

TITLE 19 NATURAL RESOURCES AND WILDLIFE
CHAPTER 31 HUNTING AND FISHING
PART 11 BEAR AND COUGAR

19.31.11.1 ISSUING AGENCY: New Mexico department of game and fish.
[19.31.11.1 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.11.1 NMAC, 4/1/2024]

19.31.11.2 SCOPE: Sportspersons interested in bear and cougar management and hunting. Additional requirements may be found in Chapter 17 NMSA 1978 and Title 19 NMAC.
[19.31.11.2 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.11.2 NMAC, 4/1/2024]

19.31.11.3 STATUTORY AUTHORITY: Sections 17-1-14 and 17-1-26 NMSA 1978 provide that the New Mexico state game commission has the authority to establish rules and regulations that it may deem necessary to carry out the purpose of Chapter 17 NMSA 1978 and all other acts pertaining to protected mammals, birds and fish.
[19.31.11.3 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.11.3 NMAC, 4/1/2024]

19.31.11.4 DURATION: April 1, 2024 through March 31, 2028.
[19.31.11.4 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.11.4 NMAC, 4/1/2024]

19.31.11.5 EFFECTIVE DATE: April 1, 2024, unless a later date is cited at the end of a section.
[19.31.11.5 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.11.5 NMAC, 4/1/2024]

19.31.11.6 OBJECTIVE: Establishing open hunting seasons and regulations, rules and procedures governing the distribution and issuance of bear and cougar licenses and permits by the department.
[19.31.11.6 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.11.6 NMAC, 4/1/2024]

19.31.11.7 DEFINITIONS:

A. “Bear entry permit” shall mean a permit awarded through a public drawing which entitles the holder of an over-the-counter bear license to hunt in a limited entry area during season dates established in rule.

B. “Bear zones” shall mean hunt areas consisting of one or more game management units as described in 19.30.4 NMAC.

C. “Cougar zones” shall mean hunt areas consisting of one or more game management units as described in 19.30.4 NMAC.

D. “Department” shall mean the New Mexico department of game and fish.

E. “Director” shall mean the director of the New Mexico department of game and fish.

F. “Game management unit” or “GMU” shall mean those areas as described in 19.30.4 NMAC.

G. “Wildlife management areas” or “WMAs” shall mean those areas as described in 19.34.5 NMAC.

[19.31.11.7 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.11.7 NMAC, 4/1/2024]

19.31.11.8 ADJUSTMENT OF LICENSES, PERMITS AND HARVEST LIMITS:

A. The director, with verbal concurrence of the chairperson or their designee, may adjust the number of licenses, permits or harvest limits, up or down by no more than twenty percent within a bear zone or cougar zone, to address critical department management needs, significant changes in population levels or habitat availability. This adjustment may be applied within the specified zones to any or all of: the specific hunt codes; total harvest limits; or female harvest sub-limits.

B. The director, with verbal concurrence of the chairperson or their designee, may take management actions independent of seasons and restrictions, harvest limits or female sub-limits for population management, or to address critical situations including ungulate population protection, depredation, human health and safety or other wildlife management issues. The decision to take management actions pursuant to this subsection shall be reported to the commission.

[19.31.11.8 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.11.8 NMAC, 4/1/2024]

19.31.11.9 [RESERVED]
 [19.31.11.9 NMAC - Repealed, 4/1/2024]

19.31.11.10 BEAR AND COUGAR ZONE CLOSURES, BAG LIMITS AND RESTRICTIONS:

A. Zone closures: Bear and cougar may be hunted or taken only in zones designated as open on the department hotline or website. Zones will close within 72 hours of when the reported number of bears or cougars harvested is within ten percent of the total limit or female sub-limit for that zone, whichever occurs first.

B. Bag limit: The bag limit for bear is one; the bag limit for cougar is two. It is unlawful to kill a bear sow with cub(s) or any bear cub less than one year old, or to kill a spotted cougar kitten or any female cougar accompanied by spotted kitten(s).

C. Limited entry hunt areas: It shall be unlawful to hunt bear or cougar in designated WMAs or other specifically designated special entry hunt areas with the following exceptions:

(1) Legally licensed bear hunters possessing a valid bear entry hunt permit may hunt bears in the area(s) specified on the permit, or as otherwise allowed by rule. Bear entry hunters shall be allowed to hunt in any other open bear zone provided they have a valid bear license.

(2) Legally licensed deer and elk hunters whose license is valid on a WMA or the Valle Vidal and are in possession of a valid over-the-counter bear or cougar license, may hunt bear or cougar in the WMA or the Valle Vidal as specified on their deer or elk license. Deer or elk hunters choosing to hunt bear or cougar under this provision may not use dogs, may hunt only in open bear or cougar zones, and must adhere to the weapon type restriction and season dates as specified by their deer or elk licenses.

D. Cougar hunting requirements and restrictions:

(1) All persons shall complete the mandatory cougar identification course offered on the department’s website prior to purchasing a cougar license.

(2) Cougar hunting is closed in the Florida mountains hunt area during any open Persian ibex season, except by legally licensed Persian ibex hunters in possession of a valid cougar license. Persian ibex hunters may hunt cougar only if the cougar zone is open, and must adhere to the weapon type restrictions and season dates as specified by their Persian ibex license.

[19.31.11.10 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.11.10 NMAC, 4/1/2024]

19.31.11.11 BEAR HUNTING SEASONS:

A. Over-the-counter bear hunts for the 2024-25 through 2027-28 seasons: The following table lists bear zones, open GMUs, sporting arm restrictions, season dates, total harvest limits and female harvest sub-limits

Bear zone	open GMUs	bow only	any big game sporting arms	2024-25 total limit (female)	2025-26 total limit (female)	2026-27 total limit (female)	2027-28 total limit (female)
1	4, 5, 6, 7, 51, 52	9/1 - 24	9/25 - 11/15	168 (67)	168 (67)	168 (67)	168 (67)
2	2	9/1 - 24	9/25 - 11/15	15 (6)	15 (6)	15 (6)	15 (6)
3	49, 50, 53	9/1 - 24	8/16 - 8/31 and 9/25 - 11/15	65 (26)	65 (26)	65 (26)	65 (26)
4	45, 46, 48	9/1 - 24	8/16 - 8/31 and 9/25 - 11/30	109 (43)	109 (43)	109 (43)	109 (43)
5	54, 55, 57	9/1 - 24	8/16 - 8/31 and 9/25 - 11/15	108 (43)	108 (43)	108 (43)	108 (43)
6	39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 47, 56, 58, 59	9/1 - 24	8/16 - 8/31 and 9/25 - 11/15	51 (20)	51 (20)	51 (20)	51 (20)
8	8	9/1 - 24	10/15 - 11/15	11 (4)	11 (4)	11 (4)	11 (4)
9	9, 10	9/1 - 24	8/16 - 8/31 and 9/25 - 11/15	36 (14)	36 (14)	36 (14)	36 (14)
10	12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27	9/1 - 24	9/25 - 12/15	197 (79)	197 (79)	197 (79)	197 (79)
11	37, 38	9/1 - 24	8/16 - 8/31 and	36 (14)	36 (14)	36 (14)	36 (14)

			9/25 - 11/30				
12	34	9/1 - 24	8/16 - 8/31 and 9/25 - 12/15	33 (13)	33 (13)	33 (13)	33 (13)
13	36	9/1 - 24	8/16 - 8/31 and 9/25 - 11/30	16 (6)	16 (6)	16 (6)	16 (6)
14	14	9/1 - 24	10/15 - 11/15	19 (7)	19 (7)	19 (7)	19 (7)

B. Entry hunts for the 2024-25 through 2027-28 seasons shall be as indicated below, listing the open GMUs and areas, eligibility requirements or restrictions, hunt dates, hunt codes, legal sporting arms and number of permits.

open GMUs and areas	2024-25 hunt dates	2025-26 hunt dates	2026-27 hunt dates	2027-28 hunt dates	hunt code	permits
2: youth only	8/1-8/31	8/1-8/31	8/1-8/31	8/1-8/31	BER-1-100	5
4: Sargent WMA only	8/1-8/31	8/1-8/31	8/1-8/31	8/1-8/31	BER-1-101	10
4: Humphries WMA only	8/1-8/31	8/1-8/31	8/1-8/31	8/1-8/31	BER-1-102	5
9: Marquez/LBar WMA only	8/1-8/31	8/1-8/31	8/1-8/31	8/1-8/31	BER-1-103	10
54:55: Uracca, E.S. Barker, and Colin Neblett WMAs, and Valle Vidal	8/1-8/31	8/1-8/31	8/1-8/31	8/1-8/31	BER-1-104	60

55: Valle Vidal	4/15-5/20	4/15-5/20	4/15-5/20	4/15-5/20	BER-1-105	20
57: Sugarite Canyon State Park/ bow only	8/1-8/31	8/1-8/31	8/1-8/31	8/1-8/31	BER-2-106	5

[19.31.11.11 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.11.11 NMAC, 4/1/2024]

19.31.11.12 COUGAR HUNTING SEASONS:

A. Over-the-counter cougar hunting season shall be from April 1 through March 31, or until the total harvest limit or female sub-limit, whichever comes first, is met in any given cougar zone.

B. The following table lists cougar zones, open GMUs, total harvest limits and female harvest sub-limits for the 2024-25 to 2027-28 seasons.

zone	open GMUs	2024-25 total limit (female)	2025-26 total limit (female)	2026-27 total limit (female)	2027-28 total limit (female)
A	2, 7	42 (13)	42 (13)	42 (13)	42 (13)
B	5, 6, 50, 51	25 (8)	25 (8)	25 (8)	25 (8)
C	43, 45, 46, 48, 49, 53	57 (17)	57 (17)	57 (17)	57 (17)
D	41, 42, 47,59	15 (5)	15 (5)	15 (5)	15 (5)
E	9, 10	43 (13)	43 (13)	43 (13)	43 (13)
G	13, 17	50 (15)	50 (15)	50 (15)	50 (15)
H	18, 19, 20	29 (9)	29 (9)	29 (9)	29 (9)
I	36, 37, 38	24 (7)	24 (7)	24 (7)	24 (7)
J	15, 16, 21	84 (25)	84 (25)	84 (25)	84 (25)
K	22, 23, 24	45 (14)	45 (14)	45 (14)	45 (14)
L	25, 26, 27	19 (6)	19 (6)	19 (6)	19 (6)
M	31, 32, 33, 39, 40	25 (7)	25 (7)	25 (7)	25 (7)
N	4, 52	13 (4)	13 (4)	13 (4)	13 (4)
O	12	17 (5)	17 (5)	17 (5)	17 (5)
P	56, 57, 58	14 (7)	14 (7)	14 (7)	14 (7)
Q	28, 29, 30, 34	17 (6)	17 (6)	17 (6)	17 (6)
R	54, 55	26 (8)	26 (8)	26 (8)	26 (8)
S	8, 14	17 (5)	17 (5)	17 (5)	17 (5)

[19.31.11.12 NMAC - Rp, 19.31.11.12 NMAC, 4/1/2024]

HISTORY OF 19.31.11 NMAC:

Pre-NMAC History: The material in this part was derived from that previously filed with the state records center and archives under:

- Regulation No. 482, Establishing Seasons on Deer, Bear, Turkey, Elk, Antelope, Dusky Grouse, Tassel-Eared and Chickaree Squirrel, and Barbary Sheep, filed 5/31/1967;
- Regulation No. 487, Establishing 1967 Seasons on Javelina and Barbary Sheep, filed 12/15/1967;
- Regulation No. 489, Establishing Turkey Seasons for the Spring of 1968, filed 3/1/1968;
- Regulation No. 491, Establishing Big Game Seasons for 1968 for Jicarilla Reservation, filed 3/1/1968;
- Regulation No. 492, Establishing Seasons on Deer, Bear, Turkey, Elk, Antelope, Dusky Grouse, Tassel-Eared and Chickaree Squirrel, and Barbary Sheep, filed 6/6/1968;
- Regulation No. 495, Establishing a Season on Bighorn Sheep, filed 10/2/1968;
- Regulation No. 496, Establishing an Elk Season in the Tres Piedras Area, Elk Area P-6, filed 12/11/1968;
- Regulation No. 502, Establishing Turkey Seasons for the Spring Of 1969, filed 3/5/1969;
- Regulation No. 503, Establishing 1969 Deer Seasons for Bowhunting Only and Big Game Seasons for the Jicarilla Indian Reservation, filed 3/5/1969;
- Regulation 504, Establishing Seasons on Deer, Bear, Turkey, Dusky Grouse, Chickaree and Tassel-Eared Squirrel, and Barbary Sheep, filed 6/4/1969;
- Regulation No. 507, Establishing a Season on Bighorn Sheep, filed 8/26/1969;
- Regulation No. 512, Establishing Turkey Season for the Spring Of 1970, filed 2/20/1970;
- Regulation No. 513, Establishing Deer Season for Bowhunting Only in Sandia State Game Refuge, filed 2/20/1970;

Regulation No. 514, Establishing Seasons on Deer, Bear, Turkey, Elk, Antelope, Dusky Grouse, Tassel-Eared and Chickaree Squirrel, Barbary Sheep and Bighorn Sheep, filed 6/9/1970;
Regulation No 520, Establishing Turkey Seasons for the Spring of 1971, filed 3/9/1971;
Regulation No. 522, Establishing 1971 Seasons on Deer, Bear, Turkey, and Elk on the Jicarilla Apache Indian Reservation, filed 3/9/1971;
Regulation No. 523, Establishing Seasons on Deer, Turkey, Bear, Cougar, Dusky Grouse, Tassel-Eared and Chickaree Squirrel, Elk, Antelope, Barbary Sheep and Bighorn Sheep, filed 6/9/1971;
Regulation No. 531, Establishing a Season on Javelina, filed 12/17/1971;
Regulation No. 532, Establishing Turkey Seasons for the Spring of 1972, filed 3/20/1972;
Regulation No. 534, Establishing 1972 Seasons on Deer, Bear, Turkey, and Elk on the Jicarilla Apache Indian Reservation, filed 3/20/1972;
Regulation No. 536, Establishing Seasons on Deer, Turkey, Bear, Cougar, Dusky Grouse, Chickaree and Tassel-Eared Squirrel, Elk, Antelope, Barbary Sheep and Bighorn Sheep, filed 6/26/1972;
Regulation No. 542, Establishing a Season on Javelina, filed 12/1/1972;
Regulation No. 545, Establishing Turkey Seasons for the Spring Of 1973, filed 2/26/1973;
Regulation No. 546, Establishing 1973 Seasons on Deer, Bear, Turkey, and Elk on the Jicarilla Apache Indian Reservation, filed 2/26/1973;
Regulation No. 547, Establishing Seasons on Deer, Turkey, Bear, Cougar, Dusky Grouse, Chickaree and Tassel-Eared Squirrel, Elk, Antelope, Barbary Sheep and Bighorn Sheep, and Javelina, filed 5/31/1973;
Regulation No. 554, Establishing Special Turkey Seasons for the Spring of 1974, filed 3/4/1974;
Regulation No. 556, Establishing 1974 Seasons on Deer, Bear, Turkey, and Elk on the Jicarilla Apache Indian Reservation, filed 3/14/1974;
Regulation No. 558, Establishing Seasons on Deer, Turkey, Bear, Cougar, Dusky Grouse, Tassel-Eared and Chickaree Squirrel, Elk, Antelope, Barbary Sheep, Bighorn Sheep, Javelina, Oryx, and Ibex, filed 5/29/1974;
Regulation No. 565, Establishing Special Turkey Seasons for the Spring of 1975, filed 3/24/1975;
Regulation No. 567, Establishing 1975 Seasons on Deer, Bear, and Turkey on the Jicarilla Apache and Navajo Indian Reservations and on Elk on the Jicarilla Apache Indian Reservation, filed 3/24/1975;
Regulation No. 568, Establishing Seasons on Deer, Turkey, Bear, Cougar, Dusky Grouse, Chickaree and Tassel-Eared Squirrel, Elk, Antelope, Barbary Sheep, Bighorn Sheep, Javelina, Oryx and Ibex, filed 6/25/1975;
Regulation No. 573, Establishing Seasons on Deer, Turkey, Bear, Cougar, Dusky Grouse, Tassel-Eared and Chickaree Squirrel, Elk, Antelope, Barbary Sheep, Bighorn Sheep, Javelina, Oryx and Ibex, filed 2/23/1976;
Regulation No. 583, Establishing Seasons on Deer, Turkey, Bear, Cougar, Elk, Antelope, Barbary Sheep, Bighorn Sheep, Javelina, Oryx and Ibex, filed 2/11/1977;
Regulation No. 590, Establishing Seasons on Deer, Turkey, Bear, Cougar, Elk, Antelope, Barbary Sheep, Bighorn Sheep, Javelina, Oryx and Ibex, filed 2/15/1978;
Regulation No. 596, Establishing Seasons on Deer, Turkey, Bear, Cougar, Elk, Antelope, Barbary Sheep, Bighorn Sheep, Javelina, Oryx and Ibex, filed 2/23/1979;
Regulation No. 603, Establishing Open Seasons on Deer, Turkey, Bear, Cougar, Elk, Antelope, Barbary Sheep, Bighorn Sheep, Javelina, Oryx and Ibex for the Period April 1, 1980 through March 31, 1981, filed 2/22/1980;
Regulation No. 609, Establishing Open Seasons on Deer, Turkey, Bear, Cougar, Elk, Antelope, Barbary Sheep, Bighorn Sheep, Javelina, Oryx and Ibex for the Period April 1, 1981 through March 31, 1982, filed 3/17/1981;
Regulation No. 614, Establishing Open Seasons on Deer, Bear, Cougar, Elk, Antelope, Barbary Sheep, Bighorn Sheep, Javelina, Oryx and Ibex for the Period April 1, 1982 through March 31, 1983, filed 3/10/1982;
Regulation No. 622, Establishing Open Seasons on Deer, Turkey, Bear, Cougar, Elk, Antelope, Barbary Sheep, Bighorn Sheep, Javelina, Oryx and Ibex for the Period April 1, 1983 through March 31, 1984, filed 3/9/1983;
Regulation No. 628, Establishing Open Seasons on Deer, Turkey, Bear, Cougar, Elk, Antelope, Barbary Sheep, Bighorn Sheep, Javelina, Oryx and Ibex for the Period April 1, 1984 through March 31, 1985, filed 4/2/1984;
Regulation No. 634, Establishing Open Seasons on Deer, Turkey, Bear, Cougar, Elk, Antelope, Barbary Sheep, Bighorn Sheep, Javelina, Oryx and Ibex for the Period April 1, 1985 Through March 31, 1986, filed 4/18/1985;
Regulation No. 640, Establishing Open Seasons on Deer, Turkey, Bear, Cougar, Elk, Antelope, Barbary Sheep, Bighorn Sheep, Javelina, Oryx and Ibex for the Period April 1, 1986 through March 31, 1987, filed 3/25/1986;
Regulation No. 645, Establishing Open Seasons on Deer, Turkey, Bear, Cougar, Elk, Antelope, Barbary Sheep, Bighorn Sheep, Javelina, Oryx and Ibex for the Period April 1, 1987 through March 31, 1988, filed 2/12/1987;
Regulation No. 653, Establishing Open Seasons on Deer, Turkey, Bear, Cougar, Elk, Antelope, Barbary Sheep, Bighorn Sheep, Javelina, Oryx and Ibex for the Period April 1, 1988 through March 31, 1989, filed 12/18/1987;

Regulation No. 663, Establishing Opening Spring Turkey for the Period April 1, 1989 through March 31, 1990, filed 3/28/1989;
Regulation No. 664, Establishing Open Seasons on Deer, Turkey, Bear, Cougar, Elk, Antelope, Barbary Sheep, Bighorn Sheep, Javelina, Oryx and Ibex for the Period April 1, 1989 through March 31, 1990, filed 3/20/1989;
Regulation No. 674, Establishing Open Seasons on Deer, Turkey, Bear, Cougar, Elk, Antelope, Barbary Sheep, Bighorn Sheep, Javelina, Oryx and Ibex for the Period April 1, 1990 through March 31, 1991, filed 11/21/1989;
Regulation No. 683, Establishing Open Seasons on Deer, Turkey, Bear, Cougar, Elk, Antelope, Barbary Sheep, Bighorn Sheep, Javelina, Oryx, and Ibex for the Period April 1, 1991 through March 31, 1992, filed 2/8/1991;
Regulation No. 689, Establishing Open Seasons on Deer, Turkey, Bear, Cougar, Elk, Antelope, Barbary Sheep, Bighorn Sheep, Javelina, Oryx, and Ibex for the Period April 1, 1992 through March 31, 1993, filed 3/4/1992;
Regulation No. 700, Establishing Open Seasons on Deer, Turkey, Bear, Cougar, Elk, Antelope, Barbary Sheep, Bighorn Sheep, Javelina, Oryx, and Ibex for the Period April 1, 1993 through March 31, 1995, filed 3/11/1993.

History of Repealed Material:

19.31.8 NMAC, Big Game, filed 3/1/2001 - duration expired 3/31/2003.
19.31.8 NMAC, Big Game and Turkey, filed 3/3/2003 - duration expired 3/31/2005.
19.31.8 NMAC, Big Game and Turkey, filed 12/15/2004 - duration expired 3/31/2007.
19.31.11 NMAC, Bear and Cougar, filed 12/1/2006 - duration expired 3/31/2009.
19.31.11 NMAC, Bear and Cougar, filed 3/13/2009 - duration expired 3/31/2011.
19.31.11 NMAC, Bear and Cougar, filed 2/22/2011 - duration expired 3/31/2016.
19.31.11 NMAC, Bear and Cougar, filed 2/29/2016 - duration expired 3/31/2020.
19.31.11 NMAC, Bear and Cougar, filed 12/3/2019 - duration expired 3/31/2024.