

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



Final Rules  
February 2020



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Version 1

This report 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.

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# Rule Development

April – August 2019: reviewed proposals received from staff, the public and cooperators

September – December 2019: solicited and assessed stakeholder input

December 2019: Commission review; approval to advertise

December 2019 - January 2020: advertise in Florida Administrative Register; communicate with stakeholders

**February 2020: Commission considers adoption**



FWC staff has received over 110 requests for changes from the public, staff, and cooperators. Some of these ideas were proposals for changes to publications, policies, or other non-rulemaking issues. Staff has recommended 59 of the ideas for rule changes. We gathered the public's input through online commenting, via email and by phone.

# Public Input

- Rule summaries made available online for commenting
- Stakeholders notified through email and social media
  - Sent to more than 342,000 email addresses
- Over 9,000 responses



Summaries of all rule proposals regarding hunting and FWC-managed areas were provided to the public online for commenting beginning September 6. The opportunity to comment was publicized through email blasts sent via GovDelivery (FWC's email news group service) to over 342,000 unique email addresses, FWC's HuntFlorida Facebook page, the Hunting Hot Sheet, and a banner on MyFWC.com/Hunting. These efforts have resulted in over 9,000 responses.

# Specific Area Rule Changes

## Expand Hunting Opportunities:

- 13 Areas: add hunts, days, methods of take or species to existing hunts, or remove quotas
- Establish New Public Hunting Area
  - Silver Springs Forest WMA (~4,900 acres)
  - Managed by St. Johns River Water Management District
  - Full complement of hunting opportunities (deer, turkey, small game, wild hog, etc.)



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):** Chassahowitzka, Hilochee, Hilochee – Osprey Unit, Upper Hillsborough; **(68A-15.006):** Babcock Ranch Preserve Tier II

**North Central Region (68A-15.062):** Gulf Hammock, Troy Springs

**Northwest Region (68A-15.063):** Eglin, Escambia River, Plank Road

**Northeast Region (68A-15.065):** Richloam, Three Lakes, Three Lakes – Prairie Lakes Unit

Silver Springs Forest WMA – **(new)** – establish a new Wildlife Management Area (~4,900 acres) in Marion County. The St. Johns River Water Management District is the lead land manager of this property. The hunt format will include a: 16-day archery season, 3-day muzzleloading gun season, 9-day general gun season, 2-day youth turkey hunt, two 4-day spring turkey hunts and a small game season that opens the last weekend in November and closes after the first weekend in January (Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays only). Limited-entry quota permits will be required for the archery, muzzleloading gun, general gun and turkey seasons.

# Specific Area Rule Changes

## Other Rules:\*

- 18 Areas: roads, vehicles, access, hunting equipment, scouting, check stations or camping
- 15 Areas: dates, quotas, bag limits, antler requirements or use of dogs
- Camp Blanding: reconfigure quota hunt



\* Staff is proposing to withdraw a proposal that amended when vehicular access is allowed on Green Swamp West WMA



## Other Rules:

Roads, vehicles, access, hunting equipment, scouting, check stations or camping –

**Southwest Region (68A-15.061):** Green Swamp West, KICCO; **(68A-15.006):** Babcock Ranch Preserve Tier I

**North Central Region (68A-15.062):** Bayard, Camp Blanding, Hatchet Creek, Raiford, Thomas Creek – King Road Unit, Twin Rivers

**Northwest Region (68A-15.063):** Perdido River

**South Region (68A-15.064):** Allapattah Flats, Big Cypress, J.W. Corbett; **(68A-17.005):** John G. and Susan H. DuPuis Jr.

**Northeast Region (68A-15.065):** Charles H. Bronson, Little Big Econ, Seminole Forest, Seminole Forest – Lake Tracy Unit

\*Staff is proposing to withdraw a proposal the Commission approved in December (that would have changed when vehicle access is allowed on Green Swamp West WMA during special opportunity spring turkey season scout days).

Dates, quotas, bag limits, antler requirements or use of dogs –

**Southwest Region (68A-15.061):** Upper Hillsborough; **(68A-15.006):** Babcock Ranch Preserve Tier I

**North Central Region (68A-15.062):** Big Shoals, Camp Blanding, Holton Creek, Mallory Swamp; **(68A-17.005):** Suwannee Ridge

**Northwest Region (68A-15.063):** Aucilla, Blackwater, Eglin, Plank Road

**South Region (68A-15.064):** Everglades and Francis S. Taylor, Holey Land, Picayune Strand, Rotenberger

Reconfigure quota hunt –

**North Central Region (68A-15.062):** Camp Blanding – change the general gun dog hunt from two 9-day hunts (320 no-cost quota permits each hunt, exemptions allowed) to one 10-day and one 11-day hunt (200 no-cost quota permits, exemptions allowed)

# Statewide Rule Change

## Tracking and Control Collars:

- Allows hunters to remotely locate dogs and correct their course
- Proposal submitted by dog hunters
  - Effort to ensure tradition continues
- Require on all dogs used to pursue deer, fox, coyote and wild hog
  - Public and private lands
  - Except during sanctioned mounted field trial events
  - Prohibit tampering with collars without permission



Tracking and control collars allow hunters to determine the location of their dogs and remotely correct their course. Due to the effectiveness of this technology to reduce the chance of dogs going into unauthorized areas, many of the state's largest dog hunting leases already require these collars, and this requirement has also been implemented on two of our WMAs. Furthermore, the majority of dog hunters on leases and WMAs where it's not currently required already use these collars.

Recognizing the benefits of these collars, dog hunters from around the state requested we propose a rule change requiring all dogs used to pursue deer, fox, coyote and wild hog be equipped with tracking and control collars on public and private lands. Collars would not be required for dogs used during sanctioned mounted field trial events to pursue fox, coyote or wild hog. Additionally, it would be prohibited to remove, tamper, or otherwise interfere with any collar or tag (including remote tracking and behavior correction devices) of a dog used for hunting without the owner's permission.

# Statewide Rule Change

## Tracking and Control Collars:

- Each dog required to be equipped with functioning collar while hunting
- Costs
  - New receivers: \$500 to \$800
  - New collars: \$150 to \$300 per collar
  - Used equipment available
- Effective date
  - Tracking Collar – July 1, 2021
  - Correction Collar – July 1, 2022



To meet the requirements of this proposal, each dog used for hunting deer, fox, coyote, or wild hog must be equipped with either a GPS or telemetry tracking collar. Additionally, each dog must be equipped with a device capable of correcting dog behavior. It is possible to purchase devices with tracking and correction capabilities integrated into a single unit, or individual tracking and correction devices may be purchased.

The cost of this equipment varies by model. Costs for new receivers (GPS or telemetry) range from approximately \$500 to \$800 and the cost of collars range from approximately \$150 to \$300, however, used equipment may be purchased for considerably less.

Those who don't currently use this technology will need time to acquire the new equipment, but more importantly, they must have time to ensure their dogs are properly trained before using them in the field. As a result, at the request of dog hunters, we are proposing a phased implementation with the tracking collar requirement of the rule taking effect July 1, 2021 and the correction device requirement taking effect July 1, 2022.

# Staff Recommendation

- Approve all amended rules as advertised
- Approve a Notice of Change for Rule 68A-15.061 (withdraw proposal for Green Swamp WMA and correct clerical errors)



Approved rule amendments would take effect July 1, 2020.