

Major Proposed Rule Changes for Hunting and FWC-Managed Areas



Final rules
February 2019



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Version 1

This presentation covers the major proposed rule changes related to hunting and 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.

Division: Hunting and Game Management

Author: Paul Scharine

Contact Phone Number: 850-488-3831

Report date: January 17th, 2019

Rule Development

April – July 2018: reviewed proposals received from staff, the public and cooperators

August – December 2018: solicited and assessed stakeholder input

December 2018: Commission review; approve to advertise

December 2018- January 2019: advertise in Florida Administrative Register; communicate with stakeholders

February 2019: Commission considers adoption



Over 100 requests for changes were received from the public, staff, and cooperators. Some of these requests were proposals for changes to publications, policies, or other non-rulemaking issues. Staff has recommended 57 of the ideas for rule changes. The public has had an opportunity to submit comments to staff online, via email and phone.

Statewide Rule Changes

Spring Turkey Shooting Hours:

- Extend shooting hours during spring turkey season until sunset on most WMAs

Remove Archery Hunting Restrictions:

- Allow hunting with bows equipped with rangefinders and laser sights during archery season

Muzzleloading Gun Caliber:

- Change the caliber for hunting deer from a minimum of .40 to .30



Spring Turkey Shooting Hours (68A-15.004): Extend shooting hours during spring turkey seasons on WMAs from one-half hour before sunrise until sunset, unless otherwise provided by specific area regulation. This proposal comes after a 3-year pilot study where this change was made on 16 WMAs around the state. Hunting during these times is already allowed on private lands.

Remove Archery Hunting Restrictions (68A-12.002): Allow the use of bows equipped with electronic computational (rangefinders) or light projection (laser) sights or aiming devices for hunting game or crows during archery season. These accessories are already allowed on archery equipment used during other established seasons.

Muzzleloading Gun Caliber (68A-12.002): Change the minimum caliber for hunting deer with a muzzleloading gun from .40 caliber to .30 caliber. This change would make muzzleloading gun caliber regulations consistent with existing regulations for pre-charged pneumatic air guns when hunting deer.

Statewide Rule Changes

Reallocate Youth Waterfowl Hunt Days:

- Current: 2 consecutive days at end of regular season
- Proposed: Saturday before regular season and 2nd Saturday following regular season

Expand Falconry Opportunities:

- Add 17 days to the falconry dove season



Photo Courtesy of John Hitchcock



Reallocate Youth Waterfowl Hunt Days (68A-13.003): Reallocate the 2-day youth waterfowl hunt so that one day occurs the Saturday before the regular season begins and one day occurs the second Saturday after the regular season ends. This change is intended to provide higher quality and more diverse hunting opportunities for youth within the allowable federal framework.

Expand Falconry Opportunities (68A-13.008): Expand the falconry dove season by 17 days in conformance with federal regulations.

Specific Area Rule Changes

Expand Hunting Opportunities:*

- 14 areas: add hunts, days, methods of take or species to existing hunts, or remove quotas

Other Rules:

- 15 areas: roads, vehicles, access, hunting equipment, scouting, check stations or camping



* Staff is proposing a change in the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes regulations from what was presented in December



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

Southwest Region (68A-15.061): Hilochee – Osprey Unit, KICCO; **(68A-15.006):** Kissimmee River

North Central Region (68A-15.062): Andrews, Camp Blanding, Mallory Swamp, Steinhatchee Springs

Northwest Region (68A-15.063): Chipola River, Choctawhatchee River, Plank Road, Tate's Hell

South Region (68A-15.064): Dinner Island Ranch

Northeast Region (68A-15.065): Seminole Ranch; **(68A-15.006):** Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Area*

*Staff is proposing a change from what the Commission approved in November to ensure the use of centerfire rifles remains prohibited in the Drasdo Unit of the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Area.

Other Rules - Roads, vehicles, access, hunting equipment, scouting, check stations or camping:

Southwest Region (68A-15.061): Chassahowitzka, Fred C. Babcock/Cecil M. Webb, Green Swamp; **(68A-15.006):** Babcock Ranch Preserve

North Central Region (68A-15.062): Big Shoals, Holton Creek; **(68A-17.005):** Lafayette Forest

South Region (68A-15.064): Fisheating Creek, Picayune Strand

Northeast Region (68A-15.065): Charles H. Bronson, Little Big Econ, Matanzas, Tiger Bay – Rima Ridge, Tosohatchee, Triple N Ranch

Full summaries of all proposed rule changes are included in the additional background material.

Specific Area Rule Changes

Other Rules:

- 6 areas: dates, bag limits, antler requirements, methods of take or use of dogs
- 1 area: sustainability measures to address declining deer populations
- 1 area: increase to RUP* numbers and cost



* = Recreational Use Permit



Other Rules:

Dates, bag limits, antler requirements, methods of take or use of dogs –

Southwest Region (68A-15.006): Babcock Ranch Preserve

North Central Region (68A-15.062): Hatchet Creek, Osceola

Northwest Region (68A-15.063): Blackwater – Hutton Unit, Chipola River, Eglin

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 cannot be addressed using non-regulatory means -

South Region (68A-15.064): Big Cypress WMA, Stairsteps (Zones 1-3) and Loop units only - establish that only deer having at least one antler with 4 or more points can be harvested; prohibit taking of deer with guns other than bows during the general gun season; and establish a bag limit for deer of 1 annually in the Stairsteps and Loop units combined.

Recreational Use Permit Increases –

North Central Region (68A-15.062): Grove Park

Full summaries of all proposed rule changes are included in the additional background material.

Public Input

- Rule summaries made available online for commenting
- Stakeholders notified through email and social media
 - Sent to more than 155,000 email addresses
- Over 16,700 responses



Summaries of all rule proposals regarding hunting and FWC-managed areas were made available to the public online for commenting beginning August 24th. The opportunity to comment was advertised and made available through FWC's HuntFlorida Facebook page and Hunting Hot Sheet. Additionally, an email blast was sent via GovDelivery (FWC's email news group service), resulting in emails to over 155,000 unique email addresses. These efforts have resulted in over 16,700 responses to date.

Staff Recommendation



- Approve all amended rules as advertised
- Approve a new version of F.A.C. Rule 68A-15.006 (which addresses a change for the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Area) for advertising and allow staff to file for adoption as soon as possible.



Approved rule amendments would take effect July 1, 2019.