

Washoe County Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife –  
April 29, 2024 minutes

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

*Members in Attendance*

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

*Members Absent*

1. Matt Melarkey

*Others in Attendance*

1. John Ewanyk, NDOW
2. Cooper Munson, NDOW
3. Sean Espinosa, NDOW
4. Travis Hawks, NDOW
5. Teddy Elwell
6. Mel Belding
7. Ash Casselli
8. Joel Blakeslee
9. John Zenze
10. Dakota Freshmen
11. Sean Shae
12. Lou Christensen

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

There was no public comment.

4. **Approval March 4, 2024 minutes**-[For possible action]

**Member Rhea motioned for approval of the March 4, 2024 CAB minutes. Vice Chair Browne seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

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

Chair Rowe asked who would be able to attend the upcoming Commission meeting in Reno. Board members noted they would be able to attend the upcoming Commission meeting.

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

Chair Rowe noted he had received correspondence for items that would be heard on the agenda. Correspondence can be found attached to the end of the minutes. Travis Hawks provided an update regarding fishing regulations and closures of fisheries. Additionally, John Ewanyk, NDOW, gave a presentation regarding how the quota array model worked when setting tag quotas for species.

**7. Integrating Unmanned Aircraft Systems in Wildlife Management-  
Dakota Freshman[Informational]**

This presentation is to show how UAS (Drones) can be an asset for wildlife management and why they should be considered for use by NDOW.

**8. Consent Agenda– [For Possible Action]**

- A. Heritage Account Principal Project**
- B. Fiscal Year 2025 Predation Management Plan**
- C. Commission General Regulation 520 – Tag Deferral  
Extenuating Circumstances Revision**
- D. Commission General Regulation 500, Subdivision Map  
Review**

During public comment, Lou Christensen commented on agenda item 8d. He noted that he was from Silver Knolls in Red Rock and said there was concern in the community about upcoming housing projects in the area and the appeared lack of discussion regarding the impacts of wildlife. He said there was wildlife migration corridors that could be affected by the developments.

Member Robinson said he was also frustrated with the review of some of these projects. Cooper Munson, NDOW, said NDOW requires there to be wildlife analysis on the projects for private land projects, but that NDOW did not have the ability to comment on those projects.

**Member Robinson moved to approve the consent agenda items.**  
**Chair Rowe seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

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

No items were pulled for further discussion.

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**10. New Commission Policy 12 – Fee for Habitat, Research and Management - [For Possible Action]**

Chair Rowe opened the item to review a new Commission Policy 12. There was no comment from the public or the board on Commission Policy 12.

**Member Rhea moved to approve Commission Policy 12 as written. Vice Chair Browne seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

**11. Commission General Regulation 518 – Shed hunting and Big Game skull collecting- [For Possible Action]**

Chair Rowe opened the item to discuss changes to Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) 503.172 that better identifies unlawful activity for shed hunting and provides provisions for big game mammal skull collection. Member Robinson asked how many citations had been issued that pertained to the this proposed change. Wes Koontz, Game Warden, said the proposal was seeking to have people out of the field before seasons opened. He noted that many people from outside the state were coming into Nevada and stashing skulls and they were not able to enforce the law efficiently. Vice Chair Browne asked why people were not required to have licenses to shed hunt. Mr. Koontz said he did not have a response to that question but did note he agreed that there should be some sort of licensing mechanism. The board continued discussion regarding where the majority of offenses came from.

During public comment, Mel Belding said he did not see language in the proposal that required non-residents to wait a month, or two, shed hunt. He also added that he was unclear about what could and could not be done with sheds and how the donation process worked. Teddy Elwell added that he had would like to see the season changed back to April 1 in order to allow for families to take part in the activity during spring break for youths. Joel Blakeslee said he cautioned the board to think carefully about language regarding selling because that may impact trappers.

Member Robinson recommended NDOW look into how Utah implements an app that allows people to photograph the shed and send in the information to the Utah wildlife department. Shawn Espinosa, NDOW, explained why the April 30 season was set and it was due to sage grouse mating season.

**Vice Chair Browne moved to approve Commission General Regulation 518 with the following changes; to change item 8 to read a sealed big game mammal skull may be sold by a non-profit organization after receiving it as a donation . Member Robinson seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

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**12. Commission General Regulation 519 – Waiting Periods for Bighorn Sheep and Mountain Goat- [For Possible Action]**

Chair Rowe opened the item to consider amending Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) 502.345 and 502.364 that would adjust the waiting periods for Nelson (Desert) bighorn sheep, Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, California bighorn sheep, moose and mountain goat to once in a customer's lifetime. Member Robinson said he was in favor of a once in a lifetime for all the listed species except Desert Bighorn Sheep. Vice Chair Browne said he was in favor of the full proposal. Member Rhea asked about hunters who have points for their second Nelson. Mr. Ewanyk said those hunters would be grandfathered in. Shawn Espinosa, NDOW, said there is a minimal amount of people who have drawn more than one tag for these species and the effect on the overall hunter population would be minimal. Member Rhea asked if a hunter is one year away for drawing the tag and this was implemented, would that mean the hunter would be ineligible and it was noted that yes, that hunter would be ineligible.

During public comment, John Zanze said he recommended extending the waiting period in order to take people off of the draw which would allow other hunters to still put in for the tag. Mel Belding said he felt the big picture was being missed and he was concerned with the loss of sheep population across the state. He provided details on population counts in various units. Ash Casselli added that he felt this proposal was a penalty on the hunter and that he agreed with Member Robinson that Nelson Bighorn sheep should not be included.

Member Robinson said after hearing from public comment he was even more certain that desert bighorn sheep should be excluded from the one in a lifetime policy. Member Rhea said he too agreed with Member Robinson regarding the desert bighorns.

**Member Rhea moved to approve Commission General Regulation 519 as written with the following change: omitting the Desert Nelson Bighorn Sheep from once in a lifetime. Member Robinson seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

**13. Commission General Regulation 522 – E-tag Regulation- [For Possible Action]**

Chair Rowe opened the item to review language amending Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) 502 that would update the process related to use of game tags in the field and allow the Department to offer game tags in an electronic format. Member Robinson asked for additional details regarding how the proposed process would work. Shawn Espinosa, NDOW, said that they will require hunters to use e-tags and hunters can use duct tape and wrap that around the meat and then the warden would be able to see the number. Member Rhea asked how the application would be used during the hunt, and Mr. Espinosa said the application would have the code, but it would not be available until after the animal has been killed. Additionally, the application would not need

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internet service in order to reveal the code out in the field and the plan will be to roll out the e-tags in phases beginning with the Turkey tag possibly.

During public comment, Mr. Shea said that he liked just having the tag come in but would like to see the dots on the tags be changed because they were difficult to read. He said he also had concerns with NDOW's website and whether sportsman would be able to navigate it. Ash Casselli said he was in full support of the e-tag proposal.

After public comment, Member Rhea said that since this proposal was still in the workshop stage, he was supportive. Chair Rowe said he was supportive of the proposal as well.

**Member Rhea approve Commission General Regulation 522 as written.**  
**Member Robinson seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

**14. Request from the State of Utah for the Desert Bighorn Sheep- [For Possible Action]**

Chair Rowe opened the item to consider the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources has requested desert bighorn sheep for translocation into the State of Utah. Member Rhea said he was not in favor of this proposal since the population is declining in Nevada. Member Robinson said he too was opposed, and asked what happened to sheep the state gave Utah before. John Ewanyk, NDOW, said Utah was given 32 sheep and of those 12 were left. This request would be to provide sheep to Utah at a new nursery that would hopefully allow the state's population to rebound. He said Nevada would give Utah roughly 20 sheep. Vice Chair Browne said he was opposed to the request too. Member Robinson described some best practices that other places were doing to help recover sheep populations and spoke about how Mexico has done a good job recovering their populations through the use of nurseries, but he noted this proposal was lacking clear details that he would need in order to support the request.

During public comment, Joel Blakeslee said he was not in support of the request. But he did note that that Utah classified mountain lions as predators and they implemented coyote contests and that over time Nevada may be requesting sheep from Utah. Mel Belding said he strongly urged the CAB to deny Utah's request. He said that Nevada should be concerned with recovery of this state's population now and not be focusing on assisting other states until Nevada's population had rebounded. John Zenz asked how the pen-raised sheep were doing when they were released back to the wild. Ash Casselli said he was not supportive of the request and noted the discussion earlier in the meeting regarding limiting access to sheep hunting in Nevada and then a proposal to give sheep away.

Chair Rowe asked if Nevada receives animals from Utah. Mr. Espinosa, NDOW, said the state has received species from Utah including turkeys and possibly mountain

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goats. Member Rhea reiterated his opposition to the request and added that he would like to see a stable and growing population prior to giving any more sheep to Utah.

**Vice Chair Browne moved to deny the request from the State of Utah for the Desert Bighorn Sheep. Member Rhea seconded. The motion carried 3-1 with Member Robinson opposing.**

**15. Commission Regulation 24-11, 2024 Black Bear Quotas and Harvest Limits- [For Possible Action]**

Chair Rowe opened the item to consider adopting the 2024 hunting season quotas and harvest limits for black bear. Member Robinson asked members of NDOW to discuss the outcomes of the sow harvest. Mr. Ewanyk, NDOW, gave an update on the tallies from the 2023 season. Member Robinson said that the bear biologist noted that there was no negative impact from having a sow harvest and added the bear population was exponentially growing and harvests should continue. He also added that the requirement for removal of all edible portions of meat should be added to the hunts. Chair Rowe and Vice Chair Browne said they agreed with Member Robinson.

During public comment, Mr. Shea said he was supportive of the comments and noted there had been positive movement on requiring all edible meat be removed. Mr. Blakeslee said he was opposed to removing the sow harvest and hoped the CAB would be managed by science instead of politics. Mel Belding said he too was supportive.

Member Robinson asked for clarification on how the quotas were set. Cooper Munson, NDOW, said the quota was not based on demand/success ratios, and provided information on how the quotas were set using success percentages.

**Member Robinson moved to recommend approval of Commission Regulation 24-11, 2024 Black Bear Quotas and Harvest Limits with the following changes: to remove the female harvest limit and to make it a requirement to remove all edible portions of meat from the field. Chair Rowe seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

**16. Commission Regulation 24-12 – Big Game Quotas for the 2024-2025 Season- [For Possible Action]**

*Pronghorn Antelope*

Chair Rowe asked Mr. Ewanyk to provide an update on the pronghorns. Mr. Ewanyk explained that two years of good fawn recruitment and improved habitat conditions has led to another year of an increased population estimate for hunt unit 011. Hunt success remains stable, and the 15" or better metric seems to be rebounding. Due to the high buck ratio and increase in population size, NDOW recommends a moderate increase

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in tags for 011. The pronghorn population in unit grouping 012-014 remains stable at an estimate of 1,600. Success rates for the unit grouping remain stable, although they're lower than the statewide average. Managing this unit grouping for a post hunt adult buck ratio of 25 adult bucks to 100 does results in a recommendation for similar tags as last year. Last year there were two deferred resident archery tags, and two deferred ALW tags which were added to this year's quota. The pronghorn herd in hunt unit 015 remains stable with a population estimate of 1,000. Hunt unit 015 has benefitted from three years of quality fawn ratios and multiple years of high buck ratios observed on surveys. As a result, NDOW recommends increasing the quotas for the unit. Last year there was one deferred archery tag which was added to this year's quota. The pronghorn herd in hunt unit grouping 021,022 remains stable. The unit grouping has experienced high success rates for three consecutive years and a high buck ratio was observed in this year's survey. As a result, NDOW is recommending a slight increase in tags for the unit grouping. Last year there was one deferred resident ALW tag which was added to this year's quota.

The CAB discussed and clarified some of the reasoning regarding some changes to tag recommendations with Mr. Ewanyk. Member Robinson said that overall, he was supportive of the recommendations. Vice Chair Browne added that he feared that there were too many young bucks in the counts and an increase in tags may be detrimental to the populations since the bucks were so young.

During public comment, Sean Shea asked NDOW about supply and demand and how the first-come first-served worked within that. He also asked how other CAB's across the state modify tags in weapon classes and noted that he hoped it would continue to stay within the percentages.

Cooper Munson, NDOW, added that reallocation of tags to different weapon classes is considered in whole by the Commission so changes to one weapon class would change the others.

**Chair Rowe moved to recommend approval of the 2024 Pronghorn Antelope Quotas and Harvest Limits with the following changes: to remove the deferred tags from each unit and incorporate as part of the standard quota and change Unit 012-014 non-resident any legal weapon to 12 tags. Vice Chair Browne seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

*Elk*

Chair Rowe asked if there were any questions or comments regarding elk quotas. There were no comments from the CAB or public comment.

**Member Rhea moved to recommend approval of the 2024 Elk Quotas and Harvest Limits as written. Member Robinson seconded. The motion**



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**carried unanimously.**

*Desert Bighorn Sheep*

Chair Rowe asked if there were any questions or comments regarding Desert Bighorn Sheep. Member Robinson asked for clarification regarding the quota recommendations for the sheep. Member Robinson said he did not understand why ewes were included in the tag quotas because the population has been declining. Mr. Espinosa, NDOW, said there have been some disease in some herds which has caused the ewes to be added in the tag quotas. He also spoke about lack of water for sheep in certain areas which has also caused issues with the populations.

During public comment, Ash Casselli said he was opposed to the ewe hunt. Mel Belding said he too was opposed to the ewe hunt. Mr. Shea asked how much effort the state gives those who have tags for single horn rams and if the state asks the hunters if they had seen single horn rams while they were in the field.

Cooper Munson, NDOW, noted that if a single horn ram is observed on survey they are included in the report and the intent is the general hunt can assist the one horned ram hunters.

**Vice Chair Browne moved to recommend approval of the 2024 Desert Bighorn Sheep with the following changes: in hunt 381 recommend 2 resident tags, and hunt 3281 to recommend 1 resident tag. Member Robinson seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

*California Bighorn Sheep*

Member Robinson asked about the status of the Montana's. Cooper Munson, NDOW, said there was not intention to have a hunt there in the short term. Member Robinson said collar data on the California Bighorn Sheep appeared to show deaths were being caused by predation.

During public comment, Mr. Shea said he had concerns about unit 022 and how that unit had changed after recent wildfires and said that the Reservation and ranchers would not allow 3 tags in that unit.

**Vice Chair Browne moved to recommend approval of the 2024 California Bighorn Sheep Quotas and Harvest Limits as written. Chair Rowe seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

*Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep*

Member Rhea asked about the population health. Cooper Munson, NDOW, said the population estimate had increased and the herd is recovering. There was no public comment.



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**Member Robinson moved to recommend approval of the 2024 Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep Quotas and Harvest Limits as written. Vice Chair Browne seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

*Mountain Goat*

Member Robinson asked members of NDOW about the nanny hunt and if there were issues. Mr. Munson said he was not well-versed on mountain goats but he said the Department strongly discouraged hunters from killing nannies. During public comment, Sean Shae said he hoped the state would write a letter to Utah that said it would give the state sheep if they weren't in decline, and that the state should continue to request mountain goats. Mr. Belding wondered if there was a similar concern regarding goats as there were for sheep. Sean Espinosa, NDOW, said they were actively monitoring the goat hers as well to see about the health of the herds and if there was any disease.

**Member Robinson moved to recommend approval of the 2024 Mountain Goat Quotas and Harvest Limits as written. Chair Rowe seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

*Mule Deer*

Mr. Ewanyk provided an update regarding the rationale for the proposed quotas. He noted that this year's flight time was reduced for Management Area 1, and no spring deer surveys were conducted. Deer in unit grouping 011-013 continue to occur at low density and the population estimate is slightly lower than the previous year due to continued winter loss from the previous harsh winter. Hunt success has decreased for the past three consecutive years, however the three-year average is still at 47%. Similarly, four point or better in the harvest has remained consistent for the past three years. As a result, NDOW is recommending similar quotas for this year. Last year there was one deferred resident ALW tag which was added to the quotas. Hunt unit 014 is managed as an alternative hunt unit, and this past year it hit all 3 of the alternative unit metrics. Unit 014 has a three-year average buck ratio of 44 bucks:100 does, a three-year success average of 53%, and a four point or better average of 45%. As a result, NDOW is recommending keeping tags like last year, with nominal increases to keep fulfilling the metrics of an alternative unit. Due to this year's budget constraints, no surveys occurred in hunt unit 015. Deer in hunt unit 015 occur at a low density and still receive a small influx of deer from California during the winter months. Unit 015 is managed as a non-standard hunt unit, which targets a hunt success rate of 35-45% success. The three-year average success is 22%, however the number of four points or greater in the harvest remains high with a three-year average of 64%. As a result, NDOW is recommending similar quotas to the year prior. Flight time was reduced for Management Area 2, which resulted in a smaller sample size located on fall survey and no spring deer surveys occurred. Three consecutive years of quality fawn recruitment has lead to an increase in the population

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estimate for unit 021. Harvest metrics for unit 021 remain stable, with a three-year average of 47% success and a three-year average of four point. This unit is managed as nonstandard, targeting 35-45% success. The three-year average for success is 47%, warranting an increase in tags to keep success rates between 35-45%. Last year there were three resident ALW tags that were deferred which were added to the quota. The mule deer population in unit 022 remains stable, and buck ratios have been high the past three years of surveying. Harvest success has increased the past three years, and the unit has fairly consistent four point or better in the harvest (three year average of 40%). As a result, NDOW is recommending a slight increase in quotas for unit 022. Last year there was one resident ALW tag deferred which was added to the quota.

Member Robinson noted he had continued concerns regarding predator management and the lack of data being reported due to lack of survey flights. He said he hopes to see increased flight surveys next year in order to ensure robust data is gathered to provide a clearer picture of the populations throughout the state.

During public comment, Mel Belding said he agreed with Member Robinson's statement regarding a lack of survey data. Ash Casselli noted he too hoped there would be an increase in survey flights. He also added that he was confused about how the numbers were calculated and said he hoped that the rounding would change to make it a true 90-percent to 10-percent resident/non-resident allocation.

Sean Espinosa, NDOW, said there was a reduction in the number of hours the department could fly this year, and with that came a decision to not fly northern Washoe County. He also added that determining the success of a predator management plan was based on more than survey data and he said NDOW was open to looking at more information to determine success.

**Vice Chair Browne moved to recommend approval of the 2024 Mule Deer Quotas and Harvest Limits with the following changes: to change any legal weapon class hunts to the same allocation as 2023-24 quotas, and to change the deferred tags to make those tags part of the standard quota. Member Rhea seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

*Moose*

Member Robinson said he was excited to see the moose tags for the 2024 hunt. There was no public comment.

**Chair Rowe moved to approve the mosse quota and harvest limits as written. Member Robinson seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

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

Member Robinson said he would like to see a presentation from NDOW regarding their work with mule deer.

**18. Public Comment** [Non-action item]

Joel Blakeslee said he hoped to see better management of wildlife. He said he hopes to see incentive programs that would help with predator management. He also added that more work should be done regarding the management of wild horses and to have the CAB recommend the declaration of an emergency in Washoe County for wild horses. Sean Shae said he hoped the state would look into the inclusion of drones in the management plans and surveys. Mel Belding said he was concerned with how the quota data was calculated and noted he would like to see adjustments in how mule deer quotas were set.

**19. Adjournment** [Non-action item]

Chair Rowe adjourned the meeting at 9:41 p.m.