



# Major Proposed Rule Changes for Hunting and FWC-Managed Areas

Draft rules  
November 2016

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



Version 1

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 minor technical changes and annual calendar adjustments, are included in the additional background material.

Author: Paul Scharine

Report date: October 21, 2016

# Rule Development

April – July 2016: reviewed proposals received from staff, the public and cooperators

September – October 2016: solicited and assessed stakeholder input

**November 2016: Commission review; approve to advertise**

December 2016: advertise in Florida Administrative Register; communicate with stakeholders

February 2017: Commission considers adoption



FWC staff received about 200 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 about 115 of the ideas for rule changes. The public has had an opportunity to submit comments to staff through an online poll and via email and phone.

# Specific Rule Changes

## New Hunting Opportunities:

- 71 areas: add hunts, days, species or methods of take to existing hunts, or remove quotas
- Establish new WMA (Everglades Headwaters WMA)

## Other rules:

- 9 areas: adjust permit issuance method and dates



New Hunting Opportunities – Adding new hunts, increasing the number of days of hunting, removing quotas or adding methods of take or number of species to hunt:

**Southwest Region (68A-15.061):** Fred C. Babcock/Cecil M. Webb – Yucca Pens Unit; Everglades Headwaters WMA, Gulfstream Tract – (new) – establish a new wildlife management area (395 acres) as the first tract of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Everglades Headwaters WMA  
**(68A-17.005):** Lake Wales Ridge – Royce Unit

**North Central Region (68A-15.062):** Camp Blanding, Cary, Cypress Creek, Devil’s Hammock, Flying Eagle, Four Creeks, Goethe, Gulf Hammock, Jennings Forest, Little River, Lochloosa, Log Landing, Lower Econfinia River, Middle Aucilla, Potts, Ralph E. Simmons Memorial, Steinhatchee Springs, Thomas Creek - Kings Road Unit; **(68A-17.005):** Fort White, Lafayette Forest

**Northwest Region (68A-15.063):** Apalachicola - Bradwell Unit, Aucilla, Blackwater - Hutton Unit, Box-R, Chipola River, Choctawhatchee River, Escambia River, Joe Budd, Lafayette Creek, Ochlockonee River, Perdido River, Pine Log, Point Washington, Talquin, Tyndall AFB, Wakulla, Yellow River

**South Region (68A-15.064):** Allapattah Flats, Big Cypress, Everglades and Francis S. Taylor, Holey Land, J.W. Corbett, Okaloacoochee Slough, Picayune Strand, Rotenberger, Spirit-of-the-Wild; **(68A-17.005):** CREW, John C. and Mariana Jones/Hungryland, John G. and Susan H. DuPuis Jr., Southern Glades

**Northeast Region (68A-15.065):** Buck Lake, Charles H. Bronson, Etoniah Creek, Gores Landing, Lake George, Lake George - Dexter Mary Farms Unit, Lake Monroe, Little Big Econ, Marshall Swamp, Matanzas, Ocala, Rock Springs Run, Ross Prairie, Seminole Forest, Seminole Forest - Lake Tracy Unit, Seminole Ranch, Tiger Bay, Tiger Bay - Rima Ridge Unit, Tosohatchee WMA

Other Rules:

Adjust hunt types, dates and permit issuance method–

**North Central Region (68A-15.062):** Andrews, Belmore, Cary, Four Creeks, Jennings Forest, Steinhatchee Springs

**Northwest Region (68A-15.063):** Box – R, Eglin AFB, Joe Budd

\*Full summaries of these proposed rules can be found in the additional background materials

# Specific Rule Changes

## Other Rules (Cont'd):

- 12 areas: revise rules concerning roads, vehicles, access, hunting equipment, scouting, check stations or camping
- 3 areas: change area designations and clarify where hunting is allowed
- 3 changes: quota, guest permit (Statewide) and RUP cost



## Other Rules (Cont'd):

Roads, vehicles, access or camping -

**South Region (68A-17.005):** John G. and Susan H. DuPuis Jr. WEA, Southern Glades

**North Central Region (68A-15.062):** Big Bend - Jena Unit, Four Creeks, Grove Park

**Northwest Region (68A-15.063):** Apalachicola - Bradwell Unit, Chipola River, Choctawhatchee River, Econfina Creek, Escambia River, Point Washington, Yellow River WMA

Area designations and clarify where hunting is allowed -

**Northwest Region (68A-15.063):** Yellow River WMA

**Southwest Region (68A-15.006):** Tenoroc

**South Region (68A-17.005):** Southern Glades

Quota permits and Recreational Use Permit (RUP) cost -

**Statewide (68A-15.005):** During quota hunts that allow exemptions, allow exempt hunters to bring a licensed guest, assistant, or supervisor that may participate in the hunt, but may not harvest wildlife.

**North Central Region (68A-9.004):**

Gulf Hammock - Increase the cost of each RUP from \$275 to \$417 at the request of the landowner.

**Northeast Region (68A-15.065):**

Ocala - Require a quota permit for the entire general gun season on the Pipeline Unit (5,000 permits, exemptions allowed) at the request of the cooperating agency. This change is not intended to limit the number of individuals that participate in the hunt, but it will allow our cooperator to better understand use of the area during the general gun season.

\*Full summaries of these proposed rules can be found in the additional background materials

# Holmes County Spring Turkey Season

## Conservation Success Story:

- Closed to hunting in 1998
- Successful restoration effort
- Reopened to limited hunting in 2006

## Expanded Season Regulations:

- Apply statewide spring season rules
  - 2-day youth hunt
  - 37-day regular spring season
  - 2-bird bag limit



Holmes County, in northwest Florida, was closed to wild turkey hunting in 1998 in response to confirmed reports of the county being nearly devoid of wild turkeys. With the support of residents, landowners and conservation organizations, the FWC initiated a successful wild turkey restoration program that has returned wild turkeys to most all suitable areas of the county.

Following the release of 121 turkeys at 8 sites within Holmes County from 1998 to 2000, regular monitoring of the turkey population by radio telemetry and annual—and later bi-annual—bait-station transect surveys, confirmed successful reproduction and steady expansion of turkeys across the county.

In response to the expanding turkey population, a limited, 3-day spring turkey season was opened in Holmes County in 2006. As the population continued to expand and grow the season was extended incrementally over the next several years. Currently in Holmes County, there is a 2-day youth hunt and a 16-day regular spring season with a 1-bird season bag limit. Based on harvest data, hunting success in Holmes County continues to be as good as, or better than, that of surrounding Florida counties.

Due to continued success of the restored turkey population in Holmes County, staff are recommending a proposal that would apply statewide regulations for the spring season in Holmes County. Specifically, the proposed rule amendment would maintain the 2-day youth hunt, extend the regular spring season to a full 37-days and increase the daily and seasonal bag limit to two. The resulting spring season length and bag limits would be consistent with those for the rest of the counties in the state. Fall turkey season would continue to be closed in Holmes County.

# Public Input

- Online poll for receiving public comments
- Stakeholders notified through email and social media
  - Sent to more than 140,000 email addresses
- Over 8,700 responses



Summaries of all rule proposals regarding hunting and FWC-managed areas were provided to the public through an online poll beginning September 13 (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 and Twitter account. 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 resulted in over 8,700 responses. Staff evaluated public input and made appropriate changes to rule proposals.

## Staff Recommendation



- Approve proposed rule amendments for advertising in the Florida Administrative Register
- Provide direction or guidance to staff as we continue working with the public
- Consider for final adoption at February 2017 Commission meeting



If approved as final rules in February 2017, most would take effect July 1, 2017.

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

