

Public Land Access Amendments

2026 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Nelson T. Abbott

Senate Sponsor:

LONG TITLE**Committee Note:**

The Judiciary Interim Committee recommended this bill.

Legislative Vote: 9 voting for 3 voting against 4 absent

General Description:

This bill addresses access to wildlife management areas.

Highlighted Provisions:

This bill:

- repeals requirement that under certain circumstances an individual is required to hold authorization to hunt or fish to access wildlife management areas; and
- makes technical and conforming amendments.

Money Appropriated in this Bill:

None

Other Special Clauses:

None

Utah Code Sections Affected:

AMENDS:

23A-6-402, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2025, Chapter 116

*Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:*Section 1. Section **23A-6-402** is amended to read:**23A-6-402 . Right of access to lands for hunting, trapping, or fishing reserved to public -- Exceptions.**

- (1) Except as provided in Section 65A-2-5, there is reserved to the public the right of access to lands owned by the state, including those lands lying below the official government meander line or high water line of navigable waters, for the purpose of hunting, trapping, or fishing.
- (2) When a department or agency of the state leases or sells land belonging to the state

lying below the official government meander line or the high water line of the navigable waters within the state, the lease, contract of sale, or deed shall contain a provision that:

(a) the lands shall be open to the public for the purpose of hunting, trapping, or fishing during the lawful season, except as provided by Section 65A-2-5; and

(b) the lessee, contractee, or grantee may not charge a person who desires to go upon the land for the purpose of hunting, trapping, or fishing.

(3) Lands referred to in this section shall be regulated or closed to hunting, trapping, or fishing as provided in this title for other lands and waters.

(4) The division may temporarily close that portion of a highway, as defined in Section 72-1-102, that enters into or crosses land owned by the division if closure is needed for the benefit of wildlife.

~~[(5)(a) Except as provided in Subsections (5), (6), and (7), an individual who is 18 years old or older may not enter that portion of a wildlife management area that is located within a county of the first or second class for any use unless the individual:]~~

~~[(i) holds a valid hunting, fishing, or combination license;]~~

~~[(ii) is permitted to engage in the use under a contract with, or other permission given by, the division; or]~~

~~[(iii) is permitted to engage in the use or to access the land in accordance with a property right giving the individual the right to use or access land within the wildlife management area.]~~

~~[(b) If the use engaged in by an individual described in Subsection (5)(a) would require a specific license, permit, cooperative agreement, or certificate of registration under this title if engaged in on other lands or waters, the individual shall hold the correct license, permit, cooperative agreement, or certificate of registration to engage in the use.]~~

~~[(6)(a) If an individual is expressly exempt under this title from a requirement to hold a license, permit, cooperative agreement, or certificate of registration to engage in hunting, trapping, or fishing if engaged in on other lands or waters, the individual is not required to hold a hunting, fishing, or combination license to enter a wildlife management area described in Subsection (5)(a).]~~

~~[(b) An individual may travel on a highway, as defined in Section 72-1-102, located within a wildlife management area described in Subsection (5)(a) without obtaining a hunting, fishing, or combination license.]~~

~~[(c) An individual may participate in an educational program or visit an education or~~

visitor center located within a wildlife management area described in Subsection (5)(a) without obtaining a hunting, fishing, or combination license.]

[~~(7)(a) The Wildlife Board may make rules, in accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah Administrative Rulemaking Act, to define for purposes of Subsection (6):~~

~~(i) what is meant to be "expressly exempt under this title from a requirement to hold a license, permit, cooperative agreement, or certificate of registration to engage in hunting, trapping, or fishing"; or~~

~~(ii) what constitutes an "educational program" or "education or visitor center."~~

~~(b) The Wildlife Board may not exempt an individual under Subsection (6)(a), on the basis that the individual is not engaged in hunting, trapping, or fishing within a wildlife management area.]~~

Section 2. **Effective Date.**

This bill takes effect on May 6, 2026.