

State Wildlife Areas FAQs



Colorado's State Wildlife Areas (SWA) are acquired using hunter and angler dollars for the purpose of conserving wildlife habitat and providing wildlife-related recreation. Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) manages more than 350 SWAs for this purpose. As both Colorado's human population and tourism/visitation have boomed in recent years, CPW has noticed a significant trend of people engaging in activities for which these properties were not intended. These issues run the gamut from illegal camping to engaging in recreational activities that disturb and displace wildlife.

To begin to address this trend and ensure SWAs continue to exist for the benefit of wildlife, the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission voted in 2020 to require everyone who enters an SWA to possess a valid license to hunt or fish in Colorado. In 2021, the Commission voted to add the Colorado SWA Pass as another option to access these areas and contribute to wildlife conservation.



JERRY NEAL/CPW

CPW will continue to evaluate and consider additional actions to ensure these properties are fulfilling their purpose.

While hiking, for example, has been allowed on SWAs, it was never an intended use of the properties. And many SWAs are closed periodically during the year when wildlife are reproducing and nurturing their young or on critical winter range.

The change also is a recognition by the CPW Commission that wildlife management is not a tax-funded endeavor. CPW relies on the sale of licenses and passes to preserve these important areas. Just as visitors to a Colorado State Park are required to possess a state parks pass, visitors to SWAs are now required to possess a valid license or SWA pass. Requiring a license or SWA pass to access SWAs reinforces the primary intent of these properties, and ensures users are contributing to their maintenance.

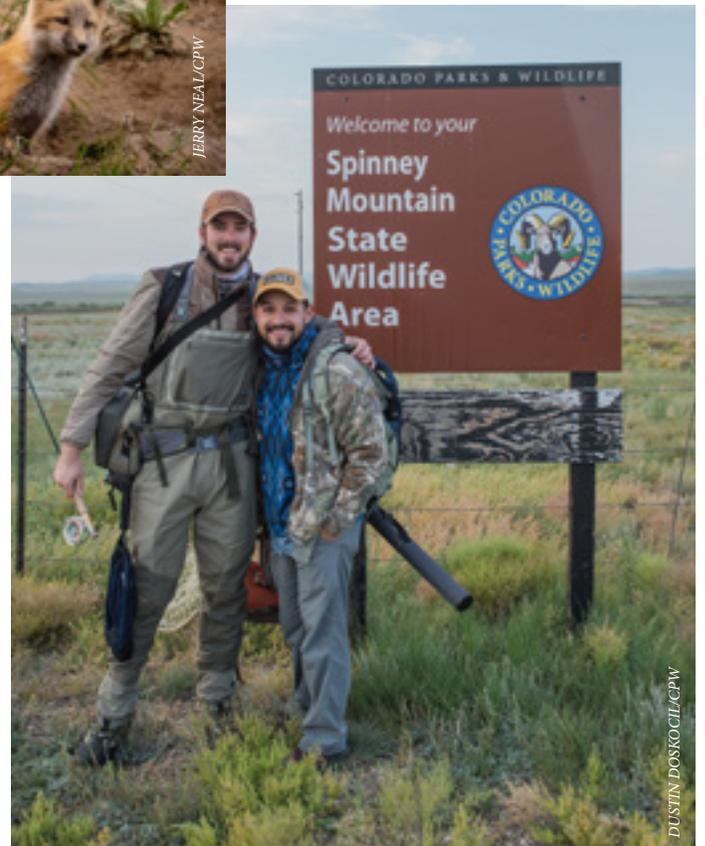
Requiring a license or a pass to access SWAs is consistent with the requirements of many other states. This new regulation allows CPW to continue protecting key wildlife habitat

in Colorado. Protecting our natural resources is not free. This regulatory decision is CPW's best solution to funding the protection of key habitat for wildlife in our state.

Anyone who buys a Colorado hunting or fishing license or SWA pass is contributing directly to wildlife conservation. CPW's income from hunting and fishing licenses supports all wildlife programs in Colorado, including: programs for non-game, threatened, and endangered species, as well as hatcheries, habitat protection, education, law enforcement, wildlife research, big-game and small-game management, fisheries and aquatic management, and more. The income from SWA pass sales will help to manage and maintain SWAs.

If you use SWAs, please support Colorado's wildlife.

continued



DUSTIN DOSKOCIL/CPW

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How do I purchase the Colorado SWA Pass?

You can easily purchase the pass online. Click the SWA Pass tile on the [CPW Shop landing page](#), enter your age and residency status, then click on “Land & Trails” on the left side of the page to see purchase options for the Colorado SWA Pass.

What is the violation and fine for being on an SWA without a license or pass?

The statute they will reference is: "Did unlawfully enter a State Wildlife Area without a hunting valid for the current license year, a valid fishing license, or a valid Colorado State Wildlife Area pass" (2 CCR 406-9-#900.C.1 pursuant to 33-6-104(1), C.R.S.). The penalty would be a \$100 fine plus \$39.30 surcharges for a total of \$139.30 and five (5) license suspension points. Our first priority with our officers and other staff will be seeking to educate first, especially over the course of the next year. However, if officers are continually contacting the same individuals who are not following the rules, they may choose to issue a citation. We're also looking into updating signage, especially in areas where the rules may be confusing.

What licenses or passes will be acceptable to access SWAs? (annuals, daily, big game, turkey, mountain lion, Colorado SWA Pass)

Annual hunting and fishing licenses, including all big game hunting licenses, small game hunting licenses, turkey licenses, and annual fishing licenses, as well as annual Colorado State Wildlife passes will be accepted to access SWAs for the current license year, March 1 through March 31 of the following year.

Daily Colorado SWA passes and daily or multi-day fishing or small game licenses are only valid on the date(s) indicated on the license or pass.

If I have a one-day fishing license, does it only give me access to SWAs for that one day?

Yes, for that one day.

If I bring my whole family, does everyone need to purchase a license?

Any person 16 years and older will need to purchase a valid hunting or fishing license or Colorado SWA Pass to access a SWA property. Any person under 16 years of age and engaged in any activity that requires a proper and valid hunting or fishing license or SWA pass still must be properly licensed.

If I access a SWA for recreational target shooting, will I still need to purchase a hunting or fishing license or SWA pass to use the range?

Yes, like all other users of a SWA.



Does this impact all wildlife properties (SWAs and STLs)?

A valid hunting license, fishing license or SWA pass is required for access to most SWAs. All STLs leased by the Division require a valid hunting license or fishing license for access. SWA passes may not be used to access STLs leased by the Division, due to current leasing agreements between CPW and the State Land Board.

How do I identify if a public property will require a hunting or fishing license or Colorado SWA Pass?

Any SWA that is managed by CPW that is open to the public requires a hunting or fishing license or Colorado SWA Pass. SWAs are all signed with property identification. A complete list of lands administered by CPW can be found in the Colorado State Recreational Lands Brochure found on the CPW website.

Does this license requirement apply to the national forest or BLM lands? Does this apply to state parks?

No, the license requirement only applies to SWAs and STLs open to the public. It does not apply to other public lands such as State Parks, National Forests, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), county properties, or municipal properties. SWA passes may not be used to access STLs leased by the Division, due to current leasing agreements between CPW and the State Land Board.

If I have a license does it allow me to engage in any activity I wish on an SWA?

No. All other regulations still apply. It allows you to engage in the outdoor activities authorized for that specific property.

What about special use permit and commercial use permit holders?

A special use permit or commercial use permit is valid for access in lieu of a license or SWA pass.

Do users of trail systems connecting to SWAs need to purchase a license?

Yes. The intended use of SWAs is wildlife habitat and wildlife-related recreation. While recreational use of trails on these properties is not a primary intended use, a license or pass purchased for recreational trail use, where allowed, can be used to help maintain connected trails.

