

Washoe County Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife –
May 1, 2023 minutes

1. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** [Non-action item]
2. **CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL** [Non-action item]

Members in Attendance

1. Matt Melarkey, Chair
2. Coby Rowe, Vice Chairman
3. Steve Robinson
4. Jim Rhea
5. Ryan Browne

Others in Attendance

1. Rex Flowers
2. Sean Shae
3. Teddy Owleing
4. John Ewanyk
5. Cody Schroeder
6. Karl Lackey

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

Sean Shae requested the CAB have a presentation for drone use in wildlife surveys.

4. **Approval April 6, 2023 minutes**-[For possible action]

Vice Chair Rowe motioned for approval of the April 6, 2023 CAB minutes. Member Browne seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

5. **Approval of May 1, 2023 Agenda**-[For possible action]

Member Robinson motioned for approval May 1, 2023 meeting agenda. Member Rhea. The motion carried unanimously.

6. **BOARD MEMBER MEETING ASSIGNMENT**-[Non-action item]

Chair Melarkey asked who would be able to attend the Commission meeting on the May 5th and the 6th. Member Robinson said he would be in attendance on the 6th, and Member Browne and Rhea said they would attend virtually on the 5th

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

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Member Robinson said he had received a question regarding the use of a scope on a crossbow and if that was legal or not. He said it appeared it may not be legal, but there is no NAC regulation that speaks to the legality of using a scope on a crossbow.

8. CONSENT ITEMS — [For Possible Action]

- a. **Wildlife Heritage Grants Manual – For Possible Action**
- b. **Fiscal Year 2024 Predation Management Plan**
- c. **Administrative Procedures, Regulations and Policy (APRP) Committee**
- d. **Elk Damage Payment Exceeding \$10,000**
- e. **Commission Policy 23 – Predation Management – Fourth Reading**
- f. **Commission General Regulation 506, Possession of Golden Eagles Under Certain Circumstances**

Chair Melarkey asked if any board members would like to remove any items from the consent agenda. No board members requested any items be removed. There was no public comment.

Vice Chair Rowe moved to accept and approve the consent agenda.
Member Browne seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

9. Consent Calendar items pulled for further discussion– [For Possible Action]

No action was taken

10. Commission Regulation 23-05, Amendment #1, 2023 Black Bear Quotas and Harvest Limits– [For Possible Action]

Carl Lackey provided the members of the board information regarding the Black Bear quotas and harvest limits. In 2022, a total of 16 bears (11 males, 5 females) were harvested during the hunt. Harvest limits were reached for males in Unit Group 203, 291 with 8 males harvested. Female harvest limits were reached in Unit Groups 192, 194, 195, 196 and 201, 202, 204, 206 with 3 and 2 females harvested respectively. This was the first year that the harvest limits were reached resulting in the closure of the Black Bear season after only 24 days. Vice Chair Rowe asked what the total harvest rate was for 2022. Mr. Lackey said the rate was 2.1 percent. Discussion continued between members of the board and Mr. Lackey.

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During public comment, Sean Shea said he would like to see the board recommend that the Commission remove the sow quota. Teddy Owleing said he was in agreement with removing the sow quota and said he hoped to see the harvest limits increased as well. He also said he would like to see a spring hunt added in future years. Rex Flowers said he too would like to see the sow harvest removed and feared that a trophy hunt would happen if the sow harvest was not eliminated. He said he would like to have a total quota of 70, and a total take of 28 animals as opposed to 20.

Member Rhea asked if there was a reason there was not a spring bear hunt. Mr. Lackey said it had been brought up but had not been discussed in recent years. He said the Department had considered the fall hunt to get the season started. He said a spring hunt would have to happen very early in the spring in order to minimize the chance of females and cubs being killed when they were coming out of hibernation. Member Robinson said he was in agreement with members of the public who recommended an elimination of the sow hunt. Chair Melarkey said he agreed with the removal of the sow harvest and noted that any consideration of adding a spring hunt would need to be heard during the season-setting meetings in the fall.

Vice Chair Rowe moved approve Commission Regulation 23-05, 2023 Black Bear Quotas and Harvest limits with the following changes: 1. Remove "Female Harvest Limits" eliminating sow ratio 2. Increase Resident Quota to 63 and Non Resident Quota to 7 3. 192, 194, 195, 196 - Increase Unit Group Harvest to 8 4. 201, 202, 204, 206 - Increase Unit Group Harvest to 8 5. 291 & 203 - Increase Unit Group Harvest to 10. Member Robinson seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

11. Commission Regulation 23-14, Big Game Quotas for the 2023-2024 Season– [For Possible Action]

Chair Melarkey asked John Ewanyk, NDOW, to give a rundown of the findings from the surveys and conducted by the Department and how those findings informed the quota recommendations. Mr. Ewanyk provided the board with an explanation of how the models interpreted the data inputted by the Department.

Pronghorn Antelope

Due to reduced flight time, this unit was only surveyed for 1 hour rather than the typical 3 hour survey. As a result, the sample size for 011 was lower this year. Due to low fawn:doe ratios from previous years, and the low buck ratios

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observed in the unit, there is a reduced number of mature bucks available in this population. As a result, NDOW is recommending moderately lower quotas for 011 pronghorn this year. The pronghorn population in 012-014 remains stable, with fawn ratios above maintenance levels for three consecutive years. This unit grouping would benefit from raising both the ALW success and percent of 15" in the harvest to what they were in previous years. As a result, NDOW is recommending similar quotas to last year, despite the increase in fawn production the past three years. Pronghorn populations in 015 remain stable, with multiple years of quality fawn:doe ratios. Much of this area has been impacted by wildfires, however rehab efforts seem to be helping pronghorn maintain steady numbers. Keeping tag numbers similar to last year's recommendation should keep the success rates aligned with objective. Success rates, percent of 15" or greater in the harvest, and hunter satisfaction all remain stable in this unit. Although much of the unit grouping has been impacted by fire, this population of pronghorn has remained stable. Due to reduced flight time, this unit was not surveyed this year. Three-year averages were used for modeling this population. As a result, NDOW is recommending similar tag quotas to last year for this unit grouping. The Sheldon pronghorn population remains stable. The past three years have had stable fawn recruitment and success rates. The percent of 15 inch in the harvest also seems to have rebounded from the previous year. As a result, NDOW is recommending similar tag quotas this year.

Chair Melarkey asked about the mountain lion predation program had progressed. Mr. Ewanyk said the program had been able to remove quite a few lions in Washoe County. Mr. Ewanyk also responded to Member Rhea's question regarding mortality rates and noted the western half of Nevada had seen a much lower mortality rate than the eastern portion of Nevada.

Sheep

Mr. Ewanyk explained that this year, hunt units 012 and 014 were combined due to collar data showing sheep movement between the two hunt units. As a result, the data in the tables above is a combination of the past three years of sheep metrics from unit 012 and 014. The sheep in 012 and 014 have experienced population decline as a result of drought, predation, low quality forage, and feral horses exceeding appropriate management levels. With the contraction in population size and this being the first year the hunt units are combined, NDOW recommends being conservative on the tag quota for this unit grouping. The sheep population in 022 is stable, which has been reflected in the past few years of hunter success, and age class of harvested rams. The sheep hunt in this unit grouping is limited by access issues in the northern end of the Virginia Mountains, where the sheep spend most of their time during the season. Due to hunters having access issues, NDOW recommends keeping the

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quota at 2 tags for this unit grouping. The sheep population on the Sheldon seems to be stable despite drought and predation issues. Lamb ratios on the Sheldon improved this year, and the number of sheep detected on survey was double what was observed the year prior. Given that hunters have struggled to find mature rams during the past few hunt seasons, NDOW recommends being conservative with the number of tags in this unit and keeping the quota at 2.

Member Robinson said he didn't agree with the season setting that was approved by the Department. He said that since 012 and 014 were combined he did not agree with the tag recommendations. He said that hopefully next year the unit setting could be adjusted for these two units.

Mule Deer

Mr. Ewanyk explained that deep snow levels and harsh winter conditions are anticipated to have a negative impact on the 011-013 mule deer population. Several years of low fawn recruitment, poor body condition of GPS collared adults, and predation are all contributing to the lower population size of this unit grouping. The reduction of available bucks that survived the tough winter in northern Washoe County will result in a reduction of recommended tags for the 2023 hunt season. The mule deer population in Unit 014 remains suppressed from what it once was in the early 2000's. Despite the population decline, buck ratios remain high for Unit 014. Hunter success for this unit continues to be stable after the previous reductions in tags. Another year of conservative quota recommendations should help Unit 014 stay within the management objectives of an alternative hunt unit. Unit 015 is managed as a non-standard unit, where success should be between 35-45%. The Any Legal Weapon success rates have been below 35% for the last 3 consecutive years. Historically, there was a large migration of deer from California moving to winter range within Unit 015; however, the lack of severe winters has reduced the immigration of deer into this unit prior to the hunting season. Recommended tag reductions for this unit should help to get hunter success rates within the 35-45% range. The interstate deer herd of Unit 021 has had much of its summer and winter ranges burned by wildfires. As a result of these fires, the population estimate has declined across the past three years. Unit 021 is managed as a non-standard unit and the Any Legal Weapon success has been steadily declining across the past three years. A slight reduction in quotas should help to maintain an ALW success rate that is between 35-45%. The mule deer population in Unit 022 has been stable for the past three years, with good fawn recruitment the past two years. Unit 022 has had stable success rates the past three years, along with consecutive years of high buck ratios. Keeping quotas similar to the previous year should keep 022 aligned with management objectives. Although the mule deer population on the Sheldon remains at low density, the harvest success and percentage of 4 points in the harvest have remained stable the past three years. Keeping quotas

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similar this year should allow harvest metrics to stay within objective for Unit 033.

Member Robinson asked why the junior tags in certain units appeared to be large. Mr. Ewanyk said that not having a doe harvest appeared to have affected the tag recommendations more this year than he had seen before.

Mr. Lackey said he was unable to do a fall survey but was able to complete a spring survey of 194 and 196. He noted that fawn ratios were low. Overall, he said that those results would not be seen in quota recommendations for a few years. He said surveys are not completed in 195 and 201. He said the population estimate for 195 was decreased and the horse population had significantly increased in that unit. Member Robinson asked if there would be an issue setting the primitive weapons back to what they were the previous year. Mr. Lackey said he did not see an issue with setting the quota the same as last year.

During public comment, Chair Melarkey requested the board take each species separately and started with antelope.

Antelope Public Comment

Rex Flowers said in unit 011 for archery was being dropped and he said he did not agree with the recommendation and would like to see the quota remain at 5. In 012 and 014 he said he had similar concerns and requested the quota be increased back to 5. Jeff Rogers said he agreed with Mr. Flowers and thought the primitive weapons hunt should be left at 5. Sean Shae asked for clarification regarding first-time applicants and if the Department saw a problem with the mix-and-match. Cody Schroeder, NDOW, said the Department does not try to manipulate the data and they let the formula take precedent. He said that people who want to draw a tag and their strategy was to draw one, they would list the weapon class in a way that would increase their chances of drawing any tag they could. Chair Melarkey asked if the number of tags would continue to be decreased each year based on the algorithm being used. Mr. Schroeder said that there had not been an analysis that could determine an answer to that one way or another at this time.

During discussion the members of the cab discussed the quota recommendations for antelope. Chair Melarkey said he felt there were only issues with the primitive weapons classes, and that is where the discussion was centered. Member Robinson said he was comfortable keeping the quotas the same, except in unit 011 where he felt it should be increased.

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Member Robinson moved to accept the recommendations for pronghorn antelope with the following changes: Resident Antelope- Horns longer than ears Muzzleloader Hunt 2171: Unit Group 012-014 increase quota to 5; Unit Group 015 increase quota to 10; Unit Group 021-022 increase quota to 2; Unit Group 033 increase quota 2 and Resident Antelope- Horns longer than ears Archery Hunt 2161: Unit Group 011 increase quota to 5; Unit Group 015 increase quota to 15; Unit Group 021,022 Increase quota to 5; Unit Group 033 Increase quota to 4. Member Browne seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Sheep Public Comment

Teddy Owleing said the 012 and 014 should not occur this year due to what he has seen in that area. He noted that Nevada should pride itself on hunting only old age-class rams. Member Robinson said that while agreed with the point, the CAB was not able to make that change for this year. Sean Shae said that when 014 is looked at more closely, the issues in that unit are based on genetics and due to that, no one should hunt unit 014.

Chair Melarkey moved to accept the recommendations for the bighorn sheep hunts as written. Member Robinson seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Mule Deer Public Comment

Prior to starting public comment, members of the board contemplated some adjustments to the recommendations. Member Browne asked about doe tags. Mr. Schroeder said the units are almost at their mortality rate. He said the quota recommendations were insignificant based on the overall populations. He said that the quota recommendations would not affect the population and would provide additional opportunities. During public comment, Mr. Flowers said the primitive weapons classes should be increased to at least 2 due to party hunts. He said he did not believe one tag should be given when party tags were offered. Jeff Rogers said he agreed with the recommendations overall, expect for the primitive weapons, and said he felt the primitive weapons should remain the same as the previous year. He also added that he agreed with Mr. Flowers regarding the party hunts.

Chair Melarkey moved to accept the mule deer hunt as written with the following changes: Resident Mule Deer- Antlered Muzzleloader Hunt Resident 1331: Unit Group 014 increase quota to 2; Unit Group 015 increase quota to 5; Unit Group 021 increase quota to 5; Unit Group 022

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increase quota to 5; Unit Group 033 increase quota to 5; Unit Group 194,196 increase quota to 5; Unit Group 195 increase quota to 5 and Resident Mule Deer- Antlered Archery Hunt Resident 1331: Unit Group 015 increase quota to 5; Unit Group 021 increase quota to 15; Unit Group 022 increase quota to 6. Vice Chair Rowe seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Chair Melarkey opened public comment up for any statewide recommendations. Sean Shae said he had seen a population jump in rifle hunting for antelope in unit 076. He said that during the regular season he has seen a large jump from 30 to 50, but this year many of the antelopes did not come across the border due to wildfires. He wondered if there was a large increase in the count due to the impacts of the wildfire and how those impacts may have changed movement patterns of those antelope.

12. Future Meeting Agenda Items – Informational only- Public Comment Allowed

Member Rhea requested a presentation from fisheries at a future meeting. Member Robinson also asked to have an upland game status update at the next meeting as well.

13. PUBLIC COMMENTS [Non-action item]

Sean Shae said he appreciated the participation from the Department during the meeting. Member Robinson also said he was very appreciative of the Departments participation.

14. ADJOURNMENT [Non-action item]

Chair Melarkey adjourned the meeting at 8:31 p.m.