



Game Commission Report

April 9, 2010

Big game rules take up commission meeting

The State Game Commission got its first official look at proposed changes to big game and small game rules when it met Thursday, April 8, in Albuquerque. The Department of Game and Fish presented several proposed changes in statewide hunting rules, along with proposals and public comments received to date for the turkey, upland game and javelina rules.

One of the biggest changes in hunting rules would put the normal review of rules for all species on a four-year cycle, up from the current two years. The proposal has prompted concerns from some hunters that the rules could not be altered during the four years, but department officials Thursday explained that the game commission always has the authority to open a rule at any time, should the need arise.

Other general proposals for all species include:

- Extending legal shooting hours to ½ hour after sunset for all species except migratory birds. Department staff pointed out that those hours prevail in most other states.
- Legalizing crossbow use during "any legal weapon" and muzzleloader hunts.

Some of the most sweeping changes proposed Thursday would expand turkey hunting opportunity where department biologists say it will not impact the species. Specific proposals include:

- Increasing the statewide spring bag limit to two turkeys except in the Valles Caldera
- Creating a fall archery season from Sept. 1-30
- Changing and expanding the fall shotgun season to Nov. 1-30
- Prohibiting hunting turkeys over bait
- Opening GMUs 6A, 6C, 32, and 33 to fall hunting
- Opening portions of GMUs 2A and 2C to spring and fall seasons

A department proposal to prohibit hunting upland game over bait was withdrawn due to a lack of support, according to Wildlife Management Division Chief Jim Lane. State rules were changed several years ago by the Game Commission to allow the practice. If you have thoughts on hunting upland game over bait, you can submit them by [clicking here](#).

Other Upland Game proposals include:

- Adding Arizona gray squirrel, fox squirrel, and eastern gray squirrel to the legal bag limit for squirrel hunters
- Changing the upland bird season back to a calendar-based schedule. Previously the Game Commission voted to change the season to start on a Saturday and end on a Sunday. But WMD Chief Jim Lane reported the department was receiving comments in favor of changing the season back to Nov. 15-Feb. 15, for the sake of simplicity.
- Eliminate the GS-1E experimental grouse season. Data shows that a high proportion of immature birds were being harvested in the experimental early season and department biologists recommended eliminating the season, which was earlier than any other state.

For javelina, the department continued its look at how to improve hunting opportunity and suggested opening several Wildlife Management Areas to javelina hunting, including the Lesser Prairie Chicken WMAs, La Joya and Water Canyon areas.

The process started Thursday offers a new level of transparency for interested members of the public to participate in rules that affect your time in the field. As of Thursday the Department had received just 15 comments on the above proposals. It is clear that all public comments are being read and carefully considered by department staff. Please take a moment to send in your thoughts and comments, whether positive, negative or in-between, on these proposals. [Click here to see all of the rules and proposals currently under consideration and how to contact the department.](#)

Schedule set for remaining big game rules

The schedule for the rest of the big game rules has been updated to reflect the game commission meeting schedule. These dates are tentative, however, as the commission has the authority to postpone decisions.

Group	Rules	To Web site	To Commission	Commission decision
A	Turkey, Upland Game, Javelina	done	done	June 3 (Thursday) Gallup
B	Bighorn, Exotics, Elk, Waterfowl, Open Gate	April 12	June 3 (Thursday) Gallup	July 8 (Thursday) Silver City
C	Bear & Cougar, Pronghorn, A-PLUS, Deer	July 28	Aug. 28 (Saturday) Albuquerque	Sept. 30 (Thursday) Ruidoso

If you can, attend as many meetings as possible. To see the full 2010 meeting schedule, [click here](#).

Furbearer rule to be taken up next year

On Thursday, the commission directed the department to open the furbearer rule at its December meeting and develop an appropriate schedule for review and decision. Based on the new planning process for the big game rules, we have every reason to believe the department will proceed with an equally appropriate schedule and process for the furbearer rule.

Aquatic invasive species rule changes under way

The New Mexico Legislature passed the Aquatic Invasive Species Control Act in 2009, authorizing preventive measures to minimize the potential for an outbreak of aquatic invasive species such as quagga and zebra mussels. The department presented proposed changes to bring existing invasive species rules into compliance with the new law.

While New Mexico has been fortunate to not yet have an infestation of quagga or zebra mussels, the department illustrated just how critical preventive efforts are. A boat carrying quagga mussels was prevented from entering Elephant Butte and some seismic equipment carrying zebra mussels was caught before it was used near Navajo Dam.

Habitat Stamp Program up for renewal in July

Dale Hall updated the commission on the Habitat Stamp Program in advance of the commission's expected vote to reauthorize the program July 8. The program is one of the most popular programs among sportsmen, but several potential changes were proposed Thursday. Commissioner Dick Salopek questioned whether the department could make it simpler to buy the stamp at the same time a license is purchased. Several members of the public suggested raising the \$5 stamp fee to \$10 to expand the program's success and ability to seek matching funds. Southwest Consolidated Sportsmen was one of several sportsmen's organizations who have already supported an increase in funding for the popular program.

Exercise your voice - weigh in on proposals

The State Game Commission needs your input to make the best decisions for New Mexico sportsmen. Please take a moment and weigh in on these proposed rule changes. Voice your support or your opposition, but let your voice be heard. [Click here](#) to read more about the proposals and to submit your comments. Remember, your opinion counts.

If you appreciate receiving these reports from the State Game Commission meetings, 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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