

Utah Wildlife News
July 9, 2009

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More Permits and More Places to Hunt

DWR shares ideas for next spring's turkey hunts

Every person who wants to hunt wild turkeys next spring could if ideas the Division of Wildlife Resources is proposing for Utah's 2010 hunts are approved.

And you'd have more places to hunt turkeys than ever before.

"Even though we'd be putting more hunters in the field, we don't think that would have a negative effect on Utah's turkey populations," says Dave Olsen, upland game coordinator for the DWR. "Each hunter in Utah is restricted to taking only one male turkey. And female turkeys in the state are very successful at reproducing."

Learn more, share your ideas

You can review all of the DWR's turkey hunting proposals at wildlife.utah.gov/public_meetings/next.php on the Web. Once you've read the proposals, you can share your thoughts and ideas one of two ways:

RAC meetings

Five Regional Advisory Council meetings will be held across Utah. Citizens representing the RACs will take the input received at the meetings to the Utah Wildlife Board. Board members will use the input to help them set rules for Utah's 2010 turkey hunts. They'll set those rules at their Aug. 19 – 20 meeting in Salt Lake City.

You can participate and provide your input at any of the following meetings:

Southern Region

July 28
7 p.m.
Triple C Arena
50 E. 900 N.
Panguitch

Central Region

Aug. 4
6:30 p.m.
Central Region Conference Center
1115 N. Main St.
Springville

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Southeastern Region

July 29
6:30 p.m.
John Wesley Powell Museum
1765 E. Main St.
Green River

Northern Region

Aug. 5
6 p.m.
Brigham City Community Center
24 N. 300 W.
Brigham City

Northeastern Region

July 30
6:30 p.m.
Western Park, Room #1
302 E. 200 S.
Vernal

E-mail

You can also provide your comments to your RAC via e-mail. E-mail addresses for your RAC members are available at www.wildlife.utah.gov/public_meetings.

The group each RAC member represents (sportsman, non-consumptive, etc.) is listed under each person's e-mail address. You should direct your e-mail to the people on the RAC who represent your interest.

Turkey hunting changes

Olsen says DWR biologists have watched and studied turkeys in Utah closely for more than 20 years. He says the biologists are comfortable allowing more hunters into the field.

"Turkeys and other upland game birds reproduce at a high rate," Olsen says. "It's not unusual for a single male turkey to breed as many as 10 females. And female turkeys are very productive. They usually lay a clutch of between 10 to 12 eggs.

"Because one male will breed several females, and because female turkeys are so productive, removing males out of the population will have little effect on the overall number of turkeys in Utah."

Olsen says the DWR is proposing the following for Utah's 2010 hunts:

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* A total of three hunts would be held. The first hunt would run April 10 – 29. Only a limited number of permits would be available for the hunt, and the hunt would be held on a regional basis. The following number of permits would be available through a draw:

<u>Region</u>	<u>Number of permits</u>
Northern	400
Central	500
Northeastern	250
Southeastern	250
Southern	1,100

“This first hunt should be less crowded than the hunt in May because only 2,500 permits would be offered for it,” Olsen says. “Also, if you drew a permit for the April hunt, you wouldn’t be confined to hunting one specific area like you have been in the past. Instead, you could hunt an entire region.”

* The second hunt would be held April 30 – May 2. This hunt would be a youth hunt for hunters 15 years of age and younger. Permits would not be limited in number, and permits would be available over the counter. Youth hunters could hunt anywhere in the state that’s open to turkey hunting.

Youngsters who bought a permit for the youth hunt could also use the permit to hunt during Utah’s general statewide hunt. That hunt would start May 3.

* The third and final hunt would be a statewide hunt held May 3 – 31. Just like the youth hunt, there would be no limit on the number of permits offered for the hunt, and permits would be available over the counter. Hunters of all ages could participate in the hunt. You could hunt anywhere in the state that was open to turkey hunting.

For more information about the meetings, call the nearest Division of Wildlife Resources office or the DWR’s Salt Lake City office at (801) 538-4700.

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Contact: Mark Hadley, DWR Relations with the Public Specialist (801) 538-4737

Cougar, Waterfowl and Bobcat Ideas

DWR shares ideas for upcoming hunting and trapping seasons

The number of cougars hunters take in Utah this season should be similar to the number taken over the past four seasons.

The Division of Wildlife Resources' cougar hunting ideas—along with ideas for Utah's upcoming waterfowl hunting and bobcat trapping seasons—are available for review at wildlife.utah.gov/public_meetings/next.php on the Web.

Learn more, share your ideas

Once you've read the proposals, you can share your thoughts and ideas one of two ways:

RAC meetings

Five Regional Advisory Council meetings will be held across Utah. Citizens representing the RACs will take the input received at the meetings to the Utah Wildlife Board. Board members will use the input to help them set rules for Utah's upcoming cougar, waterfowl and furbearer seasons. They'll set those rules at their Aug. 19 – 20 meeting in Salt Lake City.

You can participate and provide your input at any of the following meetings:

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July 28
7 p.m.
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Cougar hunting

About 300 cougars would probably be taken in Utah under ideas the DWR is proposing for the state's 2009 – 2010 hunting season.

That number would be similar to the past four seasons in Utah. Hunters took an average of 306 cougars during each of those seasons.

"About 15 years ago, the Utah Wildlife Board increased the number of cougar hunting permits a bunch," says Kevin Bunnell, mammals program coordinator for the DWR.

Bunnell says helping mule deer herds recover after hard winters in the early 1990s was the biggest reason for the increase. "Cougars were one of several factors that kept mule deer herds from rebounding after those winters," Bunnell says.

Biologists had two things in mind when they proposed the permit increase: they wanted to help the mule deer herds recover while making sure Utah's cougar population stayed protected. "Our main goal was to find a balance between the two species," Bunnell says.

He says it appears the effort over the past 15 years worked. Permits were increased for several years. Then, for the past four years, permit numbers have been reduced.

"Based on the number of cougars that hunters took in 2009, and the number of cougars houndsmen put up trees last year, it appears Utah's cougar population has started to stabilize," Bunnell says.

"Now we're working to find the proper balance between cougars and their prey. We think the proposals we're recommending for 2010 are another step in that direction."

The number of hunting permits the DWR is recommending for Utah's limited entry units, and the total number of cougars to be taken on the state's harvest objective units, are down slightly from 2009.

For more information, call the nearest Division of Wildlife Resources office or the DWR's Salt Lake City office at (801) 538-4700.

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Contact: Mark Hadley, DWR Public Relations with the Public Specialist (801) 538-4737

Smith Family “Legacy” Becomes Newest Part of Tabby Mountain WMA

DWR makes biggest land purchase in almost a decade

Fruitland -- More than 5,700 acres of critical big game and sage-grouse habitat now belongs to the state of Utah.

On June 29, Allan Smith and representatives from the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR) and the Mule Deer Foundation (MDF) finalized the sale of the land.

“Our grandfather, Moroni Smith, who acquired much of this land 100 years ago, instilled a simple philosophy in us: ‘leave the land in better shape for future generations than you found it,’” Smith says. “Our family is happy that this land—5,700 acres—is going to the DWR. It’s our legacy to the people of Utah.”

Miles Moretti, president of the Mule Deer Foundation, and Kevin Christopherson, DWR regional supervisor, agree. “This land exchange protects thousands of acres of critical wildlife habitat,” Christopherson says. “It’s a tremendous legacy for the people of Utah.”

The land, located in the foothills of Tabby Mountain north of Fruitland, is a critical piece of winter and transition range for elk, deer, sage-grouse and other wildlife.

“A couple thousand elk and several thousand mule deer either winter in this area or pass through it on their way to other winter ranges,” Christopherson says. “Sage-grouse habitat has also been enhanced in the area, and more and more sage-grouse are using the southwestern corner of the property.”

“The Smith property adjoins and compliments the other WMA [wildlife management area] lands in this area. It’s no accident that the Tabby Mountain WMA is the largest WMA in the state: it provides critical winter range for some of the biggest, healthiest herds in Utah.”

MDF and DWR provide the funds

“I was delighted when they [the DWR] asked me if the Mule Deer Foundation could assist with the purchase,” Moretti says. “I first saw this land over 30 years ago when I worked for the DWR. It was prime country then, and it’s even better now.”

Moretti says the land is critical winter and transition range for the Wasatch, Carrant Creek and Tabby Mountain deer herds.

“The MDF contributed over \$200,000 for the purchase,” Moretti says. “We raised most of that money at a local banquet. It feels good to be investing in the future of wildlife. And it feels even better when we can make that investment close to where the funds were raised.”

The DWR provided the rest of the funds.

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“Most of the funds came from the sale of some DWR property in Roosevelt,” Christopherson says. “The property had been used as a game farm and was open to hunting until residences were built all around it. Local leaders asked if we would sell it as it had now become more valuable as commercial or residential property than wildlife property.”

Close call

Smith says his family had been talking about selling the land to the DWR for years, but it was still a close call. “Family members had also been approached about selling it for development,” he says. “We could have gotten much more if we had sold it [to a developer who would have turned it into] 5- to 20-acre lots for trophy homes.

“In the end, we decided to work with the DWR to preserve the land for wildlife,” Smith says.

Smith says he’s looked over this property when between 1,200 to 1,500 elk, and an equal or greater number of deer, were on it.

“Seeing that was an amazing sight,” he says. “Now that sight will be protected for future generations to enjoy.”

Future focus

Christopherson says protecting the land’s critical winter range is the DWR’s long-term goal. “Also, now that the property belongs to the state, we can make it more accessible to the public, at least during the summer and fall,” he says. “During the winter, it will likely be closed to the public to provide deer and elk with a disturbance-free place to spend the winter.”

Christopherson says habitat biologists will continue to enhance the area for wintering wildlife, giving special attention to sensitive species, such as sage-grouse. “We’ll also do plenty of enhancement work for elk and deer,” he says. “We’d like to see the herds stay on our ground rather than moving into the farms, ranches and communities below the property.”

Christopherson says livestock grazing will also continue. “We plan to use cattle as a tool to maintain and enhance wildlife habitat through using cattle for selective grazing,” he says.

“This sale means a lot to wildlife and to the people of Utah,” Christopherson says. “We will protect and enhance the land’s wildlife values and preserve them forever.”

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Cooperation was the key

Christopherson says the Smith property sale would not have happened without support from the landowner, surrounding landowners, local communities and local political leaders.

Smith agrees.

“This land is a good example of how wildlife and ranching communities can come together,” Smith says. “The Tabby Mountain foothills were homesteaded in 1905. Our family, which ran sheep at the time, was able to acquire the land when the homesteaders learned it was unsuitable for farming.”

Smith says just 20 years ago, the property was almost a “badlands.” “It was mostly old sage with little grass or forbs in the understory,” he says. “Studies also showed these and the surrounding lands were responsible for roughly half of the silt flowing into Starvation Reservoir.”

Smith’s family was in the process of decreasing its sheep and cattle herds on the land when the Natural Resources Conservation Service approached them. The NRCS asked them to participate in a restoration project.

“The NRCS provided most of the plan and the machinery, the DWR provided seed, and we provided funds and extra manpower. By the time we were done, we had treated about 5,000 acres.”

Today, Smith’s estimates the land has about 2,300 to 2,400 pounds of forage on it. “Both livestock and wildlife share that forage,” he says. “And we’ve slowed the flow of silt down by roughly 99 percent.

“We [the DWR and ranchers] are the stewards of the land,” Smith says. “This is a good example of what can be done. We can co-exist together.”

For more information, call the DWR’s Northeastern Region office at (435) 781-9453.

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