



## Bi-annual Newsletter

March 2025

Thank you for attending the 14th annual auction and meeting of the Nebraska Big Game Society. We hope you enjoy fellowship at the event while supporting the habitat of elk, deer, antelope, bighorn sheep and other big game.



2024 Bull Elk Tag Winner: Frank Tritz

**2024 Auction Update** – The event held last year was well-attended and raised more than \$211,275 at the live auction. The resident/non-resident elk permit sold for \$135,000; the successful hunter for 2024, Frank Tritz, was

one of the call-in bidders. The opportunity to allow call-in bidders has been a successful way to include bidders from areas outside of the auction site.

**Total Funds Raised** – Including last year, NBGS has raised more than \$1,141,275 for conservation since the organization was formed. Specifically, \$608,850 was raised from elk permits at 13 auctions. The full amount of each elk permit has been donated to Nebraska Game and Parks.



2024 elk tag auction check presentation from Nebraska Big Game Society.  
L-R: Justin Hartzel, Jim King, Tim McCoy – NGPC Director, Aaron Baumann and Tom King.

**Chadron State Scholarship** – The board also continued support of NBGS Nebraska Wildlife Scholarship at Chadron State College. The board voted to continue the support level at \$5,000 per year.

**Fall Event** – Jim and Cathy Nachreiner hosted the fall social event for members of the board and their spouses. Board members also met to discuss goals for the coming year.

**Royal Game Dinner** – The board hosted the social hour for the annual Royal Game Dinner at the Crete Carrier Lodge at Eugene T. Mahoney State Park in January.

### Officers for 2025:

Justin Hartzel, President  
Jim King, Secretary  
Craig Hundt, Treasurer

### Board of Directors:

Aaron Baumann, Rick Brandt, Seth Harms,  
Randy Johnson, Tom King, Jason Muhle,  
Jim Nachreiner and Michael Westhoff

### Members:

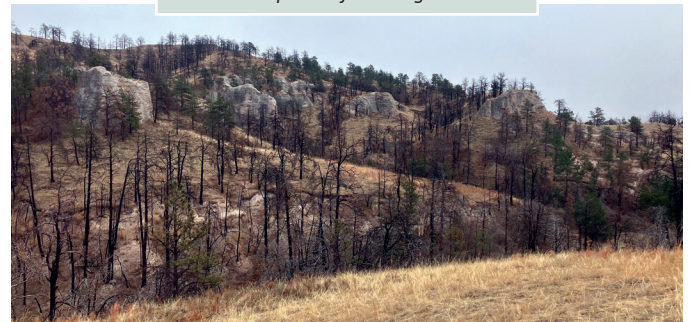
Scott Cassels, Dick Block, Brandon Dirkschneider  
and Dr. Elizabeth Weedin

### BELF Property Lease

The Nebraska Game and Parks recently obtained a 593-acre Board of Education Lands and Funds lease adjacent to the Williams Gap WMA in Banner County. This lease consists of 458 acres of timber (some of which has been burned in recent wildfires) and 135 acres of mixed grass prairie. The public access to this property will only be available through the Williams Gap WMA access points, as there are no public roads directly to the site. The site is home to mule deer, turkeys, upland species, some bighorn sheep and potentially elk.



Williams Gap Wildlife Management Area



## Nebraska Mountain Lion Season a Success

The 2025 mountain lion hunting season in Nebraska ended Jan. 19 after the final harvest limit was reached in the Pine Ridge Unit. The Wildcat Hills and Niobrara units met their harvest limits Jan. 2 and 5 respectively.

Fresh snow for good tracking conditions in many areas, effective hunting techniques, and excellent hunter access due to thin linear habitats, contributed to relatively short seasons.

Thirteen total mountain lions were harvested during the 2025 season. This is the highest harvest for mountain lions in Nebraska, surpassing the previous high of seven in 2020. This harvest should help achieve our management objectives of reducing lion numbers or halting growth.

Seven of the thirteen harvested lions were marked by our research project (six collared and one ear-tagged). We presently have 16 total mountain lions with working collars across the state.

This was the state's eighth mountain lion harvest season; the first was in 2014.

## Bighorn Sheep Management and Research Continues

NGPC continues to work toward objectives identified in the Bighorn Sheep Management Plan. A primary driver of bighorn sheep herd health is pneumonia, which is difficult to manage. Staff continue monitor and assess disease symptoms across herds in the panhandle.

Additionally, we are expanding collaboration with domestic sheep owners to increase disease testing and education and outreach opportunities, with the goal of reducing the likelihood of wild bighorn/domestic sheep interactions. This information will help staff assess areas to focus management efforts.

Nebraska Game and Parks staff continue to inform and provide support to research efforts, including cause-specific mortality and movement studies, as well as continuing to provide guiding services for Nebraska bighorn sheep hunting opportunities. Game and Parks also continues to explore the concept of a temporary bighorn sheep recovery facility to facilitate in-state translocations, working with research, veterinary, and other partners.



*Left: A helicopter flew bighorn sheep to the processing area as Game and Parks biologists, veterinarians and others wait to safely test and care for the animals during a capture.*

*Nose swabs and blood samples were just a couple of the many tests performed at the processing site on the bighorn sheep.*

*Right: The animals were outfitted with ear tags and tracking collars before being released back to the wild.*

## Big Game Captures Planned

Captures of three big game species — bighorn sheep, elk and mule deer — for research projects will take place in Nebraska throughout February and early March. These projects are being conducted by Game and Parks in conjunction with research partners at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Colorado State University and the National Wildlife Research Center.

Captures will be accomplished with net guns and darting from helicopters. They will be conducted for bighorn sheep and mule deer in the Nebraska panhandle. Elk captures will occur in the Panhandle (Unit 4), Southwest (Unit 5) and Northeast (Units 7/14) districts.

The main purpose of these studies is to estimate movements and habitat selection, disease and health status, and reproduction. Some captured bighorn sheep may be translocated to meet management objectives for herd health.



*A helicopter flew a bighorn ewe to the processing area. The sheep was safely and humanely strapped in for its short journey. The animal became calm after a blindfold was secured over its eyes.*

