

Jan. 13, 2012

Be prepared: Big changes in this year's Big Game Draw

Hunters can apply now for the Big Game Draw, but it's not what you're used to. **The application process has gone through huge changes this year.**

Perhaps the biggest change is that **all applications must be done online.** Paper applications are a thing of the past. If you're reading this email, you're probably among the vast majority of hunters who already apply online. But if you know hunters who don't use computers much, **do them a favor and help them navigate the online application process. And don't wait until the last week to apply.** There could be an online traffic jam of last-minute filers.

Another big change this year is that once you apply for a hunt and hit the "Send" button, **you cannot go back and edit your hunt choices.** In the past you had that option. Starting this year, you can only delete the entire application and start over, but you will forfeit your \$8 application fee and will have to wait until May to get a refund for that particular hunt. The change resulted from requests from hunters who wanted to have their credit card charged at the time of application rather than at the draw hunt deadline, according to Game and Fish Administrative Services Director Alexa Sandoval. "So that's what we did," she said. But charging when the application is submitted makes it too complicated to allow for changes. That's why you can delete an application and start over, but not edit an application, she said.



Photo by Garrett VeneKlasen

The decision to go paperless this year came as a surprise to many. The Department of Game and Fish has been discussing the idea for some time, but the issue was decided internally and did not come before the Game Commission for approval. The department is offering assistance to hunters who need help applying. **A toll-free help line** is available from noon to 8 p.m. through March 20 (888-248-6866.) And department staff will be at select locations throughout the state in February and March with computers and answers to your questions (see below for details.) **The deadline for most big game licenses is March 28.** The bear and turkey draw deadline is Feb. 1.

Several other changes this year result from the passage of Senate Bill 196. The measure increased New Mexico resident hunters' share of draw licenses to 84 percent, up from 78 percent but still far short of the 90 percent that is common in most western states. **The increase gives resident hunters more than 3,000 additional elk, antelope and other big game licenses.** (The nonresident quota fell to 6 percent. Outfitters are still guaranteed a share of licenses – 10 percent – but now residents can apply for that license pool.)

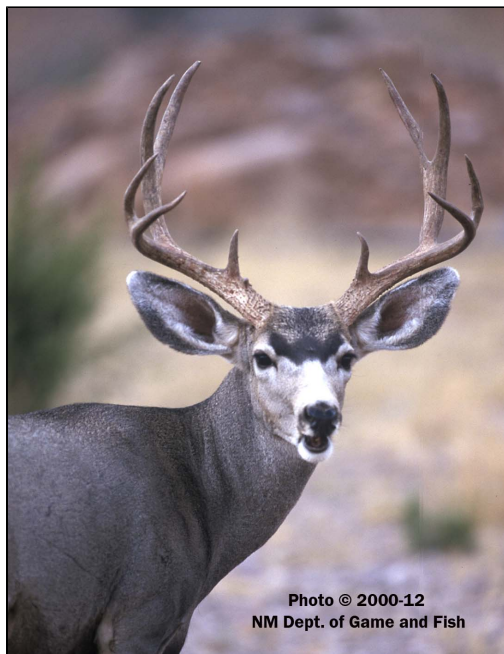


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NM Dept. of Game and Fish

To ensure that Game and Fish would not lose funding as a result of the quota change, SB 196 **requires all big game hunters – public draw or private land authorization – to buy a general hunting license (\$15 for residents, \$65 for nonresidents).** The new general hunting license allows the holder to hunt small game and birds other than turkey, so it's basically the same as the old small game license but \$5 cheaper. A combination general hunting/fishing license is now \$30, down from \$33.

Those who apply for but do not receive a draw license will get a refund, as always. They can also get their general hunting license refunded, though Game and Fish is encouraging hunters to **use the license and hunt small game or upland and migratory birds.** To get the refund, however, you must request it when you apply for a draw license. There are no refunds for those who buy the combined hunting/fishing license.

Another result of SB 196 is that resident deer licenses also fell by \$5, to \$42. Junior/senior licenses are now \$30.

Also, the **oryx deadline** is now the same as elk, antelope and most other big game species – March 28.

One clear advantage of paperless applications is that **results will be announced a month earlier, on May 9.** Turkey and bear results will be announced Feb. 29.

If you or anyone you know has questions or problems with the online application system, don't hesitate to call New Mexico Wildlife Federation at (505) 299-5404. We'll do our best to help you successfully apply. And remember, the department is offering assistance to hunters from noon to 8 p.m. through March 20. Call toll-free (888) 248-6866. In

addition, the department will have computers and staff available at these locations:

Saturday, Feb. 25:

- Ruidoso - ENMU
- Silver City - WNMU
- Tucumcari - Mesalands
- Belen - Belen HS

Saturday, March 10

- Portales - ENMU
- Las Cruces - DACC
- Clayton - Clayton HS
- Farmington - SJCC

Sunday, March 11

- Roswell - ENMU
- T or C - WNMU
- Chama - Escalante HS

Saturday, March 24

- Socorro - NM Tech
- Santa Rosa - Luna CC

Sunday, March 25

- Quemado - Quemado HS
- Raton - Raton HS

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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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