

**Southwest Environmental Center • Sierra Club: Rio Grande Chapter  
Animal Protection of New Mexico • Back Country Horsemen of New Mexico  
WildEarth Guardians • Sandia Mountain BearWatch • Center for Biological Diversity  
Conservation Voters New Mexico • New Mexico Wilderness Alliance**

November 18, 2013

By email to:

[nmdept.ofgameandfish@state.nm.us](mailto:nmdept.ofgameandfish@state.nm.us)

[nmdgf.chairman@state.nm.us](mailto:nmdgf.chairman@state.nm.us)

Scott Bidegain, Chair

Thomas "Dick" Salopek, Vice-Chair

Tom Arvas, Commissioner

Paul M. Kienzle III, Commissioner

William "Bill" Montoya, Commissioner

Robert Espinoza, Sr. , Commissioner

Ralph Ramos, Commissioner

Dear Chairman Bidegain and Commissioners:

We the undersigned represent organizations with tens of thousands of members in New Mexico who have a strong interest in the conservation of New Mexico's wildlife. We are writing to express our views and recommendations on the selection of the next director of the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF).

The director plays a pivotal role in the management of the state's wildlife. As head of NMDGF, the director oversees a complex agency that is responsible for enforcing state laws and regulations and for implementing policy set by the Game Commission pertaining to wildlife, including game and fish, furbearers, nongame and endangered species. NMDGF has direct management authority over 52 percent of the state's more than 1100 vertebrate species (New Mexico Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy), and through its actions has an indirect influence on a much larger portion of New Mexico's biodiversity, certainly far more than just the species harvested by anglers, hunters and trappers.

For these reasons, the selection of the next director is of concern to all New Mexicans who value our state's wildlife. Wildlife is very important to our state economy. Anglers spend \$418 million in New Mexico, hunters spend \$139 million, and non-consumptive users of wildlife--who comprise 31 percent of the state's population and outnumber hunters and anglers by nearly two to one--account for \$328 million in annual expenditures related to wildlife-watching. (2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation: State Overview)

Wildlife management in New Mexico currently faces many challenges, including habitat loss, invasive species, limited funding for conservation, and the overarching uncertainty about the impacts of climate change. There is also a growing tension between the views held by non-consumptive wildlife enthusiasts and the values reflected in current state law and policy, as evidenced by recent public controversies over bear and cougar harvest quotas, fur trapping--especially on public land, Mexican wolf management and coyote killing contests. And there continues to be dissatisfaction among New Mexico hunters over the allocation of licenses among residents, non-residents and landowners.

The North American Model of Conservation which is often praised and promoted by wildlife managers holds among its tenets that wildlife is held in trust for all and owned by no one and that science should form the foundation and basis for wildlife management decisions.

We strongly believe the next director should be an individual with the professional qualifications, experience and skills needed to address these and other challenges, and the ability to reach out to all stakeholders and lead NMDGF in the management of the state's wildlife for the benefit of all New Mexicans and our wild heritage. At a minimum we believe the next director should possess the following qualifications:

- **Scientific grounding:** the director should demonstrate a solid understanding of the principles and methods of conservation biology and wildlife management, and should have an established record of working with the scientific community to build a credible basis of objective information upon which resource management decisions can be made. A degree—preferably graduate—in biology, wildlife management or closely related field should be required.
- **Management experience:** the director should have a demonstrated ability to administer an enterprise on the scale of a state agency.
- **Ability to work with all stakeholders:** the director should demonstrate a proven desire and ability to listen to and work well with all stakeholders, and be personally accessible and welcoming to divergent thinkers, both within and outside the agency.

With the challenges facing the state's wildlife, New Mexico cannot afford a caretaker director or someone hired primarily for political reasons. Mixing politics with the conservation needs of wildlife is a recipe for abuse, exploitation and corruption that ultimately harms our wildlife and the complex natural systems to which it belongs. The department needs a leader whose credentials are unimpeachable and respected by all New Mexicans who value our state's wildlife. We urge you to conduct a nationwide search to find the best possible candidates.

Sincerely,

Kevin Bixby, Executive Director  
Southwest Environmental Center

Jan Hayes, Founder  
Sandia Mountain BearWatch

Mary Katherine Ray, Wildlife Chair  
Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club

Mark Allison, Executive Director  
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance

Phil Carter, Wildlife Campaign Manager  
Animal Protection of New Mexico

Demis Foster, Executive Director  
Conservation Voters New Mexico

Oscar Simpson, Public Lands/Legislative  
Chair  
Back Country Horsemen of New Mexico

Michael Robinson, Conservation Advocate  
Center for Biological Diversity

Wendy Keefover, Carnivore Protection  
Director  
WildEarth Guardians