the November deer hunts. We're looking forward to see how that works and how it goes. We're going to move forward to all this, and the Deer Rule will open, and we'll see how it all comes to play in the end. Thank you very much, everyone, for being here.

Tirzio Lopez: Mr. Chair.

Richard Stump: Yes.

Tirzio Lopez: Just a quick comment. I didn't finish my comments. I'm going to apologize. I did notice Director Inez stated that there might have been a discrepancy in the request regarding the response. When the request came in, I thought it was going to be the number he said. I don't know, of the 300 and some tags, if the Department would be willing to speak with him and have further conversations so we can get this right and see where we can-- some type of resolve with a path going forward to see how we can work on it.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Commissioner Lopez. That was surprising me, too, because when we were in our meeting in Socorro, we agreed with that November hunt. I'm surprised by that as well.

Tirzio Lopez: Well, offline, if the department could speak with or touch base with the tribe to see what further we can do to correct or work on or improve or speak about. I forgot all the little comments after that.

Michael Sloane: Mr. Chair, just for clarity, for my own sake, when you say that you were surprised by that, you were surprised by the number on the memo, or were you were surprised by Mr. Inez's higher number?

Tirzio Lopez: The number on the memo.

Richard Stump: Was that addressed to me?

Michael Sloane: Yes.

Richard Stump: I was surprised by Director Inez.

Michael Sloane: That was my understanding when we spoke after your meeting in Socorro, that that was the agreed-upon number in Socorro. I, too, am confused by the confusion.

Richard Stump: There we are with that.

Sharon Salazar-Hickey: Mr. Chair and commissioners, today has been a very wonderful meeting. I can't say thank you enough to everybody who participated, who attended. I thought it was a very good meeting. I struggle with what the commissioners have said in this last round because we have a very special invitation from the Apache Nation, from Director Inez, and others.

The Jicarilla, as we know, the mule deer issue is very sacred to them. Now, Director Sloane, we do not hold special meetings upon every request. We get a lot of requests. Commissioners get invited a lot. We go to different events. Somehow in my heart of hearts, I feel that this is something different. This is a nation. I also heard earlier that it would not just be them, but it would be all tribes, all pueblos in the state of New Mexico.

I do see, personally, a very good opportunity for some definition and some formality, because, if there happens to be questions about, "Wait, did we hear this? Or what are the numbers? Or there's some confusion," sometimes having a special meeting might be very helpful. That's just my comment. I know on the agenda, it's comments, not necessarily something where we can make a motion and say, "Can we have a special meeting?" I don't know if that's where you were going, but I'm rambling. Sorry, I'm going to go on.

Sabrina Pack: Chairman Stump?

Richard Stump: Commissioner Pack?

Sabrina Pack: I just want to clarify with Commissioner Salazar-Hickey. I believe what they were talking about when they talked about the all tribes was in regard to the survey, not to this meeting. When I met with them yesterday, this would be a meeting with them, but a lot of supporters even outside in this whole region, I would think. That's the way I interpreted that.

This is still just as special and just as important. I think you're really right. This is a unique request that I think that we should honor. If it's appropriate, I would certainly like to make a motion that we work towards figuring out how to have a special meeting for this and accept this invitation.

Richard Stump: I believe that probably most commissioners, and not all, would be open to that meeting. We'd have to have a public notice if we do that and when is that going to take place, all that kind of thing. Do we need a motion?

Vice-Chair Salazar-Hickey: Mr. Chair, commissioners, Director Sloane, I'm looking at my calendar. I know that July, we have no meeting. We have a meeting in August 15th in reserve, and then our next meeting is in November 7th in Los Alamos. I didn't hear a date that was proposed by the-- were you looking at the summer or at the fall? I know that the department is very busy with the rulemaking, comments. I don't want to impose a burden on them, but I'm not sure what the invitation was or the date.

Bernard Inez: How do you turn this thing on? The invitation is open invitation. I know that there's probably some rules that you guys got to follow when it comes to posting for public notice, so we are open. This is very important to us, so whatever date works for everybody, I will drop what I am doing, and I will make it happen. I am willing to continue conversation, whether it be over phone calls or emails, to where we can figure out a good date that suits us all, and we will be prepared to host.

Vice-Chair Salazar-Hickey: Mr. Chair, Commissioners, and thank you, Director. I think that's very helpful. If you could stay there. Director Sloane, I know that, in July, there's an audit. They're kicking off-- and that's going to take a lot of work and some time, and then preparing for the Reserve State Game Commission, where we're going to have some rulemaking activity. Now, I'm looking at the calendar of September. Again, we're getting into the hunting season. Is that a good time? September?

Richard Stump: I don't think I want to do this right now. It's too involved to look at our schedules and try to determine a date.

Vice-Chair Salazar-Hickey: Fair enough.

Richard Stump: Why don't we just leave this open for now, and we'll figure it out?

Bernard Inez: Understood.

Vice-Chair Salazar-Hickey: Mr. Chair, Mr. Commissioners, that said, I think there will be public notice in order to have a special meeting. Correct, Director Sloane?

Michael Sloane: Mr. Chair, Commissioner, Vice Chair, yes, we'll have to notice it like any other meeting.

Richard Stump: Okay. Thank you, everybody. Thank you, Bernard.

Bernard Inez: Thank you.

Richard Stump: Thank you, Director Sloane. I guess that winds it up. Now it's executive session. Can I have a motion?

Michael Sloane: I so move--

Vice-Chair Salazar-Hickey: Director Sloane, can you assist us with a motion, please?

Michael Sloane: Mr. Chair, I believe a motion to the effect to move to adjourn into executive session, closed to the public, pursuant to Section 10-15-1(H)(8) NMSA 1978 to discuss property purchases, acquisition or disposal, pursuant to Section 10-15-1(H)(7) NMSA 1978 to discuss attorney-client privilege litigation update, and pursuant to 10-15-1(B) limited personnel matters.

Richard Stump: Is there a second?

Fernando Clemente: I second.

Richard Stump: Director Sloane, please call the roll.

Michael Sloane: I'd like to believe someone said, "So moved," afterward, but who would have said that?

Sabrina Pack: I say so moved. Then whoever seconded can second it.

Fernando Clemente: I second the motion.

Sabrina Pack: Now, we can move. We can ask for the vote.

Richard Stump: [unintelligible 04:13:32] call the roll, please.

Michael Sloane: Vice Chair Hickey?

Vice-Chair Salazar-Hickey: Yes.

Michael Sloane: Commissioner Clemente?

Fernando Clemente: Yes.

Michael Sloane: Commissioner Witt?

Christopher Witt: Yes.

Michael Sloane: Commissioner Fulfer?

Commissioner Fulfer: Yes.

Michael Sloane: Commissioner Pack?

Sabrina Pack: Yes.

Michael Sloane: Commissioner Lopez?

Tirzio Lopez: Yes.

Michael Sloane: Chair Stump?

Richard Stump: Yes.

Michael Sloane: Motion passes.

Richard Stump: We are now adjourned to executive session.

Richard Stump: This commission has adjourned into executive session, closed to the public. During the executive session, the commission discussed only those matters specified in its motion to adjourn, and it took no action as to any matter. Does any commissioner wish to make a motion?

Vice-Chair Salazar-Hickey: Yes, Mr. Chair. Commissioners, members of the public, I would like to move to permit the chair to sign an easement granting NextEra Energy Transmission a right-of-way across the Black Hills Wildlife Management Area in Roosevelt County, New Mexico, for purposes of constructing and operating an electric transmission line.

Richard Stump: Was there a second?

Fernando Clemente: I second the motion.

Richard Stump: Any discussion? All those in favor?

Vice-Chair Salazar-Hickey: Aye.

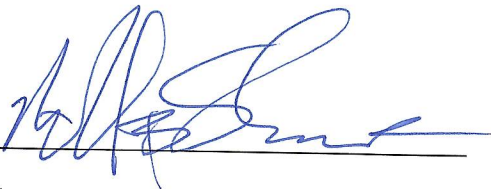
Richard Stump: Aye.

Richard Stump: Any opposed? Motion passes. Thank you all for attending and participating in today's meeting. Our next meeting is August 15th in Reserve, New Mexico. We hereby adjourn.

[04:15:08] [END OF AUDIO]

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES
NEW MEXICO STATE GAME COMMISSION**

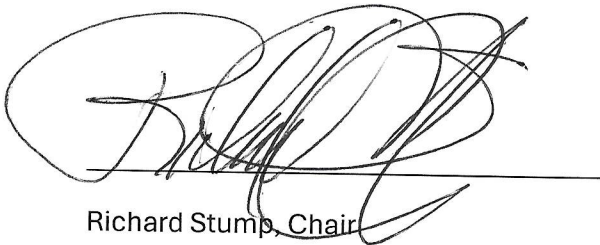
**Friday June 13, 2025
Red River Convention Center
101 W River St.
Red River, NM 87558**



Michael B. Sloane, Director

8/15/2025

Date



Richard Stump, Chair

New Mexico State Game Commission

8/15/2025

Date