



## Sportsman's News Roundup

December 2009

### Public Lands Commissioner lashes out over opposition to land trade

#### *Lyons threatens to close Whites Peak public hunting if deal doesn't fly*

Nearly 400 New Mexico sportsmen spoke out against plans by the State Land Office to trade away thousands of acres of prime hunting land in the Whites Peak area in northern New Mexico. Public Lands Commissioner Patrick Lyons responded by labeling NMWF's effort to bring the closed-door deal into the public "inflammatory and misleading," and threatened to close public lands in the area to hunting if the trades aren't finalized. The Santa Fe New Mexican recently reported that Lyons "is threatening to yank hunting privileges on the state trust lands if this land swap doesn't go through." **Now we are waiting to see whether the Land Office completes the deal that is opposed by so many New Mexico hunters.**

Because the trades have been negotiated behind closed doors over the last 2 ½ years, NMWF held a news conference on the front steps of the State Land Office in Santa Fe on Friday, Nov. 20, to bring the deal into public view. It took a major effort by NMWF to expose the four-way trade, including two formal requests for public records. Our investigation showed that the State Land Office failed to include the public in any meaningful way, failed to consult with the state Department of Game and Fish and the State Game Commission on how the deal would affect sportsmen, and never explained how the people of New Mexico would benefit financially if the trades were to go through.

At the news conference, longtime northern New Mexico sportsman Max Trujillo told reporters that the trade was strongly opposed in the Whites Peak area, and he challenged the State Land Office to show who supported it. State Game Commission member Sandy Buffett, who represents northeastern New Mexico, said that contrary to statements by the State Land Office, she was not contacted about the trade and said she opposed the plan.

Hundreds of hunters and other interested sportsmen also wrote to Commissioner Lyons asking him to cancel the trade. Another dozen or so sent letters to the Albuquerque Journal and the Journal North ([click here](#) and [here](#) to read them, although you may have to watch a short commercial first).

Earlier this week Lyons responded to many of the sportsmen who wrote him and said the information they had received from NMWF was "inflammatory and misleading in several ways." **In fact, NMWF has information to back up our position, while Lyons continues to mislead the public regarding these four proposed trades.** He also goes on to threaten sportsmen's access to the State Land Office property on Whites Peak (he had earlier told the Santa Fe New Mexican he might yank hunting privileges on the state trust lands if this land swap doesn't go through). For a copy of Lyons' letter to sportsmen, [click here](#). To read NMWF's response, [click here](#).

Although the first trade closed Nov. 24, the State Land Office has been mum about its plans. We'll keep you posted on what Commissioner Lyons and the Land Office choose to do with the proposed Whites Peak land deal. In the meantime, **sportsmen should keep up the pressure on Lyons to scrap these one-sided proposals** and work in an open process toward a fair and equitable solution of any problems he wishes to resolve in the area. [Click here](#) for more information about the trade and how to register your concerns with the Land Office.

### Game Commission poised to break its new public notice policy

The State Game Commission meets Thursday in Hobbs for its last meeting of the year. **Unfortunately, the agenda contains a major item that has not received adequate public notice or discussion – in violation of the commission's new policy aimed at eliminating just such problems by allowing at least 60 days' notice on policy changes.**

Item 15 would amend the department's trespassing regulations to shift the burden onto public lands agencies like the BLM or U.S. Forest Service to post their boundaries with fences or signs. The financial implications are staggering ([click here](#) to read the briefing). The measure originally was scheduled for discussion only.

On Nov. 18 however, the agenda was revised by Chairman Jim McClintic **changing Item 15 from "discussion only" to "action item."** That means the commission can bring it up for a final vote on Thursday. The commission Web site notifies the public that the agenda was changed, but only mentions the addition of one new item regarding deer management, and does not refer to Item 15.

The proposed trespass amendment would be a major change from the current regulations, and according to the new public notice policy adopted in August ([click here](#) to read it), the measure should be posted on the Department's Web site for at least 60 days so the public has ample opportunity to review it. If the commission votes on this measure Thursday, the public will have had less than three weeks' notice.

**Sportsmen should demand that this issue be postponed** until it can be fully vetted by the hunters and public lands agencies that will be affected. The commission does itself and sportsmen a disservice when it acts with little public input. For an example of what happens when the public is left out of the decision-making process, look at Item 10 on Thursday's agenda – reconsideration of the Quality/High Demand regulations that were approved with little public notice last year and which now must be overhauled as a result.

**What can you do? Attend the meeting if you can.** You also can [click here](#) to send a comment to the department regarding the lack of public notice on this measure, or [click here](#) for a list of all the commissioners' contact information to voice your concerns directly.

In addition to the trespass regulations, the commissioners will decide whether to continue, modify or scrap the Q/HD regs. If they choose to amend the rule, they will have several options, such as exempting all youth hunters from the one-year timeout and exempting permits obtained through the secondary license sale or as fourth-choice hunts.

**Other agenda items** include a department proposal to move the application deadline for deer, elk, antelope, ibex, bighorn sheep, Barbary sheep and javelina licenses from early April to mid-March. The commission will also discuss a proposal to ban the use of felt-soled waders in waters statewide; a final decision will be made next year.

The meeting runs from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. in Bob Moran Hall at New Mexico Junior College, 5317 Lovington Highway, in Hobbs. To read the full agenda, [click here](#). As usual, NMWF will attend the meeting and will send a report as soon as possible.

### Final elk tag sale ends quickly

**It took less than 10 seconds** for hunters to snap up all 350 late-season cow elk tags. The state Department of Game and Fish put the licenses up for sale on its Web site starting at 10 a.m. Tuesday, Nov. 10. The site got more than 250,000 hits from 9:30-10:30 a.m., the department reported.

### Endangered chubs stocked in San Juan River

**More than 3,000 endangered roundtail chubs** were released in the San Juan River in November by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, the Colorado Division of Wildlife and the Jicarilla Apache and Southern Ute tribes. The two- to three-inch minnows were bred from local stocks and raised in a Colorado hatchery. Biologists released the fish near the confluence of the San Juan and Animas rivers in Farmington. Roundtail chubs were listed as threatened in 1975 and as endangered in 1996. Eventually the fish could reach 12 inches long. As long as the fish are listed as endangered or threatened, however, chubs cannot legally be caught.

### NM Conservation Calendar

The **New Mexico Conservation Calendar** is available to help keep sportsmen abreast of events and meetings around the state. Send your group's calendar information to [nmwildlife@nmwildlife.org](mailto:nmwildlife@nmwildlife.org) and we'll take care of the rest.

### Last but certainly not least

**NMWF has been standing up for the sportsmen of New Mexico** since 1914, and the work continues. Share this newsletter with a friend and ask them to get involved by joining our Sportsman Alert network, and consider making a contribution yourself. [Click here to donate now](#). With sportsmen like you, we can continue to make a difference.

---

#### 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

---

[NMWF Website](#) | [Donate Now](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [About Us](#)

New Mexico Wildlife Federation | 2610 San Mateo Blvd. NE | Suite A | Albuquerque | NM | 87110