

Washoe County Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife –
June 24, 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
5. 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. Sean Shae
11. Lou Christensen

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

There was no public comment.

4. **Approval of April 29th, 2024 minutes**-[For possible action]

Member Rhea motioned for approval of the April 29, 2024 CAB minutes. Member Melarkey 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. Since there was not an online attendance option, board members did not know if they would be able to make the meeting in Lovelock.

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

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Chair Rowe noted he had not received correspondence for items that would be heard on the agenda..

7. Washoe County project update - Washoe County Game Biologist John Ewanyk [Informational]

John Ewanyk, NDOW, provided the CAB with a presentation regarding the Washoe County project update for mule deer enhancement.

8. Consent Agenda– [For Possible Action]

- A. New Commission Policy 12 – Fee for Habitat, Research and Management**
- B. Heritage Project Extension Requests**
- C. Heritage Funding Reallocation**
- D. Commission General Regulation 500, Subdivision Map Review**

During public comment, Mel Belding requested the CAB remove 8a and hear it as its own item.

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 Melarkey moved to approve the consent agenda items 8b – 8d as written. Member Robinson seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

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

Agenda Item 8a, New Commission Policy 12 – Fee for Habitat, Research and Management was pulled from the consent agenda and heard. Vice Chair Browne asked how the fees had been split. Mr. Ewanyk gave a percentage breakdown of the fee split. Sean Espinosa, NDOW, also provided additional background on how certain fees were spent and allocated and clarified some of the specifics of Policy 12. Members of the CAB said they hoped for a more detailed breakdown in coming years for how the money is being spent. Mr.

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Espinosa also noted that members of the CAB could put in a public record request for additional detail that may not have been provided in the documents.

During public comment, Mr. Belding spoke about the big game guzzler program and how funds were allocated for that. He also had recommendations for the board on how he would like to see funds allocated which differed from the proposed allocations.

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

10. Fiscal Year 2025 Heritage Project Proposals- [For Possible Action]

Chair Rowe opened the item to possibly approve up to \$1,840,130.76 for projects submitted for Fiscal Year 2025 from the annual year project funds. In addition, the Commission may take action to approve up to \$98,548.64 for projects submitted for Fiscal Year 2025 from the principal balance for a total of \$1,938,679.40. Funding requests are listed below and may be approved by the Commission. There was no discussion from members of the board.

During public comment, Mr. Belding said he would like to see fish stamp money be used instead of the money being proposed as part of the project proposals and he added he would like to see increased focus on mule deer projects instead.

Member Rhea moved to approve Fiscal Year 2025 Heritage Project Proposals as written. Member Melarkey seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

11. Biennial Small Game Release Plan for Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025- [For Possible Action]

Chair Rowe opened the item to approve an amendment to the Department's proposed biennial upland game release plan for fiscal years 2024 and 2025. Member Robinson asked when there may be a huntable population for the Columbian Sharp-tail Grouse. Mr. Espinosa discussed the transplant program and provided some population numbers. He also added the population had sustained itself since 2017 and the Department added another 20 females from Idaho. He said that based on the success of the addition of those birds to the existing population would determine whether a hunt would be held in the near future. Member Melarkey asked if there were any plans to have a larger population of turkeys in Nevada. Mr. Espinosa said the overall environment was a limiting factor, but there was an increasing population in Lincoln County.

Chair Rowe moved to approve Biennial Small Game Release Plan for

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Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025 as written. Member Rhea seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

12. Biennial Big Game Release Plan for Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025- [For Possible Action]

Chair Rowe opened the item to approve an amendment to the Department's Biennial Big Game Release Plan for fiscal years 2024 and 2025. Member Melarkey discussed the antelope augmentation and if the wild horse problem could be addressed through these plans as well. Mr. Ewanyk said there had been some internal discussions at NDOW and those discussions have allowed the Department to prioritize areas. Member Robinson asked about the desert bighorn sheep transplants and why there was still ewe's being killed. Mr. Espinosa said there had been some translocations, but there were processes, procedures, and permit approvals required prior to moving any of the animals which takes considerable effort and time.

During public comment, Mr. Belding spoke about the Cortez Range and the sheep populations in those areas. He said he hoped that there were protections in place to keep the domestic sheep separated from the wild sheep.

Member Robinson moved to approve the Biennial Big Game Release Plan for Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025 as written. Vice Chair Browne seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

13. Energy and Solar Projects Update- [For Possible Action]

Chair Rowe opened the item to review the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Solar Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement.

NO ACTION WAS TAKEN.

14. Duck Stamp Request- [For Possible Action]

Chair Rowe opened the item to consider up to \$90,750 for projects submitted for Fiscal Year 2025 funding from the Duck Stamp Account. There was no discussion by the CAB and no public comment.

Chair Rowe moved to approve the Fiscal Year 2025 Duck Stamp request as written. Member Rhea seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

15. Upland Game Bird Stamp Request- [For Possible Action]

Chair Rowe opened the item to approve up to \$262,230 for projects submitted for Fiscal Year 2025 funding from the Upland Game Bird Stamp Account. Member Melarkey commented on the mineral effects on sage grouse and he noted there were no projects that take into account what solar was doing to sage grouse habitats. He said he hoped to see solar panels be added to alkali flats instead of using the sage grouse and deer wintering ranges. Mr. Espinosa said he too had wondered about that

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issue but did note that solar what new in the vast majority of the state so studies were still being proposed and possibly implemented. He said that he was concerned with the overall scope of the solar proposals and how those would impact pronghorns and mule deer. He said he hoped there would be additional exploration of other areas in the state to help minimize impacts on those populations. Member Melarkey asked what authority NDOW had on the proposals and Mr. Espinosa said NDOW could provide comment on any proposal but was not the approving authority.

During public comment, Mr. Belding reiterated his concern regarding the fund allocation proposals.

Member Robinson moved to recommend approval of the Upland Game Bird Stamp request as written. Member Robinson seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

16. Commission Regulation 23-15 Amendment #1, Fishing Seasons and Regulations for January 1, 2024, through December 31, 2025- [For Possible Action]

Chair Rowe open the item to consider amending CR 23-15 to designate Smith Creek Reservoir as a closed water in Lander County. Member Robinson asked why there was no way to keep some of the shoreline open to public access. Mr. Ewanyk said that while this was not his area of expertise, he understood the proposed change was because the landowner did not want the public recreating on their property. NDOW decided to take fish out of the reservoir and plant them in other areas and the end result was to close access to the water. There was no public comment.

Member Melarkey moved to approve Commission Regulation 23-15 Amendment #1 as written. Member Robinson seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

17. Commission Regulation 24-05, Amendment #1, 2025 Heritage Tag Vendors - [For Possible Action]

Chair Rowe open the item to consider the Wildlife Heritage Committee's recommendations regarding Heritage Tag Vendor Proposals for 2025. Member Robinson asked about the partnerships regarding the tags, but those in attendance did not have an answer. There was no public comment.

Chair Rowe moved to approve Commission Regulation 24-05 Amendment #1 as written. Member Rhea seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

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18. Commission Regulation 24-13, 2024-2025 & 2025-2026 Upland Game and Furbearer Seasons and Bag Limits- [For Possible Action]

Chair Rowe open the item to consider regulations for upland game birds and mammals, furbearers, and wild turkey for the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 seasons. Mr. Ewanyk provided an update regarding the season recommendation and changes for sage grouse. He explained that NDOW would be recommending a two-day season for hunt units 012 and 013 in western Nevada and hunt units 031 and 051 in north central Nevada, with a daily and possession limit of 2 sage-grouse. The units have sage-grouse populations estimated to exceed 1,000 birds and where harvest was estimated to be 5% or less of the estimated fall population. He also added that NDOW would be recommending change to bobcat sealing dates which would allow an individual to have a single bobcat per year for taxidermy or tanning purposes to be sealed. He added that Youth seasons will extend for their normal 9-day period (e.g., September 28 – October 6 th, 2024); however, NDOW elected to split chukar and Hungarian (Gray) partridge seasons into their own species groups and limits will no longer be considered “in the aggregate”. The daily and possession limit for chukar will remain at 6 and 18 respectively while the limits for Hungarian (Gray) partridge are recommended to be 4 and 12. He also noted that these limits are also reflected in the normal general season as well. Members of the CAB continued with a discussion with Mr. Ewanyk about the specifics of certain units.

During public comment, Joel Blakeslee discussed some recommendations he would like to see from the Nevada Trappers Association. He said they supported the season recommendations. He also recommended the sealing dates in Panaca, Tonopah and Las Vegas should be moved back one week. Julie Barger provided some statistics regarding sage grouse that she had researched prior to the meeting and she noted it appeared based on her research the sage grouse populations were still suffering and recommended not having a season. She also had similar concerns regarding quail.

Chair Rowe moved to approve Commission Regulation 24-13, 2024-2025 & 2025-2026 Upland Game and Furbearer Seasons and Bag Limits as written with the following change to the bobcat sealing dates for 2024-25 Panaca from February 11 to February 18, Las Vegas from February 12 to February 19, and Tonopah from February 13 to February 20 and to change the 2025-26 sealing dates for Panaca February 17, Las Vegas to February 18 Tonopah February 19. Member Rhea seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

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

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Member Robinson asked if the coalition would be bringing a bill regarding taking all edible portions of meat from the bear hunts and requested a member of the coalition to come speak at the next meeting.

20. Public Comment [Non-action item]

During public comment, Ms. Barger spoke about the resident moose population and thought there should not be a hunt. Regarding Black Bears, she noted that the population for that species' hunt limit was too high. She also had concerns regarding the population estimates for the desert bighorn sheep and that a lack of data should have prevented having a hunt. She said she hoped that all juniors would be required to have an adult with them at all times during their hunts. She said she would like to see the bear hunts be after mating season to ensure a strong population.

21. Adjournment [Non-action item]

Chair Rowe adjourned the meeting at 7:54 p.m.