



# COLORADO

## Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

Policy and Planning  
6060 Broadway  
Denver, CO 80216

TO: Members of the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission  
FROM: Hilary Hernandez, Regulations Manager  
RE: Chapter W-9 Final Regulations for the January 2023 Parks and Wildlife Commission Meeting  
DATE: January 6, 2023

Final regulatory changes for Chapter W-9 are summarized below. If there are questions about the agenda item below, or if additional information is needed, please feel free to contact me at [hilary.hernandez@state.co.us](mailto:hilary.hernandez@state.co.us).

### Agenda Item 14: Chapter W-9 - "Wildlife Properties" 2 CCR 406-9

#### Modifying the public access dates for Oak Ridge State Wildlife Area to allow limited turkey hunting May 1-31st and youth outreach turkey hunting April 1-30th

Recently the wild turkey population has grown significantly near Meeker and specifically within unit 23. However, public land hunting opportunities are very limited for turkey hunters during the spring season in unit 23. Modifying the public access dates for Oak Ridge State Wildlife Area (SWA) will provide high quality public land hunting opportunities by allowing limited public access for spring turkey hunting. These changes will allow a very small number of CPW youth outreach hunts to occur in April prior to opening the area for hunters possessing a limited spring turkey license valid on public land in unit 23 in May. It is believed that this very limited public access for spring turkey hunting can be allowed without negatively impacting the mule deer and elk that use the property in spring.



**FINAL REGULATIONS - CHAPTER W-9 - WILDLIFE PROPERTIES**

**ARTICLE II - PROPERTY-SPECIFIC PROVISIONS**

**#901 - PROPERTY-SPECIFIC REGULATIONS**

**See Appendix B for a list of properties without property-specific regulations, to which only restrictions in #900 apply)**

- A. On all Division properties which have reservations available or required, those reservations may be made by phone or online (cpw.state.co.us). Reservations for small game and waterfowl hunting may not be made more than 14 days in advance of the hunt date, nor after 12:00 noon on the day before the hunt date. Reservations for big game hunting may not be made more than 45 days in advance of the start of the season for which the reservation is being made. Unless otherwise specified, reservations for big game hunting are valid throughout the season designated by the license. Hunters who wish to cancel a reservation must do so no later than 12:00 noon on the day before the hunt date. Failure to hunt a reserved area without prior cancellation, or follow check station procedures, may cause forfeiture of the privilege to make reservations for the remainder of the hunting season. Hunters are limited to a maximum of one reservation per hunt date. Hunters must possess a valid license for the species to be hunted in order to make a reservation. Reservations are not transferable. The individual named on the reservation must be at the property on the day of the hunt. Hunters with reservations may only hunt the hunt area specified on the reservation. Any exceptions to the above restrictions will be listed under property specific regulations.
  
- B. In addition to or in place of those restrictions listed in regulation #900, the following provisions or restrictions apply:

**172. Oak Ridge State Wildlife Area (Bel Aire Unit, Lake Avery Unit, Oak Ridge Unit, Jon Wangnild Unit, Sleepy Cat Ponds Unit, and Sleepy Cat Fishing Easement) - Rio Blanco County**

- a. Camping is prohibited, except in designated areas.
- b. Public access is prohibited on the Oak Ridge Unit from December 1 through July 15 except for CPW youth outreach turkey hunts April 1-30 and valid GMU 23 turkey license holders and their companion May 1-31.
- c. Public access is prohibited on Sleepy Cat Ponds Unit and Sleepy Cat Fishing Easement, except for fishing.
- d. Hunting is prohibited, except by archery in that portion south of Rio Blanco Co Rd 8, west of Rio Blanco Co Rd 17, and north and east of Rio Blanco Co Rd 10.
- e. Water skiing, jet skis, and boating other than wakeless boating, are prohibited on Lake Avery.

**Basis and Purpose:**

**Modifying the public access dates for Oak Ridge State Wildlife Area to allow limited turkey hunting May 1-31st and youth outreach turkey hunting April 1-30th**

Recently the wild turkey population has grown significantly near Meeker and specifically within unit 23. However, public land hunting opportunities are very limited for turkey hunters during the spring season in unit 23. Modifying the public access dates for Oak Ridge State Wildlife Area (SWA) will provide high quality public land hunting opportunities by allowing limited public access for spring turkey hunting. These changes will allow a very small number of CPW youth outreach hunts to occur in April prior to opening the area for hunters possessing a limited spring turkey license valid on public land in unit 23 in May. It is believed that this very limited public access for spring turkey hunting can be allowed without negatively impacting the mule deer and elk that use the property in spring.

The statements of basis and purpose for these regulations can be obtained from the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife, Office of the Regulations Manager by emailing [dnr\\_cpw\\_planning@state.co.us](mailto:dnr_cpw_planning@state.co.us) or by visiting the Division of Parks and Wildlife headquarters at 6060 Broadway, Denver, CO, 80216.

**The statutory authority for these regulations includes, but is not limited to:**

- § 24-4-103, C.R.S.
- §§ 33-1-101 to 33-6-209, C.R.S., particularly §§ 33-1-105, -106, -107, and 33-4-102, C.R.S.
- § 33-9-102, C.R.S.

**EFFECTIVE DATE - THESE REGULATIONS SHALL BECOME EFFECTIVE MARCH 2, 2023 AND SHALL REMAIN IN FULL FORCE AND EFFECT UNTIL REPEALED, AMENDED OR SUPERSEDED.**

**APPROVED AND ADOPTED BY THE PARKS AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF COLORADO THIS 17TH DAY OF JANUARY, 2023.**

**APPROVED:**  
**Carrie Besnette Hauser**  
**Chair**

**ATTEST:**  
**Marie Haskett**  
**Secretary**

**ISSUES SUBMITTAL FORM**

Date: 01/06/2023

<b>ISSUE:</b>	<b>Should Oak Ridge SWA in unit 23 be open to the public for limited spring turkey hunting opportunities? Should seasonal public access closure from December 1 through July 15 be modified by CPW to allow for limited spring turkey hunting?</b>
<b>DISCUSSION (FACTS AND FIGURES, EXPLANATION OF ISSUE):</b>	
<p>Currently, turkey hunting in unit 23 is limited for the spring turkey hunting season which runs from the second Saturday in April through the end of May. Limited spring turkey hunting licenses in unit 23 are split between a unit wide hunt code (T-M-023-01-R with a quota of 15 licenses) that is valid on both private/public lands, and a private land only hunt code (T-M-023-P1-R with a quota of 25 licenses). These 40 limited spring turkey hunting licenses in unit 23 are heavily sought after (require multiple preference points to draw) and are available only through the limited spring turkey drawing. Starting in 2022, Unit 23 will also be open for the fall turkey hunting season with unlimited OTC licenses.</p> <p>Historically, this wild turkey population was introduced and was very small thus CPW has been extremely conservative with annual spring hunting license quotas to ensure that the turkey population was not overharvested in unit 23. However, CPW has had tremendous support from private landowners throughout the upper White River Valley over the past 15 years and as a result of cooperative artificial feeding operations during the critical winter periods, the wild turkey population has grown significantly in unit 23 and surrounding GMUs.</p> <p>The significant growth and survival of the wild turkey population near Meeker and within unit 23 especially has resulted in a biological surplus of wild turkeys that should be offered to hunters via additional spring turkey hunting opportunities. The vast majority of the turkeys are found on private lands along the upper White River corridor where they prefer to congregate during the spring hunting season. Public land hunting opportunities for wild turkeys in unit 23 during the spring season are very limited, which can be frustrating for hunters that draw the limited turkey licenses. The one exception is Oak Ridge SWA, which is a large parcel of public land in unit 23 that provides good spring turkey habitat but is currently not open for public access in spring. Allowing limited public access for spring turkey hunting on Oak Ridge SWA would offer high quality public land turkey hunting opportunities that are in high demand in unit 23.</p> <p>Oak Ridge SWA currently has a seasonal closure to public access from December 1 through July 15 annually which is designed to protect mule deer and elk during the critical winter and fawning/calving seasons. However, local CPW biologists and managers believe that some very limited public access for spring turkey hunting could be allowed on Oak Ridge SWA without negatively impacting the mule deer and elk that utilize the property in early spring. CPW is proposing to allow access to Oak Ridge SWA in April ONLY for youth hunters that are participating in the special CPW youth outreach spring turkey hunt in unit 23 (CPW typically takes 6-8 youths per year on the Spring Youth Turkey hunt in Meeker and provides special CPW youth outreach hunting licenses for this special event). Further, CPW is proposing to allow access to Oak Ridge SWA starting on May 1 annually to any person that possesses a limited spring turkey hunting license that is valid on public land in unit 23 (the current quota is 15 spring turkey licenses for unit wide spring turkey hunt code T-M-023-01-R).</p> <p>Therefore, CPW is proposing to allow limited public access to Oak Ridge SWA in unit 23 only for special CPW youth outreach turkey hunting events in April and then for anyone with a spring unit 23 turkey license that is valid on public land from May 1 through May 31.</p> <p>To accomplish this, CPW would need to revise the seasonal closure for Oak Ridge SWA accordingly so that it is closed to the public from December 1 until the opening day of the spring turkey hunting season, and then is closed again to the public after the spring turkey season is over, from June 1 through July 15.</p>	
<b>STATE LAW REQUIRES CPW TO SOLICIT INPUT FROM STAKEHOLDERS THAT MAY BE</b>	

**AFFECTED POSITIVELY OR NEGATIVELY BY THE PROPOSED RULES. THE FOLLOWING STAKEHOLDERS HAVE BEEN ADVISED OF AND INVITED TO PROVIDE INPUT ON THE REGULATORY CHANGES PROPOSED IN THIS ISSUE PAPER:**

**\*IT IS ASSUMED THAT ALL NECESSARY INTERNAL PARTIES HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED\*.**

**[List stakeholder groups and briefly summarize comments received]**

There has not been any public outreach conducted regarding this issue, however, CPW has received numerous complaints about the significant number of wild turkeys in unit 23 and the lack of hunting licenses and opportunities that CPW currently offers, especially on public lands. Spring turkey hunting license demand for the 15 licenses that are currently available on public land in unit 23 suggests there would not be any opposition to allowing limited access to Oak Ridge SWA where the turkeys have increased and are available during the spring turkey hunting season. Providing limited public access to Oak Ridge SWA for high quality spring turkey hunting opportunities would also reduce some of the crowding issues and complaints that are commonly received from spring turkey hunters in unit 23.

**ALTERNATIVES: (POSSIBLE OUTCOMES or POSSIBLE REGULATIONS):**

1. **\*Preferred Alternative\*:** Revise seasonal closure regulation for Oak Ridge SWA in Chapter 9 as follows:
  172. **Oak Ridge State Wildlife Area (Bel Aire Unit, Lake Avery Unit, Oak Ridge Unit, Jon Wangnild Unit, Sleepy Cat Ponds Unit, and Sleepy Cat Fishing Easement) - Rio Blanco County**
    - a. Camping is prohibited, except in designated areas.
    - b. Public access is prohibited on the Oak Ridge Unit from December 1 through July 15 except for CPW youth outreach turkey hunts April 1-30 and valid GMU 23 turkey license holders and their companion May 1-31.
    - c. Public access is prohibited on Sleepy Cat Ponds Unit and Sleepy Cat Fishing Easement, except for fishing.
    - d. Hunting is prohibited, except by archery in that portion south of Rio Blanco Co Rd 8, west of Rio Blanco Co Rd 17, and north and east of Rio Blanco Co Rd 10.
    - e. Water skiing, jet skis, and boating other than wakeless boating, are prohibited on Lake Avery.
2. **Status quo:** No change to existing Chapter 9 regulation for seasonal public access closure from December 1 through July 15 on Oak Ridge SWA, which does not allow for any public hunting opportunities during the spring turkey hunting season in unit 23.

<b>Issue Raised by:</b>	<b>Area 6 DWM Bailey Franklin</b>
<b>Author of the issue paper (if different than person raising the issue):</b>	
<b>CC:</b>	<b>NW Senior Biologist Brad Banulis, A6 Terrestrial Biologists Darby Finley and Brian Holmes, A6 AWM Bill deVergie, A6 AAWM Mike Swaro, and affected A6 DWM's.</b>
<b>APPROVED FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION BY:</b>	<b>Travis Black</b>
<b>REQUIRES NEW SPACE IN THE BROCHURE?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
<b>ARE ADEQUATE STAFF AND FUNDING RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO IMPLEMENT?</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
<b>REGION, BRANCH, OR SECTION LEADING IMPLEMENTATION</b>	<b>NW Region</b>
<b>RECOMMENDED FOR CONSENT AGENDA?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO