

**Utah Wildlife News**  
**October 1, 2009**

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## **Five Deer Units Open for Only Five Days**

*Low buck numbers result in shorter deer hunt*

When the general rifle buck deer hunt opens Oct. 17, you shouldn't hear any rifle shots on five hunting areas in Utah.

Why?

The rifle hunt on the five units doesn't start until Oct. 21.

The hunt on the units has been shortened to reduce the number of buck deer hunters take. Instead of a nine-day season, the season will run for only five days—Oct. 21 to Oct. 25—on each of the following units:

### **Central Utah**

Central Mountains (Nebo)

Oquirrh-Stansbury

### **Northeastern Utah**

South Slope (Vernal)

### **Southeastern Utah**

LaSal (LaSal Mountains)

### **Southern Utah**

Monroe

You can get a boundary description for each of the five units at [www.wildlife.utah.gov/maps/2009\\_biggame](http://www.wildlife.utah.gov/maps/2009_biggame). Once you reach that part of the site, click on the "General season buck deer units with shorter season dates" selection.

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### Reason for the change

“The three-year buck to doe ratio on these five units is below the minimum objective of 15 bucks per 100 does,” says Anis Aoude, big game coordinator for the Division of Wildlife Resources.

“Our data shows that shortening the hunt to only five days—by itself—doesn’t reduce the number of bucks hunters take,” Aoude says. “Most buck deer hunters in Utah hunt an average of only 3½ days anyway.”

Aoude says delaying when the season opens on the five units is the key to reducing the number of bucks hunters take.

“Our data shows that most buck deer are taken during the opening weekend of the hunt,” he says. “When the hunt on these units opens on Oct. 21, many hunters will have already taken their deer. And that means fewer hunters should be hunting on these areas during the five-day hunt.”

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 Relations with the Public Specialist (801) 538-4737

## You Might See a Few More Deer

*Rifle hunt starts Oct. 17*

You might see a few more deer when Utah’s rifle buck deer hunt starts Oct. 17. The weather this past spring and winter was almost ideal for mule deer.

More than 70,000 hunters, plus their family and friends, are expected afield for Utah’s most popular hunt.

“The weather this past spring and winter was excellent for mule deer,” says Anis Aoude, big game coordinator for the Division of Wildlife Resources.

“Last winter was really mild—the snow stayed up high, and the valleys and the winter ranges were warm,” Aoude says. “It’s difficult to determine exactly how many deer die each winter. But because this past winter was so mild, we think far fewer deer were lost than would have been lost during a normal winter.”

Aoude says the mild winter was followed by a long, wet spring. “The state received plenty of rain clear into June,” he says. “That rain provided doe deer with a lot of good, nutritious vegetation. And that helped the does provide plenty of milk to the fawns they gave birth to earlier this summer.”

Aoude says nutritious vegetation also helps bucks grow bigger antlers. “When bucks have good vegetation to eat, even two- to three-year-old bucks can grow some nice antlers.”

The Northern Region is the region where hunters could notice the biggest difference in the number of deer they see.

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A harsh winter in 2008 killed many of the fawns that were born in 2007. As a result, many hunters noticed a big drop in the number of one-year-old bucks they saw in the region last fall.

"The herds in the Northern Region still have a long way to go. But thanks to the mild winter we had this year, hunters should see a few more deer. And many of those deer will be yearling bucks," Aoude says.

The following are deer hunting prospects for each of the DWR's five regions:

### **Northern Region**

Rifle hunters should see more deer in northern Utah this fall.

"The number of deer has increased following a mild winter and a wet spring and early summer," says Randy Wood, regional wildlife manager. "Hunters should see more yearling bucks this fall."

Wood reminds hunters that the Northern Region includes large chunks of private property. "It's a good idea to get written permission from landowners before planning a hunt to an area that has private property," Wood says.

Wood says pre-season scouting will improve your success. "And please remember that you're hunting in bear country," he says. "Keep your camp clean."

Wood provides the following preview for each of the region's general season hunting units:

#### **Box Elder unit**

Archery hunters who hunted the unit recently said the deer were very scattered. Numerous hunters who hunted on the Raft River Mountains reported seeing more bucks this year than last. Archery hunters who hunted on the Grouse Creek range reported seeing mostly does and fawns.

During the last two months, the unit has been extremely dry. If early October stays dry, be extra careful with fire. It's a tinderbox out there!

#### **Cache and Ogden units**

Biologists estimate the total population on the Cache unit at 15,000 deer. On the Ogden unit, they estimate the total population at 7,500 deer.

Fawn production was good in 2008. And very few fawns died during the winter of 2008-09. That means more yearling bucks should be available to hunters during the rifle hunt. With good spring moisture, expect to find deer dispersed across the high country. The best place to find deer is at the edges of timber and open meadows in the mornings and the evenings.

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After last fall's hunting season, the buck-to-doe ratio on both of the units was 10 bucks per 100 does. Those numbers are below the unit objective of 15 bucks per 100 does. The low buck numbers were mostly the result of heavy winter losses during the winter of 2007-08.

### **Morgan/South Rich and East Canyon units**

Thanks to a mild winter and good over-winter survival, deer numbers are increasing on both units. The number of yearling bucks is increasing, and many mature bucks have been observed too. After last fall's hunting season, the buck-to-doe ratio on both units was 25 bucks per 100 does. Deer should be spread throughout the units, with the greatest number found at higher elevations. That's where the best forage is. Cooperative Wildlife Management Unit operators say the overall number bucks is similar to last year, but more bucks are bigger in size this year.

### **Chalk Creek and Kamas units**

Deer on both of these units use both high and low elevations. Deer at low elevations use agricultural fields for food and irrigation flows for water. At higher elevations, there's abundant water and forage. For these reasons, the deer will be scattered. You'll need to do some preseason scouting to find them.

After last fall's hunting season, the buck-to-doe ratio on the Chalk Creek unit was 33 bucks per 100 does. On the Kamas unit, the ratio was 19 bucks per 100 does.

The Chalk Creek unit is almost entirely private property. You must have written permission from landowners before hunting on private land in the unit.

The Kamas unit is mostly private property, but there is Forest Service property in some of the higher elevation areas. The deer will be scattered because of abundant water and forage. You'll need to do some preseason scouting to find them. Deer hunting on the unit should be good.

### **North Slope/Summit unit**

It can be tough to find deer on this unit during the rifle hunt. Most of the deer start leaving the area before the rifle hunt begins.

## **Central Region**

On average, one out of three hunters who hunt in the Central Region during the general rifle hunt will take a deer.

Biologists expect a similar, or a slightly lower success rate, this year.

To increase your chance for success, Scott Root encourages you to get off the road and to hike through the scrub oak, conifer and aspen stands, and sagebrush and other types of cover, which the deer often hide in.

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“Deer are drawn to food sources that also provide them with cover,” says Root, regional conservation outreach manager. “Deer have been exposed to countless vehicles during the archery and muzzleloader hunts, and they’re accustomed to holding up in cover most of the day.

“The best spot to find deer is in and around this cover.”

Root says he’s noticed an abundant acorn crop in parts of the region this month. “There are also abundant types of other forage and water east of I-15,” he says.

In the western portion of the region, the conditions are more desert-like. And that makes it more challenging to find the deer. Root reminds you that the West Desert, Vernon unit is open only to hunters who have a West Desert, Vernon limited-entry permit. (A boundary map for the unit is available at [www.wildlife.utah.gov/maps/2009\\_biggame](http://www.wildlife.utah.gov/maps/2009_biggame).)

Root also reminds you that rifle hunters cannot hunt within the extended archery area east of Salt Lake City. He also encourages you to start packing now for the Oct. 17 opener. “There are several good Web sites you can go to for a checklist of the items you should bring with you on your hunt,” he says.

Root says you can get cell phone service through much of the Central Region, and he encourages you to bring your phone with you. (You may want to set your phone to “vibrate,” however. You don’t want an incoming call to spook the deer!)

Root reminds you that the hunts on the Central Mountains (Nebo) and Oquirrh-Stansbury units don’t open until Oct. 21. Delayed five-day hunts are being held on the units to try and increase the number of bucks on the units compared to the number of does.

A boundary description for the two units is available at [www.wildlife.utah.gov/maps/2009\\_biggame](http://www.wildlife.utah.gov/maps/2009_biggame). Once you reach that part of the site, click on the “General season buck deer units with shorter season dates” selection.

## Northeastern Region

Deer herds in northeastern Utah are still recovering from the harsh winter of 2007 – 08. “Overall, hunters should expect lower success than they’re used to finding in the region,” says Charlie Greenwood, regional wildlife manager.

The good news is the number of bucks left after the fall hunting seasons is climbing back to the minimum objective of 15 bucks per 100 does. Greenwood says after last fall’s hunts, the buck-to-doe ratio on the region’s public-land units averaged 14½ bucks per 100 does.

Greenwood reminds rifle hunters that the South Slope (Vernal) subunit is open for only five days of hunting. And the season on the subunit doesn’t open until Oct. 21. “The buck-to-doe ratio on this unit is low enough that we had to shorten all of the deer hunts on it this year,” he says.

A boundary description for the South Slope (Vernal) unit is available at [www.wildlife.utah.gov/maps/2009\\_biggame](http://www.wildlife.utah.gov/maps/2009_biggame). Once you reach that part of the site, click on the “General season buck deer units with shorter season dates” selection.

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## **Southeastern Region**

The overall number of deer in southeastern Utah is still below the population objective for the region. But the number of bucks compared to the number of does is improving.

“Buck-to-doe ratios are improving across the region,” says Brent Stettler, regional conservation outreach manager. “For example, on the Central Mountains-Manti unit and the LaSal Mountain unit, the ratio is 17 bucks per 100 does. On the Abajo Mountains unit, the ratio is 20 bucks per 100 does.”

While the number of bucks compared to does is improving, the overall number of deer in the region continues to hover below the region’s population objective. “On the Central Mountains-Manti unit, our biologists estimate the deer population at 20,000 animals. That number should be closer to 40,000 deer.

“The LaSal Mountains unit, with an estimated herd size of 7,400 deer, stands at only 57 percent of its herd size objective of nearly 13,000 animals,” Stettler says. “However, the Abajo unit has rebounded to 95 percent of its herd objective with a current population of about 12,800 deer.”

Lots of rain fell in the region this past spring and early summer. That precipitation provided good forage for deer across southeastern Utah, and gave new fawns a good start. The deer appear healthy. They’re also widely dispersed.

In July, the rain turned off and the heat turned on. Dry conditions moved deer into drainages near water and onto cooler north-facing exposures. Most deer in the region will be found at medium or high elevations.

Stettler encourages hunters to do some pre-season scouting. “Once you’ve selected an area to hunt, learn where the springs, seeps and creeks are in the area,” he says. “Get to know the game trails, the bedding areas and the routes deer might use to escape hunters once the hunt starts.”

How hunting pressure might affect the deer is another important factor to consider. “Make sure you consider that factor as you put your overall strategy together,” he says.

Stettler reminds you that the hunt on the LaSal (LaSal Mountains) unit doesn’t open until Oct. 21. A delayed five-day hunt is being held on the unit to try and increase the number of bucks on the unit compared to the number of does.

A boundary description for the LaSal (LaSal Mountains) unit is available at [www.wildlife.utah.gov/maps/2009\\_biggame](http://www.wildlife.utah.gov/maps/2009_biggame). Once you reach that part of the site, click on the “General season buck deer units with shorter season dates” selection.

## **Southern Region**

Rifle hunters in the Southern Region could see quite a few bucks. And those bucks might have some thick antlers.

“Many of the bucks that I have seen harvested during the archery and muzzleloader hunts have been fabulous,” says Teresa Bonzo, regional wildlife manager. “I’m thrilled to see the antler growth on the deer. I think the cool, wet spring really did wonders for antler growth this year.”

Bonzo anticipates a great rifle hunt. "It has been dry, though," she says. "Unless we get some storms between now and the hunt, finding a water hole might be a huge factor in the success you find."

Biologist Jim Lamb says there are lots of young bucks on the Plateau and Monroe units. "People report seeing them all over [the place]," he says.

Lamb says the deer on the units are starting to head to lower elevations because of the cooler weather.

Jason Nicholes, biologist on the Pine Valley, Southwest Desert and Zion units, says he's seen lots of small bucks and a few bigger ones too.

"Archery hunters reported seeing a lot of nice bucks during the general hunt," says biologist Dustin Schaible. Schaible is the biologist for the Mount Dutton, Panguitch and Paunsaugunt units.

"Hunters can expect to see plenty of deer since many of our southern region units are at or approaching population objectives," he says. "Please remember to wear your hunter orange, and be safe."

Sean Kelly, a biologist on the Fillmore and Beaver units, says archery and muzzleloader hunting has been a little slow on the Pahvant subunit so far. "Hunters are seeing a fair number of bucks, but the unusually dry conditions can make it difficult to get within shooting range," he says.

Kelly says some really nice bucks have been taken on the farmland and desert areas west of I-15. On the Beaver unit, the area west of I-15 has also produced some nice bucks.

"It's hard to make predictions because weather plays such a critical role in determining how many deer are taken during the rifle hunt," Kelly says.

"But our buck-to-doe ratios were good after the hunts last fall (22 bucks per 100 does on the Fillmore unit and 16 bucks per 100 does on the Beaver unit). It looks like most of those bucks are still alive going into the 2009 rifle season."

Vance Mumford, a biologist on the Monroe and Fishlake units, says the muzzleloader hunt was hot and dry and hunters had a hard time moving around quietly. That made hunting difficult.

"Good numbers of young bucks have been reported on the Beaver and Monroe units," Mumford says. "By the time the general rifle hunt rolls around, though, the deer near the roads have seen a lot of big game hunters. The farther you can get away from the roads, the more bucks you'll see."

Mumford reminds you that the hunt on the Monroe unit doesn't open until Oct. 21. A delayed five-day hunt is being held on the unit to try and increase the number of bucks on the unit compared to the number of does.

A boundary description for the Monroe unit is available at [www.wildlife.utah.gov/maps/2009\\_biggame](http://www.wildlife.utah.gov/maps/2009_biggame). Once you reach that part of the site, click on the "General season buck deer units with shorter season dates" selection.

Christopher Schultze, a conservation officer in the Kane County area, says he was very impressed with the bucks he saw taken during the archery hunt.

"I haven't seen or heard of any big bucks taken so far during the muzzleloader hunt," Schultze says. "I'm optimistic about the rifle hunt, especially if we get a cold spell that pushes the bucks down."

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## Tips to Get Prepared for This Year's Rifle Buck Deer Hunt

Utah's most popular hunt—the general rifle buck deer hunt—begins Oct. 17.

If you're one of the lucky hunters who obtained a permit for the hunt, getting prepared now—by gathering materials and gaining knowledge—are the key to a safe and successful hunt. And while taking a deer is usually the highlight of any deer hunt, make sure you take advantage of all the experiences deer hunting offers.

"Don't be so focused on taking a deer that you miss out on everything deer hunting has to offer," says Gary Cook, hunter education coordinator for the Division of Wildlife Resources. "Camping with your family and friends and enjoying Utah's wildlife and the beautiful state we live in are all things you can enjoy during your time afield."

Cook provides the following tips for an enjoyable and safe hunt:

### Personal preparation:

\* be familiar with the area you're going to hunt. If possible, scout the area before the hunt. "Knowing the area and the habits and patterns of the deer that live in the area is vital for success," Cook says.

\* put a survival kit together. The kit should include:

- 1) a small first aid kit;
- 2) three ways to make a fire (e.g. matches, a cigarette lighter, fire starters);
- 3) quick-energy snack foods;
- 4) a cord or rope;
- 5) a compass;
- 6) a flashlight;
- 7) an extra knife and;

8) a small pad of paper and a pencil (so if you become lost, you can leave information at your last location about yourself and the direction you're traveling).

### Preparing your firearm:

\* be as familiar as possible with your firearm—know how to load and unload it, and where the safety is and how to operate it.

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- \* make sure the barrel of your firearm doesn't have any obstructions in it.
- \* make sure you have the correct ammunition for your firearm.
- \* sight-in your firearm before the hunt.

### **Firearm safety:**

- \* controlling your firearm's muzzle is the most important part of firearm safety. Never let the muzzle of your firearm point at anything you do not intend to shoot. That includes not pointing the muzzle at yourself.
- \* never carry a loaded firearm in your vehicle.
- \* don't put your finger on the trigger until your firearm's sights are on the target.
- \* before shooting, make sure of your target and what's beyond it.

### **Vehicle preparation:**

- \* make sure your vehicle is in good mechanical condition.
- \* make sure you have a shovel, an ax, tire chains, jumper cables and a tow chain in your vehicle.
- \* if you experience mechanical problems with your vehicle or become snowed in, stay with your vehicle—don't leave it.

### **Before leaving on your trip:**

- \* let someone know where you're going and when you expect to return.

### **While in the field:**

- \* never hunt alone.
- \* wear proper safety clothing: 400 square inches of hunter orange on your back, chest and head.

### **Field dressing your animal:**

- \* use a sharp knife. A sharp knife does a better job of cutting than a dull knife does and is safer to use.
- \* cut away from you—never bring a knife blade towards you while cutting.

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**Your physical well-being:**

- \* know your physical limitations, and don't exceed them.
- \* prepare yourself for weather changes by dressing in layers. Dressing in layers allows you to regulate your body temperature by adding or removing clothes as needed.
- \* drink plenty of water, no matter how cold it is. "You can become dehydrated, even in cold weather," Cook says.
- \* hypothermia (the loss of body temperature) can occur in temperatures as warm as 50 degrees.  
Be aware of the signs of hypothermia. Some of the first signs are violent shivering, stumbling or becoming disoriented. "When you notice these signs, sit down immediately and build a fire," Cook says. "Get yourself warm and dry."
- \* frostbite. If you're hunting in cold weather, watch for signs that you're getting frostbite. White spots on your skin are the first sign. Check your face, feet and hands regularly. You'll notice the first signs of frostbite on your face sooner if you're hunting with a companion who can alert you.

**If you get lost:**

- \* don't panic. Sit down and build a fire, even if it isn't cold. "A fire is soothing. Building a fire will help you relax and think clearly," Cook says.  
After calming down, try to get your bearings and think your way out of the situation. If you think you know which direction you need to travel, get the pad of paper and pencil out of your survival kit and leave a note at your location. Indicate on the note who you are and the direction you're traveling. If you find other hunters, don't be embarrassed to ask them for directions and help.  
If you don't know which direction you should travel, stay at your camp and build a shelter several hours before sundown, if possible. Build a smoky fire (this type of fire can be spotted from the air) or build three fires (a distress signal that can also be spotted from the air).

Remaining at your camp is usually a good option. "If you have to, you can live without food and water for several days," Cook says.

**Alcohol and firearms don't mix!**

- \* do not handle a firearm if you've been drinking alcohol.
- \* do not give alcohol to someone who's cold. Instead of warming the person, alcohol will actually make them colder.

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## **New Perch Limit and New Limit at Community Ponds**

*Changes take effect Jan. 1, 2010*

Salt Lake City -- You should catch more fish more often when you visit Utah's community fishing waters next year.

And while it might take a year or two to notice, perch fishing at waters across Utah should become more consistent too.

Two changes approved by the Utah Wildlife Board on Oct. 1—a two-fish limit at the community waters and a 50-fish yellow perch limit across the state—are the reasons for both.

The new limits start Jan. 1, 2010.

All of the changes the board approved will be available in the 2010 Utah Fishing Guidebook. The guidebook will be available at [www.wildlife.utah.gov/guidebooks](http://www.wildlife.utah.gov/guidebooks) later this fall.

### **50-perch limit**

Drew Cushing, warm water sport fisheries coordinator for the Division of Wildlife Resources, says the 50-perch limit should improve perch fishing in Utah.

Right now, the perch limit in Utah varies by water. It ranges from a low of 10 perch at some waters to as high as 50 perch at other waters.

"Perch in the West have two challenges that perch in other parts of the country don't have," Cushing says.

The first challenge is the water level in Western reservoirs. These water levels go up and down from year to year. Because they fluctuate, the base of vegetation in many of Utah's reservoirs doesn't remain stable. And without a stable food supply and cover to hide in, perch populations don't remain stable either.

Another thing yellow perch need is a complex fish community that provides plenty of different fish for predators to prey on. Unfortunately, fish populations in the West aren't that complex. When perch populations get large, walleye and other predators zero in on them.

A lack of food, cover and other species for predators to prey on creates boom-and-bust cycles. The cycle begins when the perch population is small. There's plenty of food for the perch to eat and lots of cover to hide in. The perch population explodes, and fishing is great. Then the population crashes as the perch start to compete with each other for food and cover, and other predators and bigger perch prey on the smaller perch.

After the crash, the cycle starts all over again.

"Having a higher limit will allow anglers to keep more perch. Keeping the perch populations from getting too large will help smooth out the 'ups and downs' the populations go through in these cycles," Cushing says. "Perch fishing will be much more consistent. And anglers will still catch some nice-sized fish."

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Looking at data from the perch-fishing waters in Utah illustrates what Cushing is talking about. The waters with 10-perch limits have the biggest boom-and-bust cycles, while waters with 50-perch limits, such as Pineview Reservoir, provide more consistent fishing.

### **Community fishing waters**

Another change should make fishing at Utah's 42 community fishing waters even better by reducing the number of fish anglers can keep.

Currently, anglers can keep up to four fish at these waters. To improve fishing, community parks and recreation directors and individual anglers asked the DWR to lower the limit. They also recommended protecting largemouth bass under a catch-and-release-only regulation.

"Largemouth bass don't spawn until they're at least eight inches long," Cushing says. "Very few of the bass in these waters ever make it to that length because anglers catch them before they get that big.

"The community waters that have bass also have bluegill. We need the bass to keep the bluegill populations under control. If the bluegill populations get too large, they won't reach a size that most anglers will want to keep."

Board members agreed with the biologists' recommendations. Starting Jan. 1, 2010, the daily limit at the community waters will be lowered to two fish. And—even though you won't be required to—you're strongly encouraged to release all of the largemouth bass you catch.

"These waters receive a lot of fishing pressure," Cushing says. "Most of the fish we stock are caught two or three days after we stock them. Then fishing usually slows down until we can stock the water again."

Cushing says lowering the limit will keep fish in these waters for a longer period of time. And that will improve fishing for everyone. "Each time you go out, you'll have a better chance at catching a fish because many of the fish we stocked will still be in the water," he says.

### **Changes at Kolob Reservoir**

The board also passed changes at Kolob Reservoir in southwestern Utah. Anglers proposed these changes to the DWR. The anglers hope the changes will bring more families and children to the reservoir to fish.

Under the current rules, anglers may fish at Kolob with artificial flies and lures only. They can keep only one trout, and that trout must be at least 18 inches long.

After a cabin owner near the reservoir circulated a petition last fall, the Wildlife Advisory Council in southwestern Utah asked the DWR to assemble an advisory committee to suggest various options.

"This committee worked really hard, and we appreciate their efforts," says Roger Wilson, cold water sport fisheries coordinator for the DWR.

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“The committee came up with a compromise. Their goal was to maintain quality fishing at the reservoir while giving children a better chance to catch and keep fish.”

Starting on Jan. 1, 2010, the trout limit at the reservoir will be increased to two trout. Any trout kept must be less than 15 inches long or over 22 inches in length. All trout between 15 and 22 inches must be released immediately.

Also, from Jan. 1 through late May 2010, you must use artificial flies or lures. From late May until early September, you can use bait. Starting in mid-September, you must switch back to flies and lures until late May 2011.

The board approved the rules for Kolob on a three-year trial basis.

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

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