

Washoe County Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife –  
May 4, 2026 minutes

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

*Members in Attendance*

1. Ryan Browne, Chairman
2. Coby Rowe, Vice Chairman
3. Steve Robinson
4. Kristie Marchese

*Members Absent*

1. Matt Melarkey

*Others in Attendance*

1. Mel Belding
2. John Ewanyk, NDOW
3. Sean Espinosa, NDOW
4. Cooper Munson, NDOW
5. Code Schroeder, NDOW
6. Ash Casselli
7. Larry Johnson

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

There was no public comment.

4. **Approval of March 9, 2026 minutes** - [For possible action]

**Vice Chair Rowe motioned for approval of March 9, 2026 CAB minutes. Member Robinson seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

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

Chair Browne 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]

There were no updates or communications from members of the public since the March meeting. Member Robinson said he had discussed the shed antler collections at the Commission meeting and he said it appeared to resonate with the board.

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**7. First Reading – Commission Policies - [For possible action]**

**A. Commission Policy 24 – Hunting Opportunities Among Weapons and Hunter Groups**

Chair Browne opened the agenda item to hear a first reading of Commission Policy 24 and may take action to revise the policy and move to a second reading. There was no public comment or board discussion.

**Vice Chair Rowe moved to approved Commission Policy 24 as written. Chair Browne seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

**8. Second Reading – Commission Policies – [For possible action]**

**A. Commission Policy 1 – General Guidelines for the Commission**

The members of the CAB chose to vote on the agenda item as a block  
There was no discussion or public comment.

**B. Commission Policy 4 – Petition Process and Adoption of Regulations**

Chair Browne opened the item to discuss the first reading of Commission Policy 4.

**C. Commission Policy 51 – Kirch Award**

**Vice Chair Rowe moved to approve Commission Policy 1, 4 and 51 as written. Chair Browne seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

**9. Draft Fiscal Year 2027 Predation Management Plan – [For possible action]**

Chair Browne opened the item to consider the second draft of the proposed Fiscal Year 2027 Predation Management Plan. Member Robinson said he was pleased with the plan and was happy in the direction the plan was going. There was no public comment.

**Vice Chair Rowe moved to approve the Draft Fiscal Year 2027 Predation Management plan as written. Member Robinson seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

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**10. Petition – Mr. Henry Evans – [For Possible Action]**

Chair Browne opened the item to consider the removal of the compound bow let-off limit from NAC 503.144. Vice Chair Rowe said he agreed with the petition. Chair Browne said he too agreed with the petition.

During public comment, Mel Belding said he thought the petition should be approved. Joe Zeifel said he was in favor of the petition as well. Mitch Bailey said he was concerned with the sliding scale of what was considered a primitive weapon and there may need to be a reclassification of the weapon into the general weapons class.

Member Robinson asked if the Department had any issue with the petition but there was no game wardens in attendance at the meeting.

**Member Robinson moved to approve the petition as written. Vice Chair Rowe seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

**11. Appeal – Mr. Braxton Bilbao - [For Possible Action] - REMOVED**

**12. Appeal – Mr. Paul Padilla - [For Possible Action] - REMOVED**

**13. Commission General Regulations– [For Possible Action]**

**A. Commission General Regulation 517 – Automatic Range Finding Scopes**

Chair Browne opened the item to consider regulation language amending Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) that would prohibit the use of range finding scopes that automatically adjust the sight reticle or aiming point while hunting certain species with a firearm, bow, or crossbow. The board discussed their differences in opinions. Chair Browne was for the regulation while the other members were against the regulation.

During public comment, Jeff Rogers said he was unclear of the regulation and how it was written, but if he understood it he was against the regulation. Ash Casselli said he was worried about the fair chase aspects of the regulations and when it would end. Mitch Bailey said that if there is too high a success rate then there would be fewer tags for hunters.

Chair Browne said he agreed with what Mr. Bailey had said. Vice Chair Rowe said that was the key issue and how this regulation may already be outdated. He said he thought this regulation proposal should be sent back for further work. Member Robinson said he didn't want to see the elimination of certain technologies because human error can increase the chances of wounded animals.

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**Vice Chair Rowe moved to deny Commission Regulation 517 and that it should go back to emerging technologies. Member Robinson seconded. The motion carried 3-1 with Chair Browne in opposition.**

**14. Commission Regulations– [For Possible Action]**

**A. Commission Regulation 26-11, Big Game Quotas for the 2026-2027 Seasons**

Chair Browne opened the item to consider and may take action to approve setting regulations for the number of tags to be issued for mule deer, antelope, elk, moose, bighorn sheep and mountain goat for the 2026-2027 season. John Ewanyk presented the survey results for the different species.

After several years of suppressed population size in Unit Grouping 011, 013, the population is starting to show signs of positive growth. The past few years of favorable precipitation patterns within the unit grouping have produced lamb ratios above maintenance levels, and improved adult survival. Several mature rams were observed on survey, and there are quite a few younger rams in the population segment, which should provide ample opportunity for future seasons. Due to the interstate movement and potential for some of the rams to be in Oregon during portions of the hunt season, and this being the first year of re-opening the unit grouping, NDOW is recommending to start conservatively when allocating tags in Unit grouping 011,013. This remains a difficult sheep hunt due to low densities, thick juniper cover, and interstate movement. Several years of good lamb recruitment and an augmentation of sheep from the Deschutes, Oregon herd has helped the 012 sheep herd to grow in size. Hunters continue to struggle in this unit due to most of the rams being located within wilderness. \*Of the three tagholders last year, only two of them hunted and one was successful. This population is trending upward and should have plenty of mature rams available for hunters, based off the prior year's survey. Due to consecutive years with unsuccessful tagholders, there are additional rams available for harvest within the population and NDOW is recommending to increase the 012 quota to 4. The Unit 014 sheep herd is still below population objective, but has shown signs of population growth as a result of increased adult survival and lamb recruitment above maintenance level. This is the first year that Hunt Unit 014 will reopen for sheep hunting, after being combined with Hunt Unit 012 in 2023, and then closing in 2024. Although there are several mature rams within this unit, hunters applying for the unit should be aware that sheep occur at low densities and have limited potential for trophy quality due to a lack of access to high quality nutrition.

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With 2026 being the first year the hunt will re-open, NDOW recommends staying conservative with tag allocation. The sheep in Hunt Unit 022 continue to do well, with positive lamb recruitment and sheep expanding further into new habitat within the unit. Despite sheep starting to use the extreme southern and northern portions of the Virginia Mountains, access remains an issue for hunters in Hunt Unit 022. The average age of rams harvested has remained low the past three seasons, with several 4- and 5-year-old rams removed from the population. NDOW recommends remaining conservative with quotas in Unit 022 until the average age of harvested rams rebounds.

This year flight time for fall deer surveys was drastically reduced for Management Area 1, and the spring surveys were shortened due to weather. Despite the small sample size, the buck and fawn ratios on fall survey were both above average. Harvest metrics remain stable for the Unit Group, with a three-year average success rate of 42% for ALW, and a three-year average of 61% four point or better in the harvest. Deer in this Unit Grouping continue to occur at low density. As a result of the stable harvest success, and high buck ratio, NDOW recommends an increase from last year's quotas for Unit Grouping 011-013. Fall deer surveys on the Sheldon this year yielded a lower sample size, but observed buck ratios remain high for Hunt Unit 033. Harvest metrics remain stable on the Sheldon, with a three-year average of 71% success for ALW. The previous two fall surveys on the Sheldon had high observed buck ratios, which have likely contributed to the increased success hunters have seen on the Sheldon. This year, NDOW recommends a slight increase in tags for Hunt Unit 033 due to the high buck ratios and stable harvest metrics. Fall deer surveys in Hunt Unit 014 yielded a higher sample size than previous years, fawn recruitment above maintenance level, and a high buck ratio. Hunt Unit 014 is managed as an alternative unit for higher success rates, higher percentage of four point in the harvest, and higher buck ratios. This past year harvest metrics increased across all weapon classes in the unit. For Unit 014, the three-year average ALW success rate is 70%, the three-year average four point or better bucks in the harvest is 49% and this year's buck ratio was 41 bucks per 100 does on survey. Due to Hunt Unit 014 exceeding the three metrics of an alternative unit, NDOW recommends an increase in tags for Hunt Unit 014 this year. This year there were no fall deer surveys for Hunt Unit 015, and the spring surveys were shortened due to weather. Resident mule deer in this hunt unit continue to occur at low density until the winter migration from California which provides a moderate influx of new individuals. Success rates for the hunt unit rely heavily on early winter snow conditions pushing deer into Nevada for the late season hunt. The proportion of four points or better within the harvest remained high for the third consecutive year within the unit. Hunt Unit 015 is

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managed as a non-standard unit, and the three-year harvest success average is at 45%, which is within objective for non-standard units. As a result, NDOW recommends keeping quotas similar to the year prior until ALW success rates exceed objective. This year's spring deer survey yielded a lower sample size, indicating that a much lower proportion of the interstate deer herd migrated into Nevada this winter, likely because of the lack of snow received this year. Despite the lower density of deer this year, harvest metrics remained stable within the unit. Hunt Unit 021 is managed as a non-standard unit, which targets ALW harvest success between 35-45%. For Hunt Unit 021, the three-year average ALW success is above the 35/45% metric at 59%. Similarly, the four point or better in the harvest remains high with a three-year average of 50%. As a result, NDOW recommends a slight increase in tags this year. This year, spring aerial surveys conducted in Hunt Unit 022 were hampered by inclement weather during the flight. Despite the low number of deer observed during the survey, harvest metrics remain strong within the unit. The mule deer population in Hunt Unit 022 remains stable, and observed buck ratios have been high over the past three years when fall surveys occurred. Harvest metrics indicate that this population is doing well, and the Department recommends keeping quotas similar to last year.

Three years of improved habitat conditions and good fawn recruitment have helped to increase the population estimate for pronghorn in Hunt Unit 011. Both the hunt success and the 15" or better are stable within the unit, however the 3-year average ALW success rate remains slightly below the statewide mean. Due to the high buck ratio observed on survey and the increase in population size, NDOW recommends a moderate increase in ALW and Archery quotas this year. The population model for Unit Grouping 012-014 was adjusted this year to better reflect population dynamics observed on survey. Pronghorn within 012-014 continued to experience mortalities from EHD, which resulted in lower survival rates for the population. Despite receiving a translocation of pronghorn from Management Area 4, Unit Grouping 012-014 experienced a contraction in population size this year as a result of fawn recruitment below maintenance level coupled with lower adult survival rates. For the upcoming season, NDOW is recommending a reduction in the number of ALW tags in attempt to raise the buck ratio and improve success rates. The pronghorn herd in Unit 015 saw a reduction in size as a result of this year's below average fawn recruitment. Harvest success for the unit remains stable, although slightly below the statewide average. In addition to the slight increase in harvest success, the 15" or better metric saw a noticeable increase this past year. Due to the contraction in population size, NDOW recommends a reduction in tags for the upcoming season. The one exception being muzzle-loader quotas, which will increase by one as a result of last year's poor success rate. Access to pronghorn

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located within the Wilderness portions of this unit remains a challenge for hunters in Unit 015. The Management Area 2 pronghorn herd continues to do well. The many burn scars within Management Area 2 have provided pronghorn with ample forage, which is reflected in the past few years fawn ratios. For the third consecutive year, this population has increased in size and increased in ALW success rates. The 15" or better metric remained similar this year, indicating that there is good trophy opportunity within the unit. Despite the high buck ratio on survey, 40% of this year's buck sample was comprised of yearling bucks, so there are quite a few younger bucks within the buck segment of this population. As a result of the high observed buck ratio, NDOW is recommending a slight increase in tags for the unit grouping. The Sheldon's population estimate decreased this year, because of fawn recruitment well below the maintenance level. Despite the high buck ratio observed on the survey, 48% of the sample was yearling bucks, indicating a majority of the buck population on the Sheldon is composed of younger age class bucks. As a result, NDOW is recommending a slight reduction in quotas to give some of the younger bucks time to mature, and to allow success rates to come up from the three-year averages of 58% in early season and 62% in the late season.

Chair Browne opened the discussion for Antelope. Mr. Ewanyk, gave an update on some of the concerns in certain populations with regard to disease. A change in this year's quota setting was the elimination of rounding and that the quota would be set using the model output directly.

During public comment, Mel Belding said he did not want to see the junior tags decrease to 50% and would like to see it no fewer than 65%.

**Member Robinson moved to approve antelope quotas as written.**  
**Chair Browne seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

Chair Browne opened discussion for bighorn sheep. During public comment, Jeff Rogers asked if the rams in unit 022 were on private land. Mr. Ewanyk said that both were killed on private land last year, but the rams were more dispersed this year. Members of the CAB agreed with the quota recommendations.

**Vice Chair Rowe moved to approve bighorn sheep quotas as written.**  
**Member Robinson seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

Chair Browne opened the discussion for the mule deer. Member Robinson asked if the quotas were more focused on opportunity or quality. Mr. Ewanyk said mule deer were still being managed based on the management plans. Vice Chair Rowe said he agreed that he did not

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want hunters settling for smaller deer. Mr. Ewanyk added that there were quite a few bucks that were great size in unit 014. Weather during the summer and dryness may affect some disease in certain deer in the coming months, but he did not have a large concern for survival rates in the unit. Member Robinson said he appreciated the work NDOW had been doing in the unit but he was not for the increase that was being proposed. Chair Browne added that he was uncomfortable with the increase in tags that was being proposed as well. Mr. Ewanyk explained the rationale for the tag increase in unit 011 and how the model worked in relation to other units. Members of the CAB continued to discuss other units.

During public comment, Tim Hughes said he would like to see the outcomes of the project that was occurring in unit 014 and he thought that there should be a more conservative allocation than what was being proposed. Joe Zeifel said he thought more data was needed before approving the increase as proposed. Mel Belding added that he too was against the increase in the tags. Ash Casselli said that he thought the increase was too much as well. Jeff Rogers said that he thought the increase was too much as well. He said he would like to see 3 tags for muzzleloader in unit 015. Mitch Bailey said he was against the recommendations as proposed and thought the increase was too much.

Members of the CAB continued their deliberation regarding the quotas that were being proposed. Code Schroeder, NDOW, said that if the CAB would like to see NDOW manage differently then they needed to take that to the Commission. He said that NDOW has their management objections and that is what they were required to do and that was what the rationale for the tag allocations.

Members of the CAB discussed the archery quota first and they said they were okay with the recommendations for those tags, but Member Robinson said he thought the increase was too much for and thought 25 would be more reasonable. Members of the CAB continued to deliberate changes to the recommendations and how much they would decrease the tag recommendations unit by unit and by weapon class.

**Member Marchese moved to approve mule deer quotas with the following changes: Any Legal Weapon class - Unit 011 and 013 reducing tags from 55 to 40, unit 014 reduce from 18 to 12 and approve all other areas as written, Archery – Reduce units 011 – 013 from 30 to 25 tags, reduce unit 014 from 12 to 9 tags, reduce 015 from 5 to 3 and shift those tags to muzzleloader, Muzzleloader – Reduce Units 011 – 013 from 8 to 5, increase unit 015 from 3 to 5, Junior Any Legal Weapon – reduce unit 014 from 7 to 5, approve**

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**junior seasonal weapons as written, and approve junior archery as written. Vice Chair Rowe seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

The CAB then moved to elk. There was no discussion or public comment.

**Vice Chair Rowe moved to approve elk quotas as written. Member Robinson seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

The CAB then moved to moose. There was no discussion or public comment.

**Vice Chair Rowe moved to approve moose quotas as written. Chair Browne seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

The CAB then moved to mountain goats. There was no discussion or public comment.

**Member Marchese moved to approve moose quotas as written. Vice Chair Rowe seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

The CAB then moved to nelson bighorn sheep goats. During public comment, Mel Belding said he wanted an update regarding the populations and he was worried about the population decrease.

Sean Espinosa, NDOW, spoke about the translocation of sheep and how the Department has tried to minimize the chances of disease spread and detailed the management plans that have been executed in various units. Cooper Munson, NDOW, added that the Department did not think moving sheep into unit 181 at this time due to disease and interaction with domestic sheep.

**Member Robinson moved to approve nelson bighorn sheep quotas as written. Vice Chair Rowe seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

The CAB then moved to rocky mountain bighorn sheep. Sean Espinosa, NDOW, spoke about some of the rams they have found in certain units and there was a good representation of quality rams.

**Member Robinson moved to rocky mountain bighorn sheep quotas as written. Vice Chair Rowe seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

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**B. Commission Regulation 26-12, 2026 Black Bear Quotas and Harvest Limits**

Chair Browne opened the item to consider adopting the 2026 hunting season quotas and harvest limits for black bear. John Ewanyk, NDOW, provided details on the survey results of bears in the state. He said that the population was doing well and last year's harvest was strong. There was no public comment

**Member Marchese moved to approve the black bear quota as written. Vice Chair Rowe seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

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

Member Marchese asked if there were ways to change how fees were allocated to different projects when submitting for the tag. Sean Espinosa, NDOW, said he wasn't sure if the site would allow that. John Ewanyk, NDOW, said he did think being able to choose one-by-one allowed hunters more choice.

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

Ash Casselli said there was a banquet coming up and members of the CAB were invited.

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

Chair Rowe adjourned the meeting at 9:02 p.m.