

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners

From: Diane R. Eggeman, Director, Division of Hunting and Game Management

Date: February 11, 2016

Subject: Final Rule Changes for Hunting 2016-2017

Purpose:

Final rule amendments will be presented to revise select statewide hunting regulations, and specific area regulations on Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), Wildlife and Environmental Areas (WEAs) and Miscellaneous Areas and to conform hunting dates to calendar year date changes.

Summary:

Staff proposed rule amendments at the November 2015 Commission meeting that would 1) revise Babcock Ranch Preserve rules to facilitate the Florida Forest Service becoming the lead managing agency for the property, with the Commission as cooperator, and to continue the hunting program consistent with the previous private land manager; 2) require quota permits during the entire archery season and reduce the number of quota permits issued for archery, muzzleloading gun and general gun hunts on Citrus WMA; 3) revise the dog hunt area to resolve dog hunting related conflicts on Osceola WMA; 4) restrict hunting during the general gun-walk season to only north of the East/West Airboat Trail and allow the use of airboats and tracked vehicles south of the East/West Airboat Trail in Water Conservation Area 2A of Everglades and Francis S. Taylor WMA; 5) prohibit motorized vessels during quota hunts in John G. and Susan H. Dupuis WEA; 6) require permits for camping on Dinner Island Ranch WMA and John C. and Mariana Jones / Hungryland WEA; 7) provide additional opportunities for hunting small game (quail, rabbit, squirrel and migratory birds) with any dog during small game season on 24 areas; 8) provide additional vehicle access during hunting season on 2 areas; 9) change the issuance method or increase the number of quota permits on 2 areas; 10) shift hunting season dates; 11) establish new wild hog hunts on 3 areas; 12) establish a new archery hunt on 1 area; 13) establish a new general gun hunt on 2 areas; 14) provide additional opportunities for hunting wild hogs on 2 areas; 15) reduce the number of days or hunts that require quota permits on 2 areas; 16) provide additional fishing opportunities on 1 area; 17) expand the legal methods of take on 1 area; 18) establish additional youth spring turkey hunts on 1 area; 19) require antlerless deer permits to take antlerless deer on 1 area; and 20) establish or expand small game seasons on 2 areas.

FWC staff has gathered input on all proposed rule amendments via an online poll since September 8th. Thousands of comments have been received to date and are generally supportive of most proposals. However, based on input received via the online poll and other avenues, we are proposing to add Joe Budd WMA to the list of 23 WMA's where the use of any dog to hunt small game during the small game season would be allowed. This change is supported by area hunters as well as the Florida Forest Service.

Staff Recommendation:

(a) Approve a Notice of Change to Rule 68A-15.063, F.A.C. to allow the use of any dog for hunting small game during the small game season on Joe Budd WMA; (b) Approve a Notice of Change to Rule 68A-9.004, F.A.C. to change the effective date; and (c) Adopt all other final rule amendments as advertised.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Diane Eggeman, Director, Division of Hunting and Game Management