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History of American Alligator Regulations in the U.S.A.

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- 1800-1870: Alligators hunted without regulation for skins in Louisiana. No reports of extensive skin trade in Florida, but it is likely that a certain amount occurred.¹
- 1870-1943: Alligator hunting poorly regulated. The commercial skin trade in Louisiana and Florida flourishes. In Florida, hunting seasons are regulated by county governments.²
- 1944: Alligator hunting in Florida regulated by the new Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. Only alligators four feet and larger can be legally harvested. Poor compliance.
- 1950: Alligator completely protected in Florida. Poor compliance.
- 1952: Hunting reinstated in Florida. Limited to 8 ft. and larger alligators by permit only. Poor compliance. Populations decline.
- 1961: Florida prohibits the hunting of alligators after the 1961 season due to declining numbers.
- 1962: Louisiana prohibits the hunting of alligators due to declining numbers.
- 1967: The American alligator is classified as an endangered species as part of the Endangered Species Preservation Act of 1966. No regulations are passed to protect species identified under this Act.
- 1962-1970: Illegal alligator hunting continues throughout the Southeastern U.S.
- 1969: The Endangered Species Conservation Act of 1969, prohibits the interstate transport and export of illegally taken wildlife, including reptiles.
- 1969: The Mason-Smith Act is enacted by the State of New York, banning the sale of endangered species and their products. This shut down the biggest center of trade for alligator products in the U.S.A. Alligator skins are still exported to foreign markets.
- 1970: The Endangered Species Conservation Act is enforced, and several high-profile cases are made. Defendants are fined and/or serve jail time.
- 1970: Louisiana gives the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries the full authority to regulate the alligator as a commercially harvested species.

¹ Joanen, T., and L. McNease. 1987. The management of alligators in Louisiana, U.S.A. Pages 33-42 in Webb, G. J. W., S. C. Manolis, and P. J. Whitehead, eds., *Wildlife management: crocodiles and alligators*. Surrey Beatty and Sons, Chipping Norton, NSW, Australia.

² Allen, E. R., and W. T. Neill. 1949. Increasing abundance of the alligator in the eastern portion of its range. *Herpetologica* 5:109-112.

- 1970-1972: Illegal harvest of alligators is effectively curtailed and alligator populations show signs of a rapid recovery.
- 1972, 1973: Louisiana conducts experimental commercial alligator harvests on 2 parishes.
- 1973: The Endangered Species Act of 1973 goes into effect on December 28, 1973. All alligator populations are classified as endangered, and it is illegal to harvest alligators in the U.S.
- 1975: Alligators are reclassified from Endangered to Threatened due to Similarity of Appearance (T/SA) in certain Louisiana parishes. Limited hunts are allowed in these parishes.
- 1975: The American alligator is classified as an Appendix I species during the Convention for the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and export of skins from the U.S. is prohibited.
- 1977: Alligators reclassified from Endangered to Threatened in Florida and certain counties in Georgia, South Carolina, Texas, and Louisiana.
- 1977: Florida initiates a nuisance alligator control program that allows contracted trappers to kill problem alligators and sell their skins.
- 1978: Florida implements the statewide nuisance alligator program in May.
- 1979: Alligator populations in a group of LA Parishes are reclassified from Threatened to T/SA.
- 1979: Sale of alligator meat is authorized by the federal government. Florida begins alligator meat sales in October.
- 1979: The classification of the American alligator is changed from Appendix I to Appendix II by CITES. Alligator skins can be legally exported.
- 1981: Statewide alligator trapping season is approved in Louisiana. Florida initiates experimental harvests of large alligators on Orange, Lochloosa, and Newnans lakes, and hatchling and egg collections for supplementing farms on lakes Apopka, Griffin, and Jesup under the T/SA rule.
- 1983: The Texas alligator population is reclassified to T/SA
- 1984: Texas implements a limited harvest of alligators
- 1985: The Florida alligator population is reclassified to T/SA. Florida expands its experimental harvests to five additional lakes.
- 1987: The American alligator is classified as T/SA rangewide.
- 1988: Florida implements statewide alligator harvest program.