

# Proposed Changes to Private Lands Alligator Egg Collections



Final Rule  
May 2020



**Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission**

Version 1

This report covers proposed amendments to the private lands alligator egg collection regulations to support opportunity for collecting more eggs, allow greater program flexibility, and enhance resource protection measures. Full summaries of all proposed rule changes are included in the additional background material.

Division: Hunting and Game Management

Authors: Harry J. Dutton

Contact Phone Number: 850-617-9505

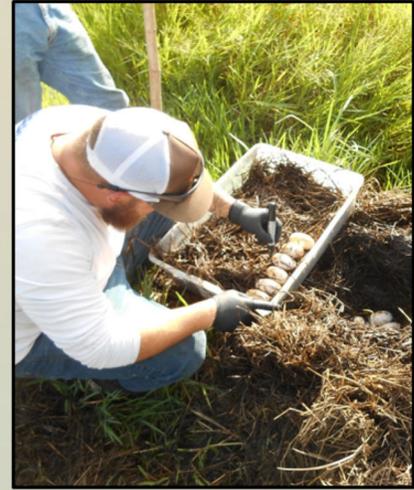
Report date: April 13, 2020

Unless otherwise noted, images throughout the presentation are by FWC.

## Draft Final Rule Changes (68A-25.032, F.A.C.)

### More Opportunity for Sustainable Egg Collection

- Allow access to all observed alligator nests provided:
  - Property has history of adequate nesting
  - Collecting is monitored against baseline nesting average
  - Nest collection data submitted annually for each property
  - Alligator hatchlings not collected
- Permit provision change to allow collecting more eggs on properties with 10 or fewer observed nests



To provide opportunity to sustainably collect more alligator eggs, the proposed rule would provide participants with the option to collect all observed alligator nests on a permitted property. To be eligible for this option, several criteria must be met:

- The property must have a history of permitted egg collections where nest surveys conducted by a Certified Wildlife Biologist or an observer approved by the Commission show more than 10 nests observed during at least 3 out of the last 5 years, including the current year
- The number of nests for a given year can't be more than 20% below the baseline average
- Nest collection data and a route showing where eggs are collected must be submitted to the Commission each year
- Hatchlings may not be collected from the property

To support sustainably collecting more alligator eggs on properties with 10 or fewer observed nests during nest surveys, staff intends to change an egg collection permit provision. The change would increase the average number of eggs per nest used to calculate quotas from 35 to 40 eggs.

## Draft Final Rule Changes (68A-25.032, F.A.C.)

### Greater Flexibility for Participants

- Provide for other qualified people to become Commission-approved nest observers
- Allow use of nest survey data from supervised collections to calculate average nest quota
- Allow licensed farming agents to sign egg records for the farm permittee



To provide greater flexibility, the proposed rule would allow people who are not Certified Wildlife Biologists to be approved by the Commission to conduct nest surveys if they meet established criteria.

In addition, the proposed rule would:

- Provide the option to use the previous two years of comparable nest surveys conducted during supervised egg collections to establish the following year's average nest quota
- Allow any person who is listed as an agent of the egg collection permittee to sign forms on behalf of the permittee

## Draft Final Rule Changes (68A-25.032, F.A.C.)

### Enhance Conservation Measures

- Require nest surveys to be conducted by certified wildlife biologists or FWC-approved observers
- Prohibit transfer of egg fee records and require their return to FWC
- Require notification when there is a change in possession of collected eggs



To continue the FWC's work to protect the alligator resource, the proposed rule would enhance conservation measures by:

- Requiring all nest surveys to be conducted, not simply verified, by Certified Wildlife Biologists or FWC-approved observers
- Prohibiting the transfer of egg fee assessment records and require those records be returned to the FWC within 15 days of the egg collection permit expiring
- Requiring a person not listed on the egg collection permit to immediately notify the FWC when possession of retained eggs is transferred to them. Additionally, eligible Florida-licensed and permitted alligator farm(s) receiving the eggs into their inventory would be required to provide immediate notice to FWC

## Staff Recommendation

- Approve amended rule as advertised



In developing program improvements, staff worked with a wide-ranging group of program stakeholders including the farming industry, private land program participants, and other interested people. Based on feedback from in-person workshops, an online commenting tool, and outreach via phone and email, the draft rule changes are generally well supported among program participants.

Staff is seeking approval of amended rules as advertised. Approved rule amendments would take effect in time for the 2020 egg collection season.