



Sportsman's News Roundup

January 2010

Whites Peak trades under investigation

Thanks to letters, e-mails and opinion pieces from sportsmen like you, the state Attorney General's Office and the State Auditor are investigating the proposed land trades around Whites Peak and the AG's Office has asked the State Land Office not to finalize the trades until the investigations wrap up.

The two agencies apparently heard sportsmen's concerns loud and clear, that the trades were concocted with virtually no public involvement; they only benefit the two participating landowners; the Land Office is trading valuable elk habitat for lower value, treeless grazing land adjacent to State Highway 120; and the Land Office has yet to explain how the trades fulfill its primary responsibility, which is to help fund public schools.

The AG's Office conducted an independent review of the land trade appraisals and found "significant problems" with the work done by a South Dakota firm and paid for by the landowners themselves. [Click here](#) to read more about the Attorney General's letter by reporter/blogger Peter St. Cyr; [click here](#) to read the letter itself.)

Gov. Bill Richardson came out early against the proposed trades, calling them "ill-conceived" and saying he was concerned that the swap was arranged behind closed doors with little public input. "This should not be acceptable for any major transaction involving public trust lands, much less lands that for centuries have been used for traditional purposes such as hunting, trapping and recreation," he said.

State Rep. Brian Egolf has said he wants the Legislature to review the trade after it convenes Jan. 19 to ensure that proper procedures were followed.

We'll keep you posted on the Whites Peak issue. In the meantime, please take a moment now and send a letter to the editor of your local newspaper commending the Attorney General and State Auditor's Offices for investigating these trade proposals that would hurt hunting and recreational opportunity for New Mexico citizens. [Click here](#) to write to the Albuquerque Journal or the Journal North or [here](#) for the Santa Fe New Mexican.

Reports show trespass, poaching allegations overblown

One interesting element of the Whites Peak trades that the news media seem to have missed is the question of trespass and poaching. Public Lands Commissioner Patrick Lyons has said repeatedly that the proposed trades are meant to stop poaching and trespass, and he makes it sound like those are enormous problems in GMU 48. Lyons has said the lands are "unmanageable" due to "rampant" trespass. The Santa Fe New Mexican reported that he threatened to shut down all public access to the 40,000 acres of state trust land around Whites Peak if the trades do not go through.

But in fact, law enforcement reports from the Department of Game and Fish in recent years show just a handful of problems in that area. In 2008, for example, only two citations and two warnings were written, whereas numerous complaints from area landowners or their staffs were investigated and found to be false or inaccurate. [Click here](#) to read the full reports.

Depredation reform bill ready for legislative action

The Department of Game and Fish has written a new bill that would overhaul the state's depredation statute, also known as the Jennings Law. The current law has allowed a few unscrupulous landowners to kill big game animals simply for threatening their crops. A few landowners have even used the law as extortion, demanding transferable tags from the department in exchange for not killing game animals.

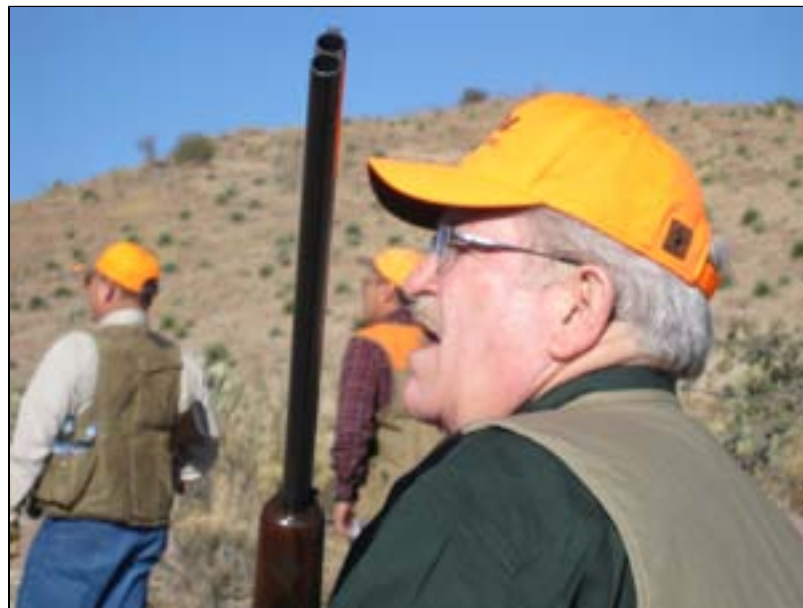
NMWF believes the new measure ([click here to read it](#)) is even better than the one that passed the state Senate and both its House committees last year. (The Legislature adjourned before the full House could vote on the bill.) This year, the Legislature has just 30 days to consider hundreds of bills, including this one, and to deal with serious budget issues. But with the support of average sportsmen like you, we're hoping the measure can make it across the finish line during this session, which begins Jan. 19.

But we need your help – and your legislators' vote. Please contact both your state senator and your state representative before the session begins and tell them you strongly support the depredation bill. The current law is a black eye for New Mexico and needs to be changed to protect wildlife and the good name of most state landowners. [Click here](#) to look up your legislators' names and contact information, then call or write and tell them you're a sportsman who votes. It's easy, and it's the best way to influence public policy. Get involved, and speak out on behalf of yourself and all New Mexico sportsmen who want this bad law changed.

Sportsmen host Congressman Teague for a day

U.S. Rep. Harry Teague took some time out of his busy schedule in late December to hunt quail and talk issues with a group of southern New Mexico sportsmen. Teague didn't get any birds, but he made an impression on the sportsmen, who said they were glad to have the opportunity to talk with him in depth.

They filled him in on their support for the **Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks Wilderness** bill and the **1872 Mining Law** reform legislation, both of which were sponsored by Sen. Jeff Bingaman. They also registered their opposition to the Gila National Forest **motorized game retrieval plan** and agreed that renewable energy projects on federal land in New Mexico need to be done responsibly. For a full report on the sportsmen's day with Teague, look for the next Outdoor Reporter, which will be in NMWF members' mailboxes later this month. **At right, Rep. Harry Teague looks for quail on his hunt south of Hillsboro.** (Joel Gay)



Good habitat crucial for New Mexico economy

Most people don't make the connection between healthy wildlife habitat and a strong economy, but the link is undeniable. NMWF board member Terry Riley teamed up with a county commissioner in southern Colorado to write a great op-ed piece for the Las Cruces Sun-News praising efforts by the governors of New Mexico and Colorado to protect wildlife corridors, which in the end helps protect our economy. They point out that in Colorado, the annual economic impact of hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing is greater than the value of the Denver Broncos, Colorado Rockies and the Denver Nuggets combined. In New Mexico, sportsmen spend \$1.2 million a day. [Click here](#) to read the whole piece.



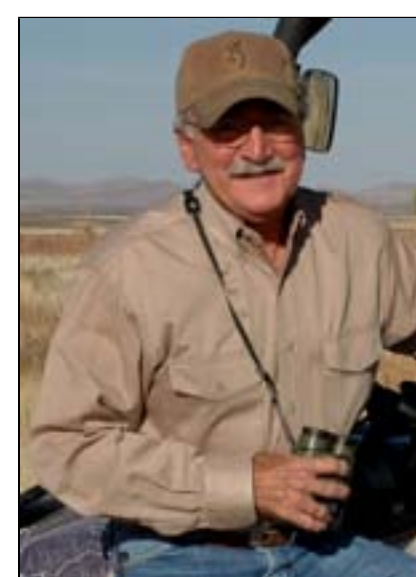
Cold day of fishing pays off for NM angler

Avid fisherman Matt Pelletier (left) landed two monster trout while ice fishing on Antero Lake in central Colorado a week before Christmas. This one is a 27-inch cutthroat-rainbow hybrid. The other was a 24-inch Snake River cutthroat, he said. Matt is a fiend for fishing, and is one of the driving forces behind New Mexico Muskies Inc.

Warm weather has closed the ice on some New Mexico lakes already, including Fenton and Storrie, so get out there while you can. And send photos of trophy catches to nmwildlife@nmwildlife.org.

Hunter ed instructors needed all over New Mexico

The Department of Game and Fish is always looking for volunteers to help run hunter education classes. It takes one instructor for every five students, but the lack of instructors has created an enormous demand for classes. If you're interested in helping the next generation take the first step toward becoming responsible hunters, the department wants you. Contact Jennifer Morgan, assistant coordinator of the Hunter Education Program, at (505) 222-4722, or e-mail her at Jennifer.morgan@state.nm.us.



Ben Brown takes over for TRCP in New Mexico

Longtime Animas sportsman Ben Brown has been named the New Mexico field representative for the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, working on issues of concern including responsible energy development. Brown has a long career in wildlife management and conservation, including teaching at Texas A&M University and working with the Nature Conservancy. For 10 years he worked on the Gray Ranch with the Animas Foundation, and most recently has been science adviser to the Malpai Borderlands Group. He lives in Animas and is an avid hunter and angler, he said, hunting all over the West and in Africa. He spends his off-seasons reloading ammunition and tinkering with his collection of firearms.

Interior Department tightens oil, gas rules

Many sportsmen, including Gov. Bill Richardson, are applauding Interior Secretary Ken Salazar's announcement this week to strengthen rules regarding the use of public lands for oil and gas development in the West. In particular, he said he wants more scrutiny and a greater public voice in how oil and gas leases are awarded on public lands. "We believe we need a balanced approach and a thoughtful approach," Salazar said at a news conference.

Richardson told the Associated Press that **the changes will bring a sense of balance to managing development** and protecting landscapes. NMWF spokesman Oscar Simpson said he hopes the changes help protect wildlife and water quality that sportsmen depend on. [Click here](#) to read the AP story.

What's ahead for NMWF in 2010? Stay tuned...

The new year looks to be an exciting one for the New Mexico Wildlife Federation. We will be picking up right where we left off last year – speaking out on behalf of New Mexico sportsmen for habitat protection and expanded opportunity. In the last year we took on some powerful interests, on issues ranging from trespass posting regulations to the excessive number of big game permits that go to certain landowners to land trades conducted behind closed doors. Not surprisingly, we have gotten some pushback from those who would rather conduct business as usual behind closed doors and out of the public eye.

But NMWF is not going to stop until we are sure that average sportsmen like you have a voice and that decisions affecting you are made in a transparent and open manner. We all depend on public lands and public wildlife and we need good, open decision-making to ensure the interests of the average sportsman and the wildlife we enjoy are taken into account.

We will continue to attend legislative hearings and Game Commission meetings, and will keep you posted on issues that affect your hunting and fishing traditions. You can expect to see the Outdoor Reporter in your mailbox every quarter, and e-newsletters like this every month. On occasion we'll also send out Sportsman's Alerts, asking you to write a quick e-mail or make a phone call.

For more than a century U.S. sportsmen have demanded a lot from the public agencies that manage our wildlife and public lands. NMWF is proud to be part of that long tradition. And in 2010 and beyond, we will continue to speak out on behalf of wildlife and opportunity and for the traditions of New Mexico's hunting and fishing that we all cherish.

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 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 Volante 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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