



Sportsman's News Roundup

May 28, 2014

Valles Caldera heading toward new management

Hunters and anglers got some great news just as the Memorial Day weekend began - New Mexico's U.S. Senate delegation introduced a bill that would transfer management of Valles Caldera to the National Park Service, as a National Preserve. Hunting and fishing would be guaranteed to continue, according to the bill introduced Thursday, but with far greater public access than the current management allows. Efforts opposed by hunters to charge \$10,000 or more for the right to hunt elk on our own public land would also end under the new management system, and access to hunting and fishing would be within financial reach for all sportsmen of the state. For more on the bill and its effect on sportsmen, [click here](#).

Voting is best way to influence decisions that affect sportsmen

All too often hunters and anglers feel like a group whose concerns simply don't register with the decision-makers in New Mexico. One of our goals at NMWF is to change that. But you need to do your part by voting in Tuesday's primary elections. Republicans and Democrats will choose candidates for the November ballot in a number of offices that are crucial for sportsmen, including:

- **Governor**, who appoints members of the State Game Commission, which in turn hires the Director of Game and Fish and determines how many licenses are allocated to the lottery drawing;
- **Public Lands Commissioner**, who controls access to 9 million acres of public lands; and
- **State legislators**, who write the laws that affect hunting and fishing, from nonresident quotas for big game to trespass posting requirements.

New Mexico sportsmen need to play a more active role in determining their own future, and it starts Tuesday. Voting booths around New Mexico are open all day (in Bernalillo County the hours are 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., but check your own county). Do your part by taking the time to vote. And plan to vote again in November. Then you can truthfully say you're making a difference.

Pressed by NMWF, Land Office retracts oil leases near Whites Peak

In January, when he was under fire for his proposed Whites Peak land trades, Public Lands Commissioner Patrick Lyons said he had no intention of leasing Trust Lands in the Whites Peak area for oil and gas development. In mid-May, however, his office issued legal ads announcing that it wanted to offer oil and gas leases on several sections of land within two miles of Whites Peak, along with other tracts in Colfax County. The lease sale is set for June 15. When pressed on the discrepancy by NMWF this week, however, the Land Office said it was all a mistake, and officials promised to strike the Whites Peak-area parcels from the June sale. "Frankly, we're not really sure how that [got] through," Land Office spokeswoman Kristin Haase told the Santa Fe Reporter. But Ed Olona, president of NMWF, said the incident raises yet another red flag about the State Land Office. "This just shows, once again, that we need to keep a close eye on this office, regardless who holds the position of Public Lands Commissioner," said Olona. [Click here](#) to read the story posted by the Santa Fe Reporter

Land Commissioner forums a success; check out the video

Sportsmen's groups including NMWF have helped shine the spotlight this year on one of the most important statewide offices for sportsmen – Public Lands Commissioner. There were forums with all five candidates (Democrats Sandy Jones, Harry Montoya and Ray Powell and Republicans Bob Cornelius and Matt Rush) in Maxwell, Albuquerque and Las Cruces. The candidates said they appreciated the opportunity to address hunters and anglers, because they know we care about the land and the office. At each event, the five were grilled on their attitudes on topics ranging from access to state Trust Lands to land exchanges to renewable energy development. You can watch YouTube videos of the Albuquerque forum and listen to the candidates by [clicking here](#).

Antelope task force meets, but long road ahead for sportsmen

Sportsmen were substantially outnumbered at the first meeting of a task force to consider changes to the state's Antelope Private Lands Use System (A-PLUS) program. Only a handful of sportsmen's groups were invited to the Albuquerque meeting, in contrast to 19 ranchers enrolled in A-PLUS plus representatives of numerous agricultural organizations. The State Game Commission has asked Game and Fish to come up with new rules that, among other things, will bring more equity and transparency to the allocation of antelope tags and increase hunting opportunity for residents. The department created the task force in hopes of developing a proposal by late July. The State Game Commission has put the issue on its Sept. 28 agenda.

But adopting new rules for A-PLUS may be difficult. Ranchers and outfitters generally like the status quo, for obvious reasons. About two-thirds of all available antelope tags go to landowners enrolled in A-PLUS, who can sell them to hunters or outfitters for thousands of dollars apiece. Because the tags are priced out of the reach of many New Mexicans, or because outfitters market them out of state, the majority of transferable licenses are sold to nonresidents. Only about one third of the tags are allocated into the big game draw, of which nonresidents and outfitters get 22 percent. That leaves New Mexico resident hunters with less than 25 percent of all available tags in recent years.

New Mexico resident hunters strongly support allocating a higher percentage of tags through the big game draw. Over time, according to research by NMWF, the percentage of transferable tags allocated to landowners has increased substantially, from approximately 20 percent in the early 1970s to nearly 70 percent today. Since the department has no rules governing how these transferable tags are allocated, it is not known what has led to this shift, but the creation of the transferable authorizations has created a market where some landowners can sell access to the majority of hunting licenses rather than selling access to land.

The A-PLUS task force will continue to meet in June and July, and NMWF is encouraging the department to allow additional sportsmen's groups to participate. The department will present several options to the public for comment this summer. We will keep you posted on this important issue. **but sportsmen will have to speak up if they want the Game Commission to adopt new antelope rules that actually benefit the resident hunters of New Mexico.**

Game Commission meets Thursday

Several hunting rules will be on the agenda when the State Game Commission meets Thursday, June 3, in Gallup. Commissioners are expected to finalize proposed rule changes for turkey, javelina and upland game. They also will discuss proposed changes for elk, barbary sheep, oryx, ibex, bighorn sheep, migratory game birds and the Open Gate program. The only other action item on the agenda is approval of a new rule governing aquatic invasive species. Also on tap are briefings on feral hog management, next year's Department of Game and Fish budget and the Legislature's request to study consolidation of hunting and fishing licenses and stamps. The meeting runs 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. in Calvin Hall Auditorium at UNM's Gallup Campus. [Click here](#) to see the full agenda and other information.

\$1M released to address abandoned mines

The federal Bureau of Land Management has provided nearly \$1 million to the state's Abandoned Mine Land Program to help **address the problem of abandoned mines in New Mexico.** The money will be used to inventory and reclaim abandoned uranium mines and to safeguard mines in the Cookes Peak area north of Deming – an issue addressed in the [Winter 2010 edition](#) of the Outdoor Reporter. (Photo at right, by Dave Menicucci, shows one of many abandoned mines in southwest New Mexico.)

Funding for the work comes from fees on coal mining. But additional funding would be available under a bill to overhaul the 1872 Mining Law sponsored by Sen. Jeff Bingaman, which is pending before the Senate. It is estimated there are more than 15,000 abandoned mine hazards around New Mexico, though the state Abandoned Mine Land Program has closed more than 4,000 hazardous openings over the past 29 years, according to the state Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department. Bingaman's bill would, for the first time ever, ask mining companies to pay royalties for the hard rock minerals they extract and to fund reclamation efforts.

In the news

The governors of New Mexico and Colorado endorsed a report by sportsmen's groups that calls for dedicated funding to help the nation's wildlife and natural resources adapt to the changing climate. Governors Bill Richardson and Bill Ritter spoke at the Denver Zoo in early May, saying that wildlife and fish should be allowed to thrive even as the country builds a renewable energy economy. Their address came with the release of ["Beyond Season's End,"](#) published by sportsmen's groups including the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, Ducks Unlimited, Boone and Crockett Club, Trout Unlimited, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and many other organizations. [Click here to read the story.](#)

Some 60 former federal and state land management officials, including former New Mexico BLM Director Jim Baca, wrote a letter to Interior Secretary Ken Salazar encouraging him to continue his proposed reform of the nation's onshore oil and gas leasing policies. Their call came as the Gulf of Mexico oil spill was turning into the nation's worst environmental disaster, affecting fish and wildlife habitat along the Gulf coast. Regulating oil and gas development so that meaningful protections are in place is not unnecessarily burdensome, the former directors wrote, it is essential for our health, safety and livelihoods. [Click here to read their letter.](#) Secretary Salazar soon after released a set of proposed reforms intended to better protect natural resources we all depend on. [Click here to read sportsmen's reaction to the new rules.](#)

The Otero County Commission recently approved an ordinance calling on the Interior Department to consult with county residents before adopting any new management status on Otero Mesa, home to quality hunting for antelope and mule deer, as well as the state's largest remaining untapped underground reservoir of fresh water. The commission had initially proposed a draft ordinance opposing any effort to designate Otero Mesa as a national monument – an idea that has never been officially proposed. But thanks in part to calls and emails from Otero County sportsmen who support protections for Otero Mesa and the Salt Basin Aquifer beneath it, the commission agreed to amend the ordinance before passing it. The measure now asks for consultation and informational efforts with local residents before any attempt is made to classify Otero Mesa as a national monument, which could be one option for protecting the water and hunting opportunities there.

The Las Cruces Sun-News ran an excellent opinion piece about the proposed Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks Wilderness Act, proposed by Sens. Jeff Bingaman and Tom Udall. Former Interior Department staffer Lynn Scarlett argues that there is nothing inconsistent about U.S.-Mexico border security and special land protections such as wilderness areas or national monuments. "Indeed, the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks Wilderness Act provides significant measures to strengthen border security while achieving other community, recreational and open space goals," she writes. [Click here to read the whole piece.](#)

The Sun-News also published an opinion by Ben Brown, who lives in Animas and works for the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, that **calls for the Senate to improve and then pass the American Power Act,** a bill sponsored by Sens. John Kerry and Joseph Lieberman that would create millions of clean energy jobs and reduce carbon pollution. Brown points out that while the measure is a good start, it falls short by failing to fund efforts to protect wildlife and habitat from the effects of climate change. Brown concludes: "As sportsmen in the 21st century, we again must be 'wise in time' and confront the threats of a changing climate on our wildlife populations before it's too late. We must insist that natural resources adaptation funding remain a component of the American Power Act - and that this important bill swiftly become the law of the land." [Click here to read it.](#)

Dick Kreiner (left) is well known in New Mexico turkey hunting circles. Now his reputation is spreading around the nation. Field and Stream magazine named the Los Lunas resident one of its "Heroes of Conservation" this spring. The magazine notes that Kreiner, president of the National Wild Turkey Federation's Middle Rio Grande chapter, has helped install 35 wildlife drinkers around central New Mexico, mostly in the Cibola National Forest. "Turkey hunting is my passion," he told Field and Stream, "so anything that I can do to help make the turkey population sustainable, I enjoy that." [\(Click here to read the story.\)](#)



Living high on the hog

You wouldn't normally think a trout would need to diet, but this one looks like it's had a hard time pushing away from the dinner table. Taos angler and author Taylor Streit (left) said he and his son Nick were fishing at Eagle Nest Lake when they caught the monster in mid-May. "We have never seen any near that rotund, and wonder if there are certain individuals that learn to hunt certain foods very well," Streit said. This one felt like it might be full of crawdads, he said. Streit released the fish after taking its picture, however, so that big boy may still be there, waiting to be caught again. (Photo provided by Taylor Streit)

New Mexico Conservation Calendar

It shouldn't come as news, but kids in America these days just don't spend much time outdoors. To help get families back in the habit, plan to celebrate **Get Outdoors Day** on Saturday, June 12. If you want a quick, easy and fun place to take your kids, grandkids or neighbor's kids, head for Tingley Beach in Albuquerque. You'll find all sorts of activities including fishing opportunities, camping demonstrations, a climbing wall, Frisbee golf, live bird exhibitions and educational materials. [Click here for more information.](#) And start thinking ahead toward the **Great American Backyard Camp.** On Saturday, June 26, thousands of American families will gather outdoors, put up a tent or unroll sleeping bags and sleep under the full moon. It should be a howling good time.

The 19th annual Thunderbird 3-D Open archery shoot is set for June 19-20 outside Weed, N.M. Sponsored by Bullseye 4-H Club and Organ Mountain Bowmen of Las Cruces, the event features dozens of targets on three courses and a seminar by TV host and author Trevon Stoltzfus. Call (575) 527-1028 or e-mail rvonwolf@vwhome.org with questions.

If your group has an event coming up, drop us a line at nmwildlife@nmwildlife.org or call (505) 299-5404 and we'll put it in the New Mexico Conservation Calendar.

Question of the Month

We're starting a new monthly feature in the Sportsman's News Roundup to help us better understand New Mexico sportsmen on current issues. In light of the upcoming primary elections:

Have you voted already or do you plan to vote in the June 1 primary election for Commissioner of Public Lands? [Click here to take our one-question survey.](#)

We also welcome your thoughts on elected officials in New Mexico and whether you think they pay enough attention to hunters and anglers. Send your comments to: letters@nmwildlife.org.

And finally

If you appreciate receiving these monthly news updates, please share them with a friend and let 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 donation 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 our 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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Photo by Garrett VeneKlasen

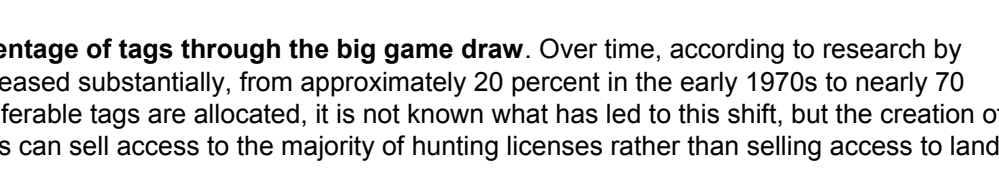


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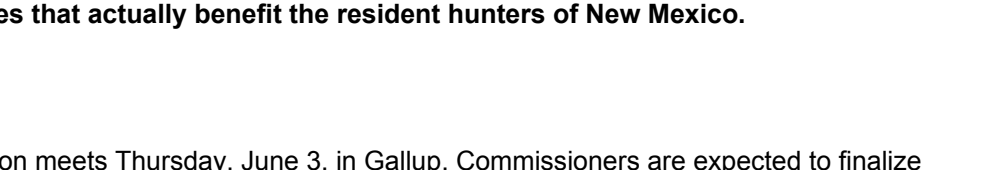


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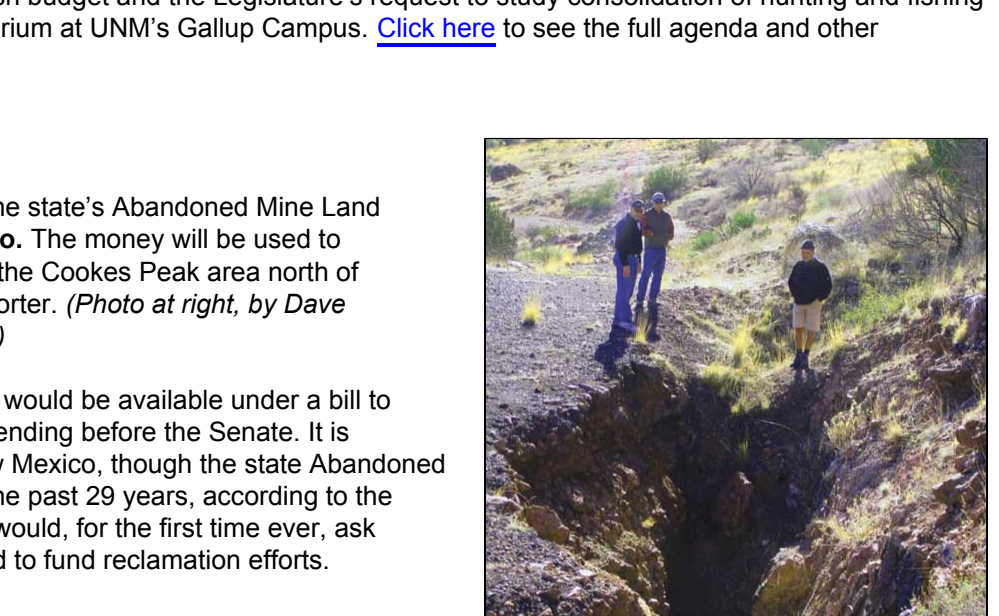


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