

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Morgan Richardson, Director, Hunting and Game Management
Date: December 13, 2018
Subject: Proposed Changes to Deer Management Regulations

Purpose:

Obtain approval to publish deer management rule change proposals regarding bag limits, harvest reporting, antlerless deer permit program, and youth hunting.

Summary:

The Commission approved a Strategic Plan for Deer Management in Florida in 2008 to help guide management of deer in Florida. Many significant changes have been made regarding deer and deer management since its inception. These include establishing Deer Management Units (DMUs), adjusting hunting seasons and zones based on hunter preferences, and implementing DMU-specific harvest regulations (antler point regulations and antlerless deer harvest). As a continuation of implementing changes based on the strategic plan and expressed hunter preferences, the staff is proposing several rule changes intended to improve hunter satisfaction, improve monitoring of the deer resource, provide more youth hunting opportunities on private lands, and adjustments to improve the sustainability of the antlerless deer permit program.

The following proposals, which can be reviewed in detail in background documents, are being considered:

- 1) Establish an annual bag limit for antlered (3) and antlerless deer (2);
- 2) Establish a harvest reporting system to improve deer herd monitoring, improve Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) surveillance efforts, and to promote compliance with proposed annual bag limits;
- 3) Require antlerless deer program permittees to report their antlerless deer harvest annually;
- 4) Allow antlerless deer program permittees to only harvest antlerless deer under their permit (require all antlerless deer taken on permitted property to be tagged with provided antlerless deer tags);
- 5) Allow youth hunters to harvest only 1 antlered deer annually that falls short of DMU-specific antler point regulations (no limit currently);
- 6) Create a youth hunting weekend (Saturday and Sunday during the current muzzle loading gun season) on private lands where youth would be allowed to use any legal method of take for deer to harvest any adult (antlered or antlerless) deer with a limit of 1 for the weekend.

Staff Recommendation:

Approve the proposed rule amendments for advertising and direct staff to return in February 2019 for final adoption.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Cory Morea, Program Coordinator, Deer Management Program, Hunting and Game Management