



State of Utah

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Department of Natural Resources

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Utah Wildlife Board

FROM: Darren DeBloois, Predatory Mammals and Furbearer Program Coordinator

DATE: December 17, 2021

SUBJECT: 2023 BLACK BEAR PLAN REVISIONS, RULE AMENDMENTS AND HUNT STRUCTURE RECOMMENDATIONS.

2023-24 FURBEARER AND COUGAR SEASON RECOMMENDATIONS

The second year of the three-year bear recommendation cycle begins in 2023. DWR will not be recommending any changes to permit numbers or harvest objectives next year.

The current Black Bear Management Plan expires next year, so the DWR convened a Black Bear Plan Review Committee to review the plan. The Committee was composed of the following individuals representing various stakeholder groups.

- Barb Smith – U.S. Forest Service
- Ben Lowder – Utah Archery Association
- Braydon Richmond – SFW
- Brett Guymon – Houndsmen
- Chad Heuser – Wildlife Services
- Cory Huntsman – Houndsmen
- Dustin Mitchell – Utah DWR
- Julie Young – USU/at large
- J.W. Hackett – At large
- Lisa Church – BLM
- Kirk Player – Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
- Ross Worthington – Big game hunters
- Sierra Nelson – Utah Wool Growers Association
- Sunshine Brosi – At large
- Travis O'Neil – Bait hunters
- Wade Heaton – Wildlife Board



In addition to the committee members, DWR had several employees to assist the group with their discussions and recommendations. The DWR personell were:

- Chris Wood – Facilitator
- Darren DeBloois – Committee Chair
- Elicia Cotcher – Record Keeper
- Lindy Varney – Licensing
- Gary Cook – Outreach
- Eric Bond – Law Enforcement
- Seth Decker – Law Enforcement

The committee met five times for three hours each time. It identified many topics to cover during the discussions at the first meeting and moved through each topic over the next four meetings. The discussions and final recommendations include changes to the management plan, administrative rule and hunting season structure. Topics of discussion included:

- Simplifying recommendation parameters
- Simplifying season structure
- Addressing law enforcement issues with hounds and bait in the field at the same time
- Addressing conflicts with houndsmen and archery big game hunters
- Bait regulations
- Pack size for houndsmen
- Permit costs
- Utilizing bear meat

The committee is recommending the following changes to the plan, rules and season structure:

Plan changes:

- Give district biologist flexibility to choose harvest strategies
- Take into account surrounding units
- Get statewide check during recommendation process
- Eliminate the requirement for percentages of the unit to fall under certain management strategies (light, moderate, liberal)
- Eliminate the requirements for limited-entry vs. harvest objective hunting strategies
- Keep current plan parameters for permit recommendations and adjustments
- Update literature cited to make include current research
- Help public understand regulations regarding pack size
- Offer permit holders info on how to determine sex of bears, but eliminate mandatory orientation for all applicants
- Update research goals
- Other housekeeping editing



Rule changes:

- Allow hunter with valid bait permits to hunt over another hunter's bait site, with written permission from the COR holder
- Allow the use of a single metal container (with maximum size of 55 gallons) to be used for bait, if securely attached at the bait site
- Prohibit the use of chocolate or cocoa products as bait
- Bait sites must comply with all DWR rules, but DWR will not review locations and approve them before COR is issued
- Eliminate mandatory orientation course, but provide information to successful bear permit holders

Hunt structure, season changes:

- Spring seasons:
 - Hound season April 1 – May 30, 2023
 - Bait season May 30 – June 30, 2023
 - Spring Pursuit (including restricted units) April 1 – May 30, 2023
- Summer Pursuit:
 - July 5 – August 4, 2023
 - Restricted Pursuit Book Cliffs, La Sal and San Juan Early Summer July 5 – 16, 2023 and Late Summer July 19 – 30, 2023
- Fall Seasons:
 - Hound season August 1 – 31 and October 30 – November 12, 2023
 - Spot-and-Stalk Season September 1 – October 29, 2023
 - Hound season Book Cliffs, Bitter Creek/South August 5 – 18 and October 6 – November 12, 2023
 - Spot-and-Stalk Book Cliffs, Bitter Creek/South August 19 – October 5, 2023
 - Spot-and-Stalk Book Cliffs, Little Creek Roadless September 2 – November 12, 2023

Recommendations for 2023-24 Furbearer include the following seasons:

- Bobcat
 - Six permits for individual
 - November 16, 2023 – March 1, 2024
 - No permit cap
- Beaver and Mink
 - September 16, 2023 – April 1, 2024
- Marten, Badger, Gray Fox, Kit Fox, Ringtail, Spotted Skunk and Weasel
 - September 16, 2023 – March 1, 2024
- Close the following areas to protect habitat restoration projects using beaver transplants
 - Threemile Creek (Garfield County)
 - Reservoir Canyon (Washington County)



The cougar recommendation cycle is in its second year, so DWR will not be recommending permit or harvest objective changes this year. Seasons dates are being changes with the calendar to the following:

- Harvest objective season including predator management units July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024
- Harvest objective season on La Sal; San Juan, Mtns; and Book Cliffs, East
 - No dogs from July 1 – November 2, 2023 and from March 30 – June 30, 2024 except for people with valid bear permits
- Harvest objective season on South Slope, Bonanza/Diamond Mtn/Vernal; South Slope, Yellowstone; Wasatch Mtns, Avintaquin/Currant Creek
 - No dogs May 30 – June 30, 2024
- Pursuit season (most units) November 1, 2023 – May 31, 2024
- Pursuit season on La Sal; San Juan, Mtns; and Book Cliffs, East units:
 - November 1, 2023 – March 29, 2024
 - Hunters with valid bear permits for these units may pursue from March 30 – May 27, 2024
- Limited Entry season (most units) November 1, 2023 – February 18, 2024
- Limited Entry season for Oquirrh-Stansbury, East and Wasatch Mtns, West-Strawberry units
 - November 1, 2023 – March 20, 2024
 - Harvest objective hunting begins at the end of these limited entry seasons and runs through May 31, 2024

