



Major Proposed Rule Changes for Hunting and FWC-Managed Areas

Final rules
February 2016

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Division of Hunting and Game Management



Version 2

This presentation covers the major proposed rule changes related to hunting and to FWC-managed public areas. Full summaries of all proposed rule changes, including nonsubstantive technical changes and annual calendar adjustments, are included in the additional background material.

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Rule Development

April – July 2015: reviewed proposals received from staff and the public

September – October 2015: solicited and assessed stakeholder input

November 2015: Commission reviewed; approved to advertise

December 2015: advertised in Florida Administrative Register; communicated with stakeholders

February 2016: Commission considers adoption



FWC staff received approximately 130 requests for changes from the public, staff, and cooperators. Some of these ideas were proposals for change to publications, policies, or other non-rulemaking issues. Staff recommended approximately 60 of the ideas for rule changes. The public has had an opportunity to directly submit comments to staff over the internet (through an online pole) and via email and phone.

Specific Rule Changes

New Hunting Opportunity:

- 33 areas: add hunts, days, species or methods of take to existing hunts, or increase quotas (note: allow hunting small game with any dog during small game season on Joe Budd WMA)

Sustainability Measures:

- 3 areas: decrease quotas; establish quotas; reduce area open to hunt, methods allowed or game legal to take



New Hunting Opportunity - Increases to hunt types, number of days, number of quota permits issued, methods of take or number of species to hunt:

Southwest Region (68A-15.061): Croom, Fred C. Babcock/Cecil M. Webb – Yucca Pens Unit, Green Swamp, Green Swamp – West Unit, Hilochee, Upper Hillsborough; **(68A-17.005):** Lake Wales Ridge – Royce Unit

North Central Region (68A-15.062): Andrews, Big Bend – Hickory Mound Unit, Big Bend – Snipe Island Unit, Cary, Cedar Key Scrub, Citrus, Flying Eagle, Lochloosa, Log Landing

Northwest Region (68A-17.005): L. Kirk Edwards

(68A-15.063): Apalachee, Box-R, Escribano Point, Tate's Hell – Womack Creek Unit;

Note: Staff is requesting approval to advertise a Notice of Change to allow any dog to be used to hunt small game (quail, rabbit, squirrel and migratory birds) during small game season on Joe Budd WMA. The Florida Forest Service supports this change, and an informal survey of area hunters indicated strong support.

(7) Joe Budd Wildlife Management Area

(d) General regulations

2. Taking wildlife with dogs is prohibited except any dog may be used to take small game that bird dogs and retrievers are allowed during small game season hunts.

Northeast Region (68A-15.065): Caravelle Ranch, Dunns Creek, Guana River, Half Moon, Herky Huffman/Bull Creek, Jumper Creek, Richloam, Salt Lake, Three Lakes, Three Lakes – Prairie Lakes Unit, Triple N Ranch

Sustainability Measures – We occasionally need to take measures to ensure the sustainability of hunting opportunities in cases where there are resource concerns, landowner requests or stakeholder concerns that cannot be addressed using non-regulatory means.

North Central Region (68A-15.062):

Citrus – Reduce hunting pressure and increase hunt quality by changing the archery season from 1 quota hunt (first 4 days, 1000 quota permits, exemptions allowed) and 19 days (no quota permit required) to 3 quota hunts (9, 7 and 7-days each, 500 quota permits per hunt, exemptions allowed). Also, change the quota for muzzleloading gun and general gun seasons from 850 to 500 quota permits per hunt (exemptions allowed). These changes are necessary to address declining deer harvest.

Osceola – Reconfigure the 96,616 acre Dog Hunt Area (would result in a net reduction of 5,065 acres) to alleviate conflicts.

Northwest Region (68A-15.063):

Joe Budd – Allow the take of antlerless deer by antlerless deer permit only. The intent of this proposed change is to address declining deer abundance on the area.

Specific Rule Changes

Other Rules:

- 8 areas: revise rules concerning roads, vehicles, access or camping
- 8 areas: adjust hunt types, permit issuance method and dates



Other Rules:

Roads, vehicles, access or camping -

Southwest Region (68A-15.061): Fred C. Babcock/Cecil M. Webb, Upper Hillsborough

South Region (68A-15.064): Dinner Island Ranch, Everglades and Francis S. Taylor (68A-17.005): John C. and Mariana Jones/Hungryland, John G. and Susan H. DuPuis

Northeast Region (68A-15.065): Seminole Forest – Lake Tracy Unit, Half Moon

Adjust hunt types, permit issuance method and dates –

Southwest Region (68A-15.061): Arbuckle, Fred C. Babcock/Cecil M. Webb – Yucca Pens Unit

North Central Region (68A-15.062): Andrews, Cary, Osceola

Northeast Region (68A-15.065): Buck Lake, Half Moon

Deer Management Units (68A-13.004): DMU A3 – Correct an error so that the antlerless deer season opens on the same day as the second phase of the antlered deer season.

Specific Rule Changes

Feedback Received:

- Most rules generally supported
- Exceptions:
 - Camping permit
 - John C. and Mariana Jones/Hungryland WEA
 - Dinner Island Ranch WMA
 - Prohibit vessels with internal combustion engines during quota hunts
 - John G. and Susan H. DuPuis Jr. WEA



Feedback received as part of our public outreach showed that a majority of respondents supported most rules. Some exceptions to this included proposed rules to require a no-cost permit for camping within designated campgrounds on John C. and Mariana Jones/Hungryland WEA (Hungryland) and Dinner Island Ranch WMA, as well as a proposed rule to prohibit the use of vessels with internal combustion engines during quota hunts on John G. and Susan H. DuPuis Jr. WEA (Dupuis).

The proposals to require a no-cost permit for camping within designated campgrounds on Hungryland and Dinner Island Ranch are in response to continued problems such as individuals leaving camping equipment unattended, claiming campsites for extended periods of time and creating conflicts with area users. This discourages other users from camping and deteriorates the camping experience. Law Enforcement staff has focused efforts on these campgrounds; however, they have found existing rules to be insufficient to address the issues. Requiring a permit for camping in designated campgrounds would allow for more equitable distribution of camping opportunity and for camping rules to be addressed through permit provisions. Comments received to date suggest that many who opposed these rules did not support them because they opposed the idea of needing to obtain an additional permit or they felt that a fee would be required. Staff has communicated with stakeholders in response to these concerns and clarified that no fee would be required and that permits would be available on short notice.

The proposal to prohibit the use of vessels powered by internal combustion engines during quota hunts on DuPuis WEA is in response to hunters complaining of the disturbance created by the use of mud boats during deer hunting seasons. Airboats, ORV's, swamp buggies and ATV's are currently prohibited on the area; however, the use of mud boats is allowed. During quota hunts, only individuals authorized to participate in the hunt are allowed on the area. As a result, this change would only impact quota hunters and not those wishing to fish on the area outside of a quota period. The majority of individuals who provided feedback indicated they supported this rule proposal; however, some individuals expressed concern that this rule change would make accessing the area more difficult. Staff believes that moving forward with this rule would increase the quality of the hunt while having minimal negative

impact on existing users.

Babcock Ranch Preserve

Proposed Rules (68A-15.006, F.A.C.):

- Rules facilitate the Florida Forest Service becoming lead land manager with FWC a cooperating partner (per Section 259.1053, F.S.)
- Allow FWC to manage:
 - Wildlife management activities
 - Tier II recreation program (fee-based)
- Keep rules in Tier I (open to public hunting) and Tier II hunt areas consistent with the previous land manager's hunting program
- Florida Forest Service will conduct Operation Outdoor Freedom programs



These proposed rules facilitate the Florida Forest Service (FFS) becoming the lead land manager of Babcock Ranch Preserve with FWC as a cooperating partner (lead land management responsibility transitioning to FFS in August of 2016 per Section 259.1053, F.S.).

Primary changes for FWC include assuming responsibility for all wildlife management activities on the property and the Tier II recreation program. The Tier II recreation program is a revenue generating permitting process that allows a permit holder along with a limited number of participants (i.e., subpermittees) and their guests to have year-round recreational access and limited exclusive hunting privileges in their designated area. Per Section 259.1053, F.S., permit fees will be market-based, and proceeds collected from these permits will be the funding source for FWC's management activities on the area (the area will continue to be managed under the financially self-sustaining model). See the background documents for the fee schedule.

In the Tier I hunt area (the 16,612 acre portion of the area open to public hunting) and the Tier II hunt area, hunting rules would remain consistent with the previous land manager's hunting program.

Additionally, rules would ensure FFS could conduct Operation Outdoor Freedom (OOF) programs on the lands outside of the Tier I and Tier II hunt areas. Operation Outdoor Freedom is an endeavor of FFS that provides recreational opportunities (including hunting and fishing) to wounded veterans.

Public comments received regarding these rules were generally supportive. Comments received suggested that many of those who did not support the proposed rules did so because they preferred FWC to be the lead land manager. The Florida Forest Service was made lead land manager by Florida Statute (Section 259.1053, F.S.).

Public Input

- Online poll for receiving public comments
- Stakeholders notified through email and social media
 - Sent to more than 140,000 email addresses
- Over 8,200 responses



Summaries of all rule proposals regarding hunting and FWC-managed areas were provided through an online poll beginning September 8 (ongoing) with instructions (to indicate support/not support) and request to make comments. The opportunity to comment was advertised and made available through FWC's HuntFlorida Facebook page. Additionally, an email blast was sent via GovDelivery (FWC's email news group service), resulting in emails to over 140,000 unique email addresses. These efforts combined resulted in over 8,200 responses. This is almost 2,000 more responses than we received last year, which was the first year employing this outreach method. Staff evaluated public input and made appropriate changes to rule proposals.

Staff Recommendation



- Approval to advertise a Notice of Change to allow any dog for hunting small game (quail, rabbit, squirrel and migratory birds) on Joe Budd WMA - 68A-15.063(d)(2), F.A.C
- Approval to advertise a Notice of Change to add fee structure and change the effective date - 68A-9.004, F.A.C.
- Approval of the other rules as advertised



Seeking approval to advertise a Notice of Change to allow any dog for hunting small game (quail, rabbit, squirrel and migratory birds) on Joe Budd WMA - 68A-15.063(d)(2), F.A.C.

Seeking approval to advertise a Notice of Change to add fee structure (see background materials for fee structure) and change the effective date for Babcock Ranch Preserve - 68A-9.004, F.A.C.

Seeking approval of the other rules as advertised. If approved, 68A-9.004, F.A.C. would take effect April 1, 2016, while the remaining rules would take effect July 1, 2016.

The following slides are considered backup material
and are not anticipated to be part of the actual
presentation







