



December 1, 2020

Lance Cherry, Chief, Information and Education Division
New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
1 Wildlife Way
Santa Fe, NM 87507

RE: Hunter Education rule, 19.36.3 NMAC

Chief Cherry,

On behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF), please accept these comments on the New Mexico State Game Commission's request for public comment related to Hunter Education rule, 19.36.3 NMAC. With over three decades in the policy arena, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) works with different levels of government to advance and protect our outdoor sporting heritage and traditions. Rooted in the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus, the largest, most active bipartisan caucus on Capitol Hill with nearly 250 Members of Congress, CSF has extended this legislative network from Washington, DC to states across the country, establishing the bipartisan National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC) and the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC). Presently, NASC is comprised of 49 state legislative caucuses, including the New Mexico Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus, with over 2,500 legislators, while the GSC includes more than half the governors from throughout the country.

CSF supports the proposed rule changes to the Hunter Education rule to:

- 1) Reduce minimum age to participate in the Mentored-Youth Hunting Program from 10 to 8 years of age.
- 2) Add small game to allowable species Mentored-Youth under 10 years of age may hunt.
- 3) Add pronghorn antelope to allowable species Mentored-Youth, 10 to 17 years of age may hunt.
- 4) Add requirement for Mentor to complete of an abbreviated hunter training course comprised of written lessons and testing and current registration in the department's mentored-youth program or proof of New Mexico hunter training course or a hunter training course of another state which is approved by the New Mexico department of game and fish.
- 5) Change rule from permanent to four-year cycle, April 1, 2021 through March 31, 2025.
- 6) Make minor spelling corrections

Hunting license sales provide essential funding for wildlife conservation and habitat restoration, while hunter expenditures generate billions of dollars annually for the national economy and support hundreds of thousands

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of jobs. The decline in hunter participation poses an ever-increasing threat to wildlife conservation and state wildlife management. CSF commends the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish's effort to improve its hunter recruitment by allowing children at a younger age to hunt safely and responsibly while under the watchful eye of a dedicated mentor and increase the diversity of species they are able to pursue. By doing so, children will have more opportunities for formative hunting experiences that will serve as the necessary stepping stones in the journey to becoming a lifelong conservationist that contributes to natural resource stewardship through the American System of Conservation Funding.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important Hunter Education rule change proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ellary Tucker Williams".

Ellary TuckerWilliams
Inter-Mountain Western States Coordinator

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