



Sportsman's News Roundup

March 3, 2011

Calls, e-mails push SB 196 toward finish line

By a wide margin, the state Senate on Wednesday approved a bill giving resident hunters a larger share of Big Game Draw licenses. Senate Bill 196 still must pass the state House before it can go to Gov. Susana Martinez for her signature. Sportsmen's strong and vocal support has gotten SB 196 over numerous hurdles already, but we can't rest until the bill passes the House before the Legislature adjourns March 19.

As originally written, **SB 196 would have increased resident hunters' share** of draw licenses to 90 percent and given the remaining 10 percent to nonresidents – eliminating the 12 percent of licenses for nonresidents who are required by law to hire an outfitter. But outfitters who claim they will go out of business without the law protecting their subsidy demanded several amendments to get SB 196 through the Senate Finance Committee, chaired by Sen. John Arthur Smith of Deming.

In its new form ([click here to read it](#)), **SB 196 gives residents 84 percent of all licenses** in each hunt code, which is up from the current 78 percent. It also reduces the subsidy for outfitters to 10 percent of licenses, and allows New Mexico residents who want to hire an outfitter to apply in the same pool. The bill gives 6 percent to nonresident hunters who can choose whether or not to hire an outfitter. In addition, New Mexico residents get all licenses that outfitters don't use, plus all cow elk licenses, as well as all elk licenses in the state's wildlife management areas. In the end, the amended version of SB 196 gives New Mexico residents more than 3,000 additional elk, antelope and other big game licenses – virtually the same number as the original bill, although of lesser quality hunts.

The Senate debated the bill late Wednesday afternoon. Several senators said they were inundated with calls and e-mails, both for and against the bill. **Sen. David Ulibarri of Grants said the bill didn't go far enough in providing additional hunting opportunity for residents.** Ulibarri also questioned whether the outfitter set-aside was even constitutional.

It was obvious from some senators' questions that they had little idea how hunting opportunity is managed in New Mexico and were happy that the amended bill preserved the subsidy for outfitters - who had complained loudly about the original bill. Sen. William Sharer of Farmington pointed out that the bill would still leave thousands of New Mexico residents without hunting opportunities every year, but still called it a step forward. In the end, only three senators voted against the bill: Sens. Carroll Leavell of Jal, Kent Cravens of Albuquerque and William Payne of Albuquerque. The bill's sponsor, Sen. George Munoz of Gallup, deserves a hearty "thank you" from New Mexico resident hunters for successfully getting his bill through the Senate.

But much work remains. SB 196 now goes to the House, where it will follow a similar path of committee hearings followed by a floor vote. Sportsmen's calls and e-mails helped get the bill through the Senate; now we need to make sure House members hear the same message: that SB 196 is good for New Mexico families and good for New Mexico businesses. Time is running out in the Legislature, so **it's important that sportsmen call or e-mail their representative today and respectfully request their support for SB 196.** [Click here](#) to find your representative's contact information.

In other action

House Bills [80](#) and [84](#), which would eliminate the State Game Commission and reduce the Department of Game and Fish to a division in another agency, have been tabled. [House Bill 206](#) would do the same thing but has not yet come up for a hearing. The Game Commission has at times disappointed sportsmen, but that's because previous governors have filled many commission seats with major donors rather than everyday sportsmen. **Rather than eliminate the commission**, the Legislature should work on behalf of sportsmen (the Senate must approve every nomination the governor makes to the Game Commission) by ensuring that everyday hunters and anglers – not big donors – get the five public seats on the Commission. [Click here](#) to read our recent report "State Game Commission: A Blueprint for Restoring New Mexico Sportsmen's Trust."

[House Bill 149](#) has stalled in the **House Taxation and Revenue Committee**. It would have 1) blended the existing deprecation fee into the cost of all big game licenses, eliminating the need for a separate stamp; 2) combined Habitat Management Stamp and Sikes Act Stamp fees, adding \$8 to all adult hunting licenses and eliminating the separate stamps/validations; 3) removed New Mexico from participating in the federal Sikes Act habitat program and replacing it with a new program; and 4) revised the way Game and Fish conducts the Big Game Draw and thus putting the Legislature in control of the draw. Southwest Consolidated Sportsmen, representing a wide array of sportsmen's groups in southern New Mexico, recently voted unanimously to oppose HB 149.

[House Bill 567](#) and [Senate Bill 565](#) would hobble the state's ability to manage endangered species like the Gila trout by prohibiting Game and Fish from coordinating with federal agencies or using federal funding for habitat work to recover federally listed species. Neither bill has had a hearing.

[House Joint Memorial 38](#), which requests that the State Game Commission and the Department of Game and Fish coordinate efforts with federal agencies to **maintain and enhance the San Juan River Quality Waters fishery**, passed the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee and now goes to the full House for approval. Supporters expect it will also clear the Senate.

[Senate Memorial 21](#), which requests the Department of Game and Fish to work with the National Park Service to determine the **feasibility of conducting bow hunts for elk in the backcountry of Bandelier National Monument**, unanimously passed the Senate Rules Committee this week and is now headed to the Senate Conservation Committee.

Big Game Draw changes panned in Sportsman's Poll

More than 900 sportsmen took our recent poll regarding the proposal in House Bill 149 to make a major change in the Big Game Draw, and **the vast majority said to leave the draw system alone**, at least for now. HB 149 calls for all first-choice hunts to be allotted before any second choices, and to allot all second choices before any third choices. But 61 percent of respondents in our recent poll either opposed the change outright or said the Game Commission – not the Legislature – should have the final say. Only 35 percent favored the change in HB 149 and 4 percent of respondents said they were neutral. *(Photo © 2000-2011 NM Dept. of Game and Fish)*



U.S. House takes swipe at sportsmen's conservation concerns

Under the guise of reducing the nation's ballooning federal budget deficit, **anti-public lands forces in the U.S. House pushed through draconian cuts and imposed severe restrictions** on some of the most important conservation programs to sportsmen. The funding cuts in Continuing Resolution 1 total less than \$2 billion, making a negligible impact on the \$13 trillion deficit.

The bill would **eliminate funding for State Wildlife Grants**, which enable agencies like the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish to effectively manage wildlife, and for the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, which has helped protect waterfowl habitat and hunting opportunity in the Rio Grande valley. It would cut nearly \$350 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which has helped protect some of New Mexico's public lands treasures, such as the Valles Caldera, and pares back Farm Bill conservation programs that have protected crucial habitat on private property throughout New Mexico.

The bill goes beyond just cutting the budget, however. **Dozens of amendments were approved that have no budget impact yet hobble efforts to protect wildlife and habitat.** One amendment would prohibit federal agencies from even considering changes to the Clean Water Act that would protect waterfowl breeding habitat in places like New Mexico's playa lakes. Another would block the U.S. Forest Service's Travel Management Plans, which were developed to prevent uncontrolled off-road vehicle use from damaging fish and wildlife habitat.

The bill passed 235-189. Rep. Steve Pearce voted in favor, while Reps. Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Lujan opposed the measure. Sportsmen's groups including Ducks Unlimited, Trout Unlimited and the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership have slammed CR1. They are calling on the U.S. Senate to make a more reasonable approach to fixing the budget deficit and to stand up to those who would reduce or eliminate the public lands that sportsmen nationwide support.

In the news



A fresh supply of desert bighorn sheep has arrived at the Red Rock Wildlife Area from Mexico, which should provide new genetic diversity to the state's captive breeding program, the Department of Game and Fish reports. The 10 young rams were provided in return for New Mexico pronghorn antelope. All the rams are less than 4 years old; when they get older the department will remove the current breeding rams, project leader Darrel Weybright said. Offspring from the Red Rock herd have been used to repopulate several mountain ranges, allowing the department to propose removing desert bighorn from the state's endangered species list. *(Photo © 2000-2011 NM Dept. of Game and Fish)*

Like the United States, England is struggling with its national finances. But a **government plan to sell off hundreds of thousands of acres of national forests** to raise money has been called off after a huge public outcry. [The Los Angeles Times](#) reported last month that the privatization proposal drew howls of protest from all sectors of British society, forcing the Environment Secretary to back down. In a message to Parliament,

Environment Secretary Caroline Spelman said, "We got this one wrong. If there is one clear message from this experience, it is that people cherish their forests and woodlands and the benefits that they bring."

National Wild Turkey Federation **celebrated a milestone last month** in Arizona with the release of a Gould's turkey hen near Tucson. It was the 200,000th bird released through the NWTFF trap and transfer program. Wild turkeys were on the brink of extinction in the early 1900s when sportsmen demanded their protection and reintroduction. Nationwide, the wild turkey population has grown to more than 7 million. According to NWTFF, it is the second-most popular game species in the United States with more than 2.5 million turkey hunters. In New Mexico, NWTFF and the Department of Game and Fish have worked together to bring back Goulds turkeys in the Bootheel region.

Don't forget about the new youth turkey draw hunt in Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge this spring. Four hunters ages 17 and under will win tags for hunts that start April 16-17 and run through May 7-8. Each hunter can take one bearded Rio Grande turkey, which have successfully repopulated the area after their reintroduction in 1974. The deadline to apply is March 15. Applications are available at the refuge visitor center or by calling the refuge at (575) 835-1828.

Big Game Draw applications due March 28

Hunters should put a red circle around March 28 on the calendar to make sure they don't miss the application deadline for elk, antelope and other species in the state Big Game Draw. [Click here](#) to download a copy of the 2011-12 big game proclamation from the Department of Game and Fish, or pick up a copy at a sporting goods store near you.

The Department of Game and Fish has scheduled **several new hunter education classes** in communities around New Mexico to help young hunters qualify for 2011-12 big game license applications. You can view upcoming classes on the department's web site, www.wildlife.state.nm.us, (click on the "Education" tab at the top of the page). But for registration information, you must log on to the online licensing system. If you want to enroll in a course, plan to submit your application as soon as registration begins – classes can fill up in a matter of minutes.

To whet your appetite for elk, check out this amazing [YouTube video](#) in which two bulls battle for dominance in Yellowstone National Park. It's impressive.

New Mexico Conservation Calendar

Sportsmen with an interest in **Valles Caldera National Preserve** are invited to discuss public use and access, as well as landscape restoration and management in the area at public meetings this week. If you can't attend, you can learn more and submit comments at www.vallescaldera.gov. Meetings are set for:

- **Jemez Springs** – 5:30-8 p.m March 3, Valles Caldera Trust Science and Education Center
- **Jemez Springs** – 9 a.m.-noon, March 5, Valles Caldera Trust Science and Education Center

The deadline to comment on the **Gila National Forest Travel Management Plan** is March 7. [Click here](#) for more on the alternatives and how to submit comments.

If your group has an upcoming event of interest to sportsmen, post it on the New Mexico Conservation Calendar, a free service of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation. E-mail the information to nmwildlife@nmwildlife.org or call (505) 299-5404.

Pass it on

If you appreciate receiving the Sportsman's News Roundup, 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 thing done is to build consensus with common goals.

Our key priorities are: Opportunity Habitat Youth

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