



Sportsman's News Roundup

May 4, 2010

Elk season proposals draw fire from hunters

Proposed changes in elk hunting seasons don't sit well with most sportsmen, if testimony heard in Albuquerque and Las Cruces is any indication. The vast majority of hunters who attended Department of Game and Fish meetings in New Mexico's two largest cities in recent days voiced opposition to a proposal that calls for a combined, month-long rifle season. The consensus among hunters at both meetings was that the current system of shorter, separate seasons was preferable to a single long season that might increase harvest and eventually lead to fewer tags in the big game draw. [Click here](#) to read more about the Albuquerque and Las Cruces meetings.

Participants at the Albuquerque meeting voiced appreciation for the department's effort to accommodate their schedules and comments into decision-making – all 11 meetings statewide were held after work hours, which allowed the average working person to attend. But hunters who wanted to better understand the department proposals were disappointed. At the Albuquerque meeting, Robert Livingston, assistant chief of the department's Northwest Area, said department representatives were there to collect comments, not to answer questions or explain any of the proposals. Hunter Matt Amdor of Albuquerque spoke for many when he said: "It is hard to make comments when we don't know exactly what these proposals mean or what the science and reasoning are behind them."

The proposals for elk, oryx and several other big game species currently under discussion are not final. The department is expected to revise them before submitting them to the State Game Commission for review June 3. The final proposals will then be put out for another month of public comment before the commission considers them at its July 8 meeting in Silver City. **Your voice will make a difference in the final proposals and Game Commission decisions.** [Click here to read the draft proposals and submit comments to the department.](#)

State Land Office candidates to address sportsmen

The State Land Office plays a key role in protecting access to traditional hunting and fishing areas in New Mexico, as sportsmen have seen in the recent attempts to trade thousands of acres around Whites Peak. Voters this fall will elect a new Public Lands Commissioner, and sportsmen this month are invited to meet the candidates for this important position face to face at events in Albuquerque and Las Cruces.

Nearly a dozen sportsmen's groups including the New Mexico Wildlife Federation have invited all five land office candidates to a forum in Albuquerque on Wednesday, May 12, from 7-9:30 p.m. Candidates will be asked questions selected by the participating groups regarding hunting, fishing, public access, land trades and other issues. Sportsmen can submit their own questions at the forum, or submit them to NMWF beforehand by [clicking here](#). Afterward, the candidates will be around to chat with hunters and anglers. Refreshments will be provided. The event will be held at the State Bar of New Mexico auditorium, 5121 Masthead N.E., Albuquerque ([click here for a map](#)).

The following week, Las Cruces-area sportsmen can hear the Land Commissioner candidates at a forum that runs 6:30-8:30 p.m. Thursday, May 20, at the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Museum, 4100 Dripping Springs Road. That event is sponsored by numerous groups including NMWF, Southwest Consolidated Sportsmen and Dona Ana County Associated Sportsmen.

Set aside the night of May 12 or May 20 to attend one of these important forums and hear what the prospective state land commissioners say about the issues that matter to you. Then be sure to vote in the primary elections set for Tuesday, June 1. Your voice matters, and sportsmen's votes count.

New bill would protect water, wildlife habitat

Sportsmen nationwide are speaking out in support of a renewed effort in Congress to restore protections for wetlands, streams and lakes. [The America's Commitment to Clean Water Act, H.R. 5088](#), would reestablish the protections lost in the wake of U.S. Supreme Court decisions that took away protection for over 90 percent of New Mexico's surface waters. Healthy streams and wetlands are vital for filtering and replenishing our drinking water supplies and providing fish and wildlife habitat. Among the areas that lost protection are some 20 million acres of pothole lakes and playas nationwide – often called America's Duck Factory. Entire trout streams in New Mexico lost protection, too, including the Mimbres River and Tularosa Creek. Healthy wildlife habitat also means jobs: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service found that waterfowl hunters alone generated \$2.3 billion in economic activity nationwide in 2006.

The House of Representatives must act now to protect drinking water supplies, critical fish and wildlife habitat and our economy by passing America's Commitment to Clean Water Act. The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee passed similar legislation last year. Organizations including New Mexico Wildlife Federation, Trout Unlimited, the Izaak Walton League and Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership support passage of America's Commitment to Clean Water Act this year. [Click here for information](#) to contact your representative in Congress and tell them you're a hunter or angler who supports clean water.

Ruidoso joins growing list calling for 1872 Mining Law reform

The Village of Ruidoso has called on Congress to overhaul the antiquated 1872 Mining Law and protect our valuable public lands and water. Ruidoso, with an economy based on an abundance of healthy public land and recreation out its back door, joins Lincoln County, Mora County, Questa and many other New Mexico communities in demanding reform of the mining law that has hardly changed since President Ulysses S. Grant signed it. Sen. Jeff Bingaman has introduced legislation, S. 796 ([click here to read a summary of the bill](#)), that would hold hard-rock mining companies responsible for restoration and reclamation of public land, provide financial resources for the cleanup of abandoned mines by ending the practice of giving away taxpayer-owned gold and other minerals and establishing a royalty for minerals that would pay for habitat restoration and cleanup of abandoned mine waste. The bill would also end the sale of public lands at the 1872 prices of as little as \$2.50 an acre, and instead establish a responsible system for mining companies to lease public lands. **We'll keep you posted as this important measure works through Congress.**

News from the Department of Game and Fish

Desert bighorn sheep hunters could see more opportunity next year after all. The Department of Game and Fish in late April began the process of potentially removing the species from the list of threatened species in New Mexico. If all goes well with the delisting process, the State Game Commission could officially drop the species from the threatened list at its Dec. 9 meeting, opening the door for additional hunts in the 2011-12 season, said Elise Goldstein, the department's bighorn sheep biologist. There will be plenty of opportunity for public comment as the delisting process moves forward, she said. It would be up to the Game Commission to set new harvest levels, but the department initially said the population has rebounded enough to support as many as 26 tags. No more than two are offered now, through a raffle and an auction.

Big game and budgets are on the agenda when the State Game Commission meets in Gallup on Thursday, June 3. Commissioners will vote on proposed changes in turkey and upland game rules, plus a new rule for javelina, known collectively as Group A – the first of three sets of big game rules on tap this year. ([Click here to read the final proposals.](#)) The commission will also get a first look at proposed regulation changes and public comments for Group B – elk, bighorn sheep, oryx, ibex, barabry sheep, migratory game birds and the Open Gate program. In other action, the commission will look at next year's budget, which is expected to be flat or even lower than this year, and at a study requested by the Legislature on potential consolidation of hunting and fishing licenses and stamps. [Click here to read the full agenda.](#)

The department reports that 150,000 applications were filed for the 62,475 licenses that were made available in the big game draw for for deer, elk, antelope and other big game species. The deadline to apply was April 7. Winners will be posted on the department's website June 9.

There are too many deer and cougars in and around Silver City and the department is planning to reduce mule deer numbers through a trap-and-transplant program. That should help reduce the number of mountain lions that prey on the deer, according to the Silver City Sun-News. The plan calls for netting the deer next fall, then blindfolding and hobbling them and moving them 50 to 100 miles away. Department officials said the deer would be used to augment deer populations in other areas of Gila National Forest. The department also is proposing "population management hunts" that would be restricted to bows or crossbows and special hunt zones. Together, the transplant and hunts would reduce deer complaints and vehicle collisions, and eventually would reduce the number of mountain lions in the Silver City area. One cougar was seen recently in the parking lot of the Gila Regional Medical Center, the paper reported.

Get the Outdoor Reporter delivered to your door

The Spring 2010 Outdoor Reporter is out now, and is packed with stories of interest to New Mexico sportsmen. You can get the next issue in the mail simply by joining New Mexico Wildlife Federation. Not only will you receive the Outdoor Reporter before it's available anywhere else, you'll also be investing in a healthy future for our outdoor traditions. [Click here to donate now.](#) We'll put your contribution to good work, helping protect our outdoor way of life in New Mexico.

Judy Davis is the winner of our spring raffle – an afternoon of archery lessons and bow rentals courtesy of the Archery Shoppe in Albuquerque. Davis, who has a store in Albuquerque but is getting ready to move full-time to a ranch near the I-40 community of Continental Divide, said she's a longtime hunter but has never hunted with a bow. However, Davis said she plans to take her two grandchildren along with her to the Archery Shoppe, which could create not one but three new bowhunters.

Great Outdoors Initiative signed

Former NMWF President Kent Salazar was part of a national task force that helped create a new effort that aims to reconnect Americans, especially children, to our rivers, parks, ranches, coasts and forests. Salazar was appointed to the Outdoor Resources Review Group by Sen. Jeff Bingaman specifically to represent sportsmen of the southwestern United States. President Obama followed the group's recommendations and signed the America's Great Outdoors Initiative, which promotes community-based recreation and conservation, job and volunteer opportunities related to conservation and outdoor recreation; and programs and projects that engage Americans in our history, culture and natural bounty. Said Salazar: "I am proud that President Obama is following the same path that President Franklin D. Roosevelt followed to reinvigorate the nation in a time of economic troubles and world strife. The president calls on us all to work together to use our nation's precious natural resources to restore the health of all Americans, especially our youth."

On the calendar

Archers are invited to a pair of shoots this month in Church Rock, including one for traditional equipment only. Spirit Canyon Archers are holding a 3-D shoot on Sunday, May 16, with a variety of classes including barebow and traditional. The following weekend, May 22-23, is for recurve and longbow only, with no sights, releases or other aids allowed. For more information on either event, call (505) 504-3137 or (910) 916-9395.

The Enchanted Circle Chapter of Trout Unlimited will hold its second annual banquet at 6 p.m. Friday, May 14, at the Sagebrush Inn Convention Center in Taos. There will be dinner and a short program, plus live and silent auctions. For more information or tickets contact Jason Sides at (575) 613-2451 or e-mail sidesjason@yahoo.com.

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.

And finally

If you appreciate receiving these monthly news updates, please share them 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 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 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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