



Sportsman's News Roundup

May 3, 2011

Ready or not, Game Commission meets Thursday

The State Game Commission meets for the first time this year on Thursday, May 5, **even though sportsmen have questions about who represents them on the seven-member board.** Four members were recently nominated by Gov. Susana Martinez; the other three are holdovers from the previous administration, including two major donors to then-Gov. Bill Richardson. But questions remain about representation on the panel.

Meeting Thursday are five commissioners from geographical districts of the state who are supposed to represent the license-buying public, plus two commissioners holding at-large seats that represent the agriculture and conservation communities. The regional commissioners are:

- **District 1 (southeast) – Bill Montoya**, a retired former director of Game and Fish who lives in Alto.
- **District 2 (southwest) – Rob Hoffman**, a retired NMSU chemistry professor and avid hunter and angler who lives in Las Cruces.
- **District 3 (northwest) – Jerry Maracchini**, another former director of the Department of Game and Fish who lives in Rio Rancho.
- **District 4 (northeast) – Scott Bidegain**, a Tucumcari rancher whose family ranch gets antelope authorizations from the Department of Game and Fish and who is a director of the New Mexico Cattle growers Association.
- **District 5 (Bernalillo County) – Tom Arvas**, a major donor to Richardson who now has been on the commission under five governors.

Montoya, Hoffman, Maracchini and Bidegain will need to be confirmed by the state Senate, and **most of them appear to have the hunting and fishing background** that would allow them to be confirmed. Neither Bidegain nor the Martinez administration has provided information on Bidegain's hunting and fishing background, although his ranching experience suggests he would be a good candidate for the statewide agriculture seat – except that the seat is already held by Dickie Salopek of Las Cruces. **If Bidegain remains in the District 4 seat, it leaves the sportsmen of northeast New Mexico without representation on the commission.**

With all the other seats filled, it appears that Chairman Jim McClintic, another major Richardson donor, holds the at-large seat representing the conservation community, despite the fact that the Albuquerque contractor doesn't appear to meet the statutory requirements to hold that position. Further clouding his status on the commission is that McClintic's term expired Dec. 31, 2010, yet Martinez has not officially reappointed him.

Salopek is in a similar situation. He was appointed by Richardson but never confirmed by the Senate. Martinez formally revoked his nomination in January so the Senate would not take action on his confirmation, but she has not yet officially reappointed him either. Salopek is a family friend of Martinez as well as a donor to her campaign.

Antelope, legislation, Land Office easement on agenda

Much of the meeting agenda is informational, although the commission could elect new leadership. Department staff will update commissioners on A-PLUS, the controversial transferable hunting license program for antelope that was formalized last year, and on bills affecting sportsmen approved in the recent legislative session. Also on tap is an update on the State Land Office easement for hunting, fishing and trapping. For the complete agenda, as well as links to other commission information, [click here](#). The meeting runs from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday, May 5, at the UNM Continuing Education Conference Center, Room C, 1634 University Blvd. NE (north of Indian School Road.)

Chaves County road closures would reduce access to public land

Landowners near Roswell have asked the Chaves Board of Commissioners to **shut down public use on two county roads, which would eliminate public access to some 38,000 acres of BLM land in GMU 32.** The commission already held one public hearing on the proposed closures. This week they are planning to visit one of the roads and have invited sportsmen along. Commissioners specifically asked for sportsmen's feedback.

Statewide, sportsmen have seen a steady erosion of access to public lands. Even hunters and anglers who don't live in Chaves County should take a moment now to **speak up against the loss of another 38,000 acres.** Contact any or all of the county commissioners below. After thanking them for encouraging public participation in this decision, respectfully ask them to vote against the proposed road closure. You can also address your concerns to Karin Herrera, Chaves County Technical Services Administrator, P.O. Box 1817, Roswell 88202-1817.

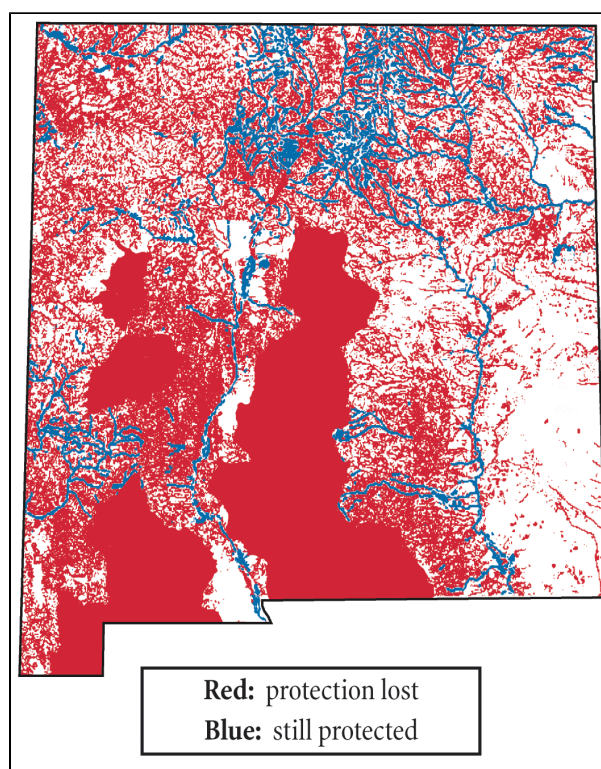
Chaves County Board of Commissioners:

- James W. Duffey, jduffey@nmsu.edu, (575) 623-4197
- Kim Chesser, kimchesser@pvtnetworks.net, (575) 347-2668
- Kyle D "Smiley" Wooton, smiley@dfn.com, (575) 626-6253
- Richard C. Taylor, (575) 623-7626
- Greg Nibert, gnibert@hinklelawfirm.com, (575) 622-6510

NM water quality, quantity in the news

Small streams, wetlands and playa lakes could regain water quality protection under new guidelines proposed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Environmental Protection Agency. Hunting and fishing groups applauded the proposed guidelines, saying they would clear up questions about exactly which water bodies are protected by the Clean Water Act. Two U.S. Supreme Court rulings cast doubt on whether the federal act extends water quality protections to small and seasonal streams, wetlands and water bodies such as the playa lakes of eastern New Mexico. (See map, right, for New Mexico streams that lost protection after the Supreme Court decisions.) Groups including Trout Unlimited, Ducks Unlimited and the National Wildlife Federation said the **proposed guidance is an important step toward protecting valuable wildlife habitat.** The guidance is still in draft form. The two agencies will take public comment on the guidelines once they are finalized this summer. [Click here to read the proposal.](#)

The warming climate could reduce the Rio Grande's flow by nearly 15 percent over the next several decades, federal authorities said at a U.S. Senate committee field hearing in Santa Fe in late April. The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee hearing was called by Sen. Jeff Bingaman to discuss New Mexico's ongoing drought and the state's future water prospects. Experts said all of the state's rivers are low this year after one of the driest winters on record, but that the warming climate is expected to make the normal drought cycles even worse. **By mid-century the Rio Grande basin's water supply could decline by 14 percent per year**, according to a recent U.S. Bureau of Reclamation report provided to the committee. [Click here to read the Santa Fe New Mexican story](#) on the hearing.

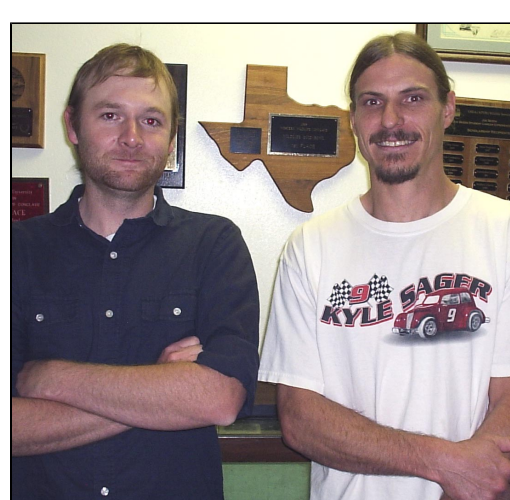


Habitat protection threatened in southern NM and elsewhere

U.S. Rep. Steve Pearce of New Mexico has joined 22 other House members in co-sponsoring a **bill that would eliminate key habitat protection on BLM and U.S. Forest Service land nationwide, including more than 40,000 acres in Doña Ana County**, the [Las Cruces Sun-News](#) reports. The bill, [H.R. 1581](#), would remove millions of acres of wilderness study areas administered by the BLM and another 60 million acres of roadless areas within the National Forest System from land use protections in place for years or even decades.

It isn't yet clear what the effects are statewide, but according to the Sun-News **the bill would affect some 33,000 acres in the Robledo and Sierra de Las Uvas mountains and another 8,600 acres in the West Potrillos.** Sen. Jeff Bingaman, who has proposed turning many of the southern New Mexico wilderness study areas into a new Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks Wilderness, said H.R. 1581 would take away existing protections from millions of acres of roadless areas managed by the Forest Service and BLM "without properly considering the merits of each specific area. It could negatively impact the clean water we rely on that comes from these watersheds, and it could harm the fish and wildlife on our public lands that hunters and anglers use," he added. "For those reasons, I would oppose this legislation if it came to the Senate."

Doña Ana sportsmen encourage next generation



Each year Doña Ana County Associated Sportsmen awards scholarships to wildlife science majors at New Mexico State University – some \$91,000 to date. This year, **two outstanding seniors were given scholarships of \$1,500 each**, which both students say will help them pay off their student loan debts and launch them into their chosen careers.

John Hamilton (on left in photo) receives his science degree this month, but is contemplating graduate work, he says. Having grown up in Las Cruces and now an avid outdoorsman, Hamilton said his goal is to work in the Las Cruces area as a biologist for the Department of Game and Fish or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. He decided to go back to school after his wife died in 2005 and is now raising their three children solo.

Jesse Bergloff (at right in photo) is getting a degree in wildlife science and hopes to work with BLM or similar agency, perhaps in the Pacific Northwest, he says. A lifelong New Mexican who grew up in Radium Springs, Bergloff is married to another full-time student and has a 5-year-old son.

Department hiring more officers

Interested in becoming a conservation officer for the Department of Game and Fish? Act quickly – the deadline to apply is May 12. The department has had a backlog of officer positions open and is hiring a number of people, according to a news release. Qualifications to become a state game warden include a bachelor's degree in any of several wildlife management-related fields and a five-month training course at the state Law Enforcement Academy. For more information, go to the State Personnel Office web site at www.state.nm.us/spo.

In the news

There was good news and bad news regarding the **annual gathering of walleye spawn** this spring. The Department of Game and Fish reports. One or more people stole spawning equipment from Stubblefield Lake and damaged other department equipment. Anyone with information about the incident is asked to call Operation Game Thief at (800) 432-4263. On the other hand, a video crew from **Discovery Channel's "Dirty Jobs"** program spent time with Game and Fish staff at Santa Rosa Lake and helped collect some 600,000 walleye eggs while filming the operation. Their program should be broadcast next fall.

A Taos man has been charged with poaching and other wildlife crimes after Game and Fish investigators dropped into the Rio Grande Gorge to gather evidence. **Ray Cortez, 25, was charged with 39 counts** of poaching, outfitting without a license and throwing the carcasses of 17 deer and elk off the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge. Cortez pleaded not guilty to the charges. He was previously convicted of several other hunting violations, according to Game and Fish. Officers rappelled into the Gorge after search warrants turned up evidence alleging that Cortez had parts of numerous game animals but no licenses or carcass tags.

New Mexico Conservation Calendar

Hunters and anglers should mark Friday and Saturday, May 13-14, on their calendar and plan to attend the **Northern New Mexico Hunting and Fishing Expo and Big Money Fishing Derby** in Red River. There will be events for the whole family ([click here](#) to see the schedule), including **archery shoots and a fishing derby** with cash and merchandise prizes. New Mexico Wildlife Federation and the Red River Chamber of Commerce are co-sponsoring first prize for the youth archery shoot – a **Mission Craze compound bow** (right) and accessories worth \$400. Fishing Derby winners will split \$3,000 in prizes. Also on tap are a **Wild Game Cook Off** on May 14 (you have until Monday, May 9 to enter), plus fly fishing demonstrations and booths by hunting and fishing outfitters and Red River-area businesses. For more information go to www.redrivernewmex.com.



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 way to get things done is to build consensus with common goals.

Our key priorities are: Opportunity Habitat Youth

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