

Bridger Bolinder proposes the following substitute bill:

Wildlife Amendments

2026 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Bridger Bolinder

Senate Sponsor: Calvin R. Musselman

LONG TITLE

General Description:

This bill addresses the management of wildlife resources and wildlife habitats.

Highlighted Provisions:

This bill:

- addresses who may provide verification of illness, injury, or disability in relationship to a license, certificate, or permit issued under the Wildlife Resources Act;
- amends provisions related to notice of acquisition of real property;
- addresses rulemaking and penalties related to reporting hunt information;
- provides for the management of grizzly bears;
- grants rulemaking authority;
- addresses discharge of a dangerous weapon related to a waterfowl management area or wildlife management area; and
- makes technical and conforming amendments.

Money Appropriated in this Bill:

None

Other Special Clauses:

None

Utah Code Sections Affected:

AMENDS:

23A-4-207, as renumbered and amended by Laws of Utah 2023, Chapter 103

23A-4-305, as renumbered and amended by Laws of Utah 2023, Chapter 103

23A-6-202, as renumbered and amended by Laws of Utah 2023, Chapter 103

23A-15-101, as renumbered and amended by Laws of Utah 2023, Chapter 103

76-11-209, as renumbered and amended by Laws of Utah 2025, Chapters 173, 208

ENACTS:

29 **23A-4-713**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

30 **23A-15-301**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

31 **23A-15-302**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

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

33 Section 1. Section **23A-4-207** is amended to read:

34 **23A-4-207 . Sales of licenses, certificates, or permits final -- Exceptions --**

35 **Reallocation of surrendered permits.**

36 (1) A sale of a license, permit, or certificate is final, and the division may not refund money
37 except as provided in Subsections (2) and (3) or Section 23A-4-301.

38 (2) The division may refund the amount of a license, certificate, or permit if:

39 (a) the division or the Wildlife Board discontinues the activity for which the license,

40 certificate, or permit was obtained;

41 (b) the division determines that the division has erroneously collected a fee;

42 (c)(i) the person to whom the license, certificate, or permit is issued becomes ill or
43 suffers an injury that precludes the person from using the license, certificate, or
44 permit;

45 (ii) the person furnishes verification of illness or injury from a physician[-or] ,
46 physician assistant, or nurse practitioner;

47 (iii) the person does not actually use the license, certificate, or permit; and

48 (iv) the license, certificate, or permit is surrendered before the end of the season for
49 which the permit was issued; or

50 (d) the person to whom the license, certificate, or permit is issued dies before the person
51 being able to use the license, certificate, or permit.

52 (3) The Wildlife Board may establish additional exceptions to the refund prohibitions in
53 Subsection (1) by rule made in accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah
54 Administrative Rulemaking Act.

55 (4) The director may reallocate surrendered permits in accordance with rules made by the
56 Wildlife Board in accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah Administrative
57 Rulemaking Act.

58 Section 2. Section **23A-4-305** is amended to read:

59 **23A-4-305 . Persons with a physical or intellectual disability, terminally ill
60 persons, and children in the custody of the state may fish for free.**

61 (1) A resident who is blind, has paraplegia, or has another permanent disability so as to be

63 permanently confined to a wheelchair or the use of crutches, or who has lost either or
64 both lower extremities, may receive a free license to fish upon furnishing satisfactory
65 proof of this fact to the division.

66 (2) A resident who has an intellectual disability and is not eligible under Section 23A-4-303
67 to fish without a license may receive a free license to fish upon furnishing verification
68 from a physician[-or] , physician assistant, or nurse practitioner that the person has an
69 intellectual disability.

70 (3) A resident who is terminally ill, and has less than five years to live, may receive a free
71 license to fish:

72 (a) upon furnishing verification from a physician[-or] , physician assistant, or nurse
73 practitioner; and
74 (b) if the resident qualifies for assistance under a low income public assistance program
75 administered by a state agency.

76 (4) A child placed in the custody of the state by a court order may receive a free fishing
77 license upon furnishing verification of custody to the division.

78 Section 3. Section **23A-4-713** is enacted to read:

79 **23A-4-713 . Reporting of hunt information.**

80 (1) By rule, made in accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah Administrative
81 Rulemaking Act, the division may require that a person who obtains a hunting license or
82 permit report hunt information to the division.

83 (2) The rule described in Subsection (1) may impose penalties for failure to provide hunt
84 information in accordance with that rule, except that a penalty requiring the payment of
85 money may not exceed \$25.

86 Section 4. Section **23A-6-202** is amended to read:

87 **23A-6-202 . Acquisition of real property held in private ownership -- Published**
88 **notice and governor's approval required.**

89 (1) The division may not acquire title to real property held in private ownership without
90 first:

91 (a) publishing a notice of the proposed acquisition on:

92 (i) ~~[in a newspaper of general circulation in the county in which the property is~~
93 ~~located]~~ the division's public website; and

94 (ii) ~~[as required in]~~ a public legal notice website in accordance with Section 45-1-101;
95 and

96 (b) obtaining the approval of the governor.

97 (2) Subsection (1) applies whether title to real property held in private ownership is
98 acquired through a purchase, donation, or other means.

99 (3) In the case of a proposed purchase of private property, the division may publish notice
100 after earnest money is paid.

101 (4) The published notice shall inform the public regarding:
102 (a) the proposed use of the real property;
103 (b) any conditions on the acquisition of the real property placed by donors, the federal
104 government, sellers, or others specifying how the real property is to be used;
105 (c) any changes to existing land uses that are anticipated; and
106 (d) the public comment submission process for comments on the proposed acquisition.

107 (5) The governor shall:
108 (a) submit a notification of the proposed acquisition to:
109 (i) the county executive of the county in which the real property is located;
110 (ii) the legislators of the legislative districts in which the real property is located; and
111 (iii) the School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration; and
112 (b) invite those notified to submit comments on the proposed acquisition.

113 (6) After considering comments on the proposed acquisition, the governor may:
114 (a) approve the acquisition in whole or in part; or
115 (b) disapprove the acquisition.

116 Section 5. Section **23A-15-101** is amended to read:

117 **CHAPTER 15. Wolf and Grizzly Bear Management Act**

118 **23A-15-101 . Definitions.**

119 As used in this chapter:

120 (1) "Endangered Species Act" means the Endangered Species Act of 1973, 16 U.S.C. Sec.
121 1531 et seq.

122 (2) "Grizzly bear" means the species *Ursus arctos horribilis*.

123 [(2)] (3) "Service" means the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

124 [(3)] (4) "Wolf" means the species *Canis lupus*.

125 Section 6. Section **23A-15-301** is enacted to read:

126 **Part 3. Grizzly Bear Management**

127 **23A-15-301 . Grizzly bear management.**

128 (1) If the division discovers a grizzly bear in an area of the state where grizzly bears are
129 listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act, the division shall

130 contact the service and request immediate removal of the grizzly bear from the state.

131 (2) The division shall manage grizzly bears to prevent the establishment of grizzly bears in
132 any area of the state until the grizzly bear is completely delisted under the Endangered
133 Species Act and removed from federal control in the entire state.

134 (3) Subsections (1) and (2) do not apply to a grizzly bear that is lawfully held in captivity
135 and restrained.

136 Section 7. Section **23A-15-302** is enacted to read:

137 **23A-15-302 . Rulemaking.**

138 The Wildlife Board may make administrative rules in accordance with Title 63G,
139 Chapter 3, Utah Administrative Rulemaking Act, to manage the grizzly bear in accordance
140 with Section 23A-15-301.

141 Section 8. Section **76-11-209** is amended to read:

142 **76-11-209 . Improper discharging of a dangerous weapon.**

143 (1) Terms defined in Sections 76-1-101.5, 76-11-101, and 76-11-201 apply to this section.

144 (2) An actor commits improper discharging of a dangerous weapon if the actor:

145 (a) discharges a dangerous weapon:

146 [(a) (i) from a vehicle;

147 [(b) (ii) from, upon, or across a highway;

148 [(c) (iii) at a road sign placed on a state highway;

149 [(d) (iv) at communications equipment or property of public utilities including [
150 facilities, lines, poles, or deviees] a facility, line, pole, or device of transmission or
151 distribution;

152 [(e) (v) at railroad equipment or [facilities] facility including a sign or signal;

153 [(f) (vi) within a Utah State Park building, designated camp or picnic [sites,
154 overlooks, golf courses, boat ramps, and developed beaches; or] site, overlook,
155 golf course, boat ramp, or developed beach; or

156 [(g) (vii) without written permission to discharge the dangerous weapon from the
157 owner or person in charge of the property within 600 feet of:

158 [(i) (A) a house, dwelling, or other building; or

159 [(ii) (B) a structure in which a domestic animal is kept or fed, including a barn,
160 poultry yard, corral, feeding pen, or stockyard[.] ; or

161 (b) notwithstanding Subsection (2)(a)(vii):

162 (i) discharges a dangerous weapon while located on a waterfowl management area, as
163 defined in Section 23A-12-301, or a wildlife management area, as defined in

164 Section 23A-6-101;

165 (ii) is within 300 feet of:

166 (A) a house, dwelling, or other building; or

167 (B) a structure in which a domestic animal is kept or fed, including a barn, poultry

168 yard, corral, feeding pen, or stockyard; and

169 (iii) does not have written permission to discharge the dangerous weapon from the

170 owner or person in charge of the property described in Subsection (2)(b)(ii).

171 (3) A violation of Subsection (2) is a class B misdemeanor.

172 (4) In addition to any other penalties, the court shall:

173 (a) notify the Driver License Division of the conviction for purposes of [any] revocation,

174 denial, suspension, or disqualification of a driver license under Subsection

175 53-3-220(1)(a)(xi); and

176 (b) specify in court at the time of sentencing the length of the revocation under

177 Subsection 53-3-225(1)(c).

178 (5) This section does not apply to an actor who:

179 (a) discharges a dangerous weapon in the lawful defense of the actor or another

180 individual;

181 (b) is an individual listed in Subsections 53-5a-108(1)(a) through (f) and is performing

182 official duties as provided in Section 23A-2-207 or 79-2-704 or as otherwise

183 provided by law;

184 (c) discharges a dangerous weapon from an automobile or other vehicle, if:

185 (i) the discharge occurs at a firing range or training ground;

186 (ii) at no time after the discharge does the projectile that is discharged cross over or

187 stop at a location other than within the boundaries of the firing range or training

188 ground described in Subsection (5)(c)(i);

189 (iii) the discharge is made as practice or training for a lawful purpose;

190 (iv) the discharge and the location, time, and manner of the discharge are approved

191 by the owner or operator of the firing range or training ground before the

192 discharge; and

193 (v) the discharge is not made in violation of Subsection ; or

194 (d) acting under a farm custom slaughter license, discharges a firearm or other

195 dangerous weapon in accordance with Subsection 4-32-108(3).

196 (6) It is a defense to a charge for violating this section that the actor had actual permission

197 of the person in charge of the property at the time the actor discharged the dangerous

198 weapon as described in Subsection (2).

199 **Section 9. Effective Date.**

200 This bill takes effect on May 6, 2026.