

DOUGLAS COUNTY ADVISORY BOARD TO MANAGE WILDLIFE
Minutes of the May 2, 2023 Meeting

The Douglas County Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife meeting was scheduled for 5:00 pm on Tuesday, May 2, 2023, in the Douglas County Community Center, Carson Valley Medical Center Room, 1329 Waterloo Lane, Gardnerville, Nevada.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Craig Burnside, Chairman
Mike Porter
Kevin Kjer
JT Chevallier

MEMBER ABSENT: Paul Howell, Vice Chairman

OTHERS PRESENT: Carl Lackey, Nevada Department of Wildlife biologist.
Matt Bernard, Minden resident

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Burnside called the meeting to order at 5:03 pm and determined a quorum was present.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Matt Bernard led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL AND INTRODUCTIONS

The recording secretary called the roll noting the absence of Vice Chairman Howell.

The Chairman introduced Carl Lackey, Nevada Department of Wildlife biologist, and Matt Bernard, former Advisory Board member, former member of the Minden Town Board, and a Minden resident.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

FOR POSSIBLE ACTION. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

No public comment.

MOTION by Kjer/Chevallier to approve the agenda as presented; carried with Howell absent.

FOR POSSIBLE ACTION. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- **March 7, 2023**

No public comment.

MOTION by Chevallier/Kjer to approve the minutes as presented; carried with Howell absent.

1. DISCUSSION ON THE RESULTS OF THE MARCH 10 & 11, 2023 NEVADA BOARD OF WILDLIFE COMMISSION MEETINGS.

Chairman Burnside highlighted the actions taken at the meeting including the approval of the Migratory Game Bird Seasons, Bag Limits, and Regulations, which were adopted as recommended.

2. DISCUSSION AND UPDATE ON THE ACTIVITIES AND ACTIONS OF THE MULE DEER ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM SUBCOMMITTEE.

The group has not met but Carl Lackey, Nevada Department of Wildlife biologist, offered to facilitate scheduling the next meeting.

3. The following items, 3a through 3h, are items that will be heard before the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners at the next meetings, May 5 & 6, 2023 at the Washoe County Administration Building A, Commission Chambers, 1001 E. Ninth Street, Reno, Nevada. The Douglas County Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife may take the following action, or a variation thereof, on each item: support the item, not support the item, or not take a position on the item. Public Comment will be allowed on each item.

3a–3h. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING WHETHER THE DOUGLAS COUNTY ADVISORY BOARD SHOULD TAKE A POSITION ON:

3a. FOR POSSIBLE ACTION. DISCUSSION ON THE LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT. A report will be presented on the committee's recent meetings. The Commission may review bills of interest and any associated amendments, consider Legislative Committee recommendations and may take official positions on those bills. The Commission may also choose to develop platforms on bills by supporting or opposing general concepts. Bill and BDR language may be viewed online at:
(Wildlife Commission Agenda Item 6E)

<https://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/82nd2023/Bills/List>.

Chairman Burnside referred to AB 70, the use of certain fees for a game tag. This would eliminate a requirement for the use of a minimum 80% for lethal control, which would then be made available for any projects that help the big game species in Nevada.

No public comment.

The consensus of the members was to take no action on this item.

3b. FOR POSSIBLE ACTION. DISCUSSION ON THE WILDLIFE HERITAGE GRANTS MANUAL. The Commission will review recommendations made by the Heritage Committee to cap principal balance projects at 50% of the available balance per year. *(Wildlife Commission Agenda Item 6G)*

The members discussed the Nevada Revised Statute change regarding the percentage of the balance in the account available for expenditures.

No public comment.

MOTION by Porter/Chevallier to recommend the Commission support the proposed recommendation into the Wildlife Heritage Grant Manual; carried with Howell absent.

3c. FOR POSSIBLE ACTION. DISCUSSION ON THE FISCAL YEAR 2024 PREDATION MANAGEMENT PLAN. The Commission will review the final draft of the Fiscal Year 2024 Draft Predation Management Plan with the Department. The Commission may take action to modify or endorse the plan. *(Wildlife Commission Agenda Item 6I)*

The members felt there were no substantive changes since the last time this item was heard.

No public comment.

MOTION by Burnside/Chevallier to recommend the Commission adopt the 2024 Predation Management Plan; carried with Howell absent.

3d. FOR POSSIBLE ACTION. DISCUSSION ON ELK DAMAGE PAYMENT EXCEEDING \$10,000. Per NAC 504.421, the Commission is required to approve an elk damage payment above \$10,000. An elk damage assessment on the Granite Peak Ranch in White Pine County, totaling \$28,346, was completed by Department personnel and submitted for reimbursement by Bruce Hubbard, agent for the property. *(Wildlife Commission Agenda Item 7)*

Member Porter thought the damage and the number of elk was well documented. Since the elk move on and off the property, he suggested a legal hunt could take place when the animals move away from the property.

No public comment.

MOTION by Porter/Kjer to recommend the Commission support the payment of \$28,346 for elk damage on the Granite Peak Ranch; carried with Howell absent.

3e. FOR POSSIBLE ACTION. DISCUSSION ON ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES, REGULATIONS AND POLICY (ARPR) COMMITTEE'S COMMISSION POLICY 23 – PREDATION MANAGEMENT. The Commission will review Commission Policy 23 and may make any necessary changes and may decide to repeal, revise, or adopt the policy. *(Wildlife Commission Agenda Item 8A)*

Chairman Burnside said one of the proposed changes reduces the number of yearly meetings by one.

No public comment.

MOTION by Burnside/Porter to recommend the Commission adopt Commission Policy 23, Predation Management; carried with Howell absent.

3f. FOR POSSIBLE ACTION. DISCUSSION ON THE POSSIBLE ADOPTION OF COMMISSION GENERAL REGULATION 506, POSSESSION OF GOLDEN EAGLES UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES. The Commission will hold an adoption hearing to consider amending Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) 503 to allow for possession of a golden eagle under certain circumstances. *(Wildlife Commission Agenda Item 14A)*

No public comment.

MOTION by Chevallier/Porter to recommend the Commission adopt Commission General Regulation 506, Possession of Golden Eagles Under Certain Circumstances; carried with Howell absent.

3g. FOR POSSIBLE ACTION. DISCUSSION ON THE POSSIBLE ADOPTION OF COMMISSION REGULATION 23-05, AMENDMENT #1, 2023 BLACK BEAR QUOTAS AND HARVEST LIMITS. The Commission will consider adopting the 2023 hunting season quotas and harvest limits for black bear. (Wildlife Commission Agenda Item 16A)

Considering the early closure of last year's bear season, Chairman Burnside asked if eliminating the restrictions on the sows would impact either the hunt or populations.

Carl Lackey, Nevada Department of Wildlife biologist, explained the reasons behind the early closure of the past season. The female harvest limit (2) in Unit 20 was reached three days into the hunt, closing that area, resulting in guides and hunters moving from that area to the Pine Nuts (Area 29). Area 29 reached the harvest limit 13 days into the hunt, and it too was closed. All the remaining hunters holding tags moved into Area 19 causing the female quota to be met on October 10th, also closing that unit group. This shut down the entire hunt for the first time since its inception. Many, many people were upset that the hunt closed early because they did not get to hunt but held tags.

The harvest rate formula is the percentage of bears killed in the hunt compared to the total population estimate. The overall harvest rate for all bears since the hunt's inception is 2.1%; the female harvest rate is 1.8%; the male harvest rate is 2.3%. Most states that track harvest rates and manage for stable populations aim for 10-15%. It is his feeling that removing more females would keep the population stable.

Chairman Burnside asked whether the population would be affected if all 20 bears taken were sows.

Mr. Lackey responded it would take a few years to see the effect of doing that. Reviewing the number of bears taken last year, he pointed out more bears were killed by cars than hunters. He added the total mortality of 71 bears has not influenced the population. Would removing the female quota affect the population? He believes no. If female harvest limits are in place for this year, hunters are more likely to be quicker harvesting a bear for fear the hunt may close. Referring to hunter effort, Mr. Lackey provided the statistics since 2011 on days per kill for successful hunters. 2022 had the lowest numbers of days per kill.

Chairman Burnside suggested eliminating the sow quota might make hunters more patient and more selective in what they take.

Member Porter would like to see the quota raised because we are way below other states, and he would like to see the removal of the female harvest limits.

Member Kjer thought some of these suggestions could raise concerns among non-hunters.

Mr. Lackey pointed out there were no female harvest limits from 2012-2017. Currently hunter success rate is 35%. As an example, increasing the harvest limit from 20 to 30 would not change anything unless the tag quota is increased.

Member Chevallier recapped his understanding that the 35% hunter success rate is not having a significant effect on carrying capacity and populations. He supports removing the sow quota to increase opportunity. It does not seem that there would be an adverse impact on populations by doing so. He indicated he would be open to considering an increase in quotas as well.

Member Kjer agreed.

Chairman Burnside recommended the sow quota be removed and the harvest quota be increased to 25, with the Department determining the best distribution of the tags. If 50 tags are issued, half the hunters have an opportunity to draw a tag.

MOTION by Chevallier/Porter to recommend the Commission remove the sow quota and increase the harvest limits to 25 black bear for Commission Regulation 23-05, Amendment #1, 2023 Black Bear Quotas and Harvest Limits. The distribution of the tags should be determined by the Department;

PUBLIC COMMENT

Matt Bernard, Minden resident, has supported the Nevada Department of Wildlife for his whole life and he is not satisfied with the revenue generation through all the advertising done to attract out of state hunters, who flood the application process. This makes it harder on a lifetime and generational overseer and steward of wildlife. He does not condone and cannot understand the rationale behind giving out more tags than you allow people to hunt. He does not want to allocate more tags than bears that can be taken. The "allowable bear harvest" should be based on the demand/success formula. Going through the process and expense to get a tag and then find out you cannot hunt equates to fraud in his mind. He would like to see hard quotas for bears as is done with all the other species. Quotas should be set, tags issued, and hunting takes place until the season closes. Mountain lions are different since they are over the counter tags.

Chairman Burnside talked about the Douglas County Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife's efforts to increase the number of tags to 50 to have a Dream Tag available for the bear hunt.

Mr. Lackey provided the statistics on the number of resident and non-resident tags from 2011. The long-term hunter success rate is 35%. The average number of bears killed per year since 2018 is 15.

Chairman Burnside added that everyone who drew a bear tag was able to hunt, until last year.

Mr. Bernard feels outfitters and guides have played a role in the amount of bear hunting in the Pine Nuts. Addressing the "panic factor", he believes older bears would be taken if hunters knew they had the whole season to hunt.

Mr. Lackey reported that since 2011, 169 bears have been killed and of those successful hunters, 27% used professional guides.

Member Porter thinks the recent weather and fire anomalies caused the bears to move into the Pine Nuts and into neighborhoods.

Public comment closed.

Member Kjer would like to see a bear season structured in the same way it is for deer and other wildlife.

Member Chevallier asked Mr. Lackey how the science behind marrying Mr. Bernard's desire with the current process for allocation and quota limit would work.

Mr. Lackey explained Mr. Bernard's suggestion would result in 51 tags being issued with no harvest limits on bears. He pointed out the conservative harvest limit of 20 bears has never been reached; the highest number is 18 bears in 2014. We do not hunt bears to reduce the population or solve conflict; it is a recreational opportunity. He called attention to the Department's recent recommendations to increase the female quota.

Member Kjer felt the mentality of the hunter would change if it was open for the whole season making them more patient and selective when taking a bear. Also, they would be less likely to be angry if they do not get a bear since they had the opportunity to hunt for the whole season.

MOTION; carried with Howell absent.

3h. FOR POSSIBLE ACTION. DISCUSSION ON COMMISSION REGULATION 23-14, BIG GAME QUOTAS FOR THE 2023-2024 SEASON. The Commission will consider and may take action to approve regulations for the numbers of tags to be issued for mule deer, pronghorn antelope, elk, bighorn sheep, and mountain goats for the 2023 - 2024 season. *(Wildlife Commission Agenda Item 16B)*

Chairman Burnside mentioned that people are expecting a big reduction in tags from the extreme winter we have just experienced but it appears that antelope and elk were not as affected as mule deer were. Many collared deer in northwest Nevada were lost as were 45-50% of the fawns.

Carl Lackey, Nevada Department of Wildlife biologist, explained elk and antelope can do better in the deeper snow and harsher conditions.

He provided survey results for the Carson front. 113 deer were counted in Unit 192 with an adult to fawn ratio of 28. In Unit 194, the adult to fawn ratio was 19. He did not see the adult mortality here that the eastern part of the state has seen, which is why our quotas are the remaining the same. The fawn loss of this year will not be apparent in tag reductions for a few years yet. Unit 192 has about 1200 deer and Unit 194 has about 1300, which is a decrease over a ten-year average. Units 195 and 291 are not surveyed; their population estimates are based on a buck harvest formula. Unit 195's population estimates were adjusted considerably downward. He noted the large presence of feral horses in Area 195, which is affecting the deer habitat. Unit 291 was adjusted upward, which allowed for an increase in tags, partially due to fires, buck harvest, and increased mule deer forage. As an aside, Mr. Lackey talked about the impact that timing and weather conditions have on survey flights.

Member Kjer asked about the sheep survey.

Mr. Lackey said he counted 127 from the air.

Chairman Burnside noticed an increase in cow elk tags from last year to this year and asked why.

Mr. Lackey thought it may have to do with the winter range and compensatory mortality.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Matt Bernard, Minden resident, discussed the Unit 291 quota recommendations. He feels his hunting experiences in the Pine Nuts has improved over the last 15 years because the allocation of tags has changed. The Bison fire has benefited the mule deer. Across the state the winter was very hard, and this area experienced a winter like no other. He urged the Department to be more conservative and decrease the tags by 20%. He questioned how tags are allotted to the Washoe Tribe since half the Pine Nut range is in their jurisdiction.

Mr. Lackey was unsure.

Mr. Bernard talked about the differences between season opening dates for the Washoe Tribe and those set by the Department. He wondered if raising the tag recommendations would also translate into an increased allocation for the Washoe Tribe and for other hunts as well. This was a hard winter and he urged the Department to be more conservative. Since the deer tags across the state have been reduced by 40% he would recommend maintaining the status quo or decreasing tags in the Pine Nuts.

Mr. Bernard related a situation he encountered with sheep grazing at the Jacks Valley Wildlife Management Area in November.

Public comment closed.

Member Chevallier supports Mr. Bernard's comments about the past winter and feels there is information yet to be determined about the survivability of the herds so it may not make sense to increase the tag quotas. He would be comfortable keeping the quotas as is or reducing them a little bit.

Chairman Burnside agrees that erring on the caution might be appropriate given the winter we just experienced.

Members Kjer and Porter support keeping the quotas as is.

MOTION by Chevallier/ to recommend the big game quotas for 2023-2024 season remain the same quotas as the 2022-2023 season; motion died for lack of a second.

MOTION by Burnside/Porter to recommend the Commission approve keeping the mule deer quotas in Area 291 the same as last season; carried with Howell absent.

MOTION by Chevallier/Kjer to recommend the Commission support the big game quota recommendations for the 2023-2024 season excluding Unit 291; carried with Howell absent.mm

4. FOR DISCUSSION ONLY. CORRESPONDENCE OR COMMUNICATIONS BOARD MEMBERS HAVE RECEIVED.

Chairman Burnside met with Mr. Matt Bernard to discuss the Pine Nut mule deer.

Member Chevallier had discussions about the opening of the Alpine County fishing season.

Member Kjer had conversations with other hunters about big game quotas.

This was informational only.

5. FOR DISCUSSION ONLY. DISCUSSION REGARDING ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER COMMITMENTS TO ATTEND UPCOMING WILDLIFE COMMISSION MEETINGS AND TO REPRESENT THE FINDINGS OF THE DOUGLAS COUNTY WILDLIFE ADVISORY BOARD. ONE MEMBER WILL BE DESIGNATED AS A SPOKESMAN FOR THE DOUGLAS COUNTY ADVISORY BOARD.

Member Kjer will attend the Friday meeting and Member Chevallier will attend Saturday either by Zoom or in person.

6. FOR DISCUSSION ONLY. DISCUSSION TO SCHEDULE THE NEXT DOUGLAS COUNTY WILDLIFE ADVISORY BOARD MEETING. The next Commission meeting is scheduled for June 23 and 24, 2023. The Commission will review and discuss potential agenda items for that meeting. The Commission may change the date, time, and meeting location at this time. The Commission will review and approve the Commission Meeting Schedule for 2024-2025. The chairman may designate and adjust committee assignments and add or dissolve committees, as necessary at this time. Any anticipated committee meetings that may occur prior to the next Commission meeting may be discussed.

The next Douglas County Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, June 20, 2023.

7. FOR DISCUSSION ONLY. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS.

No future agenda items were identified.

CLOSING PUBLIC COMMENT.

Chairman Burnside advised that he submitted the Douglas County Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife's budget request on May 1, 2023. The request is for \$5600.

Public comment closed.

ADJOURNMENT.

There being no further business to come before the Douglas County Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife, the meeting adjourned at 6:34 pm.

The minutes of the May 2, 2023 meeting of the Douglas County Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife are so approved this 20th day of June 2023.

Respectfully submitted:

Craig Burnside, Chairman