



Sportsman's News Roundup

Nov. 5, 2010

New governor wants to hear from you



Susana Martinez officially takes over as governor in January, but in the meantime she has asked the public for suggestions on how her new administration should take shape. **Hunters and anglers should ask her to do all she can** to make the State Game Commission and the leadership of the Department of Game and Fish more accountable to New Mexico sportsmen and to rebuild the trust that sportsmen have lost in their state wildlife management agency. Send your suggestions to info@susana2010.com.

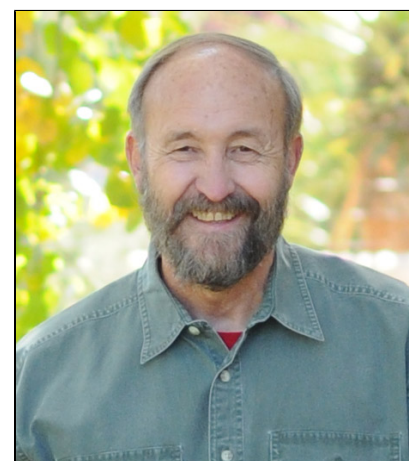
Martinez appears to be open to reform. In her answers to the Sportsmen's Questionnaire in our Summer 2010 Outdoor Reporter, she called for greater transparency and an end to the "pay-to-play" policies that have marked some of Gov. Bill Richardson's appointments to the State Game Commission – appointments that have created a commission that at times does not represent the average New Mexico sportsman. The commission is composed of five public seats that are supposed to represent the license-buying public in different regions of the state, plus two statewide seats supposed to represent conservation interests and agriculture. Past governors have often failed to appoint true public representatives to the five regional seats, instead appointing large donors or special interests to those positions.

Martinez also said she would support a decrease in nonresident hunting quotas, and that because the Department of Game and Fish is fully funded by sportsmen it should be exempt from general state budget cuts and furloughs that have left the Department shorthanded. [Click here](#) to read all of her questionnaire answers.

To help Martinez move forward to rebuild sportsmen's trust in the Game Commission and the Department of Game and Fish, NMWF and other hunting and fishing organizations will be providing her with important input. But she also needs to hear from you, the public at large. **Ask Martinez to get pay-to-play out of the State Game Commission** and to appoint people to the five public seats who truly reflect the average New Mexico hunter and angler rather than special interests. **Your voice on this issue is critical and will make a difference.**

Powell back as Land Commissioner

Former Commissioner of Public Lands Ray Powell will return to that office for another stint. In the Sportsmen's Questionnaire he called for greater public participation in any future land trades or leases of state Trust Land, which should eliminate backroom deals like the one that resulted in the Whites Peak mess. [Click here](#) to read his questionnaire answers and to get a sense of where the State Land Office will head under his leadership.



Whites Peak decision still before Supreme Court

The state Supreme Court still has not ruled on the legality of the Whites Peak land trade exposed last year. In the meantime, **NMWF has heard from a number of sportsmen who drew elk licenses in that area and were not happy** with the Stanley trade, which was completed before Attorney General Gary King stepped in. The trade may still be reversed by the state Supreme Court, but for this season sportsmen got a taste of how the trade would affect hunting if it is made permanent. The land office lost significant acreage for hunters in the sweetheart deal, and the Department of Game and Fish then awarded the Stanley Ranch an additional 43 elk authorizations to sell as a result of the acreage gained in the trade. Hunters seemed to largely approach the situation with patience, however, despite the loss in opportunity for this season. As of late October, the Department of Game and Fish office in Raton reported that there was no appreciable uptick in trespass or other citations. There is no set schedule for when the Supreme Court will rule on the trades.

Department foot-dragging costs NM sportsmen in lost access

Arizona and Colorado last month won substantial grants from the Farm Service Agency to expand their private land hunting access programs – **grants that the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish leadership chose not to pursue**. Arizona received \$600,000, which it will use to expand its public access program by 1 million acres. Colorado got a grant of almost \$450,000 and will both lease additional acres and start paying more for higher quality habitat.

The current administration at Game and Fish cited a number of reasons for not applying for the Voluntary Public Access/Habitat Improvement Program grants last summer. The department said on its website that states would have to conduct an environmental assessment "on all private lands that may have participated in this program." The department also said it "does not currently have the capacity to undertake a task of this magnitude"

But contrary to what the department told the public, an environmental assessment is not required for each participating landowner; Colorado, for instance, did its assessment county by county, not ranch by ranch. And it turns out that the "magnitude" of the task was not much – the Farm Service Agency, which administers the grants, estimates the cost of the environmental assessment at "\$5,000 to \$35,000." The FSA gave each state a list of contractors that do such assessments and it agreed to pay for the work.

Had New Mexico applied and won a grant like Colorado and Arizona, it could have used the funding to dramatically expand its Open Gate program. Open Gate, which provides cash payments to landowners who agree to allow public hunters on their land, currently leases less than 200,000 acres; Arizona's grant will boost its access program to 3 million acres.

New Mexico Game and Fish will have another opportunity in 2011 to apply for \$2 million to expand hunting and fishing access, if the leadership decides to do so.



Desert bighorn delisting takes detour

The Department of Game and Fish has postponed the public meetings to take comment on the proposed delisting of desert bighorn sheep. But not to worry, said bighorn sheep biologist Elise Goldstein, the postponement was caused by an administrative oversight, not because desert bighorns are suddenly threatened again. Goldstein said the department lost track of the public notice requirements and missed a deadline. **The delay will set back final approval of the delisting decision**, which originally was set for December. The public meetings schedule is now as follows:

- Truth or Consequences: 6 p.m. Monday, Feb. 7, Civic Center Chambers
- Deming: 6 p.m. Monday, Feb. 7, Special Events Center

Habitat Stamp Program comments still sought

Sportsmen still have time to comment on the future of the Habitat Stamp Program, a collaboration between the Department of Game and Fish, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service. The program receives about \$800,000 a year for habitat improvement projects. While final project approvals are made by the Game Commission, sportsmen have a say in them through regional advisory committees. Now the department is proposing potential changes in how the funding is divided and in the composition of the advisory committees. (Hats off to program administrator Dale Hall for proposing a wide range of alternatives for public comment rather than just one or two.) **Some sportsmen have voiced concern about both the funding allocation plan and the future role of the advisory committees.** [Click here](#) to read the Habitat Stamp Program proposals and to submit your comments. An update on public comment will be presented to the Game Commission at its Dec. 9 meeting in Clovis, but a final decision on the program's future course will not be made until mid-2011, Hall said.

New sportsmen's groups now at work

Three new sportsmen's groups have sprouted up in recent months that already are making a difference. **United Bowhunters of New Mexico** ([click here](#) to see their website) formed to represent that growing group of hunters. President Jessie Deubel says the group's mission is to preserve and advance bowhunting and "to work with other hunting organizations in protecting the future of all hunting for generations to come."

And two new organizations formed in the wake of the financial problems of Quail Unlimited. **New Mexico Quail Inc.** is a new statewide organization and recently held its inaugural banquet in Las Cruces and has big plans for the future, said President John Moen. The group will host a youth quail hunt on Armendaris Ranch in November, and donated \$34,000 to kick-start a major habitat restoration project in the West Potrillos that will be overseen by the BLM as part of its Restore New Mexico effort. "We've been doing that for the last 20 years, just under a different name," said Moen. Contact him at (575) 644-6936.

Another group of sportsmen who split off from Quail Unlimited reformed as **Lea County Sportsmen**. Like N.M. Quail, the new group will continue to do the habitat work they have been doing for years, but focusing just on Lea County. The group is headed up by A.O. Stevens of Hobbs.

Hunters for the Hungry looking for carcasses

If you have a successful hunt this fall and want to make a charitable contribution to a good cause, think about donating a quarter or more of your carcass to Hunters for the Hungry. The Las Cruces-based nonprofit is looking for unprocessed game meat to pass on to food banks in the region. Spokesman Rob Hoffman said they only want large portions – quarters, halves or whole carcasses – to ensure quality and to have a paper trail that shows the animal was taken legally. If you can help, contact Hoffman at (575) 642-1032, or mrhoffman@cybermesa.com.

Reward offered in Valles Caldera elk poaching case

The Department of Game and Fish is offering up to \$750 in reward money for information about a trophy bull elk that was shot and left to rot at Valles Caldera National Preserve. The six-by-six bull was shot with a rifle on the morning of Monday, Oct. 18, near the main entrance to the preserve, according to a department news release. "It appears that someone drove up, shot the bull and left the scene in a hurry to prevent being caught," said Blake Swanson, district conservation officer for the Jemez Mountains. Anyone with information that could lead to an arrest or charges filed in this case is encouraged to contact Operation Game Thief at (800) 432-4263. Callers can remain anonymous.

Nevada Wildlife Federation member named Conservation Hero

Field & Stream magazine named Gale Dupree as its Conservation Hero of the Year last month in recognition of his work on restoring sage brush habitat. **"Sportsmen don't just talk about protecting wildlife and wild places," says Anthony Licata, editor of Field & Stream. "They actually do it."** Dupree, who lives in Loyalton, Calif., noticed a sage grouse decline in Nevada, so he helped develop a handbook that informs landowners of how to improve nesting habitat for the birds. He also mobilizes volunteers to count leks (strutting grounds) in spring. Grouse are an important indicator species, Dupree said. "If they're not doing well, other populations of wildlife are not doing well, either." A 30-year member of the Nevada Wildlife Federation, he serves on several local conservation boards.

New Mexicans, Gila featured in Field & Stream

Also featured recently in Field & Stream were New Mexicans Greg McReynolds, the Public Lands Coordinator for Trout Unlimited; State Game Commissioner M.H. "Dutch" Salmon of Silver City; and Taos sportsman Garrett VeneKlasen. The trio showed Field & Stream writers around the Gila country. [Click here](#) to read more.

Montana strips outfitters of set-aside

Montana voters this week approved an initiative that abolishes nearly 8,000 nonresident hunting licenses set aside for outfitters, according to the Great Falls Tribune. The decision puts the outfitter-sponsored licenses into the state's big game draw along with all other nonresident licenses. "Now everybody has to draw for those elk and deer tags — it's not a matter of just writing a check and being certain of getting one," wrote Outdoor Editor Michael Babcock. For more on the Montana initiative, [click here](#).

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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