

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: George Warthen, Director, Hunting and Game Management
Date: February 20, 2020
Subject: Final Rule – Proposed Rule Changes for Hunting 2020 – 2021

Purpose:

Obtain final approval of rule amendments that revise select statewide hunting regulations, revise specific area regulations, and conform hunting dates to calendar date changes on Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), Wildlife and Environmental Areas (WEAs) and Miscellaneous Areas; approval to advertise a Notice of Change (N.O.C.) for Rule 68A-15.061, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.).

Why:

These changes will enable better management of fish and wildlife resources.

Top Points:

- 1) Over 110 requests for changes received – 58 of those moving forward.
- 2) Active online public commenting since September 6.
- 3) Proposing to remove one rule amendment approved at the December meeting from consideration based on stakeholder and cooperator feedback.

Affected Parties:

Hunters of deer, fox, coyote, wild hogs; turkey, small game and racoons; all users of the WMA system.

Summary:

During 2019, over 110 requests for changes were received and evaluated. Most of the substantive rule proposals were summarized and published online for public comments beginning on September 6. Public notification was also made through FWC's HuntFlorida Facebook page, HGM's Hunting Hot Sheet, and a GovDelivery notice to over 342,000 unique subscribers. Over 9,000 responses have been received, and the feedback indicated general support for most of the staff proposals. Staff is requesting removal of the advertised proposed limitation on hunter access on Green Swamp West WMA through publication of a N.O.C. for Rule 68A-15.061, F.A.C. This change is the result of staff continuing to engage with stakeholders and the cooperating agency. Some of the most notable rule amendments approved include:

- Establishing Silver Springs Wildlife Management Area (~4,900 acres in Marion County), which would provide new deer, turkey, and small game hunting opportunities.
- Providing families with more opportunity by allowing an additional nonhunting family member or guest to attend established family and youth hunts on a number of wildlife management areas.
- Offering new public hunting opportunities in nearly all regions of the state by adding general gun, family deer dog, wild hog-still, spring turkey, small game, released quail, and night-time raccoon hunts and removing some quota requirements for wild hog-dog hunts.

Staff Recommendation:

Approval to publish the N.O.C. for the proposed amendment to Rule 68A-15.061, F.A.C. and approval of all other rule amendments as advertised.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

George Warthen, Director, Hunting and Game Management
Paul Scharine (Presenter), Hunting and Game Management