Wildlife Management Reform in New Mexico

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Defenders of Wildlife
Agenda

• Background
• Game Commission
  – HB 254
• Scope of Species
• Funding
• Overarching Lessons
Background

• Efforts began in 2015 following a series of alarming decisions by New Mexico’s state game commission
  – Cougar trapping on state trust lands
  – Increased quotas for black bear hunting
  – Requiring and then denying a permit for FWS to release endangered Mexican wolves

• Coalition of environmental and conservation organizations met in December 2015

• Initial focus was solely on the game commission
Game Commission

Current Structure

- 7 commissioners
  - 5 geographical representatives (4 quadrants plus Bernalillo County)
  - 1 agricultural representative
  - 1 conservation representative
    - “At least one member shall have a demonstrated history of involvement in wildlife and habitat protection issues and whose activities or occupation are not in conflict with wildlife and habitat advocacy.”
  - All nominations are made by the governor
  - No scientific knowledge is required
- Dismissal without cause
- No more than 4 commissioners from the same political party
Game Commission

HB 254

• 7 commissioners
  – 4 appointed by the Legislative Council
    • 1 agriculture representative
    • 1 sportsman/woman representative
    • 1 scientist
    • 1 non-consumptive conservationist
  – 3 appointed by the governor
    • Representing New Mexico’s 3 congressional districts
• No dismissal without cause
• Expanded terms from 4 years to 6 years
Game Commission

Issues and Lessons Learned

• Definition of non-consumptive representative
• Legislative Council?
• Geographical boundaries
• Delayed the enactment of the bill until January 2019
• What happens with a bad governor?
Scope of Species vs. Funding

• Chicken vs. Egg dilemma
• New Mexico’s part-time legislature meets, at most, for 60 days making large, complicated pieces of legislation difficult to pass, so….
  — Should we generate new sources of funding that will later make expanding its authority possible?

OR

— Should we give the Department more authority, which will create the need for additional funding?
# Scope of Species

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taxa</th>
<th>Total native subspecies protected</th>
<th>Total native subspecies found in NM</th>
<th>Percentage protected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mammals</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birds</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amphibians</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reptiles</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total vertebrates</strong></td>
<td><strong>600</strong></td>
<td><strong>996</strong></td>
<td><strong>60%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scope of Species

• The Department will require additional funding to be able to adequately manage ALL of the state’s wildlife
• Currently, does not have the funds to sufficiently protect and recover species under its authority:
  – $10-15 million to fully fund and implement the Wildlife Conservation Act
  – ~$27 million to fully implement SWAP
• Fill gaps vs. blanket authority
  – i.e. all birds or all fish species
• Mitigation policy
Funding

• General Fund allocation
• Other possibilities
  – General Sales Tax
  – Real Estate Transfer Tax
  – Lottery
  – Speeding Fines
  – Methane Capture Rule
  – Lodgers Tax

• Considerations
  – Urgency compared with other issues?
  – What will be palatable to legislators?
  – Other legislative priorities?
Overarching Lessons

• Spend only as much time as needed harping on the problems before figuring out the solution
• What constituency are you serving? Is there a way to broaden your audience?
• Long-term vs. short-term goals
• Form better relationships with commissioners and department staff