

New Mexico Wildlife Federation



Protecting our outdoor way of life since 1914

March 2009 Sportsman's News Roundup

Legislative Watch

The **New Mexico Legislature is winding down** but is still considering several pieces of legislation that affect wildlife, habitat and sportsmen. If you haven't seen the "Legislative Watch" section of our Web site, check it out by [clicking here](#). On it you'll find information on key bills and easy ways to contact decision-makers before the session ends March 21. Here are a few issues we've been following:

HB 11 – Valles Caldera elk tags: This bill would take up to 25 percent of the Valles Caldera bull elk tags out of the public draw and turn them over to the preserve's Board of Trustees to sell to the highest bidder. The House passed HB 11 and the measure is scheduled to appear before the Senate Conservation Committee on **Thursday, March 5**, but with your support we're hoping to see the bill stopped in its tracks. The defeat of HB 11 would send a message to Congress that a new way of managing the national preserve is required and that it isn't OK to take more hunting opportunity away from New Mexico citizens. [Click here to learn more and help stop this bad legislation.](#)

SB 391 – Depredation law reform: Sen. Michael Sanchez introduced this long-overdue reform of the state's controversial depredation law and it passed the first committee with unanimous support. However, the New Mexico Wildlife Federation and other sportsman's groups have spent the past week fending off attempts to amend the bill by raiding the Game Protection Fund to provide more money to landowners who suffer depredation damage. Sportsmen have been fighting to ensure the fees currently paid by hunters for habitat protection and wildlife management are not tapped to pay for what amounts to crop insurance. SB 391 contains provisions to aid landowners who experience wildlife problems, but assistance needs to come from the Depredation Fund, which was set up for that purpose. **The measure comes before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Thursday, March 5.** Please call or e-mail members of the Senate Judiciary Committee and ask them to pass SB 391, and to ensure that sportsmen's dollars are well-managed and protected. [Click here to contact committee members.](#)

HB 163 – Trespass notice requirements: On the good news front, the House Consumer and Public Affairs Committee **tabled a bill that could have severely affected many New Mexico sportsmen.** HB 163 called for drastically reducing the posting requirements for criminal trespass, potentially making it harder for law-abiding sportsmen or hikers to know whether they were on private or public land. This bill was unanimously tabled this week **thanks in large part to Sportsman's Action Alert members like you** who stepped up at short notice to send e-mails to committee members and make their voice heard. The bill is dead for now, but theoretically could still be brought back to life before the legislative session ends. [Click here to learn more.](#)

HB 604 - Electing members of the State Game Commission: This bill would revamp the State Game Commission by requiring that all seven commission members be elected by voters rather than be appointed by the governor. It would drop the current requirement that one commissioner represent ranching interests

and another represent wildlife and conservation interests, and it eliminates the provision that the commission have no more than four members from the same political party. HB 604 comes up for its first committee hearing Thursday, March 5. [Click here to read more about the measure.](#)

Hats off to Sen. Eichenberg

Thanks to the efforts of freshman Sen. Tim Eichenberg of Albuquerque, **the state Senate passed a memorial calling for Congress to begin talks on establishing a new management system for Valles Caldera National Preserve.** His measure, [Senate Memorial 32](#), won strong bipartisan support, passing 32-3. When Congress bought the Valles Caldera property it also created an experimental management system calling for the preserve to pay its own way by 2015. That challenge has proven insurmountable, leading to ideas such as HB 11 (see above) that would take hunting opportunities away from average citizens. Eichenberg and the Senate respectfully suggest that Congress consider another management strategy, such as turning over Valles Caldera operations to the U.S. Forest Service or another federal agency, assuring access for hunters, anglers and all others. **The memorial specifically calls for expanded hunting, fishing and other recreational opportunities along with better habitat protection for this public lands jewel.**

Game Commission meets this week

The State Game Commission could adopt new trespass regulations and penalties for poachers when it meets **Thursday, March 5**, in Santa Fe. The Department of Game and Fish has proposed **new regulations to stiffen the penalties against those who knowingly trespass to hunt, fish or trap**, but which protect sportsmen who inadvertently cross an unmarked, unfenced boundary. [Click here to read the proposal.](#) Many NMWF members have sent letters to the Game Commission supporting the measure as written, but the commissioners have the authority to change the wording entirely. We will be at the meeting and we strongly encourage sportsmen to attend and show your support for these reasonable changes. The meeting is 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Thursday in the Willie Ortiz Building, 2600 Cerrillos Road, Santa Fe. [For the full agenda, click here.](#)

Jemez Mountains elk and San Juan trout are on the commission's agenda, as well. Commissioners will hear more about a proposal to combine Game Management Units 6A and 6C, manage the area to increase elk numbers and revise the formula for distributing elk tags to private landowners in the area who suffer depredation. No action is expected. The department will also explain its plans to start talking with anglers and others about the San Juan Quality Waters fishery and its management. The commission could decide how to begin the public communication process.

Hunting season draws closer

Several deadlines are approaching for hunters. The last day to apply for the turkey hunt lottery in Valles Caldera National Preserve is Sunday, March 29. Ten tags are available through the lottery. For more information, [click here.](#)

The deadline to apply for the 2009-10 state big game hunts is April 8. **But don't apply until you've looked through NMWF's Big Game Draw Odds Report.** It will show the approximate odds of drawing a license in any given hunt, perhaps boosting your chances of winning your hunt. We'll e-mail the report to our members ([click here for information on how to join NMWF](#)) and post it on our Web site in early March. In the meantime, don't forget to get your Customer ID number on the Department of Game and Fish Web site if you haven't already done so.

Responsible gun owners and the BLM are teaming up to **keep the Santa Fe public shooting area clean, safe and accessible.** Call BLM ranger Jon Sering at (505) 438-7419 or e-mail him at Jon_Sering@nm.blm.gov for more information. He developed guidelines for shooters, which are posted at the range and are available at Santa Fe sporting goods stores. Since last spring the self-regulation and cleanup of the area have worked out well, local sportsmen say. Here are some of Sering's tips:

- Shoot into a hill or dirt bank. Do not set targets on top of a berm, on rocks or hanging off a tree or cactus.
- Shoot at paper targets or manufactured “knock down” targets, not at glass containers or unwanted items from home.
- Pick up all your shotgun shells, brass casings, clay pigeons and other trash. (Tip: Use a ground cloth to collect .22 caliber shells as you shoot.)
- Do NOT mix alcohol and firearms.
- Always point your muzzle down range, and always treat your firearm as if it were loaded.
- Have a non-shooter act as a spotter to ensure safety.

In the news

A recent study suggests that the **changing climate will affect not only the environment, but also our wallets**. University of Oregon economist Bob Doppelt said climate change – which is expected to reduce recreational opportunity and cause more floods, droughts and wildfires – would cost New Mexico’s economy \$3.2 billion a year by the time today’s kindergarteners graduate from high school. ([Click here](#) to read the Albuquerque Journal’s story, though you may have to watch a short ad first.) NMWF is part of a coalition of sportsmen’s groups calling for Congress to rein in climate change by capping carbon emissions and to provide funding to help protect and restore the nation’s natural resources already affected by the warming climate. [Read more about our efforts by clicking here.](#)

The Bureau of Land Management and the Trust for Public Land have **bought 2,240 acres near Cuba to provide crucial winter range for deer and elk**, the Associated Press reported recently. The Elk Springs property south of Cuba is valued at \$1.6 million. BLM officials say the acquisition gives big game an alternative to private hay fields and helps complete the 9,485-acre Elk Springs Area of Critical Environmental Concern.

A Fort Sumner man was jailed and charged with **16 counts of wildlife-related crimes** in connection with the alleged poaching of 12 deer, the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish reported last month. Following a tip called in to the Operation Game Thief hot line, officers arrested Loy Minton, 25. They also seized a dozen buck deer heads, firearms, knives and about 200 pounds of deer meat. Minton admitted to killing four deer illegally, the state says. He could face civil penalties of up to \$10,000 per animal due to the trophy nature of some of the bucks, according to the state.

Critters on the move

A Yellowstone wolf has traveled a 1,000-mile loop and is now in central Colorado, some 450 miles from home, the Colorado Division of Wildlife reported last week. The 18-month-old female had been collared last year in Montana and tracked by GPS through parts of Wyoming, Idaho and Utah before crossing into Colorado in February. Biologists say the wolf is likely looking for a pack to join, but since there are no known packs in Colorado it may have to keep moving. ([Click here to read the news release.](#))

Biologists with the **Arizona Game and Fish Department captured a wild jaguar** last month, their first ever. The 118-pound male was trapped southwest of Tucson as part of a study of black bears and mountain lions, the department said in a release. Biologists fitted the big cat with a satellite-tracking collar and released it. Within a week, trail cameras in the area helped biologists identify the jaguar as “Macho B,” which has been photographed periodically since 1996. Unfortunately, the collar also showed the jaguar’s health was declining. Macho was picked up for medical intervention, but then euthanized when veterinarians found it was suffering from kidney failure. ([Click here to read the original release and links to the updates.](#))

Help wanted

One of the best tools sportsmen have in the effort to protect public lands is sportsmen themselves. Lawmakers listen when regular citizens make the effort to contact them, reporters like to get “real people” into their stories and the State Game Commission is constantly asking for public input. Beginning this spring, **NMWF will offer one-evening courses in how to become a stronger voice for conservation, habitat and access to public lands**. Learn how to contact your

legislator, how to write an effective letter to the editor and how to prepare for your three minutes before the Game Commission. If interested, give us a call at (505) 299-5404 or e-mail us at nmwildlife@nmwildlife.org.

NMWF also is looking for **volunteers to become hunter education instructors**. The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish will teach the course and certify instructors for live-fire supervision at a range near Las Cruces. The training is tentatively set for May. NMWF and the department are working together to provide small game hunting clinics to youths who have not had an opportunity to experience hunting and the outdoors. If interested, please call us at (505) 299-5404 or e-mail us at nmwildlife@nmwildlife.org.

Calendar events for March

The Albuquerque chapter of **Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation** holds its annual banquet Saturday, March 14, at Sandia Resort & Casino. Doors open at 4:30 p.m., dinner begins at 6:30 p.m., followed by an auction. The deadline to purchase tickets is March 9. For more information, call Bob Kaup at (505) 299-1515.

The Middle Rio Grande Chapter of the **National Wild Turkey Federation** annual banquet is Saturday, March 21, at the Sheriff's Posse Cafe building in Belen. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. dinner is at 7 p.m. and a live auction starts at 8:30 p.m. Contact Jim Davis for tickets or information, at (505) 865-2990 or jsdaviscpa@qwest.net.

Other New Mexico chapters of the **National Wild Turkey Federation** also holding banquets this month are:

- **Trinity Spurs**, Los Alamos, March 7, contact Karl Thomas, (505) 470-1512
- **Mesilla Valley Longbeards**, Las Cruces, March 14, Jim Bates, (575) 522-7248
- **Tres Rios**, Farmington, March 14, Howard Bradley, (505) 632-2003
- **Santa Fe Fans**, Santa Fe, March 21, H.C. Hawkins, (505) 660-9362
- **Gila Gobblers**, Santa Clara, March 28, Jeffrey Fell, (505) 538-5021
- **Sierra County Strutters**, Truth or Consequences, March 28, Brooke Wiley, (505) 296-7230

The Southwest New Mexico chapter of **Quail Unlimited** is having its annual banquet March 28 at the Mesilla Valley Conference Center. For details on time and tickets, contact John Moen, (575) 526-3571.

Learn more about the Mexican gray wolf recovery at a presentation in Deming at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, March 12. The program will include talks by Stewart Liley and Paula Capece of the Department of Game and Fish. They will discuss the wolf recovery program, the biological dynamics of elk and wolves and efforts to reduce wolf-livestock conflicts. Contact Angela Wilds at awilds@cityofdeming.org or (575) 546-9202.

[Click here to learn more about SB 391 and to make your voice heard.](#)

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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