



Sportsman's News Roundup

April 1, 2011

Call governor now to get SB 196 over finish line

Although the Legislature approved the bill that will give New Mexico residents some 3,400 additional big game licenses, **Gov. Susana Martinez still has to decide whether to sign it into law or veto the bill.** It's hard to imagine that she would not support increasing the number of elk, antelope and other Big Game Draw licenses for the residents of New Mexico, but **opponents of the bill — primarily nonresident outfitters — want her to kill it.**

All New Mexico sportsmen are urged to **contact the governor immediately** and ask her respectfully to sign Senate Bill 196. Remind her that New Mexico hunters who already buy a small game (general hunting) license will see their license fees go down under SB 196, and that resident deer licenses would drop. You could also point out that New Mexico residents deserve more than the 78 percent of draw licenses we currently receive, and that SB 196 increases the percentage of licenses allocated to residents to 84 percent. You can call the Governor's Office at (505) 476-2200 or [click here](#) to send her an e-mail.

Game Commission nominations mostly on target

Sportsmen still holding breath on further action

Sportsmen should be happy with three of the State Game Commission nominations announced last week by Gov. Martinez to the seven member commission. Martinez's nominations to represent sportsmen of SE, SW and NW New Mexico fit the bill of what sportsmen had been asking for. The sportsmen of NE New Mexico, however, are still waiting to see how things will shake out and whether they will get the same fair representation on the commission as the hunters and anglers in other parts of the state. So far, Martinez has nominated:

- **Bill Montoya of Alto** to represent southeast New Mexico. Montoya spent 28 years with the Department of Game and Fish and was director from 1988-94.
- **Jerry Maracchini of Rio Rancho** to represent the northwest region. Maracchini was a 27-year department veteran, and was director from 1994-2000.
- **Rob Hoffman of Las Cruces** to represent the southwest region. He is a retired New Mexico State University chemistry professor and vice president of New Mexico Quail, as well as member of numerous other sportsmen's organizations.
- **Scott Bidegain of Tucumcari** to represent the northeast region. His family owns T-4 Cattle Co., he is on the board of directors of the New Mexico Cattlegrowers Association, and his family's ranch receives resalable antelope permits from the Department of Game and Fish. On paper Bidegain is the ideal candidate for the statewide agricultural representative on the Commission, but unless Martinez appoints a sportsman representative for the region without personal financial conflicts of interest, Bidegain would be sportsmen's voice on the commission for Santa Fe, Taos, Colfax, Union, Mora, Harding, Quay, San Miguel, Guadalupe and Torrance counties.

The governor has not yet taken action on former Gov. Bill Richardson's remaining appointees. Jim McClintic of Albuquerque, Tom Arvas of Albuquerque and Dickie Salopek of Las Cruces. **McClintic's term expired** at the end of December but he can serve until a replacement is named, or the Governor could choose to renominate him for Senate confirmation. Salopek was nominated by Richardson, but was not confirmed by the Senate. Martinez [revoked the pending appointment](#) of Salopek, so the Senate did not act on his confirmation during the recent legislative session. Salopek, a Martinez family friend who currently holds the agriculture seat, **could be renominated or replaced** by the governor. Tom Arvas is the one commissioner whose term did not expire and who was not removed by the governor, which means he has now served under five governors – Toney Anaya, Garey Carruthers, Bruce King, Bill Richardson and Martinez. His current term, representing the sportsmen of Bernalillo County, expires Dec. 31, 2011.

New Mexico sportsmen had been hoping Martinez would do more than her predecessor to restore their confidence in the Game Commission. More than two dozen sportsmen's organizations submitted a letter to Martinez in January asking that she appoint people who have a proven track record of service to hunting, angling and wildlife and who have no financial conflict of interest. Montoya, Maracchini and Hoffman all meet those criteria.

Game Department leadership in commission's hands

The Game Commission has the legal authority to hire and fire the director of the Department of Game and Fish — a hard-fought law that was passed with sportsmen's support in the 1930s. But some past governors have stepped in and done the hiring themselves when commissioners were unwilling or unable to uphold their legal duty. The same sportsmen's organizations that asked Martinez to make better Game Commission appointments also asked her to honor the commission's authority to hire their own director — and for the commission to **conduct an open search for a director** from both within and outside the department and making the finalists' names public.

If the commission needs a model, members can look at how a new director of the New Mexico Department of Agriculture is being hired. State law gives that authority to the regents of New Mexico State University. In late March the regents announced they had selected three nominees for the position and said they planned to hold public meetings with the candidates to gather input from the agriculture community. The regents are expected to make a final hire for the Department of Agriculture director at an upcoming meeting. **The State Game Commission could go a long way toward recovering the trust of New Mexico sportsmen by following a similar model.**

Other legislative news

The state House of Representatives approved Senate Bill 196 – the resident quota bill – in the waning hours of the Legislature on a 45-21 vote. The bill not only increase residents' share of each draw hunt to 84 percent, but also gives residents all elk licenses in wildlife management areas and all cow elk licenses statewide. [Click here](#) to see how your state representative voted on this crucial measure.

Other legislation of interest to sportsmen approved this year include a new big game license plate and a request for Game and Fish to work with federal officials on improving the San Juan River quality waters trout fishery. For more on how other legislation of interest to sportsmen fared in the Legislature, [click here](#).

Bow hunts in Bandelier to be studied

Among the legislation that passed was a Senate memorial sponsored by Sen. Tim Eichenberg of Albuquerque that could lead to **bowhunting for elk in Bandelier National Monument**. [Senate Memorial 21](#) asks the Department of Game and Fish to work with National Park Service officials to determine the feasibility of allowing limited bow hunts for elk in Bandelier's backcountry. Bow hunts in Bandelier could help reduce habitat degradation problems caused by elk and help distribute elk better in the Jemez Mountains, including neighboring Valles Caldera National Preserve.

Action in Washington

Sens. Jeff Bingaman and Tom Udall have **reintroduced a bill in Congress to transfer the management of Valles Caldera National Preserve** to the National Park Service, provided that hunting and fishing continue. Their bill, [S. 564](#), was necessary because the 111th Congress adjourned last year before it could take up a similar measure. Sportsmen have long wanted better access to the area, but have been stymied by a misguided mandate from Congress to operate the preserve much like a private business. Under National Park Service management, the hunting and fishing would continue to be managed by the Department of Game and Fish, but access would be easier for hunters and anglers — and through joint management bowhunts could even be expanded into neighboring Bandelier National Monument.

New Mexico's two senators also reintroduced legislation to create the **Rio Grande del Norte National Conservation Area**, which would protect hunting, fishing and other traditional uses of the area roughly between Ute Mountain and San Antonio Mountain in northern New Mexico.

The Senate has so far beaten back House efforts to axe conservation programs that have benefited hunters and anglers for years. The House majority in February approved HR1, which made \$61 billion in cuts (out of a \$3.7 trillion budget). But the bill assigned a disproportionate share of those budget cuts to programs crucial to sportsmen. It would, for example, eliminate funding for State Wildlife Grants and the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, and slash programs like the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Conservation Reserve Program. The bill also included dozens of amendments that have no budget impact yet hobble efforts to protect wildlife and habitat. The efforts to defund habitat and public land management are the first steps toward trying to sell public lands used by hunters and anglers. The Senate has rejected HR1, but budget negotiations continue. [Click here](#) to find out what you can do to fight these anti-public lands efforts.

NRA and others slam Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife

The NRA, Safari Club International and the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation publicly disavowed a misleading press release issued by Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife, saying the Utah-based group **"blatantly misrepresents the position of these organizations regarding legislation to delist gray wolves under the Endangered Species Act."**

Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife, in a March 11 news release, claimed that the NRA, SCI and CSF were opposed to language relating to the delisting of gray wolves in legislation pending before Congress, according to the NRA. "In fact," the [NRA announced on March 17](#), "these organizations support that language, as well as every other measure that has been introduced in the U.S. House and Senate to date addressing this important issue."

The NRA cautioned the public to **"exercise caution in accepting as fact, or repeating, any claims made by Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife**, Big Game Forever or any person claiming to represent them. Due to the blatant misrepresentation contained in the press release circulated by these two groups, any claims they make in the future should be thoroughly investigated and independently confirmed."

Robert Espinoza, the executive director for Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife-New Mexico, testified before the New Mexico Legislature this winter in opposition to SB 196, the bill that would give New Mexico families some 3,400 additional elk, antelope and other Big Game Draw licenses every year. Last year he testified against making any changes to the Antelope Private Lands Use System, which gives 70 percent of all available antelope licenses in New Mexico to private landowners, leaving just 30 percent for the Big Game Draw.

Also in the news

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will begin conducting its national survey of hunters and anglers on April 1. If you're lucky enough to be called, please take the time to answer. The surveys provide the only comprehensive figures on hunting, fishing and wildlife-watching in the nation. The survey is conducted every five years and this year will involve 53,000 households. Another 19,000 anglers and hunters will get further questions in a follow-up. The 2006 survey showed that 87.5 million Americans enjoyed some form of wildlife-related recreation and spent more than \$122.3 billion on activities such as hunting and fishing.

Sportsmen can have a say in how their Habitat Stamp Program fees are spent at a series of meetings this month around the state. The program budget of almost \$800,000 annually comes from hunters and anglers who must purchase a \$5 Habitat to hunt, fish or trap on most federal lands. The Habitat Stamp Citizen Advisory Committee meetings are set for:

- **Albuquerque** – April 5, 1 p.m., Dept. of Game and Fish office, 3841 Midway Place NE
- **Bloomfield** – April 7, 1 p.m., U.S. Forest Service office, 664 East Broadway
- **Taos** – April 11, 1 p.m., Bureau of Land Management office, 226 Cruz Alta Road
- **Las Cruces** – April 14, 9 a.m., BLM office, 1800 Marquess St.
- **Ruidoso** – April 16, 10 a.m., U.S. Forest Service office, 901 Mechem Drive
- **Silver City** – April 18, 9 a.m. Gila National Forest office, 3005 E. Camino del Bosque

Department of Game and Fish officers are looking for information regarding the illegal killing of a doe antelope March 20 or 21 on Ensenada Mesa, southeast of Bloomfield. The antelope was shot with a small-caliber firearm and left to rot, the department said in a release. Callers with information that leads to the arrest or charges against wildlife law violators are eligible for a reward up to \$350. Call (800) 432-4263 if you have any information about this wildlife crime or any other.

New Mexico Conservation Calendar

Bowhunters looking to test their skills are invited to Clovis on April 9-10 to a Rinehart 100 competition hosted by the Clovis Bowhunters Club. Archers can shoot at 100 targets over two days or 50 targets in a single day, with targets ranging from anteaters to zebras to alien invaders. There are numerous competition classes, including for kids 10 and under, along with special events and door prizes. For more information contact Paul McAlister at (575) 799-3391.

Landowners have until April 15 to enroll their property in the USDA's Conservation Reserve Program, which can provide financial aid to establish or enhance wildlife habitat on private property. The purpose of the program is to retire environmentally sensitive cropland from agricultural production and convert it to conservation covers to provide long-term benefits to soil, water and wildlife, according to a news release from the National Wild Turkey Federation. [Click here](#) to learn more about the CRP.

If your group has an upcoming event of interest to sportsmen, post it on the New Mexico Conservation Calendar, a free service of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation. E-mail the information to nmwildlife@nmwildlife.org or call (505) 299-5404.

Pass it on

If you appreciate receiving the Sportsman's News Roundup, please share this newsletter with a friend and ask them to get involved by joining our Sportsman's Alert network. New Mexico sportsmen need to stay involved to ensure our hunting and fishing traditions continue. **And please make a contribution to NMWF.** With sportsmen like you, we can continue to make a difference. [Click here to donate now.](#)

About the New Mexico Wildlife Federation

Founded in 1914 by sportsman and conservation pioneer Aldo Leopold, the New Mexico Wildlife Federation is New Mexico's first and most effective conservation advocate. We are dedicated to protecting New Mexico's wildlife, habitat and outdoor way of life. We spearheaded permanent protection of our hunting and fishing rights in the Valle Vidal, and stopped cold the previous sell-off of your public lands. We believe that the best way to get things done is to build consensus with common goals.

Our key priorities are: Opportunity Habitat Youth

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