

Utah Wildlife News
October 23, 2008

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Some extra help
Dedicated Hunter changes
Bonus point changes
Deer and elk hunting changes

**Deer, Elk and Moose
Might Get Some Extra Help**

Course proposed for those who gather shed antlers

The Division of Wildlife Resources is proposing a change that would protect deer, elk and moose and the places they live next year.

The change would also allow you to gather antlers shed by deer, elk and moose anytime in 2009.

Learn more, share your ideas

All of the DWR's big game proposals are available at www.wildlife.utah.gov/public_meetings. 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 when they meet in Salt Lake City on Dec. 4 to approve rules for Utah's 2009 big game hunts.

You can participate and provide your input at any of the following meetings (**two notes: the Southern Region meeting begins at 5 p.m. The Central Region meeting is being held on a Thursday.**):

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Nov. 4
5 p.m.
Beaver High School
195 E. Center St.
Beaver

Northern Region
Nov. 12
6 p.m.
Weber Commission Chambers
1st floor
2383 Washington Blvd.
Ogden

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Southeastern Region

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6:30 p.m.
John Wesley Powell Museum
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Green River

Central Region

Nov. 13
6:30 p.m.
Springville Junior High School
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Gathering shed antlers

The antlers of deer, elk and moose drop off their heads each winter. The animals then grow a new set of antlers in the summer.

The time when the animals are shedding their antlers—February through April—is the most stressful time of the year for them. They're at the tail end of a long winter. The habitat in their low-elevation wintering areas is also wet and in delicate shape.

To protect animals and their habitat in northern Utah, shed antler gathering has not been allowed in that part of the state from February through mid-April for the past few years.

Across the rest of Utah, shed antlers could be gathered anytime of the year.

To protect all of Utah's deer, elk, moose, and the habitat they rely on, the DWR is proposing the following for 2009:

Before gathering shed antlers anywhere in Utah between Feb. 1 and April 15, you would first have to complete a free online shed antler gathering course.

The course would give you information about deer, elk and moose and the condition the animals are in in late winter and early spring. The course would also teach you how delicate the animals' habitat is and how easily it can be damaged.

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After providing this background, the course would give you tips and advice that would help you gather antlers without stressing the animals and damaging their habitat.

Once you completed the course, you'd receive a course completion certificate. You'd be required to carry the certificate with you while you were gathering antlers.

Shed antler gathering would be allowed in northern Utah, and across the rest of Utah, throughout the year.

If you gathered antlers after April 15, you would not be required to complete the shed antler gathering course.

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) 537-4737

Changes to Dedicated Hunter Program

The DWR is proposing several

Changes might be coming to a program that's provided Utah's wildlife with millions of dollars in volunteer help.

The proposed changes would give all deer hunters an equal chance to join the state's Dedicated Hunter program. The changes would also teach those who join more about Utah's wildlife.

Learn more, share your ideas

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Background

During the three years they're in the Dedicated Hunter program, those who join are guaranteed a deer permit for the region they want to hunt in. They can also hunt all three general seasons in that region. They can take two deer during the three years they're in the program.

In return, they must participate in conservation projects that benefit Utah's wildlife. They must also pay a fee to join the program.

Becoming more popular

Utah's Dedicated Hunter program has increased in popularity with hunters since it started in 1995. The program is capped at 10,000 hunters. That cap was reached in 2008.

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Proposed changes

Now that the cap has been reached, the Division of Wildlife Resources is proposing the following changes for 2009:

- Change the first-come, first-served enrollment process to a drawing.

Applications for the drawing would be accepted from Dec. 29, 2008 to Jan. 12, 2009. Results of the drawing would be available by Jan. 16.

If your application wasn't drawn to join the program, you'd still have time to apply for a general season buck deer permit. Applications for general season buck deer permits would be accepted from Jan. 22 to Feb. 26.

You would not have to buy a hunting license or a combination license to apply for the Dedicated Hunter program, but you would have to pay a \$10 application fee.

If your application wasn't drawn to join the program, you'd receive a preference point. The preference point would ensure your application was among the first drawn to join the program in 2010.

- Before you could apply to join the Dedicated Hunter program, you would have to complete an online orientation course that taught you more about the program. The course would be available at wildlife.utah.gov.

The program's current online wildlife conservation and ethics course would also change. The course would offer more information about Utah's wildlife, and it would take the place of attending a Regional Advisory Council meeting. Dedicated Hunters would no longer be required to attend a RAC meeting.

"We think expanding the wildlife conservation and ethics course is a great idea," says Rhianna Christopher, volunteer services coordinator for the Division of Wildlife Resources. "The expanded course will give Dedicated Hunters more information about wildlife management and conservation in Utah, why it's important to be an ethical hunter and how they can provide input to us through our RAC process."

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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Bonus Point System Might See Some Changes

The Division of Wildlife Resources is recommending several changes to Utah's bonus point and preference point system.

The two systems help ensure that everyone gets a chance to hunt some of Utah's biggest big game animals in the areas where they want to hunt them the most.

Learn more, share your ideas

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Proposed Changes

The DWR is recommending four major changes for 2009. The agency's ideas, and the challenges those ideas address, are listed below:

Challenge: It's not a widespread problem, but the number of people who are using someone else's bonus points to get a permit is increasing. Here's what people are doing:

Up to four hunters can apply as a group for limited entry elk, deer and pronghorn permits. Someone with a high number of bonus points agrees to apply in a group with someone who has a low number of points. Applying with someone who has a high number of points increases the odds that the person with a low number of points draws a permit.

After both hunters draw their permit, the person with the highest number of points surrenders his permit to the DWR.

Under the current system, he gets all of the bonus points he accrued up to that year back. And he gets another bonus point for surrendering his permit.

The next year, he offers again to apply with someone who has a low number of points.

Possible solution: To stop this practice, the DWR has two ideas:

- Do away with group applications for limited entry elk, deer or pronghorn permits; or,
- Continue to accept group applications, but no longer award a bonus point to those who surrender a limited entry elk, deer or pronghorn permit.

Challenge: Some of Utah's big game permits are hard to draw. For example, it usually takes a Utah resident up to 15 years to draw a limited entry elk permit.

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Possible solution: Reward hunters who regularly apply by removing bonus points from those who rarely apply.

Under this proposal, hunters who go three consecutive years without applying for a permit or a bonus point would lose any bonus points they had accrued. If they apply again in the future, they would have no bonus points. They'd have to start accruing bonus points all over again.

"This change would reward those who apply for a permit at least once every three years," says Greg Sheehan, chief of the DWR's Administrative Services Section.

Challenge: Hunters may apply for one limited entry permit and one once-in-a-lifetime permit. If you want to hunt two species (for example, limited entry elk and limited entry deer) you may never get a chance to. The current system allows you to accrue bonus points for only one of the two species.

Possible solution: Continue to allow hunters to apply for only one limited entry species and one once-in-a-lifetime species, but let them also apply for bonus points for other species.

Challenge: Preference points are awarded to hunters who don't draw any of the choices they list on their general buck deer permit application. Because many hunters want a preference point if they don't draw their first choice, many are applying for only one hunt.

When permits that weren't taken in the draw are offered over-the-counter in June, the permits go fast. This often creates Internet-related problems for the DWR and frustration for hunters.

Possible solution: Award a preference point to applicants for their first choice, even if they draw a permit for their second, third, fourth or fifth choice.

This change would encourage hunters to apply for more than one region because they wouldn't be penalized if they drew a permit for their second, third, fourth or fifth choice. Because they'd still receive a preference point for not drawing their first choice, they'd have a better chance the following year to draw a permit for the region they wanted to hunt the most.

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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DWR Proposes Changes to Archery and Rifle Deer Hunts

One major elk hunting change also proposed

If you like to hunt deer with a bow and arrow, you may have to wait until Sept. 1 to hunt statewide in 2009.

That idea is among several the Division of Wildlife Resources is proposing for Utah's 2009 big game hunts.

Most of the DWR's deer-hunting ideas came from a committee the agency formed last spring to review Utah's Mule Deer Management Plan. Increasing the number of deer in Utah, and providing more chances to hunt deer, are among the goals of the committee members.

Learn more, share your ideas

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Proposals

Buck deer

The following are among the DWR's deer hunting proposals for 2009:

- Require general season archery buck deer hunters to hunt in a single region until Sept. 1. Starting Sept. 1, you could hunt in any region in the state.

"Hunters in southern Utah are concerned that too many archery hunters are hunting in the Southern Region at the start of the season," says Anis Aoude, big game coordinator for the DWR.

"Depending on which region you choose to hunt in, this change could prevent you from hunting in the Southern Region at the start of the archery season. But you could still hunt in the region halfway through the season."

The DWR is proposing that Utah's general season archery buck deer hunt run from Aug. 15 to Sept. 11.

Under the proposal, you'd indicate which region you wanted to hunt in when you bought your archery permit. Your permit would then be valid for that region until Sept. 1. Starting Sept. 1, you could hunt in any region in the state.

- Make Utah's general rifle buck deer hunt a nine-day hunt in each of the DWR's five regions. The hunt would run Oct. 17 – 25.

The only exception would be five subunits where buck-to-doe ratios aren't meeting goals in the state's management plan. The hunt on the five subunits would run Oct. 21 - 25.

The five subunits that would have the shorter hunts are the Nebo and Oquirrh-Stansbury subunits in central Utah; the South Slope, Vernal subunit in northeastern Utah; the LaSal Mountains subunit in southeastern Utah; and the Monroe subunit in south-central Utah.

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- Allow more hunters to hunt on the Paunsaugunt and Henry Mountains premium limited entry units during a hunt that ran Nov. 7 – 11.

Those who hunted during this hunt would be restricted to taking deer that did not have a single antler with more than three points on it. They would also be required to hunt with either a muzzleloader, or a bow and arrow.

“This change would give more hunters a chance to hunt on these premiere units while still protecting the larger bucks on the units,” Aoude says.

The committee that provided deer hunting ideas to the DWR consisted of 17 members. The Mule Deer Foundation, Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife, the Utah Bowman’s Association, the Utah Wildlife Federation, the Utah Farm Bureau, the Bureau of Land Management, Utah’s Cooperative Wildlife Management Unit Association, all five of Utah’s Regional Advisory Councils and the Utah Wildlife Board were among the groups that had members on the committee.

Elk

The following is the major DWR elk hunting proposal for 2009:

- Increase the number of permits for spike-only units to 17,000, and allow spike bull elk hunting on all of Utah’s limited entry units.

The state currently offers 11,000 spike bull elk permits. Spike bull hunting is allowed on 10 of Utah’s 29 limited entry bull elk units.

“On many of these units, the number of bull elk and cow elk is the same,” Aoude says. “The only way to keep bull elk numbers that high is to continuing taking a lot of cow elk. And that isn’t good for the herds.

“Because the herds have fewer cow elk in them, fewer and fewer calves are being born. If the situation doesn’t change, the elk populations will eventually crash.”

Aoude says the DWR proposal would allow more hunters to take spike bulls while continuing to protect the larger bulls in the herds.

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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