

Washoe County Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife

MINUTES

Thursday ~ April 25, 2019 ~ 6:00 p.m.
Nevada Department of Wildlife
Conference Room B
1100 Valley Road, Reno, Nevada

MEMBERS

Steven Robinson, Chair
Arnold Pitts, Vice-chair
Meghan Di Rocco
Anthony DoMoe
Ray Kabisch

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE [Non-action item]

Member DoMoe led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL [Non-action item]

Chair Robinson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. A quorum was established.

PRESENT: Anthony DoMoe, Arnie Pitts and Steve Robinson.

ABSENT: Meghan Di Rocco and Ray Kabisch.

Jen Gustafson – Deputy District Attorney, was also present.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS [Non-action item]

Sean Shea commented that he would like to see the State of Nevada do something about the number of bear and vehicle encounters as nearly 40 bears were killed by vehicles last year. Mr. Shea suggested that perhaps barriers or means of deterrent would alleviate the problem.

Rex Flowers commented that deer populations in Washoe County were down 62-percent in the last 5 years. Typically the response when asked about the continued decline in populations the answer is wildland fires and the 2007-2015 droughts. Mr. Flowers also noted that Big Horn Sheep populations were down some 17 percent with antelope down by 7 percent. Mr. Flowers encouraged the board to pursue a Heritage Project in Washoe County to protect and enhance Washoe County resources.

Jonathan Lesperance concurred with Mr. Shea's comments about the loss of bears on highways and suggested that other species such as Big Horn Sheep would also benefit.

David Gough, Chair - Nevada Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, drew attention to the May 3 and 4, 2019, Commission agenda noting that Alternative C is opposed due to its serious impacts on wildlife. Mr. Gough asked that the Commission write a letter to White Pine County expressing concerns about the approval of the proposed off road uses.

4. APPROVAL OF MARCH 7, 2019, MINUTES (For possible action)

There were no Board or public comments.

It was moved by Member Pitts, seconded by Member DoMoe, to approve the March 7, 2019, minutes, as submitted. The motion carried: Members Di Rocco and Kabisch absent.

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- 5. BOARD MEMBER MEETING ASSIGNMENT** [Non-action item] –Discussion of member(s) to attend the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners meetings on:

5-1) May 3 and 4, 2019, meetings in Clark County, Nevada – Chair Robinson noted that the meetings are being held in Washoe County and that he would attend both meetings.

Member Pitts stated that he too would be present at both meetings.

5-2) June 21 and 22, 2019, Mineral County, Nevada – Chair Robinson will attend both days

- 6. COMMITTEE, MEMBER AND LIAISON UPDATES** [Non-action items]

6-1) Correspondence (including sportsmen's concerns) and Announcements – There was no correspondence or announcements.

6-2) Overview of the March 15 and 16, 2018, meetings of the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners – Chair Robinson noted that the main focus was on the sellable list with guides expressing concern about the opt out feature.

Jack Robb – NDOW, noted that an online survey about whether or not individuals wished to have their contact information available was running at about 50-percent for and 50-percent against.

Chair Robinson commented that Director Wasley did a presentation on how the combining of certain areas might not be a good idea and that he is interested in hearing how the quotas will be changed for this year.

- 7. COMMISSION GENERAL REGULATION 19-14, BIG GAME QUOTAS FOR THE 2019-2020 SEASON** [For possible action] – *A review, discussion and possible action to recommend that the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners approve, deny or otherwise modify regulations for the numbers of tags to be issued for mule deer, pronghorn antelope, elk, bighorn sheep, black bear, and mountain goats for the 2019 - 2020 seasons.*

Chair Robinson opened the agenda item.

Chris Hampson – Game Biologist, provided a handout to the board and summarized each of the hunts as follows. Antelope - statewide 4,500 tags recommended this upcoming season an increase of 50 tags based on a 20-30 buck per doe ration 2 years of age or more with horns shorter than ears. 185 tags for the 2019 season a decrease from 1329 in last year when the buck to doe ratio was 42 to 100. The intent is to maintain recruitment statewide. It was noted that Washoe County was also a bit lower in the buck to doe ratio at 29 bucks to each doe. Mr. Hampson noted an error had been identified in the status book and will be corrected.

Chair Robinson opened public comments.

Sean Shea commented that he had three people contact him about doing European skulls for the antelope they harvested this year and several were young sub-adult males not females. On the questionnaire for antelope horns shorter than ears he would like to see a section that they would have

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to check a box for Male or check a box for Female. The hunt was designed to harvest females not males, and he sees many sub adult males harvested.

Responding to Mel Belding's inquiry about Units 021, 022 antelope tags on private property, Mr. Hampson noted that deer tend to go to the top of the property where the gate is locked. Additionally there are sufficient antelope outside the enclosed area.

Mike Scott – NDOW, commented that 021 and 022 are combined so that there can be an additional unit.

It was moved by Chair Robinson, seconded by Member Pitts, to recommend that the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners approve Antelope Horns longer than ears All Weapons classes for resident and non-resident archer as presented. The motion carried: Members Di Rocco and Kabisch absent.

Black Bears

Mr. Hampson noted that the recommendations are similar to previous years.

Responding to Chair Robinson's inquiry about the number of bears hit by vehicles, Mr. Hampson explained that NDOW is aware of the issue and has shared the information with the State of California.

Jack Robb – NDOW, noted that the agency maintains a bear log and that records' keeping has been increased on all species. Mr. Robb commented that bears along highways tend to be attributed to nearby fruit trees.

Jonathan Lesperance expressed his support for the Black Bar recommendations. Additionally, Mr. Lesperance believes that the number of bear fatalities may be about 1-percent.

Mr. Hampson commented that younger bears appear to be extending their range and that there is not a large number coming in from Oregon and California.

Mike Scott – NDOW commented that there is an ongoing study of bears encompassing about 100 sites where bear hair has been found. Additionally, some areas have cameras. However that data has not yet been analyzed.

Sean Shea concurred with Mr. Lesperance and voices his support for the recommendations.

Mr. Hampson pointed out that it is illegal for other to harass hunters in the field and that enforcement officials want to be notified when harassment does occur.

It was moved by Chair Robinson, seconded by Member Domoe, to recommend that the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners approve Black Bear recommendations as written. The motion carried: Members Di Rocco and Kabisch absent.

Nelson Desert Big Horn

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Mr. Hampson outlined the number of tags pointing out that some areas had seen a reduction in the number of tags from the 2018 quotas. Mr. Hampson drew attention to the season change in area 18. Mr. Hampson explained that the statewide perspective is the driving force of sheep quotas and that there are not as many older and/or younger rams in some areas which could be caused by disease events. Mr. Hampson pointed out that Southern Nevada constantly monitors wildlife health and is always on the look-out for issues of concerns especially in Unit 183.

Mike Scott – NDOW, pointed out that the State of Utah had experienced some disease issues and that NDOW has not released any sheep. Other areas of concern include the lack of rain to keep guzzlers filled causing the need for herds to migrate to Lake Mead. Typically helicopters are used during drought conditions to fill guzzlers at slightly lower elevations.

Rex Flowers noted that he has no issues with the quota and suggested that perhaps 3 non-resident tags should be reallocated to residents

Mr. Hampson noted that biologists try to stick with the 10-percent based on guidelines as they make their recommendations.

It was moved by Chair Robinson, seconded by Member Pitts, to recommend that the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners approve the Nelson (Desert) Bighorn Sheep Any Ram, Any Ewe Any Legal Weapon as written with a recommendation to move three (3) tags from non-resident to resident at their discretion. The motion carried: Members Di Rocco and Kabisch absent.

California Big Horn Sheep Any Ram Any Ewe

Mr. Hampson provided an overview of the suggested tag reductions noting that some young rams had been collared and are providing data on movements and range. Mr. Hampson pointed out the areas of wildfire devastation along Virginia Mountain and fire-fighting activities involving aircraft that also had some effects on the herds. Mr. Hampson noted that guides had also struggled in the area as well and that it had been about 3 or 4 years since younger aged rams had been observed. While there is plenty of new grass the animals tend to extend their range sometimes well into tribal lands.

Mel Belding pointed out that a much lower number of ewe tags for 068 was being suggested than what was reported at the Season Settings meeting. In light of this, keeping a minimal number of ewes was not going to cause a habitat problem and these ewes along with others would be better served if they were captured this winter and transplanted to areas where California Bighorns are in decline 014, 012, 013 and even 033.

Sean Shea commented that he is curious if the state knows why the sheep in 033 have changed the areas that they originally survived in, and that he still feels that McGee mountain should be part of unit 033 not 032, because they are the same population.

Mr. Hampson commented that sheep movements could be associated with horse gathering as well as drought and helicopter activity.

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Responding to Member Pitts inquiry about the biological danger of removing sheep, Mr. Hampson explained that the biologists try to maintain a level capture to capture from and to augment to stay ahead of the curve. Mr. Hampson pointed out that this is only one of several management tools.

It was moved by Chair Robinson, seconded by Member Pitts, to recommend that the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners approve California Big Horn Sheep – Any Ewe – Any Legal Weapon with a change in Unit group 068 from 5 to 1. The motion carried Members Di Rocco and Kabisch absent.

Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep Any Ram

Mr. Hampson commented that the number of tags in Units 074 and 091 had increased by two, one in each unit due to the number of available rams in those units. Mr. Hampson noted that those areas are being closely monitored and show some improvement.

Mr. Hampson explained that there has been encouraging recruitment and living long enough to be considered mature rams.

It was moved by Member Pitts, seconded by Member Domoe, to recommend that the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners approve Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep Any Ram - Any Legal Weapon as presented. The motion carried: Members Di Rocco and Kabisch absent.

Mountain Goat – Any Goat – Any Legal Weapon

Mr. Hampson noted that there were no changes in the proposed tag quotas and that while there is insufficient recruitment to increase the number of tags there was sufficient to provide the opportunity. Mr. Hampson commented that he was aware of the shedder and that some animal had been removed to stop the spread of the disease. Biologists continue to test the populations as does the vet and local biologist in Elko County. The intent is to continue to work through the disease issue such that the populations of Mountain Goat can improve.

No public comment.

It was moved by Member Pitts, seconded by Chair Robinson, to recommend that the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners approve Mountain Goat – Any Goat - Any Legal Weapon as written. The motion carried: Members Di Rocco and Kabisch absent.

Elk Antlered/Antlerless - Any Legal Weapon Depredation Hunt

Elk Antlered - All Weapons Classes

Elk Spike – Any Legal Weapon

Elk Antlerless – All Weapons Classes

Elk Antlerless – Management All Weapons Classes

Mr. Hampson provided an overview of the hunts noting the reduction in certain hunts to maintain compliance with mane length and other criteria in the subplans.

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During a brief discussion it was noted that the intent is to maintain pressure in certain areas based on input from local and regional supervisors. Other discussion noted that the areas of higher success will have fewer tags whereas hunts with less success may have an increased number of tags. As the discussion continued it was pointed out that the collared population movements indicate that a number of herds spend significant time in other states.

Public comments opened.

Rex Flowers pointed out that management is another tool used to address high populations to reduce congestion and spread the pressure over a larger area. Mr. Flowers suggested that priority be given to Antlerless Elk.

David Gough questioned why all elk tags for 72-74 were decreasing besides spike tags.

Mel Belding pointed out because of greatly fewer cow tags that the management hunt should be eliminated so more General cow tags would be available for those wanting to hunt cow elk.

Public comment closed.

Member Pitts suggested moving the Management Hunt by changing the area.

Chair Robinson suggested that the hunt be removed once the goals are achieved

Jack Robb – NDOW, noted that fees for the Management Hunt are higher.

Responding to Member DoMoe's inquiry, Mr. Hampson explained that the tag allocations are based on the 10-percent criteria and results in tag allocations being increased or decreased as needed.

It was moved by Member Pitts, seconded by Chair Robinson, to recommend that the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners approve the Elk hunts as written. The motion carried: Members Di Rocco and Kabisch absent.

Resident Junior Muledeer – Antlered or Antlerless – All Weapons Classes

Mr. Hampson outlined the proposed modifications that decrease the number of tags by 551 noting the 30 bucks to 100 does. The fall survey indicated a ratio of 50 to 100. Mr. Hampson noted that the past summer had been one of the driest in recent years and that populations are generally stable.

Chair Robinson noted that there was not a corresponding drop in the adult any legal weapon as in the junior hunt

Mr. Hampson noted that the Junior Hunt allocations were based on statewide allocations and that if the board wished to recommend an increase in the tag allocation they should do so. Mr. Hampson then drew attention to the number of wildfires and the driest summer in several years. Mr. Hampson then pointed out areas that are now experiencing high numbers of animals in certain areas and that no fawns were seen in certain units such as 013 and 015. The limited amount of vegetation is also a limiting factor on wildlife populations. Mr. Hampson pointed out that Washoe County has more going

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on than any other County in the State of Nevada for Muledeer. Mr. Hampson explained that about 67-percent of the die-off in the Petersons tested positive for various diseases with two being lost to lions. The data from the collared animals is being compiled and analyzed and will be shared.

During a brief discussion it was noted that Unit 051 had a wildfire that burned nearly 450,000 acres

Chair Robinson opened public comment.

Rex Flowers concurred with the recommendation to return to a single unit from a split.

Jonathan Lesperance suggested that perhaps it was time to review the nutritional value of the vegetation.

Closed public comment

It was moved by Chair Robinson, seconded by Member Pitts, to recommend that the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners approve Junior Mule Deer – Antlered or Antlerless – All Weapons classes with the following modifications: Unit 014 reduce from 20 to 15; Unit 022 increase from 10 to 20; and Muledeer Antlerless Any Legal Weapon – no change; and Muledeer Antlered All Weapons Classes: reduce Unit 014 from 30 to 20; Unit 022 from 35 to 30; Archery: Unit 033 from 10 to 5; and Non- Resident: Unit 022 from 3 to 2. The motion carried with Members Di Roccio and Kabisch absent.

- 8. WASHOE COUNTY ADVISORY BOARD TO MANAGE WILDLIFE MEMBERS AND/OR STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS, REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION AND SELECTION OF TOPICS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS** [Non-action item] – Selection of additional agenda item(s) for the next meeting to be held June 13, 2019.

It was suggested that NDOW provide an update on Habitat.

- 9. PUBLIC COMMENTS** [Non-action item]

Sean Shea suggested a presentation of the entire process of flying a unit to assess habitat and what it takes to develop the populations and quota setting.

Rex Flowers suggested that the CAB consider becoming involved in a project to rehabilitate Unit 014.

Mike Scott – NDOW, noted that NDOW is not planning to capture sheep from the Muddies as Utah is dealing with a major issue.

Mr. Belding suggested that while it is not thought that the animals can grow sufficient hair to survive at 9,000 foot elevation that perhaps an experimental transplant to determine whether that is a statement of fact or not should try a limited transplant to determine how well the animals can adapt to the higher elevation.

- 10. ADJOURNMENT** [Non-action item]

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Chair Robinson adjourned the meeting at 8:16 p.m.