

Washoe County Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife –
March 3, 2025 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. Matt Melarkey (virtual)

Members Absent

1. Jim Rhea

Others in Attendance

1. Mel Belding
2. Joel Blakeslee
3. Sean Espinosa, NDOW
4. Cooper Munson, NDOW
5. Joe Bennett, NDOW
6. Teddy Elwell
7. Larry Johnson
8. George Forebush
9. Mitch Bailey

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

There was no public comment.

4. **Approval of January 21, 2025 minutes**-[For possible action]

Member Robinson motioned for approval of the January 21, 2025 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. Board members noted they would be able to be in attendance for the upcoming Commission meeting.

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

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Chair Rowe said he did not receive any correspondence and no other CAB members received correspondence.

7. Presentation by Joe Bennett, Game Division Supervisor Southern Nevada - [Informational Only]

Joe Bennett, NDOW, gave a presentation and introduced himself as the new predator management specialist. Members of the public asked Mr. Bennett about his plans for the new position.

8. Consent Agenda [For Possible Action]

- A. Elk Statewide Management Plan Update**
- B. Presentation on Emergency Bighorn Sheep Capture and Water Hauling in Southern Nevada**
- C. Gemini Solar Project Activities**

No action was taken on the items in the Consent Agenda because all items in the block were for informational purposes only.

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

No items were pulled for further discussion.

10. Petition – Mr Joe Krathwohl- [For Possible Action]

Chair Rowe opened the item to discuss Mr. Krathwohl's petition of the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners to modify existing regulations pertaining to allowable fees charged for conservation education programs, presented by falconry licensees, and to regulations pertaining to the application requirement for possessing a golden eagle in this State. Members of the board discussed the reasons for the petition and were unclear as to what was being petitioned. Chair Rowe said the first petition was regarding fees. The second petition was a challenge of the terms of penalty which currently lasts forever.

During public comment, Mel Belding said that in the past the CAB had tabled petitions similar to these since the petitioner was not in attendance at the meeting to answer questions regarding the petition.

The board tabled the item and took no action.

11. Heritage Meeting Report and Emergency Bighorn Sheep Capture and Water Hauling in Southern Nevada, Heritage Account Principal Proposal [For Possible Action]

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Chair Rowe opened the item to discuss a report from the Heritage Committee and consider the emergency bighorn sheep capture and water hauling in Southern Nevada heritage account principal proposal. The Department is seeking Heritage Account Principal Project funding in the amount of \$500,000 to assist with emergency bighorn sheep captures and water hauling in Southern Nevada. Member Browne asked if the Department had contacted the National Guard for assistance in water hauls. Sean Espinosa, NDOW, said the helicopters the National Guard use are not workable for the water hauls. He did note that the Nevada Division of Forestry would assist. Mr. Espinosa added the habitat was incredibly dry in southern Nevada and the water hauls were important to ensure the survival of the sheep. Member Browne asked about the concerns that Ely and Elko counties had. Mr. Espinosa said those concerns had been taken into account and there was a hold harmless agreement in place.

During public comment, Mr. Belding had some concern regarding the \$500,000 and asked if there could be a breakdown of the costs so there was more clarity for expenses and returns on investment. Ash Casselli said the Coalition for Nevada's Wildlife was in support of the plan and said they too hoped for a breakdown of how the money was being spent.

Member Melarkey provided his assessment of the allocation of money and how it appeared to be spent based on supporting materials provided to the board. Joe Bennett, NDOW, provided additional information regarding the dollar amounts. He discussed details regarding the aerial water hauls and the costs associated with those hauls. He said there were around 27 projects that this money was being allocated for. Additionally, Mr. Bennett information regarding specific costs for sheep collars and moving sheep to different ranges.

Member Robinson motioned for approval of the Heritage Meeting Report and Emergency Bighorn Sheep Capture and Water Hauling in Southern Nevada as written. Vice Chair Browne seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

**12. Biennial Big Game Release Plan for Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025,
Amendment # 3 – [For Possible Action]**

Chair Rowe opened the item to consider an amendment to the Department's Biennial Big Game Release Plan for fiscal years 2024 and 2025. Member Robinson reiterated his concerns regarding the sheep population and the significant losses that have occurred in recent years. He said that he was happy to see action being taken now, but hoped that it wasn't too little too late. Mr. Espinosa provided an update regarding the planning and implementation of the plans regarding sheep and said he believes there have been improvements in recent months. Member Melarkey asked about the BLM's role in these plans and how the private land owners are being consulted. Mr. Espinosa said one of the main reasons NDOW elected to not go a private land route was because of the uncertainty and moving parts with regard to private land owners, and by using public lands, the process would be smoother. Member Melarkey added that he wanted

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to make sure that ranchers and farmers were not lost in the discussion since they have been under incredible stress from environmental impacts and wild horses.

During public comment, Mr. Belding said he was for the proposed transplants in the Cortez mountains but he was concerned with the lack of accountability for people who had their domestic sheep come into contact with wild sheep. He said he believed that Unit 183 was the best spot to transplant the sheep to. Mitch Bailey said the lion problem in Nevada was caused by poor policy from California. He said the sheep are too dependent on humans for survival and there should be analysis on how humans are negatively impacting sheep. Ash Casselli said feral horses should not be excluded from the policy and plans because of the damage they are doing to the habitat.

Member Robinson motioned for approval of the Biennial Big Game Release Plan for Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025, Amendment # 3 as written. Vice Chair Browne seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

13. Legislative Committee Report– [For Possible Action]

Chair Rowe opened the item to discuss a report provided on the recent Legislative Committee meeting and he went through various bills that may be heard at the Nevada legislative session.

During public comment, Joel Blakeslee representing the Coalition for Nevada's Wildlife, provided additional details regarding the progress of bills through the Nevada legislature.

14. Discussion on Coyote Calling Contest Regulations– [For Possible Action]

Chair Rowe opened the item to outline of potential regulatory provisions for coyote calling contests. These may include, but are not limited to, licensing requirements for participation in the contests, licensing for hunting all species (both unprotected and protected), and the establishment of coyote calling contest seasons. However, there were no support materials provided and the board decided to table the item.

The board tabled the item and took no action.

15. Draft Fiscal Year 2026 Predation Management Plan– [For Possible Action]

Chair Rowe opened the item to review the draft FY 2026 Predation Management Plan which would be presented to the Commission for additional review. Mr. Bennett, NDOW, provided an overview of the proposed plan. He discussed the costs of various strategies to manage predators across Nevada and he noted that all projects would be evaluated for efficiency. Vice Chair Browne asked if there was a way for the Department to provide an audited accounting of the costs so members of the public would have a

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better idea of how money was being allocated and spent. Mr. Espinosa, NDOW, said the majority contractor that is used is the USDA Wildlife Services and they provide invoices for all money spent on a project. Vice Chair Browne said that he had heard that people were concerned regarding how money was being spent and the results of the projects that have been implemented. Vice Chair Browne said he would like to see payments to contractors that are done through Wildlife Services to get a better understanding of who is being paid via the USDA Wildlife Services. Member Robinson spoke to projects that are currently being funded and the allocation of funds that may come from other projects. Mr. Bennett said the Department has tried to create a reserve in certain projects in order to cover expenses in the event of a shortfall.

During public comment, Mr. Belding said that he hoped that any additional information presented would not be used by groups who may be anti-hunting. He added he would like to see continued efforts to streamline projects which may lead to better results and lower costs. Ash Casselli said he really would like to see breakdowns of costs in order to have a better understanding of how tax payer dollars were being spent. Mr. Forebush said he worries about anti-hunters and how wildlife agencies across the county are catering to those groups too much. He said that many groups are for recreational hunting and there should be questions to those groups about what they mean by recreational hunting. Teddy Elwell said he was very concerned about wolves that have moved into the state and there is not enough being done about those predators. Mitch Bailey added that he had been out on many coyote removal projects and there is varied success with each hunt, so the issue was not as simple as it was being made out to be. He said that he hoped the Department and Wildlife Services would use available information and studies to maximize outcomes with projects based on the time of year and numbers of coyotes.

Member Melarkey commented on Project 47 and the lack of meetings that have taken place recently regarding the mule deer enhancement. Mr. Espinosa said NDOW had presented some new strategies to reinvigorate the mule deer enhancement projects and bring those to the county advisory boards.

Chair Rowe motioned for approval of the Draft Fiscal Year 2026 Predation Management Plan as written. Member Melarkey seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

16. Commission General Regulation 524 – Bonus Points Associated with Junior Hunt Applications– [For Possible Action]

Chair Rowe opened the item to consider a temporary regulation amending Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) 502 that would simplify the issuance, use and administrative management of bonus points associated with junior hunt applications. There was no discussion by the board or public comment.

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Chair Rowe motioned for approval of the Commission General Regulation 524 – Bonus Points Associated with Junior Hunt Applications as written. Member Robinson seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

17. Commission Regulations– [For Possible Action]

A. Commission Regulation 25-07 Amendment #1 – 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 Big Game Seasons

Chair Rowe opened the item to consider and may take action to approve amended season dates for the 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 hunting season dates for a minor number of mule deer and antelope seasons that were portrayed incorrectly within the original Commission Regulation 25-07. There was no board discussion or public comment.

Member Robinson moved to approve Commission Regulation 25-07 Amendment #1 as written. Vice Chair Browne seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Commission Regulation 25-11 Migratory Game Bird Seasons, Bag Limits, and Special Regulations for Waterfowl and Webless Migratory Game Birds; Public Hunting Limited on Wildlife Management Areas and Designated State Lands – 2025–2026 Season

Chair Rowe opened the item to consider recommendations for seasons, bag limits, and special regulations for migratory game birds for the 2025–2026 season and adopt regulations consistent with proposed regulations framework for the 2025–2026 hunting seasons on certain migratory game birds established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. During public comment, Ash Casselli said he would like to see a change in the season windows. Mr. Munson, NDOW, said the seasons were set by Federal Regulation.

Chair Rowe moved to approve Commission Regulation 25-11 as written. Member Melarkey seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

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

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Chair Rowe said he was working to have a representative from the BLM to give a presentation regarding habitat management at an upcoming meeting meeting.

19. Public Comment [Non-action item]

Ash Casselli said he had worked with the Department in Fallon and was appreciative of that engagement and noted his kids had a great time too.

20. Adjournment [Non-action item]

Chair Rowe adjourned the meeting at 8:27 p.m.