

GMU 1

Region 1 - GMU 1: October 2026 (*This document date reflects its most recent review. Updates are made only when necessary.*)

Species within this game management unit (GMU): Pronghorn, Black Bear, Elk, Mule Deer, Merriam's Turkey, Bighorn Sheep, Mountain Lion, Tree Squirrel, and Waterfowl.

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Game Management Unit Boundaries

Beginning at the New Mexico state line and U.S. Hwy 60; west on U.S. Hwy 60 to Vernon Junction; southerly on the Vernon-McNary Rd. (FR 224) to the Fort Apache Indian Reservation boundary; east and south along the reservation boundary to Black River; east and north along Black River to the East Fork of Black River; north along the east fork to Three Forks; and continuing north and east on the Three Forks-Williams Valley-Alpine Rd. (FR 249) to U.S. Hwy 180; east on U.S. Hwy 180 to the New Mexico state line; north along the state line to U.S. Hwy 60.

The Wallow Fire that occurred in the summer of 2011 significantly impacted various areas, resulting in obvious changes to the habitat. It burned in a mosaic pattern, and some areas were impacted more severely than others. Hunters are reminded that their safety is their responsibility. Remember to Look Up, Look Down, and Look

Around.

For up-to-date recreation information from the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, visit https://www.fs.usda.gov/asnf.

Land Status: The following are three types of land ownership categories and the rules that apply:

Private Land: Written or verbal permission from the private landowner must be obtained for use of their legally posted private lands for any purpose, including the crossing of these lands by foot or vehicle to get to public and State Trust lands not accessible by public means. It is NOT lawful to drive off-road to retrieve a downed big game animal on privately owned land without the permission of the landowner.

State Trust Lands: Hunting and fishing on State Trust lands is allowed with a valid Arizona hunting and/or fishing license. A person may utilize a vehicle on- or off-road to retrieve a legally taken big-game animal. Use good judgment in the case of driving off-road to retrieve an animal. If the ground is wet, and driving off-road will cause damage such as ruts, please consider retrieving the animal by another means. Remember, just because you are following a set of vehicle tracks, it does not necessarily mean that it is a road. All other off-road activity, including driving around wet sections of road, is prohibited.

U.S. Forest Service roads are open to all licensed vehicle operators. Hunting with the aid of a vehicle is unlawful. Vehicles are prohibited from operating in any area or on any road that is gated, barricaded, or signed as closed. Keep in mind that during wet conditions, secondary roads are subject to damage and can even become impassable. Driving around wet sections creates ever-widening roads and damages the resource. Please help protect your National Forest by treading lightly. Information pertaining to roads, road conditions, or areas prohibiting the operation of motor vehicles is available from the Apache-Sitgreaves Forest Service offices.

Unit 1 covers a portion of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, encompassing the Springerville Ranger District and portions of the Alpine and Lakeside Ranger Districts. Unit 1 contains some special-use areas designated by the Forest Service. The U.S. Forest Service utilizes various types of special land-use designations on lands that they administer. These areas are posted as to what restrictions apply to that area, and the following are some of these designations:

Wilderness Areas: Within Unit 1, there are two areas that have a “Wilderness” designation. They are the Mt. Baldy Wilderness Area and the Escudilla Mountain Wilderness Area. Areas under wilderness designation place restrictions on the use of mechanical devices within their boundaries. No mechanical means of transportation are allowed (this includes motorized vehicles, bicycles, and any other type of wheeled vehicle), and other

mechanical devices, such as chainsaws, are prohibited. Hunting and fishing are allowed in wilderness areas.

Habitat Areas: There are two designated Habitat Areas in Unit 1. They are the St. Peter's Dome Habitat Area and the Hulsey Bench Habitat Area. Habitat areas were developed in partnership with the Arizona Game and Fish Department to provide wildlife with quiet areas that are undisturbed by motorized vehicle use. Habitat areas are open to hunting and fishing, but motorized vehicle access is prohibited. Other types of vehicle access, like bicycles, are allowed.

Recreation Areas: There are also numerous designated recreation areas within Unit 1. These areas are posted as to the restrictions that apply to that particular area. Restrictions can include, but are not limited to, vehicle travel restrictions (e.g., travel on existing road only), size and type of vehicle allowed, camping in designated campgrounds, parking areas, and fire restrictions.

Generally, camping is allowed throughout the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. Some designated Recreation Areas restrict camping to specific campgrounds only. There is a 14-day stay limit in effect on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. It is also unlawful to shoot within a designated campground. Temporary restrictions such as fire restrictions and area closures may be authorized as deemed necessary, depending on forest conditions. It is a good idea to contact a local Forest Service office prior to the hunt to see if any restrictions apply in the area that you wish to access. For other Forest Service information, or for maps of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest, contact one of the following:

Apache-Sitgreaves Forest Supervisor's Office

Springerville

Phone: (928) 333-4301

Hours: Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Springerville Ranger District

Springerville

Phone: (928) 333-4372

Hours: Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Alpine Ranger District

Alpine

Phone: (928) 339-5000

Hours: Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

A good map of the area in which you are going to hunt is very beneficial. One of the best is the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests map that can be obtained from the U.S. Forest Service. Land status maps and U.S. Geological Survey topographic maps can also be useful. Outlining your hunt unit boundary on the map can prevent embarrassing situations and citations for hunting in the wrong unit.

Weather conditions during hunts are generally warm to cool days with cool nighttime temperatures. Due to the high elevation, wet weather and extremes in conditions can occur. So be prepared.

Species Information

Pronghorn

Overview: The highest concentrations of pronghorn antelope in Unit 1 are found in the open grassland and pinyon-juniper/grassland habitat types. During the hunting season, pronghorn are found at both high and low elevations. During drought years, antelope are concentrated in areas where water occurs and may even utilize forest habitat.

Much of the lower elevation pronghorn habitat within the unit is on State Trust lands and, to a lesser degree, private. They can also be found on U.S. Forest Service lands in the higher elevation areas within Unit 1. Be cognizant of where you are hunting and the land status of the area. Obtaining a good land status map of the area in which you are planning to hunt would be very beneficial.

Access and OHV (Off-Highway Vehicle) use are important issues in Unit 1. OHV regulations vary depending on the ownership of the land. Driving “cross-country” is an ever-increasing problem in Unit 1 due to the resulting resource damage and the increasing number of “wildcat” roads being created.

Areas: Unit 1 generally contains three large areas where pronghorn can be found. These are as follows:

North of Hwy 260: This area includes a block of land bounded on the south by Hwy 260, on the north by Hwy 60, on the east by the Springerville-Eagar city limits, and on the west by the Unit 1-Unit 3B boundary. This area is comprised of private, State Trust, and U.S. Forest Service lands. Some good hunting spots within this area are Antelope Mountain, the area along the northern reach of Carnero Creek, Cheney Lake, south of Cerro Quemado, along Forest Road 117, North of Mallory Springs, and between Garris Knoll and Cerro Montoso.

Loco Knoll: This area encompasses a portion of Unit 1 from Loco Knoll (just north of Escudilla Mountain) to Hwy 60 in the north. The area is bounded on the east by the New Mexico border and on the west by Highway 191. It includes private, State Trust, and U.S. Forest Service lands. Pronghorn locations within this area include Reagan Reservoir, Dry Lakes, and Indian Tank Hills.

High Country: This area is completely within the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. It is generally an area extending from Big Lake on the south to Hwy 273 on the western edge, to Mexican Hay Lake in the north, and to the east of Forest Road 285. It is composed mostly of high elevation grasslands surrounded by forest. Pronghorn spots within this area include Boardshack Knoll, the area around Hay Lake, Hog Wallow Lake, Pool Knoll, Rudd Knoll, Wahl Knoll, S.U. Knoll, Dipping Vat, the area south and west of Basin Lake, Pat Knoll, Salt House Lake, Crosby Crossing, and the Colter Creek drainage.

Other Areas: Other areas where pronghorn are likely to be found include the open grassland areas west and south of Greens Peak and the strip of land south of Hwy 260 and north of the Little Colorado River. These lands are composed of private, State Trust, and U.S. Forest Service land.

Black Bear

Hunters are responsible for confirming whether the GMU is still open before going into the field and should monitor the Arizona Game and Fish Department harvest tracking page to ensure the season remains open. Click here for more information on black bear regulations and harvest reporting.

Hunters are required to report black bear harvest information to the department within 48 hours of taking a black bear. In addition, the hunter (or their designee) must present the skull and hide, with attached proof of sex, to a designated department employee for inspection within 10 days of harvest. Visit the Arizona Game and Fish Department harvest reporting page to complete the mandatory report and schedule a physical checkout.

Overview: Unit 1 has four bear seasons. The first is a spring general firearms hunt beginning in March. The second hunt and third hunt are the first fall bear seasons, both starting in August. The Fourth hunt is a general firearms hunt, which starts at the beginning of October and runs to the end of December.

Special Considerations: The August opening dates were instituted to liberalize the harvest of nuisance/problem bears that occur, depending on the year, infrequently throughout the unit. Due to the increasing number of people utilizing and/or inhabiting Unit 1, some bears learn to associate human activity with food and subsequently become habituated to human-produced food sources such as garbage. Hunters pursuing these “nuisance” bears should be extremely careful when hunting near urban areas or campgrounds. Firearms and/or archery safety

should be the foremost concern for individuals hunting bears in these areas. Discharging a firearm within one-quarter mile of an occupied residence or in a campground is unlawful as well as unsafe.

Regulations prohibiting the take of female bears (sows) with cubs were instituted to protect the reproductive segment of the bear population, so be careful to watch for cubs near a potential game bear. Please review the easy steps outlined in the Hunt Regulation Booklet to ensure that the bear season is still open after the opening week. Once the sow harvest quota is attained in Unit 1, the unit will be closed to further bear hunting.

Ear-tagged/Collared Bears: Biologists have placed ear tags and collars on some bears in Unit 1 as part of an ongoing research project. Harvesting these bears (except for a sow with cubs) is lawful, but any ear tags or collars must be returned to the Department. This can be done during the mandatory inspection.

Areas: Black bear distribution in Unit 1 will vary from year to year as food crops are influenced by precipitation patterns. Generally, bears will travel to a greater extent to obtain food during dry years. Hunters would do well to concentrate their efforts in canyons and riparian areas. Also, look for concentrated food production areas such as oak stands, gooseberry shrub stands, and areas of mushroom concentrations. Most major canyons with perennial water sources will be areas to locate bears within the unit. Hunters should obtain an Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest map to aid in locating these areas within Unit 1.

Elk

Overview: Unit 1 offers many opportunities to hunt elk. These include archery bull and antlerless hunts, firearm bull and antlerless hunts, and Juniors-only antlerless hunts.

Elk hunting in Unit 1 begins in August, with the last hunts ending in December. Elk distribution within the unit varies depending on the time of year and on the weather conditions. Elk can be found in both high and low elevations. During drought years, elk tend to be concentrated in areas where there is water and green feed.

Special Considerations: Some of the hunts in Unit 1 are restricted to specific hunt areas. This is done to meet specific elk management objectives through concentrated harvest in these areas. Be aware of the hunt for which you have drawn a permit. The permit will have the hunt unit printed on it (e.g., Unit 1) along with the herd unit (e.g., Escudilla Hunt Area, Unit 1 East). If the hunt is unit-wide, it will only have the hunt unit (e.g., Unit 1). Additionally, some of the Unit 1 hunts also include Unit 2B and/or Unit 2C in the hunt area. Remember that hunting outside the hunt area boundary will result in a citation.

If you find a possibly poached animal, get a good location and report it by calling the 24-hour Operation Game Thief Hotline at 1-800-352-0700! Try not to disturb the site around the animal, as we need to collect evidence.

Treat it as you would any other crime scene.

Biological check stations are conducted to collect data on sex, age, and condition of animals harvested. This information is used to determine the composition of the elk herd and to make permit recommendations. Unless otherwise stated, bringing an animal to the check station is not mandatory but is encouraged. If you bring in an animal, please bring it in field dressed but otherwise whole. Additionally, for some of the bull hunts, we provide tooth envelopes and data sheets for measuring antlers. This information is used to continue providing quality bull elk hunting opportunities in Unit 1. Notification for biological check stations and other data collection is usually provided through a mail-out to successful permit applicants.

Elk distribution within Unit 1 is dependent on the season and the weather. Elk migrations from summer to winter range occur during the fall and winter and can affect the hunts. Unit 1 hunting opportunity is designed to place the hunter in areas where elk can be found in regard to weather and migration patterns. The best time to scout for your hunt is one to two weeks prior to the opening of your season. Pre-hunt scouting in the high country in late September for an early December hunt would be fruitless because the elk will have moved out of those areas and onto the winter range at lower elevations.

Areas: Areas for hunting elk in Unit 1 vary according to the time period in which the hunt occurs. The following are suggested areas for the various hunts in the early, middle, and late seasons:

Early Season Hunts: These hunts occur during the month of September and the first part of October. They include the archery-only antlerless and bull hunts, the early firearms bull hunt, and the Juniors-only firearms antlerless hunt. The archery antlerless and bull hunts are run concurrently from about the middle of September to the first of October.

During this time period, elk are distributed throughout the unit. They are found at both low and high elevations. The bulls are starting to bugle and will generally come to calls. Areas to hunt would include Escudilla Mountain, the Loco Knoll area, the Black River area, Kettle Holes, Centerfire Creek, Burro Mountain, the Greens Peak area, Mineral Creek, St. Peter's Dome, the Mexican Hay Lake area, Milligan Valley, Juan Garcia Mountain, Sipe White Mountain Wildlife Area, and the Pole Knoll area.

The early firearms bull hunt begins the day following the end of the archery hunts. Bulls are still in the rut, and the opportunity for success is good. Areas to hunt are generally the same as the areas for the archery hunts.

The Juniors-only firearms antlerless hunt follows the early firearms bull hunt. Elk are still distributed throughout the unit at this time. Local concentrations of elk can occur in certain areas. The previously mentioned areas are a

good start in finding an elk for this hunt. Weather conditions during these early season hunts usually consist of warm to cool days and cool to cold nights. Rain showers may still be occurring during the early part of September. October snowstorms have occurred in the past, and freezing nighttime temperatures are not uncommon.

Middle Season Hunts: These hunts occur during late October into the middle of November. This is the time of year when elk begin their migration from summer to winter range. Snowfall is a major factor in accelerating the migration. Places to find elk include the area around the base of Escudilla Mountain (along Forest road 275), Loco Knoll, ELC Flat, Hulsey Bench, South Unit 1 along forest service Road 25, Forest Service road 409, Greens Peak, St. Peter's Dome, Sipe White Mountain Wildlife Area and Antelope Peak. Weather varies during this time of year, but you can expect cool to cold temperatures and the possibility of significant snowfall.

Late Season Hunts: These hunts occur from the end of November to the last hunt in December. These hunts usually include the late firearms bull hunt in Unit 1, 2B, and 2C, the Unit 1 East hunt area, the Escudilla hunt area in Unit 1, and the firearm antlerless hunt in Unit 1 and Units 2B and 2C. During this time period, elk are generally found at lower elevations on the winter range. The weather conditions are generally cold with snow. If significant snowfall has not occurred by this time, then some elk may also still be found in the higher elevation areas.

For the firearms bull hunt, places to find elk include the area north of Greens Peak to Hwy 60, the area along Forest roads (FR) 118 and 117, the Antelope Mountain area, the Loco Knoll area, Milligan Valley, the Garris Knoll area, along FR 404, the Sipe White Mountain Wildlife Area. Depending on snowfall, the Big Lake area can be productive.

During the firearms antlerless hunt, the following areas would be good places to find elk: Milligan Valley, Sipe White Mountain Wildlife Area, Loco Knoll, around the base of Escudilla Mountain, Pat Knoll, Antelope Mountain, Cerro Montoso, and Forest Service Road 409.

The late firearms antlerless hunt is generally a winter range hunt. Areas to find elk include the Antelope Mountain area, Sipe White Mountain Wildlife area, the Cerro Montoso area (both north and south of Hwy 60), along FR 117 going south from Hwy 60, the Cheney Lake area, the Mallory Springs area, the Garris Knoll area, FR 25 in the southern portion of the hunt unit, and along Carnero Creek south of Green Spot on Hwy 60.

Round Valley Hunts: These hunts are limited opportunity hunts designed to address specific issues. The Coon Canyon and Flat Top hunt areas (described in the Hunt Regulations) have limited vehicle access. Most of the hunt areas are accessed by foot and/or horseback. Proximity to the Eagar and Springerville City limits makes knowledge of the hunt boundaries imperative. Be prepared to walk and to pack harvested animals out of the hunt area. Access for vehicular retrieval of animals may be granted in some instances depending upon where the

animal is located. The Antelope Mountain hunt area is primarily made up of State Trust land and private property. Cross-country travel is prohibited on State Trust land, with the exception of big game retrieval. Cross-country travel on private property is permissible with permission from the property owner. Road conditions will vary depending on the weather.

Mule Deer

Overview: Mule Deer distribution in Unit 1 generally follows a distinct seasonal pattern. During the archery season in August and September, bucks can be found throughout the unit, with huntable concentrations easily found at higher elevations. The general firearms season occurs in October. Deer distribution here can be profoundly affected by winter weather conditions. Early winter snowfall may cause deer to move to lower elevation areas within the unit. During the early archery season, deer may be found within all the habitat types that occur in Unit 1.

Habitat types to concentrate on include high elevation meadows, aspen stands, and riparian areas. At this time, mature bucks will be solitary or in small bands. General firearms season hunters can find bucks in pinyon-juniper habitat types and in areas where concentrations of browse plant species such as cliff rose, oak, and mountain mahogany occur. Regardless of the season that you choose to participate in, proper scouting prior to the season is essential to having a successful hunt.

Special Regulations: A voluntary biological check station may be set up during the general deer season to collect samples for chronic wasting disease (CWD). Successful hunters are strongly encouraged to stop at this check station and assist biologists with this effort. If this is not running during your hunt, and you wish to have a CWD sample collected, please call the local Game and Fish office and ask how to have this completed.

Areas: Areas for hunting mule deer in Unit 1 vary depending on the time period in which the hunt occurs. The following are suggested areas in the higher elevation portions of the unit where they can be found for the early archery season.

Mt. Baldy Wilderness/Burro Mountain: Located west of State Hwy 273, the Mt. Baldy Wilderness Area contains many small drainages and aspen stands where mule deer can be found. Vehicle access is restricted in this area, so hunters should be prepared to operate on foot.

Forest Service Road 25: This is a major road running from Buffalo Crossing to Black River. The many creeks in this area, such as Wildcat, Centerfire, and the West Fork of Black River, provide good opportunities to stalk deer. There are numerous two-track roads in this area that are open to vehicular use. Hunters should honor the road closures they will encounter in this portion of Unit 1.

Escudilla Mountain Area: Located south of Alpine and west of the New Mexico border. Escudilla Mountain contains a small wilderness area as well as extensive aspen stands. The Terry Flat Loop Road provides access to the top of the mountain, while Forest Road (FR) 275 provides access around the base of the mountain.

Late-season rifle hunters should consider the following areas for hunting:

Northwest Unit 1: The northwest corner of Unit 1, particularly the areas along FR 61 and 65, Garris Knoll, and Cerro Montoso. This part of the unit contains good browse components and hiding cover. Hunters should utilize their field glasses to locate deer in openings. Also, take care in driving in wet or snowy conditions, and keep vehicles on existing roads.

South Fork, Little Colorado River: This general area runs from the town of Greer, east along a geological "rim" formation to the Water Canyon area. Vehicle access to this area is somewhat limited, so you should be prepared to pack out your animal by foot or horseback. Some of the access roads and trails to consider include Forest Service Trail 97 and FR 70A. Hunters should pay attention to all road closure signs.

Escudilla Mountain Area: Located south of the town of Alpine, FR 275 provides good access around the base of the mountain. The Hulsey Bench Habitat Area on the west side of the mountain is closed to all vehicle access and provides good walk-in hunting opportunities.

Merriam's Turkey

Notice: The fall hunting season is a limited weapon-shotgun shooting shot season only. There is an archery-only, over-the-counter permit hunt available in the fall and spring.

Overview: Both spring and fall turkey hunts are offered in Unit 1. Turkeys occur throughout the unit, utilizing both the forested and pinyon-juniper habitat types.

Spring Hunting: The spring turkey season in Unit 1 usually begins in late April and extends through late May. **Unless otherwise specified, spring turkey hunts are firearm seasons and are limited to shotguns shooting shot**. The Juniors-only season is a non-permit tag turkey hunt which begins one week before the spring permitted turkey hunt. There is also an archery-only, non–permitted hunt available two weeks after the opening day of the spring permitted turkey hunt.

The Unit 1 spring permitted turkey hunt is stratified with two hunts occurring, one after the other. Additionally,

legal birds are limited to bearded birds only. The majority of the birds taken are males, although bearded females do occasionally occur. During mating season, as this time period is called, the males (gobblers) will come to calls. This is the best method to use to take a bird. Stalking birds will sometimes work, but calling is by far the most effective method.

Weather conditions during this hunt vary from cold with snow to sunny and warm. Be prepared for extremes in weather. Very often, there will still be winter snow in the higher elevations, which will make it difficult or impossible to get to some areas. Additionally, strong winds can occur during this time.

Spring Hunt Areas: Try Escudilla Mountain, Black River area, Kettle Holes, Wildcat Creek, Boggy Creek, Centerfire Creek, Burro Mountain, the Mexican Hay Lake area, the Greens Peak area, the Garris Knoll area, the Wahl Knoll area, the Pat Knoll area, Milligan Valley, OD Ridge, the Pole Knoll area, Juan Garcia Mountain, St. Peter's Dome, or the Sizer Knoll area.

Fall Hunting: The fall hunting seasons consist of an archery-only, Juniors-only, non-permit tag, and a permitted limited weapon-shotgun shooting shot season. Any turkey is legal to take during these hunts. The archery-only hunt starts at the end of August and extends through the middle of September. The limited weapon-shotgun shooting shot season is at the beginning of October. Weather conditions during the archery hunt usually consist of warm to cool days and cool to cold nights. Rain showers may still be occurring during the early part of September. During the limited weapon-shotgun shooting shot hunt and the Juniors-only limited weapon-shotgun shooting shot hunt, expect cooler temperatures. October snowstorms have occurred in the past, and freezing nighttime temperatures are not uncommon. Turkeys are usually distributed throughout the unit during the fall. The best hunting method is to locate the birds and then stalk them. This can be accomplished by walking along one of the numerous logging roads in the unit.

Fall Hunt Areas: Try Escudilla Mountain, the Black River area, Kettle Holes, Wildcat Creek, Boggy Creek, Centerfire Creek, Burro Mountain, the Mexican Hay Lake area, the Greens Peak area, the Garris Knoll area, the Wahl Knoll area, the Pat Knoll area, Milligan Valley, OD Ridge, the Pole Knoll area, Juan Garcia Mountain, St. Peter's Dome, or the Sizer Knoll area.

Bighorn Sheep

Overview: Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep distribution is primarily from Three Forks down the East Fork of the Black River to the main stem of the Black River to the Fort Apache Indian Reservation. This is the primary area where their habitat occurs. (On a side note, AZGFD transplanted Sheep in the South Fork area on the Little Colorado River. This was to reestablish Sheep in an area where they were historically found but have not occurred recently. This is not a huntable population and does not occur within the Black River hunt area.) Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep do occur outside the Black River corridor, but population numbers occur at a lesser degree in these areas.

Special Regulations: All bighorn sheep hunters (or their designee) must check out within 3 days following the close of the season at any Department office in accordance with R12-4-308. Unsuccessful hunters and those who did not hunt must also check out in person or by telephone at any Department office.

Areas: Areas for hunting bighorn sheep are contained mostly within the black river corridor and its tributaries. As mentioned above, they do utilize some of the flatter and more wooded areas directly adjacent to the black river. There is very little to no vehicle access within a large portion of the huntable habitat in the Black River. Be prepared to pack out what you harvest.

Three Forks: Located at the furthest north portion of the black river corridor. This is the part of the east fork of the black river. An access point would be Forest Road 249, which goes from Big Lake to the town of Alpine.

Kettle Holes: This is an area to the North of the Black River. It overlooks the Black River and provides good feeding habitat for sheep. Access is gained by Forest Road 25G, which goes south of Forest Road 25 and west of Buffalo Crossing.

Fish Bench: This area is directly south of Kettle Holes and across the Black River canyon. It provides a good view of the canyon and has a variety of critical areas for sheep. This area can be accessed only on foot.

Wildcat Crossing: A good place to access the river bottom and a trail system that goes from Forest Road 24 to the Fort Apache Indian Reservation would be here. Wildcat Crossing is the point where Forest Road 25 crosses the Black River. There is a parking area and trails that follow the river.

Snake Creek area: This is one of the lower most areas to hunt on the Black River and very near the Fort Apache Indian Reservation. The access point would be forest road 25D. This will allow access to an area with a few roads that wind their way to the Snake Creek area. Here, you can either view large parts of the canyon or hike down into a trail system in the bottom of the Black River.

Mountain Lion

Hunters are responsible for confirming whether the GMU is still open before going into the field and should monitor the Arizona Game and Fish Department harvest tracking page to ensure the season remains open. When the harvest threshold is reached, the zone closes to additional mountain lion harvest at sundown on the Wednesday immediately following. Click here for more information on mountain lion regulations, the management zones map and harvest reporting.

Hunters are required to report mountain lion harvest information to the department within 48 hours of taking a mountain lion. In addition, the hunter (or their designee) must present the skull and hide, with attached proof of sex, to a designated department employee for inspection within 10 days of harvest. Visit the Arizona Game and Fish Department harvest reporting page to complete the mandatory report and schedule a physical checkout.

Overview: Mountain Lions can be found throughout Unit 1. The majority of lions taken are by hunters using hounds. Predator calls can be another effective way to harvest mountain lions in this unit.

Lions may be called in using predator calls in the same manner as is used for calling coyotes. Longer calling sequences, up to 45 minutes, are recommended. Set up calling stands in rough canyon country with good visibility to spot approaching predators.

The most effective method by far for hunting mountain lions is trailing with hounds. While few hunters can afford to keep a pack of lion hounds for recreational hunting, many professional guides with seasoned hounds are available for hire for the hunter that is determined to bag a cougar. A list of licensed outfitter-guides operating in Unit 1 may be obtained by calling the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests at (928) 333-4301. Forest Service maps can also be obtained by calling this same number.

Areas: The best areas for finding lions will be around Escudilla Mountain, Flattop Mountain through the South Fork area, the Black River area, and in general, the transition areas between the higher and lower elevations.

Tree Squirrel

Overview: The general squirrel season in Unit 1 begins Oct. 4 and continues to Dec. 31. Unit 1 is home to two species of tree squirrels, the Abert's or tassel-eared squirrel and the red squirrel. Each of these squirrel species occurs in distinct habitat types. The Abert's tree squirrel is found almost exclusively in Ponderosa pine forests throughout the unit. The red squirrel is found at higher elevations in the mixed conifer and spruce-fir habitat types. Both squirrel species favor large, mature trees in a closed setting.

Pre-season scouting for these types of settings can increase your chances of success in hunting squirrels. The "chattering" call of the red squirrel is useful in locating these animals during the season. **Hunters should be sure to review the hunting regulations before going to the field**.

Areas: Abert's squirrels can be found throughout Unit 1, where mature Ponderosa pine forests occur. Forest Roads 2, 404, 65, and 70C are good areas to begin looking for these animals. The red squirrel occurs at higher elevation areas in the mixed conifer and spruce-fir forest types. Hunters would do well to look around the Escudilla

Mountain area, Greens Peak, Burro Mountain, and the area south of Big Lake.

Waterfowl

Overview: Waterfowl can be found throughout Unit 1 in a variety of wetland habitat types. Although there can be fair "tank jumping" in some lower elevations in Unit 1, the majority of viewing and hunting opportunities occur at the higher elevations on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest. Wetlands found on the Forest consist of natural, shallow wetlands that fill from snowmelt, man-made reservoirs, and some larger lake impoundments. Hunting and viewing opportunities are most productive in the fall, during October and November. Unit 1 has limited waterfowl hunting opportunities in December and January due to snow and ice coverage of the wetlands and subsequent migration of the birds to lower elevations. Since most of the wetlands are difficult to jump-shoot, the majority of water fowlers in Unit 1 utilize blinds and decoys. **Be sure to read the current waterfowl regulations, as separate seasons and bag limits may apply.**

Logistics: Prior to visiting Unit 1 for a waterfowl hunting experience, it is recommended that you acquire a U.S. Forest Service Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Map. Maps can be obtained from either the Springerville Ranger District or the Alpine Ranger District at the following numbers and hours:

Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Springerville RD (928) 333-4301

Alpine RD (928) 339-5000

Contact should also be made with these offices to learn road conditions and weather updates, as well as to get water levels in most of the wetlands. The Pinetop office of the Arizona Game and Fish Department would be another source for logistical information. They can be reached Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at (928) 367-4281.

Where to Go: As mentioned in the overview, there are three general types of wetland habitats in Unit 1 that offer waterfowl hunting opportunities.

Natural Basin Wetlands: These types of wetlands are generally shallow and provide abundant emergent and submergent vegetation. Both dabbling and diving species of waterfowl can be found on these wetlands. Examples of these types of wetlands that provide good, early season waterfowl hunting include Hay Lake and Hog Wallow Lake that can be accessed off State Route 273 to U.S. Forest Service Road 249. Many other small natural basins occur in Unit 1, which can be located with minimal scouting efforts.

Man-made Reservoirs: These are by far the most frequently used waters by both waterfowl and hunters during the early season in Unit 1. Again, the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest Service map will reveal many of the locations that for the most part, lie south of Hwy 260 and east to the Mexican Hay Lake highway, which is State Route 273. A quick glance at the map within this area will reveal numerous reservoirs. Water depths in the reservoirs vary from shallow, wadeable waters to others requiring boats. A good rule of thumb is if you do not see any emergent vegetation such as bulrush or cattails, it is too deep to wade. Some examples of excellent areas to scout include Basin Reservoir, which is just north of Crescent Lake off State Route 273, and White Mountain Reservoir and Geneva Reservoir, south of Hwy 260 on Forest Road 112. Moving east off the Water Canyon road, Forest road 285 will provide additional waterfowl hunting reservoirs, such as Saint Joseph's, Saint Mary's, and Russell Reservoir. Each of these areas has easy access and could be hunted with shore blinds and decoys. Fall gunning will most likely put mallard, teal, gadwall, widgeon, and pintail in your bag, while the deeper waters of these reservoirs will produce canvasback, redheads, and ringnecks. Retrieves by wading are generally possible, however, the use of a retriever is highly recommended.

Lakes: Lakes within Unit 1 also provide some excellent waterfowl hunting, especially near the shallow ends of these water bodies where emergent plant growth can be found. Caution must be exercised when hunting lakes, however, due to the presence of cold-water fisheries in most of them. In most cases, conflicts do not arise due to the time and weather preference for waterfowl hunting.

Examples of several reservoirs in Unit 1 which are certainly worth exploring include Nelson Reservoir, located south of Springerville on Hwy 191, Crescent Lake and Mexican Hay Lake off Hwy 273; and Luna Lake east of Alpine, Arizona, on Hwy 180. These water bodies can be hunted from shore; however, a johnboat concealed in the tules with decoys would be your best bet. **Remember when waterfowl hunting in a boat, Arizona Watercraft Regulations require a wearable life jacket for every occupant in the boat**.

Tricks of the Trade: When waterfowl hunting in Unit 1, snow is very possible, and both waterproof and insulated hunting garments are recommended. Of course, chest waders are a necessity for any waterfowler, not only to keep you dry but for placing decoys and retrieving birds. One or two dozen decoys are recommended with one or more skilled callers on either a pintail whistle or a mallard call. The author prefers 2 3/4-inch #4 steel shot for shooting over decoys. Lastly, consult your local Game and Fish Department office to obtain current waterfowl regulations, and be sure to identify what you're shooting at. An experience in the White Mountains this time of year can bring the best of nature, elk bugling, golden aspens, and crisp air with a pair of mallards dropping in. Good luck to all.

Game Management Unit Summary

Primary Game Species/Hunting Month(s)	
Elk	August - December
Turkey	October, April/May
Deer (Mule & White-tailed)	August - October
Secondary Game Species/Hunting Month(s)	
Antelope	August/September
Javelina	August - December
Average # Permits in Past 5 Years	
Elk	~ 1575
Turkey	~ 1027
Deer (Mule & White-tailed)	~ 425
Pronghorn Antelope	~ 54

Climate Information

Climate varies year to year and often day to day. Hunters should prepare for cool and/or cold weather, and they should also bring rain gear.

Cities, Roads & Campgrounds

Major Highways and Roads Leading To

From the East: State Hwys 60, 180, Forest Service 249, 88

From the West: State Hwy 260

From the North: State Hwys 191, 273, Forest Service 285

From the South: State Hwys 191, Forest Service 285, 26

Developed Campgrounds

Big Lake (S.E. side of Big Lake); East Fork of Black River has Buffalo Crossing and Diamond rock (along FS 276);

West Fork of Black River Campground along FS 68 (***currently closed until further notice***); Hoyer campground in Greer Lakes Recreational Area; Winn Campground near Lee Valley Lake.

Dispersed Camping

Camp anywhere on the Forest that will not cause damage to the habitat – 14-day limit.

Brief Description of Terrain, Elevation, and Vegetation

The north part of the Unit is pinyon -pine-juniper and open grasslands. There are ponderosa pine forests through interspersed with riparian areas (cottonwood-willow), rivers, streams, high elevation grasslands, and mixed conifers. Elevations range from 7,000 feet (Springerville-Eager) to 11,300 feet on Mt. Baldy.

Government Agencies and Phone Numbers

Arizona Game & Fish Department/Region I – 928-367-4281

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest, Alpine Ranger District. – 928-339-5000

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest, Springerville Ranger District. – 928-333-4372