Population Management Hunts

Hunters wishing to be considered for population management hunts for Barbary sheep, bighorn sheep, deer, elk, ibex, oryx or pronghorn must select the 5th-choice option on the draw application for the appropriate species. Applications must be completed online or by telephone by March 17 before 5 p.m.

Applicants must apply for at least one regular draw hunt choice to be eligible for the population management hunt for the same species. By choosing this option hunters are indicating their willingness, if unsuccessful in drawing their 1st, 2nd, 3rd or 4th choice, to be contacted by NMDGF if a population management hunt is scheduled for that species.

If a population management hunt is scheduled, a NMDGF official will contact the hunter to notify him/her of the hunt areas, dates, bag limit, allowable sporting arms and any other special restrictions. The hunter will be asked to accept or decline a hunt. If a hunter declines, another hunter will be contacted. Bag limits for population management hunts will be primarily female animals, since these hunts are intended to reduce populations in specific areas.

Choosing a population management hunt option is not a guarantee the applicant will be contacted for a hunt. Population management hunters must file a harvest report.

White Sands Missile Range (WSMR): If selecting the 5th-choice option for oryx, applicants must have arranged to receive a hunt authorization code from an approved WSMR 2021 security sponsor (see page 103). The applicant must enter the hunt authorization code in his/her oryx 5th-choice hunt application. This applies only to population management oryx hunts that occur on WSMR. Do not select WSMR option if you do not have an authorization code.

Population Management Hunt Fees

If unsuccessful for the 1st, 2nd, 3rd or 4th choice, applicants will be refunded the license fee.

If a hunter is contacted and accepts a 5th-choice hunt, she/he will be required to purchase the appropriate license(s) with tag for the species that she/he will hunt (page 12, Draw License Fees). White Sands Missile Range and Jornada Experimental Range each charge a $150 access fee to all oryx hunters. Other federal agencies may charge access fees. Choosing the oryx population management hunt implies acceptance of additional fees should a hunter be called for one of these hunts. Population management hunters must file a harvest report, and may be required to obtain a carcass tag in person at a license vendor or NMDGF office.

Avoid Late Fees: Harvest Reporting for Late-season Management Hunts

Population management license holders for hunts that occur late in the license year or after the reporting deadlines must submit a harvest report on or before April 7 to maintain draw eligibility. NMDGF recommends reporting by telephone at: 1-888-248-6866 to avoid late fees.
All proceeds from enhancement hunts are used solely for habitat enhancement, conservation, research and management projects in New Mexico for the species auctioned or raffled. Authorizations may be used either by the recipient or any individual of the recipient’s choice through sale, barter or gift. These hunts do not count as once-in-a-lifetime hunts.

**Big-game Enhancement Packages**
Two big-game enhancement packages will be auctioned by NMDGF – one through the Mule Deer Foundation at the virtual Western Hunting and Conservation Expo (www.huntexpo.com) on February 11-14, 2021 – and one through The Wild Sheep Foundation www.wildsheepfoundation.org. Each package will consist of five authorizations, one for each of the following: deer, elk, ibex, oryx and pronghorn. The season dates are: Sept. 1, 2021–Jan. 31, 2022 for deer and elk; April 1, 2021–March 31, 2022 for ibex and oryx (for oryx hunts, WSMR access must be prearranged); and Aug. 1–Nov. 1, 2021 for pronghorn.

**Bighorn Sheep Enhancement Authorizations**
Two authorizations will be auctioned by NMDGF with the assistance of the Wild Sheep Foundation—one for desert bighorn sheep and one for Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep—during their virtual convention January 11–16, 2021. Please visit www.wildsheepfoundation.org for details. Two authorizations will be raffled by NMDGF with the assistance of the New Mexico chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation (NMWSF)—one for desert bighorn sheep and one for Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep.

Raffle tickets can be ordered by contacting NMWSF President Bryan Bartlett: (575) 635-3499 or bartlebc@yahoo.com. Tickets will be on sale from April 1–June 20, 2021. Tickets cannot be paid by telephone or email. Tickets are $20 each, and there are no volume discounts. Hunt dates are August 1–December 31, 2021, except in GMU 53 (Wheeler Peak), where the dates are August 1–15, 2021 and September 1–December 31, 2021.

The successful auction bidder for desert bighorn sheep will choose their exclusive hunt area from the desert bighorn hunt area list on page 93, and the successful auction bidder for Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep will do the same from the hunt area list on page 92 (excluding Unit 58, Dry Cimarron). Each successful auction bidder must select their exclusive hunt area by June 30, 2021. Raffle winners for desert bighorn sheep and Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep must do the same by July 20, 2021, however, they may not choose the same exclusive area declared by the successful auction bidders. The units remaining after both the auction and raffle winners have chosen their hunts may be hunted by either or both enhancement license holders.

**Deer Enhancement Authorizations**
One deer authorization will be auctioned by NMDGF with the assistance of the Mule Deer Foundation at the virtual Western Hunting and Conservation Expo (www.huntexpo.com) on February 11-14, 2021. One deer authorization will also be raffled with the assistance of the Mule Deer Foundation. Raffle tickets can be ordered by contacting N.M. Mule Deer Foundation Regional Director Colleen Payne at colleen@muledeer.org. Tickets must be purchased by 6 p.m., June 10, 2021 to be considered for the June 11, 2021 drawing. The bag limit for these hunts is one fork-antlered deer. The season dates are: Sept. 1, 2021–Jan. 31, 2022.
Elk Enhancement Authorizations

One bull elk authorization will be auctioned by NMDGF with the assistance of the Mule Deer Foundation at the virtual Western Hunting and Conservation Expo (www.huntexpo.com) on February 11-14, 2021. One bull elk authorization will be raffled with the assistance of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation at the NMDGF Santa Fe office in June, 2021. If an enhancement license holder chooses to hunt on Valles Caldera, he/she must arrange access with the National Park Service: (575) 829-4100 at least 2 weeks prior to hunting. For more information please visit the RMEF website: www.rmef.org. The bag limit for these hunts is one mature bull elk. The season dates are: Sept. 1, 2021–Jan. 31, 2022.

Gould’s Turkey Enhancement Permits

One Gould’s turkey license authorization will be auctioned by NMDGF with the assistance of the National Wildlife Turkey Federation at the virtual Convention and Sport Show in February 2021 (https://www.nwtf.org/). A second Gould’s turkey license authorization will be raffled by NMDGF with the assistance of the New Mexico Chapter of the National Wildlife Turkey Federation (https://www.facebook.com/NewMexicoNWTF). The drawing will be held in March.

Premium Statewide Deer and Elk Hunts

The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish premium deer and elk hunts are in honor of two NMDGF employees, Austin Roberts and Ocie Gray, who were killed in a January 1960 plane crash while delivering hay to starving pronghorn on the snow-covered plains outside of Las Vegas.

Pilot Austin Roberts, 40, of Roswell, was a 14-year veteran of NMDGF at the time of his death. A cause of the accident was never determined. Before joining NMDGF Roberts served as a bomber pilot during World War II and survived 62 bombing runs and being shot down six times. Lake Roberts in the Gila National Forest is named after him.

Ocie Gray, 25, was a NMDGF biologist and a 1959 graduate of New Mexico State University in Las Cruces where a scholarship in his name is available to biology students.

The two premium hunts were authorized by the New Mexico State Game Commission to provide the public an affordable chance at a high quality hunting experience. The hunt codes are DER-1-700 and ELK-1-700 and allow hunting with any big game sporting arm in any unit statewide, including NMDGF’s wildlife management areas and private land with written permission, anytime between Sept. 1, 2021 and Jan. 31, 2022. The hunts are available through the draw and are subject to quota (nonresident and outfitted applicants are extremely unlikely to draw).

Right (top–bottom): Austin Roberts and Ocie Gray. NMDGF photo taken the day of the crash.