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Majority of wildlife advisory board resigns



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ELKO — A dispute over how many deer should be hunted in Elko County this fall led to the resignations of three Wildlife Advisory Board members.

Elko County Wildlife Advisory Board Chairman Ken Wellington and board members Candido Mendive and Don Hanks resigned from the board effective July 1.

Their resignations come on the heels of a decision to accept most of the Nevada Department of Wildlife's deer tag quotas. County Commissioner Charlie Myers, who is also the liaison for the board to the Elko County commission, sent an email to Ken Wellington, writing that the purpose of the board is to evaluate public opinion and convey that to the Nevada Wildlife Commission. The wildlife

commission makes the final decision on deer tag quotas. His comments were directed at Mendive who had said he would take NDOW's recommendations.

"His job is to listen to public/local input and make a just determination as to their recommendations and concerns and vote based on that and send those recommendations to the Board of Wildlife Commissioners," Myers wrote to Wellington. "His job isn't to agree with NDOW, publicly support NDOW, or automatically side with NDOW because he feels they know more than the public, it is to take local input."

Wellington countered in a radio interview Monday, saying that a small vocal faction, against raising the tag quotas to the level NDOW suggested, intimidated and verbally abused those who did not agree.

Many members of the public, although they supported the quotas, did not stand up and speak because of this faction, he said. "If those people are going to dictate what happens, I don't want to be a part of it."

Wellington said he took offense to Myers' letter because it said the board didn't make the right decision, despite the fact that they were appointed to make that decision.

Myers wrote in the letter that the next ECWAB members should "go through some sort of vetting process to weed out those who are not good fits to represent the people of Elko County."

Wellington, Mendive and Hanks all voted to accept NDOW's recommended quotas for buck tags although Hanks did not vote to accept NDOW's quota for doe tags.

Matt Murray, a member of the wildlife advisory board, wrote in an email that he has "the utmost respect for all three gentlemen."

Wellington, in his resignation letter, wrote that, following the May 7 meeting, "three of our board members' integrity and the way we voted were questioned by a member of the county commission (Myers)."

Mendive, in his resignation letter, wrote that he has always put the resources first "using the best available scientific information, valuing the public's input and knowing in my heart and with a clear conscience that through some very hard times I would do it all over again the same way."

Hanks, in his resignation letter, wrote that, as a veterinarian and professor at the University of Nevada, Reno, he has always relied on science to base his decisions and that NDOW biologists are trained professionals managing Nevada's wildlife.

"While I value public opinion," he wrote, "sometimes I fail to see that it overrides scientific data. Therefore, I cannot continue to serve as a board member..."

Wellington has served on the board for five years.

For the first three years, he said, he fought the Nevada Wildlife Commission.

"I can't fight the Elko County Commission after three years of fighting (the Wildlife Board)," he said.

"I spent three years being punished by the old (wildlife) commission," he said.

"I'm done," he said, shrugging his shoulders and letting out a sigh.

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