

GMU 27

Region 1 - GMU 27: October 2026 *(This document date reflects its most recent review. Updates are made only when necessary.)*

Species within this game management unit (GMU): Black Bear, Bighorn Sheep, Elk, Javelina, Mountain Lion, Mule Deer, White-Tailed Deer, Merriam's Turkey, Dusky (Blue) Grouse, Dove, Quail and Tree Squirrel.

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Game Management Unit Boundaries

Attention Sportsman: The Malay Gap road is currently closed to vehicle access. For hunters interested in hunting this area foot access is still allowed. This area is accessed by crossing the San Carlos Apache Reservation. Non-tribal members need to ensure they have all appropriate permits to cross tribal lands. Be aware of and know the regulations of the San Carlos tribe before traveling through their lands.

Beginning at the New Mexico state line and AZ Hwy 78; southwest on AZ Hwy 78 to U.S. Hwy 191; north on U.S. Hwy 191 to the San Carlos-Morenci-Clifton road; west on the San Carlos-Morenci-Clifton road to Eagle Creek; north along Eagle Creek to the San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation boundary; north along the San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation boundary to Black River; northeast along Black River to the East Fork of Black River; northeast along the East Fork of Black River to the Three Forks-Williams Valley-Alpine road (FR 249) easterly along the Three Forks-Williams Valley- Alpine road to U.S. Hwy 180; southeast on U.S. Hwy 180 to the New Mexico state line; south along the New Mexico state line to AZ Hwy 78.

The Wallow Fire that occurred in the summer of 2011 significantly impacted various habitat zones in the northern portion of Game Management Unit 27 burning about 30% of the unit. The impacts of this fire occurred north of the Mogollon Rim and west of the Blue River. This fire has resulted in obvious changes to the habitat. It burned in a mosaic pattern and some areas were impacted much more severely than others. All areas within the fire perimeter are now open to the public. There are a few isolated roads that remain closed, as indicated by signs or barricades on the roads.Camping is allowed throughout the fire area except within a couple areas that were impacted severely by the fire. For restrictions on camping, refer to the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests website. Motorized game retrieval is allowed throughout the unit, except in those areas that were closed prior to the Wallow Fire, such as wildlife habitat areas, the Blue Range Primitive Area and the Black River non-motorized area. Hunters are reminded that their safety is their responsibility.Remember to Look Up, Look Down and Look Around. Recreation information from the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.

All Hunts

Your big game hunter questionnaire link is located on the back of your tag. You also will receive a hunter questionnaire postcard in the mail. You can choose to return the hunter questionnaire postcard via postal mail or online here. You may also receive an email containing a link to your hunter questionnaire. You can respond by one method only. This information is a critical component of the hunt recommendation process, and your information helps us to accurately estimate species harvest and set permit levels.

Species Information

Black Bear

Overview: The black bear population in Unit 27 has been stable over the past five years, with an average annual harvest of just over 30 bears. The bear population appears to be in good condition, and good hunting opportunities should exist throughout the fall.

Bears are found in good numbers throughout the unit. In the southern half of the unit, bears have been found in prickly pear stands and feeding on juniper berries. Bears are still found in abundance in the northern portion of the unit as well.

There are currently four separate seasons for bear hunting in Unit 27. Each of these hunts has a sow harvest objective to regulate the harvest of female bears, thus ensuring the reproductive health of the population.

Additionally, there is an annual harvest objective which, when met, will close any future hunts for the remainder of the calendar year. There are three non-permit hunting seasons (tags available over the counter) during the fall, and one non-permit hunt during the spring. The first fall hunt is an archery-only hunt that begins at the end of August (refer to the current hunt regulations) and continues through the Thursday just prior to the archery elk hunt opening, or until the sow harvest objective is reached. The second fall hunt is a general hunt open from early during the month of October or until the seven-sow harvest objective is

reached. The third hunt will open around Halloween weekend and continue to December 31, or until the sow harvest objective is reached. Stratifying the late fall season was done in an effort to distribute the bear harvest over a longer period of time and to allow more bear hunting opportunities during the fall. The spring hunt is open from late March to the end of July (refer to the current spring hunting regulations).

The most successful methods for hunting bears are glassing, calling, and pursuit with hounds (legal during the fall hunts only). Hunters in mid to lower elevations have been successful in locating bears by glassing open slopes containing an abundance of food plants that bears prefer, such as prickly pear cactus or acorn-producing oaks. Using a predator call can be an exciting and effective method to bring the animals to the hunter. Calling "stands" should be fairly long, up to 45 minutes per stand, as bears may come in very slowly to the call. Pursuit with trained hounds is probably the most effective method for hunting bears. Because a pack of trained hounds is expensive and time-consuming to put together, hunters may wish to book the services of a professional guide who uses hounds. A list of licensed outfitter-guides operating in Unit 27 may be obtained by calling the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests at (928) 333-4301. Maps can also be obtained by calling this same number.

Areas: To get to Unit 27, take Hwy 191 south from Springerville, or, for hunters coming from the southern parts of Arizona, take Hwy 191 north from Clifton. Remember to check the area north of US Highway 78. Good areas for the early fall hunt would include most of the high elevations above the Mogollon Rim from Alpine to Hannagan Meadow. Remember to be aware of the hazards that exist and will continue to exist for several years throughout the northern portion of the unit, in association with past forest fires. Below the Mogollon Rim, the Upper Eagle Creek watershed and the areas west of Maple Peak (Wild Bunch Canyon, Mud Springs Canyon) have produced many bears in the past. Focus on small riparian canyons and areas with abundant Gambel oak.

Hotspots for late season hunting include areas just under the Mogollon Rim in the Blue River and Eagle Creek watersheds. Look for steep, forested slopes and canyon heads where male bears will stage prior to hibernating. These same areas will be good for the spring hunt, as the boars will again stage in these rough and remote locations after emerging from their winter dens.

Bear hunters should be familiar with the following laws and regulations prior to going bear hunting. Female bears with cubs are not lawful for harvest. Care must be taken to look for the presence of cubs with all bears considered for harvest. 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.

Bighorn Sheep

Overview: There are currently four hunted populations of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep in Unit 27. The first is the Upper Blue River hunt area that has an estimated population of approximately 150 bighorns. The former Foote Creek and Bear Canyon hunt areas have been combined, expanded and renamed to create this new hunt area. With the increased area incorporated into a single hunt, hunters should expect to spend a lot of time scouting to be able to adequately cover the area. Most of the terrain is rugged and is within the Blue Range Primitive Area. This limits access to foot or horseback only.

The Upper Blue River Hunt Area is defined as: that portion of Unit 27 beginning at the junction of U.S. Hwy 180 and the New Mexico state line; south along the New Mexico state line to Forest Trail 41; northwest along Forest Trail 41 to the Little Blue River; south-southwest along the Little Blue River to the confluence of the Blue River; north along the Blue River to Forest Trail 14; west on Forest Trail 14 to U.S. Hwy 191; north on Hwy 191 to U.S. Hwy 180; east on U.S. Hwy 180 to the New Mexico state line.

The Foote Creek portion of the bighorn herd occupies some 25 to 30 square miles of rugged country at the northern tip of the Blue Range Primitive Area. The center of this range lies near the forks of Foote Creek at Horse Ridge. Topography is composed of steep, rocky canyons and cliffs, with pinyon-juniper and mahogany-oak browse vegetation communities dominant. Because the primitive area is managed as wilderness, all access to the bighorn range is by foot or horseback only. Hunters usually travel four to six miles from the selected trailhead by foot or horseback to access the core of the bighorn range. Because of the rugged terrain and travel distances involved, sportsmen are strongly encouraged to use horses and mules when hunting in the Foote Creek area. Packing in a spike camp into the Primitive Area to hunt from is also recommended.

Access into this area can be obtained from the Tutt Creek, Red Hill or Horse Ridge trailheads. Each of these trailheads has corrals available for sportsmen to use. The current state record Rocky Mountain ram, which officially scored 194 3/8 points, was harvested here in 2007. The average score of rams harvested in this hunt area runs in the 170s.

The Bear Canyon portion of the herd is located at the end of the Blue River Road (FR 281). This area has been hunted for the last several years, and has resulted in the successful harvest of rams scoring in the 170s.

This portion of the hunt unit is exclusively in the primitive area, which limits access to foot or horseback. Some of this area can be glassed from the road and most of the core area is within several miles of the Blue Road. The Bear Canyon area is not as remote as the Foote Creek area, but it is extremely rugged and people should take care when accessing it. Access to this area involves crossing private land at the end of the Blue River Road. In order to ensure continued access into this area, please respect all private property.

In the last few years, more sheep have been observed in several stretches of KP Canyon. A hunter with the Upper Blue River tag may benefit from taking a look at this remote canyon to try to locate sheep. Due to several fires in the upper KP Canyon area over the last few years, sheep are frequenting this area more. The area around Sawed-Off Mountain and KP Canyon above this may be a location hunters want to look at if warmer conditions exist. The areas along KP Canyon were impacted by the Wallow Fire, care should be taken when accessing this

hunt area during wet weather as floods down the Blue River are frequent, and flash floods are highly likely. Be prepared to wait out high water, and do not cross the river when flooded.

The second area is a hunt in the Lower Blue River hunt area. This is an expansion and renaming of the Upper San Francisco hunt area that was opened in 2011. The hunt area is defined as: That portion of Unit 27 beginning at the junction of the New Mexico state line and U.S. Hwy 78; west on U.S. Hwy 78 to Forest Road (FR) 212; northwest along FR 212 to the San Francisco River; southwest along the San Francisco River to Sardine Canyon; west along Sardine Canyon to U.S. Hwy 191; north along Hwy 191 to Forest Trail (FT) 14 (AD Bar Trail); east along FT 14 to the Blue River; south along the Blue River to the confluence of the Little Blue River; northeast along the Little Blue River to FT 41; west along FT 41 to the New Mexico state line; south along the New Mexico state line to the junction with Hwy 78.

Bighorn are typically found scattered in small groups throughout the hunt area. The San Francisco River and Blue River Canyons are usually the best places to begin scouting for a hunt. Bighorn have been taken from the Wildbunch Canyon and Pipestem Canyon areas, as well as from the San Francisco River close to the NM state line. Hunters should plan for remote conditions and also plan on doing plenty of scouting before their hunt.

The third area in Unit 27 that offers a bighorn hunt is at Lower Eagle Creek in the southwest corner of Unit 27. This hunt is managed in conjunction with the Unit 28 bighorn hunts. Refer to the Unit 28 description for additional information on this hunt.

Hunters successful in drawing this once in a lifetime hunting opportunity would be strongly advised to book the services of an outfitter-guide experienced in hunting with horses in this remote area if they do not have access to mountain-seasoned horses or mules. A list of outfitter-guides licensed to operate in this area can be obtained by calling the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Alpine Ranger District at (928) 339-4384 or the Clifton Ranger District at (928) 687-8600. Forest Service maps can also be obtained by calling the Alpine and Clifton Ranger Districts.

As bighorns are usually highly visible and not as elusive as other big game, the most difficult aspect of hunting bighorn is locating the rams and then negotiating the rugged terrain they inhabit. Essential equipment for a successful bighorn hunt would include: good, quality hiking boots; spotting scope and binoculars; a flat-shooting rifle with telescopic sight; and plenty of help to pack out your trophy. Pack-out weights for bighorn rams (boned out meat, plus head and cape) commonly exceed 200 pounds.

The final area in Unit 27 that offers a bighorn hunt is along the Black River on the northern boundary. This hunt is managed in conjunction with the Unit 1 bighorn hunt. Refer to the Unit 1 description for additional information on this hunt.

Areas: For the Upper Blue River area hunt, take Hwy 191 south from Springerville to Alpine. From Alpine, take Hwy 180 east to Forest Road 281 (adjacent to Luna Lake). Go down FR 281 south approximately 19 miles to the Foote Creek or Tutt Creek Trailheads. The most commonly used trails to access the bighorn range are Forest Service Trails 76 and 105, which begin at the Foote Creek and Tutt Creek Trailheads. Access may also be

seasonally obtained at the Horse Ridge and Red Hill Trailheads just east of Hwy 191, some 13 miles south of Alpine, but early winter snows may make these trailheads unavailable for vehicle access. Once within the bighorn range, popular glassing locations to spot sheep include Horse Ridge and Sissy Point. Refer to the appropriate USGS topographic map to locate these landmarks.

A sheep tag holder for the Upper Blue River Area may also look at the Bear Canyon area. Take FR 281 from Alpine south to the end of the road. Sheep can often be glassed looking east from the road on either side of where KP Creek merges with the Blue River

Special Regulations: All successful bighorn hunters must personally submit the intact horns and skull of their bighorn for inspection at a Department office within three days of the close of the season. Even if unsuccessful, hunters are still required to check out through a Department office within three days of the close of the season. Sportsmen hunting the Upper Blue River area are encouraged to check out their bighorn at the Pinetop Regional office. Checkouts at the Pinetop office are done between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, or after hours and on weekends by appointment. Call (928) 367-4281 to make an appointment. For bighorns taken in the Lower Blue River area, call either the Pinetop office at (928) 367-4281 or the Tucson office at (520) 628-5376 to make arrangements to check out your sheep.

Because the Blue Range Primitive Area is managed for wilderness values, use of any mechanized device, such as a vehicle, bicycle, or chain saw, is prohibited. Hunters are encouraged to visit with the Alpine or Clifton Ranger District Wilderness Staff for appropriate, low impact camping techniques and other wilderness restrictions.

Elk

Overview: Unit 27 currently offers elk seasons throughout the fall. Early fall hunt seasons that coincide with the elk breeding period include archery-only, in which both bull and antlerless permits are available, and early firearms bull, which is limited to muzzleloading rifles every other year. General antlerless seasons are offered in October to meet population management objectives. Late archery and firearms bull seasons are also offered during mid- to late-November and into early December. All elk permits must be obtained through the permit draw process. Because the quality of Arizona's bull elk hunts has become widely known, permits to hunt bull elk in Arizona are difficult to obtain. Drawing odds for an early firearms bull tag in Unit 27 can be as low as 1% of the total applicants. However, hunters willing to pursue antlerless elk have much better odds of being drawn.

Elk are widely distributed throughout the northern half of Unit 27. The opportunistic elk is thriving in habitats ranging from pinyon-juniper woodlands in lower elevations to spruce-fir forests at higher elevations. Hunters pursuing elk during September and October should have no problem finding plenty of animals, both bulls and cows, on high elevation summer range located above the Mogollon Rim. Those areas that were impacted most during the Wallow Fire seem to hold the most elk now. Elk can be found foraging on herbaceous forage and new aspen shoots throughout the summer and fall. Late season hunters have also been able to locate elk in the high elevation burned areas the past two years. To get away from crowds, hunters will have to brave rugged, winter range country located below the Mogollon Rim, in the Blue River and Eagle Creek watersheds.

If a hunter decides to hunt those areas off the Rim, they would be well advised to use horses or plan on arduous backpacking, both to access areas with concentrations of mature bulls and to pack out their meat and trophies. Late season hunters may wish to consider hiring the services of an outfitter-guide experienced in hunting these rugged and remote winter range areas. A list of outfitter-guides licensed to operate in Unit 27 can 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.

Early season bull elk hunting tactics involve using bugles and cow calls to draw rutting bulls in close enough for a shot. Tree stands placed on water sources, elk trails, or salt licks have also proven successful for early season hunters.

Antlerless hunters may have to rely on the more difficult tactic of still-hunting through feeding or bedding areas, and stalking in close enough for a shot. Late season tactics are similar to those for hunting deer. Successful late season tactics involve glassing with binoculars from vantage points at first light to locate bulls or cows, and then executing a stalk to get within archery or rifle range of the selected elk.

Areas: Take Hwy 191 south from Springerville to Alpine to access the northern portion of the unit. Hunters driving from the southern parts of the state may wish to take Hwy 191 north from Clifton.

A limited-opportunity hunt has been established to address resource concerns with elk establishing resident herds in the Eagle Creek area. Elk in the Eagle Creek area may be found near Black Mountain, the Double Circles Ranch or along Sheep Wash. If a person is willing to invest some time into these hunts, they can be successful. Also, remember that with the early time-frame of this hunt, it can be hot. Be prepared to process your harvest quickly and get it cooled to prevent loss of meat.

As previously mentioned, early season hunters will find elk well distributed along their summer range above the Mogollon Rim. Look for elk in feeding areas along riparian bottoms, wet cienegas, and open meadows in the early morning. Move to heavy timber on north facing slopes where elk commonly bed by mid-morning. During the late afternoon, hunters may intercept elk moving back into feeding areas.

A growing number of elk have established resident populations below the Mogollon Rim, particularly in the Upper Eagle Creek watershed, Mud Springs, Rose Peak, Red Mountain, and Alma Mesa areas. Resident elk can be found year-round, and these less hunted populations can be highly productive for hunters willing to expend the effort required to hunt there. These areas have become highly popular with guides and outfitters for hunting mature age-class bulls.

October antlerless hunters will find elk in the same locations as those in the early season. Areas where some of the larger concentrations of antlerless elk occur are around Sprucedale, off Forest Roads 26 and 24, in the Buckelew area off Forest Roads 567 and 58, and south of Alpine off Forest Roads 59 or 403. Other areas may hold seasonally abundant elk as well, so it is important to scout ahead of time to make this hunt a success.

Late season bull elk hunters will find groups of cows, calves and young bulls in the summer range areas. Mature

bulls can be tougher to locate and may have already migrated to their winter range. Areas above the Rim to look for bulls include the area between Middle Mountain and Forest Road 26, the benches above Black River, and the area along the Campbell Blue drainage between Hwy 191 and the New Mexico state line. Since the Wallow fire elk spend a majority of their time above the rim, in their summer range. If you are looking for a better chance at a mature bull, or you want to get away from the crowds, you may want to concentrate your time off the rim in either the Blue or Eagle Creek watersheds. In the Blue River watershed, some of the productive areas can be found around the Campbell Blue, on either Manness Peak, the upper end of Foote Creek, or in the upper ends of KP, Grant or Steeple canyons. In the Eagle Creek winter range, areas between Honeymoon Campground, Squirrel Canyon, and Baldy Bill have produced some good bulls in the past.

Special Regulations: Firearms and muzzleloader elk hunters need to be aware that the Alpine Valley is closed to elk hunting during all firearms and muzzleloader elk hunts. This closure has been enacted at the request of the residents of Alpine for public safety reasons. Refer to the footnotes in Commission Order 4 (elk) within the Hunting Regulations for specific details of the closure. To locate the private areas described, refer to an Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests map.

Javelina

Overview: Javelina hunting in Unit 27 is average. Although they can be found throughout the unit, huntable populations are generally found along the Blue River in the northern part of the unit or south of FR 475 (Juan Miller Road) and in Eagle Creek. It is advisable to get an Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests map. This map will give you an excellent view of the unit.

Areas: Blue River – From Alpine, take U.S. Hwy 180 east to FR 281 (adjacent to Luna Lake). Go south on FR 281 to access areas off of private land that contain herds of javelina. Areas along the confluences of KP Creek and Grant Creek with the Blue River have been very good in the past.

Rattlesnake-Buzzards Roost – This area is east of Clifton. Access is off of Hwy 191. Take the Skyline View Road past Loma Linda subdivision. It eventually arrives at Rattlesnake Springs, just inside the forest boundary. Land status is BLM, State Trust, and private. No access problems have been experienced thus far. Do not hunt in or next to the subdivision. One-quarter-mile distance shooting rules apply here. Large expanses of prickly pear cactus make this area highly attractive to javelina.

Lower Eagle Creek – This area is northwest of Clifton. Access can be obtained off of Hwy 191, west on the Pump Station Road to Eagle Creek. Remember that this road is the southern boundary of the unit. Vehicle access is limited. There are several dirt roads going north from the Pump Station Road. Land status here is BLM, State Trust, and private. Most of the private land belongs to the Freeport-McMoRan mining corporation. Hunters are reminded that this is private land and access is restricted. No hunting is allowed on the Freeport-McMoRan property. In this area, Eagle Creek forms the southwestern boundary of Unit 27. Know where you are and what the land status is at all times.

Juan Miller-Pat Mesa – This population of javelina is located in the central part of the unit. Access is off of Hwy

191, east on FR 475, to Blue River. Hunt from Cow Canyon east to the Blue River. If you are willing to do some serious hiking, go south off of FR 475 to Pat Mesa, just south of Pigeon Creek. There are several herds of javelina are surveyed in this area on a regular basis. There is no vehicle entry into this area.

Sheep Wash-Bee Canyon – In some years, this area can provide good hunting. Javelina are present all the time, but numbers can vary. Access is off of Hwy 191 on FR 217. About five miles west is the Sheep Wash Road. This road goes west to the San Carlos Reservation line. North of FR 217 there are several canyons with javelina. These include Big Dry and Bee Canyons. Javelina may also roam north of these canyons to Bear Canyon. This area is pinyon-juniper and open grassland habitat.

The upper Blue River area can also hold good javelina numbers. They can be found along the Blue River Road from about the state line south to the end of the road. If you hunt this area, be aware that much of it is private land, with some of it being posted and off-limits to hunters. Some of this area was impacted by the Wallow Fire, so you may want to scout ahead of time before hunting here.

Mountain Lion

Overview: Mountain lions, also referred to as cougars, can be found throughout Unit 27. Annually, an average of 10 lions per year are usually taken through sport harvest. Roughly half of the yearly harvest is with the aid of hounds. While lucky hunters occasionally locate lions by still hunting or glassing, the most successful methods for hunting lions involve the use of predator calls or hounds.

Mountain 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 27 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: To get to Unit 27, take Hwy. 191 south from Springerville, or, for hunters coming from the southern parts of Arizona, take Hwy. 191 north from Clifton.

Good areas to find mountain lion during the fall and winter months are located below the Mogollon Rim, or along the upper Blue River. Along the lower Blue River, excellent areas include Wild Bunch Canyon and Mud Springs Canyon. The canyons below Rose Peak also have good lion populations. Basically, any area that holds concentrations of deer or elk are prime locations for finding lions.

Unit 27 offers a general mountain lion season, from late August through late May (see current year's hunt regulations). It has been classified as Zone 11, along with Unit 1. The harvest threshold for the zone has been set

at 29 total lions.

Special Regulations: Lion hunters should be familiar with the following laws and regulations prior to going lion hunting. Legal lion is any lion except spotted kittens or females accompanied by spotted kittens. 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. If a hunter freezes the skull or hide before presenting it for inspection, the hunter shall prop the jaw open to allow access to the teeth and ensure that the attached proof of sex is identifiable and accessible. A premolar tooth will be removed during the inspection.

Mule Deer

Overview: Unit 27 is home to a diversity of landscapes. The elevation ranges from 3500 feet at Clifton to 9300 feet at the Mogollon Rim. The unit then slopes to 8000 feet at Alpine. Going north on Hwy 191, you pass through several vegetation zones. The area around Clifton is semi-desert, followed by chaparral, pinyon-juniper, ponderosa pine, and spruce-fir at the Rim. Proceeding towards Alpine, you go through mixed conifers and ponderosa pine. All the area north of the Rim is high pine country.

Unit 27 offers several opportunities to hunt mule deer throughout the year. Archery hunters can pursue deer with a draw-permit during the August-September hunt. There is no longer an archery deer hunt in January. Unit 27 also offers a juniors-only hunt during the Columbus Day weekend. Finally, general firearms hunters can hunt during the last part of October and/or the first part of November. There is no longer a general weapons hunt for mule deer in December for Unit 27. Refer to the current regulations booklet for specific hunt dates.

Vehicle access north of the Mogollon Rim is fair in most areas. The area has numerous two-track roads, as well as some main roads that are periodically maintained. Most numbered Forest Roads are open to hunter access, except those that are posted closed by the Forest Service. The area has several developed campgrounds, and camping in undeveloped areas is allowed almost everywhere, unless posted as “No Camping.” There are several areas that have been closed to camping due to safety concerns. See the Apache-Sitgreaves NF website or call the Alpine Ranger District office at (928) 339-5000 for specific information. Do not litter, and please leave a clean camp.

Vehicle access south of the Rim is limited. The only paved roads are Hwy 191, which runs on a south-north axis from Clifton to Alpine, and the other is Hwy 78 in the southern part of the unit. Highway 78 also forms part of the

unit's southern boundary. There are three other maintained dirt roads; Forest Road (FR) 475 (Juan Miller), FR 217 (Upper Eagle Creek), and FR 212 (Martinez Road). FR 475 runs east from Hwy 191 to the Blue River. FR 217 goes west from Hwy 191 then north to Honeymoon Campground. FR 212 starts at Highway 78 and goes north to the San Francisco River. FR 515 is a 4X4-only hunter access road built by the Forest Service using an Arizona Game and Fish Heritage Grant. It is advisable to acquire an Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests map. All roads and trails can be easily located on the map.

Due to the elevation difference, weather can vary. Rain and/or snow are not uncommon during the deer hunt. Deep snow is common at the higher elevations and present at lower elevations. Cold can be extreme at higher elevations. The unit's rivers and washes can reach flood stage in a short period of time. Be prepared for any kind of weather.

Areas: Mule deer can be found throughout the unit. Most of Unit 27 is comprised of public lands, with the largest landholder being the U.S. Forest Service. The extreme southern part of the unit has some BLM, State Trust, and private lands. There have never been any access problems in the unit, but it is always advisable to check land status when hunting in country you are not familiar with.

Four Bar Mesa – Open grassland area on both sides of US 191, bordered on the east by Turkey Creek and on the west by Sheep Wash. Both are deep, rough canyons. Primary vegetation is pinyon-juniper. This area has probably the highest concentration of mule deer in the unit south of the Rim. This is also an area with a high concentration of hunters. This is an easy hiking area until you drop into Turkey Creek or Sheep Wash. This area has been part of landscape scale habitat improvement projects for deer within the last ten years.

FR 475 – FR 475, also called the Juan Miller Road, runs east of US 191. This road is very popular with mule deer hunters, and hunting can be good on either side of this road. Going east on the 475 road, you cross the Blue River. After three miles you come to the Stacy Ranch. The Department purchased an access easement here using sportsmen's dollars to maintain this easement for hunters in perpetuity. This is the start of the Coalson Jeep Trail, which is an extremely rough road that snakes east about 13 miles to the Coalson cabin. It dead-ends there. Hunting is fair to good all through that area. Again, be advised that this is a very primitive road, and the surrounding area is very rough. Boots with plenty of ankle support are highly recommended and four-wheel drive vehicles are required! Problems with cross-country travel on 4-wheelers and other OHVs have cropped up in recent years, and hunters are asked to respect this area and "tread lightly."

Upper Blue River – This area is excellent mule deer habitat. Access is on FR 281 and FR 567. FR 281 leaves US 180 at Alpine, and proceeds 31 miles to the south. It ends at a gated ranch that allows foot and horse access only. With few exceptions, this is the only vehicle access into this area. The land on either side of the roads is the Blue Primitive Area, which is off limits to vehicles. FR 567 leaves US 191 at Beaver Creek and proceeds east and south, joining FR 281 at Blue River. Foote Creek Mesa holds the largest concentrations of mule deer in the Upper Blue area. Broken terrain in the pinyon-juniper type allows for good spot-and-stalk mule deer hunting. Deer concentrations may not be as good if weather remains warm. If that is the case, deer are often found at higher elevations.

As mentioned, vehicle access is very limited; however, there are plenty of hiking trails. The area is very steep and rough. Be prepared for serious hiking. It is excellent horseback country. Another precaution that must be considered is land status. The Blue River bottom is mostly private land. Be advised that landowners in the area do not allow camping or hunting on their lands. Camp and hunt only on public lands, which are abundant.

North of Mogollon Rim – Mule deer hunting in Unit 27 north of the Mogollon Rim is scattered. This area primarily consists of high pines, and vehicle access is fair. Some areas that can be productive include the area between Middle Mountain (FR 37) and FR 26, all of the areas along FR 25 including 25B and 25D, and those areas east of Highway 191 between FR 567 and the Blue Lookout Road (FR 184). For those that do not want to rough it, there is lodging and food at Hannagan Meadow Lodge. All of these areas above the Rim seem to be more productive during the early season archery hunt than during the later general hunt. However, depending on weather, it seems that the deer herd has been holding to these higher elevation areas longer than they did prior to the Wallow Fire.

Eagle Creek – Leaving US 191 and traveling on FR 217, you come to Eagle Creek. Going east of FR 217 are several roads into areas that offer fair to good hunting. They are FR 515 that goes past Black Mountain and back to US 191. The next one is FR 46, also called the Bear Canyon Road. This road goes east about six miles, ends, and becomes a trail. North of the 46 road is the 49 road, also called the Mud Springs Road. This road also ends and turns into a hiking trail. These areas are mostly pinyon-juniper habitat with some open grasslands.

Other areas – The Hagan Corral area, Strayhorse and Crabtree Canyons are located north of Rose Peak. These can be good hunting for early seasons such as the September archery hunt.

Special Regulations: Although not mandatory, hunters are asked to contact Department personnel if they are willing to let the Department collect tissue samples from harvested animals. This is to help in determining age criteria and check for the presence of Chronic Wasting Disease and any other diseases. It will also help ensure the continuation of the best possible management of this deer population for the future.

White-tailed Deer

Overview: Unit 27 is home to a diversity of landscapes. The elevation runs from 3,500 feet at Clifton to 9,300 feet at the Mogollon Rim. The unit then slopes to 8,000 feet at Alpine. Going north on Hwy 191, you pass through several vegetation zones. The area around Clifton is semi-desert, followed by chaparral, pinyon-juniper, ponderosa pine, and spruce-fir at the Rim. Proceeding towards Alpine, you go through mixed conifers and ponderosa pine. All the area north of the Rim is high pine country.

Unit 27 offers several opportunities to hunt white-tailed deer throughout the year. Archery hunters can pursue deer with a draw-permit during the August-September hunt. There is no longer an archery deer hunt in January. Unit 27 also offers a juniors-only hunt during the Columbus Day weekend. Finally, general firearms hunters can hunt during the end of October or, for the late hunt, during the last half of December. Refer to the current regulations booklet for specific hunt dates.

Vehicle access north of the Mogollon Rim is fair in most areas. The area has numerous two-track roads, as well as some main roads that are periodically maintained. Most numbered Forest Roads are open to hunter access, except those that are posted as closed by the Forest Service. The area has several developed campgrounds, and camping in undeveloped sites is allowed almost everywhere, unless posted as "No Camping." There are several areas that have been closed to camping due to safety concerns. See the Apache-Sitgreaves NF website or call the Alpine Ranger District office at (928) 339-5000 for specific information. Please obey all rules and regulations. Do not litter, and leave a clean camp.

Vehicle access south of the Rim is limited. The only paved roads are Hwy 191, which runs in a south-north axis from Clifton to Alpine. Another is Hwy 78 in the southern part of the unit. This highway also forms part of the unit's southern boundary. There are three other maintained dirt roads; Forest Road (FR) 475 (Juan Miller), FR 217 (Upper Eagle Creek), and FR 212. FR 475 runs east from Hwy 191 to the Blue River. FR 217 goes from Hwy 191 west then north to Honeymoon Campground. FR 212 starts at Highway 78 and goes north to the San Francisco River.

FR 515 is a 4X4-only hunter access road built by the Forest Service using an Arizona Game and Fish Heritage Grant. It is advisable to acquire an Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest map. All roads and trails can be easily located on the map.

Due to elevation differences, weather can vary. Snow is not uncommon during the deer hunt. During the late elk and White-tailed hunts, deep snow is common at the higher elevations. Rivers and washes can reach flood stage in a short period of time. Be prepared for any kind of weather.

Areas: The largest white-tailed deer population in Unit 27 is around the Mitchell Peak/Grey's Peak area, and along the southern face of the Mogollon Rim. Hunters report good numbers of deer in these areas. In particular, some quality deer are found in the areas around Strayhorse Canyon and Raspberry Canyon. Walnut Tank west of the highway in this area is excellent, as well. All the areas east and west of the highway and down towards the larger canyons coming off the Mogollon Rim offer good white-tailed hunting. This country is rough and steep, and vehicle access is very limited. Hwy 191 runs between Mitchell and Grey's Peak, and climbs the Mogollon Rim at Blue Vista.

The Big Lue Mountains are located on the southern edge of Unit 27. There is fair to good white-tailed hunting here. These mountains are in what is commonly known as the Mule Creek/Martinez area. Again, vehicle access is limited. Access north of the Big Lues is by Hwy 78. FR 212 will get you north of the Big Lues. Vegetation is pinyon-juniper with some open grassland.

Robinson Mesa and Hot Air Canyon have a white-tailed deer herd that is increasing in numbers. It can be accessed via FR 217, then by trail #37. The shortest access from Hwy 191 is from Sheep Saddle using trail #16, or west along trail #33 (East Eagle). Vegetation is pinyon-juniper, oak thickets, and chaparral. The area is very brushy, but there are plenty of trails. A hot spot is an area known locally as Walnut Tank.

Local populations of white-tailed deer can be found throughout the rest of the unit, as well, although in much lower concentrations. For those people lucky enough to draw a tag, it is a good idea to get out in the field and

scout the area you plan on hunting to locate where white-tail are more abundant.

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 number of deer equaling the archery deer harvest limit for a particular unit and species has been reported, that unit will be closed to further archery deer hunting at sundown the Wednesday immediately following. Click here for more information on archery deer regulations and harvest reporting.

Hunters are required to report archery deer harvest information to the department within 48 hours of taking a deer. Visit the Arizona Game and Fish Department harvest reporting page to complete the mandatory report.

Merriam's Turkey

Overview: Unit 27 offers both fall and spring limited weapon-shotgun shooting shot permitted turkey hunts. Tags for both hunts must be obtained through the permit draw process. Additionally, there is a fall and spring archery-only, over-the-counter non-permit tag hunt. The spring hunt is for bearded turkeys only, while the fall hunt allows any turkey (bearded or not) to be taken. The spring Junior's hunt is also an over-the-counter non-permit tag hunt. This Jr's tag is good for either the spring of fall hunt in the same calendar year.

The Wallow Fire impacted the turkey population extensively throughout the northern portion of the unit. However, the turkeys appear to have recovered well and are again being seen throughout their range. Merriam's turkey are widely distributed throughout the northern two-thirds of the unit, using habitat types ranging from deciduous riparian, pinyon-juniper, ponderosa pine, and mixed conifer, to spruce-fir forests in the higher elevations. Fall turkey hunters wanting to increase their chances for success should focus on ponderosa pine and mixed conifer forests, with Gambel oak present in the understory. Turkeys often key on these Gambel oak sites in the fall to feed on the energy-rich acorns produced by the oak trees. Large riparian river bottoms, such as the Blue River and Eagle Creek, can also be good locations to hunt turkey during the fall.

Turkey distribution during the spring can vary widely, depending on the melting of the winter snow pack. Look for areas from the pine-oak belt up into mixed conifer forest where snow melt has resulted in the production of new herbaceous growth. Turkey foraging habits during the spring often key into new green herbaceous growth, as well as using acorns and pine seeds left over from the previous fall. Heavy signs of scratching in the leaves or needles under oak and pine trees are sure indicators that turkeys are using an area.

The best hunting method for the fall involves "still-hunting" by walking slowly through foraging areas during the early morning or by setting up near heavily used water sources. Spring turkey hunters are most successful by locating a gobbler on the roost after sundown, then setting up on that roost the following morning and calling the gobbler to them using a variety of hen turkey calls. There are numerous videotapes available commercially to assist the novice spring turkey hunter in the art of turkey calling. Full camouflage clothing, including face and hands, is a must for spring turkey hunters, as gobblers have excellent eyesight.

USFS maps can be obtained by calling the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests at (928) 333-4301.

Areas: Take Hwy 191 south from Springerville to Alpine to access the northern portion of the unit. Hunters driving from the southern parts of the state may wish to take Hwy 191 north from Clifton.

With turkey population numbers recovering quickly after the Wallow Fire, turkey can again be located throughout the northern portion of the unit. Those areas adjacent to unburned patches seem to hold the highest concentrations. If you have trouble locating birds, those areas along the Blue River, Eagle Creek and along Hwy 191 from Strayhorse to Rose Peak offer the best alternatives to the high elevation areas that most are used to hunting.

The high elevation areas from Alpine to Rose Peak, accessed from Hwy 191, are good places for both fall and spring hunters to begin scouting. Access to the Blue River can be obtained on Forest Roads (FR) 281, south from Alpine, and 567, east from Hwy 191 at Beaverhead. Access to Eagle Creek can be obtained from Hwy 191on FR 217, or on a variety of trails leading west from Hwy 191 between Strayhorse Campground and Rose Peak. Hunters in the Blue River and lower Eagle Creek areas need to be courteous of the many private land in-holdings in these areas. It is unlawful to discharge a firearm within 1/4 mile of any house or outbuilding without the owner's permission. Never trespass or hunt on private land without first obtaining permission from the landowner.

Unfortunately, Arizona has experienced several hunting accidents during turkey seasons in the past. Always be sure of your target before shooting and practice safe firearms handling techniques. Avoid wearing clothing that has red, white, or blue colors, as these are the dominant colors on the head of a male turkey.

Dusky Grouse

Overview: Dusky grouse populations have not been evaluated since the Wallow Fire. The fire impacted a large portion of the grouse habitat throughout Unit 27. Areas to look for grouse include the northern half of the unit in high elevation mixed conifer and spruce-fir forest habitats. Look for grouse along ridge tops and steep slopes that have Douglas fir and aspen present. Birds have also been seen in the fringe areas of burns and conifer forest. Additionally, Areas east of Hwy 191 did not burn as severely as those areas west of the highway and may hold more birds. Some of these areas to look into are located between Hannagan Meadow and KP Cienega.

Small forest openings are also good places to find grouse feeding on forbs and berries. Overall habitat conditions should be enhanced in the long run by the Wallow fire. The Horton fire may help in the next few years in the higher elevations. In the past, hunters would harvest average of 110 grouse per year in Unit 27.
Principle food items for dusky grouse during the fall are Douglas fir needles, aspen leaves, wild pea and vetch, dandelion, and raspberry. A properly trained bird dog can greatly enhance your success at finding these elusive birds.

Areas: To get there, take Hwy 191 south from Springerville, or, for hunters coming from the southern parts of the state, take Hwy 191 north from Clifton.

Dusky grouse concentrations can be found in the high elevation areas around Hannagan Meadow. Forest Roads

25 and 54, leading west from Hwy 191, access good areas for finding grouse.

USFS maps can be obtained by contacting the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests at (928) 333-4301.

Dove

Overview: Dove, both mourning and white-wing, occupy Unit 27, but not in enough numbers to provide active and continuous shooting. Small pockets at the southern edge of the unit provide dove hunting opportunities, but a trip to the unit will likely result in more scenic vistas than bag limits. If you're after consistent bag limits, advice is to seek another hunt unit.

Quail

Overview: Unit 27 contains two species of quail, Gambel and Mearns. Gambel quail prevail, and can be found in several areas. Mearns can be found unit-wide, but in such scattered populations as to make them truly a challenge.

Area: Good populations of Gambel quail can be found in the areas southeast of Clifton. These are Rattlesnake, Buzzards Roost, and Rustlers Canyons. Access is by State Route 78. You can also take the Skyline View Road past the Loma Linda subdivision to Rattlesnake Spring. Do not hunt on or next to the subdivision. Quail populations can vary from year to year. Another area to consider is Lower Eagle Creek. Access is via Hwy 191 and then west on the Pump Station Road. This area can provide fair Gambel quail hunting, especially close to or in Eagle Creek.

Tree Squirrel

Overview: Tree squirrel populations, of both Abert's and red squirrels, have remained fairly stable in recent years in Unit 27. Tree squirrels may be found across the northern half of the unit in high elevation Ponderosa pine, mixed-conifer, and spruce-fir forest habitat types. Look for Abert's squirrels in Ponderosa pine forest, focusing your attention on stands with large trees that have interlocking crowns. The presence of Gambel oak in conjunction with Ponderosa pine is especially good for Abert's squirrel habitat during the fall, as squirrels will feed on Gambel oak acorns when they are available. Principle food items for Abert's squirrels during the fall are fungi (mushrooms and truffles), acorns, pine seed, and inner pine bark.

The smaller red squirrel or chickaree may be found in high elevation mixed-conifer and spruce-fir forest habitats. Chickaree's principle food items during the fall are fungi and conifer cones.

The best time to hunt tree squirrels is from first light to mid-morning on clear, still days. Tree squirrels tend to be very inactive during stormy or windy weather. The best hunting method is to "still hunt" by walking very slowly and quietly though good squirrel habitat, frequently scanning the forest floor and tree branches for active squirrels. Squirrels may be stalked and shot on the ground, or chased up a tree and harvested. A well-trained squirrel dog can be a great advantage in locating and treeing squirrels. Both shotguns shooting shot and .22 rimfire rifles are good firearm choices for squirrel hunting. USFS maps can be obtained by contacting the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests at (928) 333-4301.

Areas: Take Hwy 191 south from Springerville, or for hunters coming from the southern parts of the state, take Hwy 191 north from Clifton.

Abert's squirrel concentrations can be found in Ponderosa pine forests in the Beaver Creek and Campbell Blue River valleys. Forest Roads 26, 58 and 567 access good areas for finding Abert's squirrels.

Red squirrel concentrations can be found in the high elevation areas around Hannagan Meadow. Forest Roads 25 and 54 leading west from Hwy 191 access good areas for finding red squirrels.

Remember, several areas in the northern portion of the unit are closed to all entry, so be sure to know where you are hunting and where the Forest Closure boundaries are.

Game Management Unit Summary

Primary Game Species/Hunting Month(s)	
Elk	September/December
Mule Deer/White-Tailed Deer	August/October
Turkey	April/May, October
Secondary Game Species/Hunting Month(s)	
Javelina	January/February
Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep	December
Average # Permits in Past 5 Years	
Elk	650 Bull, 500 Cow
Mule Deer	1,350 Rifle/150 Archery
Turkey	350 Fall, 600 Spring
Pronghorn	150 General/HAM, 75 Archery
Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep	5 - 7

Climate Information

Month	Avg. Temp	Avg. Rainfall	Avg. Snowfall
January	Max 48°/Min 18°	0.54"	7.1"
February	Max 53°/Min 25°	1.15"	1.4"
April	Max 60°/Min 24°	0.60"	1.5"
May	Max 67°/Min 29°	0.68"	0.3"
September	Max 70°/Min 37°	2.46"	0.0"
October	Max 63°/Min 27°	2.09"	0.7"
November	Max 53°/Min 20°	1.53"	2.9"
December	Max 46°/Min 40°	1.69"	11.3"

Other Climate Information
This unit's northern boundary is at approximately 8,500' elevation; the southern boundary is approximately 3,500', which leads to a great variety of temperatures and climate conditions. It might be warm and sunny in the southern part and snowing in the northern. Check with ADOT or Forest Service offices for current weather conditions and road closures. Highway 191 between Alpine and Clifton can be extremely icy and snowy in inclement weather, please use caution during winter months.

Cities, Roads & Campgrounds

Major Cities and Towns in or Near Game Management Unit and Nearest Gas, Food and Lodging
Alpine, Hannagan Meadow, Clifton/Morenci

Major Highways and Roads Leading To
From the East: U.S. 180, Hwy 78
From the West: U.S. 60 to 180
From the North: U.S. 191
From the South: U.S. 191

Developed Campgrounds
Honeymoon campground on Eagle Creek from Forest Road 217; Upper and Lower Blue campgrounds accessible from Forest Rd. 281; Diamond Rock, Aspen, Buffalo Crossing, along the East Fork of the Black River; Hannagan, near Hannagan Meadow off of Hwy 191; KP Cienega, Stray Horse, and Juan Miller off of 191.

Undeveloped Campgrounds
Camping is allowed on Forest Service land throughout the unit.

Brief Description of Terrain, Elevation and Vegetation
Northern half of the unit is ponderosa pine and mixed conifer forest, rolling hills, and high mountains. Elevations range from 6,500'-9,000'. Southern half of unit is south of Mogollon Rim and has some ponderosa pine forests in the higher elevations, with pinyon-juniper forests interspersed with grasslands and desert scrub. Elevations in the southern end range from 4000'-9000'.

Government Agencies and Phone Numbers
Arizona Game and Fish Department, Region I – 928-367-4281
Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest, Alpine District – 928-339-5000
Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest, Clifton District – 928-687-8600