



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

Draft rules  
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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 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 review; approve to advertise

December 2015: advertise in Florida Administrative Register; communicate 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:

- 32 areas: add hunts, days, species or methods of take to existing hunts, or increase quotas

## Sustainability Measures:

- 3 areas: decrease quotas, establish quotas, reduction in area open to hunt or methods allowed or add restrictions on 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-15.063):** Apalachee, Box-R, Escribano Point, Tate's Hell – Womack Creek Unit; **(68A-17.005):** L. Kirk Edwards

**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 can't be addressed using non-regulatory means.

### **North Central Region (68A-15.062):**

Citrus – Reduce hunting pressure and increase hunt quality by reducing the number of quota permits and changing the archery season to 3 quota hunts. This change is 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 has focused enforcement efforts on these campgrounds, however, they have found existing rules to be insufficient to address these issues. Requiring a permit for camping in designated campgrounds will 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.

The proposal to prohibit the use of vessels powered by internal combustion engines during quota hunts on Dupuis is in response to hunters complaining of the disturbance created by the impact 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, we received many comments from individuals who felt that this rule change would make accessing the area more difficult. Staff feel that moving forward with this rule would

increase the quality of the hunt while having minimal impact on existing users.

# Babcock Ranch Preserve

## Background:

- 74,000 acres in Lee and Charlotte counties
- Privately-managed as working ranch since 2006
  - In cooperation with FWC, Florida Forest Service and Lee County
- Financially self-supporting
- Management transitioning to Florida Forest Service in August 2016 with FWC a cooperating partner (Section 259.1053, F.S.)



★ Rule changes needed to facilitate this transition



The Babcock Ranch Preserve consists of approximately 74,000 acres located in Lee and Charlotte Counties. Since 2006, this State-owned property has been managed as a working ranch by Babcock Ranch Management, LLC, in cooperation with FWC, the Florida Forest Service (FFS), and Lee County. Currently, the Babcock Ranch Preserve is being managed by Babcock Ranch Management, LLC as a financially self-supporting area with revenue generated by cattle ranching, tenant farming, timber and recreation (including hunting). FWC's current role is to provide oversight for wildlife management and facilitate WMA-like public hunting opportunities on 16,612 acres of the 74,000 acre area.

In August 2016, the management of Babcock Ranch Preserve will transition to FFS. The FFS will assume lead manager responsibility and FWC will be a cooperating partner as outlined in Section 259.1053, F.S. Area rules must be revised in order to facilitate this transition.

# Babcock Ranch Preserve

## Proposed Rules (68A-15.006):

- Facilitate Florida Forest Service becoming lead-land manager
- Allow FWC to manage:
  - Wildlife management activities
  - Tier II recreation program (fee-based)
- Continue current FWC management of public hunts in the Tier I hunt area
- Make rules in the Tier II hunt area consistent with the previous land manager's hunting program
- Authorize Florida Forest Service to conduct Operation Outdoor Freedom programs



These rule changes will facilitate FWC's new role in managing the Tier II program and the Florida Forest Service's (FFS) new role as the lead land manager.

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, a limited number of participants and 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).

In the Tier I hunt area (the 16,612 acre portion of the area open to public hunting), the current hunting format and management will be maintained.

Additional changes will establish rules for the Tier II hunt area consistent with the previous land manager's hunting program; and authorize FFS to 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



- 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 2016 Commission meeting



If approved as final rules in February, 2016, most 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







