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State Game Commission expands agreement with State Land Office

SANTA FE – At the Jan. 15, 2021, State Game Commission Meeting, a unanimous vote finalized a four-year agreement between the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish and the New Mexico State Land Office. The easement will allow hunters, anglers and trappers to access state trust lands in exchange for an annual payment of \$800,000 and \$200,000 of habitat improvement projects on state trust land.

“This is a wonderful agreement that increases opportunities for hunters, anglers and outdoor recreationists,” said State Game Commission chairwoman Sharon Salazar Hickey. “The Department of Game and Fish and the State Land Office worked together, to find balance for the benefit of all New Mexicans.”

The Department of Game and Fish and the State Land Office agreed to the success of a 2020 pilot programs for backpacking and dispersed and roadside camping. With the new agreement these pilot programs have become permanent additions.

Additional changes include:

- Expanding the easement from a one-year agreement to a four-year agreement.
- Representatives from the Department of Game and Fish and the State Land Office will meet within 30 days of the execution of this agreement to discuss additions, deletions and other changes to the access points. Access points will be finalized by May 15 of each year.
- The Department shall provide the State Land Office with a dedicated after-hours point of contact for law enforcement-related calls and complaints, including but not limited to reports of violations, locked gates or other access problems and resource damage (such as unlawfully cut fences or unauthorized road construction).

- Expanded camping opportunities.

During the State Game Commission meeting, Commissioner of Public Lands Stephanie Garcia Richard said this is a great day for sportspeople across the state of New Mexico because we have a great agreement between our two agencies to provide access throughout the state for hunting seasons on state trust land.

State Game Commission vice-chairman Jeremy Vesbach summed up the agreement, "One of the values we share with the State Land Office is the ability to get our families in this state outside. This pandemic has shown us just how important outdoor recreation and the tie we have to the land is."

Since March 2020, the Department and the State Land Office partnered on \$200,000 worth of projects to fulfill the indirect project spending portion of the easement. Those successes include completed projects and some that are currently in progress, including:

- sheep net-wire fence modification to wildlife friendly design in SE New Mexico,
- Canadian River native riparian vegetation establishment project in Harding and Mora counties where several thousand willows and hundreds of cottonwood poles will be planted along two to three miles of stream bank,
- improvements to Luera Mountains Access Road in Catron County,
- new Turkey Ridge campsite and fencing on Chupadera Mesa in Socorro County,
- sixty-seven new sportsperson access points including signage and gate installation (20 vehicle access, 47 walk-in access),
- and two new pilot programs for licensed New Mexico hunters that created the previously mentioned dispersed and backpack camping opportunities.

[Visit the Department's YouTube Channel to view the past State Game Commission meeting.](#)

[Easement details and hunting access maps can be found on the Department's website.](#)
The updates easement will be posted when signed by both parties.

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