

**Wildlife Management Area Amendments**

2025 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

**Chief Sponsor: Casey Snider**

Senate Sponsor: Michael K. McKell

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**LONG TITLE**

**General Description:**

This bill addresses wildlife management areas.

**Highlighted Provisions:**

This bill:

- directs the creation of a wildlife management area known as the Bear River Bay Waterfowl Management Area;
- provides limits and requirements related to the Bear River Bay Waterfowl Management Area;
- removes restrictions on impounding structures in certain waterfowl management areas;
- removes prohibitions related to the regulation of airboats or small watercraft in certain waterfowl management areas;
- requires the creation of an advisory committee for the Willard Spur Waterfowl Management Area under certain circumstances; and
- makes technical changes.

**Money Appropriated in this Bill:**

None

**Other Special Clauses:**

None

**Utah Code Sections Affected:**

AMENDS:

**23A-6-403**, as renumbered and amended by Laws of Utah 2023, Chapter 103

**23A-12-301**, as renumbered and amended by Laws of Utah 2023, Chapter 103

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*Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:*

Section 1. Section **23A-6-403** is amended to read:

**23A-6-403 . State-owned lands authorized for use as wildlife management areas, fishing waters, and for other recreational activities.**

(1) The Wildlife Board may use any and all unsurveyed state-owned lands below the 1855 meander line of the Great Salt Lake within the following townships for the creation, operation, maintenance and management of wildlife management areas, fishing waters, and other recreational activities:

Township 2 South, Range 5 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 2 South, Range 4 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 1 South, Range 5 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 1 South, Range 4 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 1 South, Range 3 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 1 North, Range 3 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 1 North, Range 2 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 2 North, Range 3 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 2 North, Range 2 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 2 North, Range 1 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 3 North, Range 3 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 3 North, Range 2 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 3 North, Range 1 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 4 North, Range 3 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 4 North, Range 2 West, S.L.B. and M.; Sections 1, 2, 11, 12, 13, 14, 23, and 24, Township 4 North, Range 4 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 5 North, Range 3 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 5 North, Range 4 West, S.L.B. and M.; Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 11, and 12, Township 5 North, Range 5 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 6 North, Range 5 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 6 North, Range 4 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 6 North, Range 3 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 7 North, Range 5 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 7 North, Range 4 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 7 North, Range 3 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 7 North, Range 2 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 8 North, Range 5 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 8 North, Range 4 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 8 North, Range 3 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 8 North, Range 2 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 9 North, Range 5 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 9 North, Range 4 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 11 North, Range 11 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 11 North, Range 10 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 11 North, Range 9 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 11 North, Range 8 West, S.L.B. and M.; North 1/2 of Township 10 North, Range 10 West, S.L.B. and M.; North 1/2 of Township 10 North, Range 9 West, S.L.B. and M.; North 1/2 of Township 10 North, Range 8 West, S.L.B. and M.

(2)(a) The Wildlife Board shall establish a wildlife management area known as the "Willard Spur Waterfowl Management Area" on the unsurveyed state-owned lands below the 1855 meander line of the Great Salt Lake in Sections 26, 35, 36 of Township 8 North, Range 4 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 8 North, Range 3 West,

S.L.B. and M.; Sections 1, 2, 11, 12 of Township 7 North, Range 4 West, S.L.B. and M.; Township 7 North, Range 3 West, S.L.B. and M.; Sections 20, 21, 29, 30, 31 of Township 8 North, Range 2 West, S.L.B. and M., except for the following:

- (i) lands within the May 14, 2019, boundaries of the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge;
  - (ii) lands within the May 14, 2019, boundaries of Harold Crane Waterfowl Management Area;
  - (iii) lands within the May 14, 2019, boundaries of Willard Bay Reservoir; and
  - (iv) lands within the May 14, 2019, boundaries of state mineral leases.
- (b) The division shall execute a memorandum of understanding with the Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands recognizing the division's use of the state-owned lands described in Subsection (2)(a) as a wildlife management area.
- (c) The division shall manage the state-owned lands described in Subsection (2)(a) as a wildlife management area and consistent with:
- (i) the beneficial purposes identified in Subsection (2)(d); and
  - (ii) a management plan created consistent with the procedures in this chapter for a management plan.
- (d) The division shall manage the Willard Spur Waterfowl Management Area for the following beneficial purposes:
- (i) propagating and sustaining waterfowl, upland gamebirds, desirable mammals, shorebirds, and other migratory and nonmigratory birds that use the Great Salt Lake ecosystem and the Great Salt Lake ecosystem's surrounding wetlands;
  - (ii) preserving and enhancing the natural function, vegetation, and water flows under existing or acquired water rights to provide productive habitat for the species listed in Subsection (2)(d)(i);
  - (iii) providing recreational opportunity for traditional marsh-related activities, including hunting, fishing, trapping, and wildlife viewing; and
  - (iv) providing public access in the ~~[management area]~~ Willard Spur Waterfowl Management Area for purposes of hunting, fishing, trapping, and wildlife viewing, including access with airboats and other small watercraft.
- (e) The division shall provide the habitat, recreational opportunities, and public access described in Subsection (2)(d) ~~[-without construction or use of an impounding dike, impounding levee, or other impounding structure].~~
- (f)(i) The division may construct a structure within the Willard Spur Waterfowl

Management Area only after the division forms and meets with an advisory committee concerning the structure.

(ii) The advisory committee formed by the division under this Subsection (2)(f) shall include representatives of users of airboats, users of other small watercraft, hunters of waterfowl, and other stakeholders in the Willard Spur Waterfowl Management Area.

~~[(f) Notwithstanding the purposes identified in Subsection (2)(d), the division may not prohibit year-round public airboat and small watercraft access in the management area except in selected areas during limited periods of time to protect habitat, nesting birds, or vulnerable wildlife.]~~

(3)(a) The Wildlife Board shall establish a wildlife management area known as the "Bear River Bay Waterfowl Management Area" on the unsurveyed state-owned lands below the 1855 meander line of the Great Salt Lake in Bear River Bay or as mutually determined by the division and the Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands.

(b) The division shall execute a memorandum of understanding with the Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands recognizing the division's use of the state-owned lands described in Subsection (3)(a) as a wildlife management area.

(c) The division shall manage the state-owned lands described in Subsection (3)(a) as a wildlife management area and consistent with:

(i) the beneficial purposes identified in Subsection (3)(d); and

(ii) a management plan created consistent with the procedures in this chapter for a management plan.

(d) The division shall manage the Bear River Bay Waterfowl Management Area for the following beneficial purposes:

(i) propagating and sustaining waterfowl, upland gamebirds, desirable mammals, shorebirds, and other migratory and nonmigratory birds that use the Great Salt Lake ecosystem and the Great Salt Lake ecosystem's surrounding wetlands;

(ii) preserving and enhancing the natural function, vegetation, and water flows under existing or acquired water rights to provide productive habitat for the species listed in Subsection (3)(d)(i);

(iii) providing recreational opportunity for traditional marsh-related activities, including hunting, fishing, trapping, and wildlife viewing; and

(iv) providing public access in the Bear River Bay Waterfowl Management Area for purposes of hunting, fishing, trapping, and wildlife viewing, including access with

airboats and other small watercraft.

(e) The division shall provide the habitat, recreational opportunities, and public access described in Subsection (3)(d).

Section 2. Section **23A-12-301** is amended to read:

**23A-12-301 . Definitions.**

(1) The definitions in Section 58-79-102 apply to this part.

(2)(a) As used in this part, "waterfowl management area" means real property owned or managed by the division that is:

(i) primarily used for the conservation, production, or recreational harvest of ducks, mergansers, geese, brant, swans, and other waterfowl; and

(ii) designated as a waterfowl management area by the Wildlife Board in accordance with Section 23A-12-303.

(b) "Waterfowl management area" includes the following referenced in Section 23A-6-403:

(i) Willard Spur Waterfowl Management Area~~[-and the]~~ ;

(ii) [-]Harold Crane Waterfowl Management Area~~[-described in Section 23A-6-403:]~~ ;  
and

(iii) Bear River Bay Waterfowl Management Area.

Section 3. **Effective date.**

This bill takes effect on May 7, 2025.