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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Unless otherwise noted, images throughout the presentation are by FWC.
FWC staff received over 288 requests for changes from the public, staff, and cooperators. Some of these ideas were proposals for changes to publications, policies, or other nonrulemaking issues. Staff has recommended 155 of the ideas for rule changes. We gathered public input through online commenting, via email and by phone.
Summaries of all rule proposals regarding hunting and FWC-managed areas were provided to the public online for commenting beginning September 23, 2021. The opportunity to comment was publicized through email blasts sent via GovDelivery (FWC’s email news group service) to over 439,000 subscribers, FWC’s HuntFlorida Facebook page, the Hunting Hot Sheet, and banners at MyFWC.com and MyFWC.com/Hunting. These efforts have resulted in over 15,450 responses. Additionally, 3 webinars were hosted by FWC staff regarding the wild turkey harvest reporting proposal. Those webinars were lightly attended with few comments and questions.
Specific Area Rule Changes

Expand Hunting Opportunities:

- 37 Areas: add hunts, days, methods of take or species to existing hunts, or remove quotas
- Establish one new public hunting area
  - St. James Island Unit - Tate’s Hell WMA (~8,200 acres)
    - Franklin County
    - Florida Forest Service is lead land manager

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):** Avon Park

**North Central Region (68A-15.062):** Andrews, Bayard, Cedar Key Scrub, Cypress Creek, Devil’s Hammock, Flying Eagle, Hatchet Creek, Holton Creek, Homosassa, Jennings Forest, Little River, Log Landing, Lower Econfina River, Mallory Swamp, Middle Aucilla, Steinhatchee Springs, Troy Springs; **(68A-17.005):** Lafayette Forest

**Northwest Region (68A-15.063):** Apalachicola, Blackwater, Econfina Creek, Juniper Creek, Tate’s Hell, Tyndall Air Force Base

**South Region (68A-16.064):** Allapattah Flats, Big Cypress, Big Cypress – Addition Unit, Big Cypress – Bear Island Unit, Everglades Headwaters – Kissimmee Bend Unit, Picayune Strand; **(68A-17.005):** CREW, DuPuis

**Northeast Region (68A-15.065):** Ocala, Seminole Forest, Seminole Ranch, Silver Springs Forest

St. James Island Unit – Tate's Hell WMA – **(new)** – establish a new wildlife management area (~8,182 acres) in Franklin County. The Florida Forest Service is the lead land manager of this property. The hunt format would include a: 12-day archery season, 6-day muzzleloading gun season, 4-day family hunt, 9-day general gun season, 35-day small game season, 2-day youth turkey hunt and a 12-day spring turkey season. Limited-entry quota permits would be required for the archery, muzzleloading gun, family hunt, general gun and turkey seasons.
Specific Area Rule Changes

Other Rules:

- 29 Areas: roads, access, vehicles, hunting equipment, check stations or camping
- 25 Areas: dates, bag limits or use of dogs

Other Rules:
Roads, access, hunting equipment, check stations or camping –

**Southwest Region (68A-15.061):** Avon Park, Chassahowitzka, Everglades Headwaters – Hatchineha Unit

**North Central Region (68A-15.062):** Bayard, Camp Blanding, Grove Park, Hatchet Creek, Holton Creek, Lochloosa

**Northwest Region (68A-15.063):** Eglin Air Force Base, Tyndall Air Force Base

**South Region (68A-15.064):** Big Cypress, Big Cypress – Corn Dance Unit, Everglades and Francis S. Taylor, Everglades Headwaters – Kissimmee Bend Unit, Holey Land, J.W. Corbett, Okaloacoochee Slough, Picayune Strand, Rotenberger, Spirit-of-the-Wild; (68A-17.005): Hungryland, Southern Glades

**Northeast Region (68A-15.065):** Etoniah Creek, Guana River, Half Moon, Richloam – Baird Unit, Tosohatchee, Triple N

Dates, bag limits or use of dogs –

**Southwest Region (68A-15.061):** Avon Park Air Force Range, Croom, Green Swamp West, Hilochee – Osprey Unit, KICCO

**North Central Region (68A-15.062):** Bayard, Cypress Creek, Grove Park, Osceola, Thomas Creek – Kings Road Unit, Troy Springs

**Northwest Region (68A-15.063):** Apalachicola – Bradwell Unit, Tyndall Air Force Base

**South Region (68A-15.064):** Big Cypress, Everglades and Francis S. Taylor, Everglades Headwaters – Kissimmee Bend Unit, Holey Land, J.W. Corbett, Okaloacoochee Slough, Rotenberger (68A-17.005): CREW, DuPuis, Southern Glades

**Northeast Region (68A-15.065):** Lake Panasoffkee, Ocala
Specific Area Rule Changes

Other Rules:

- 2 Areas: changes to recreational use permits
- 2 Areas: sustainability measures

Other Rules:
Recreational Use Permits –
North Central Region (68A-15.062): Grove Park, Gulf Hammock

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 – Bear Island Unit: replace the existing 37-day nonquota spring turkey hunt with two consecutive spring turkey quota hunts (one 4-day hunt followed by one 5-day hunt) beginning the first Saturday in March (50 no-cost, quota permits for each hunt, no exemptions) followed by one 28-day nonquota spring turkey hunt. These measures are necessary to alleviate overcrowding on the area.
J.W. Corbett: limit motor vehicle access on Trail 6 to people legally participating in hunts during established seasons and provide an alternate route for motor vehicles to access the L-8 Levee Road, allow only street legal vehicles to be operated outside designated hunting seasons and allow only those persons participating in hunts to possess or operate unlicensed and unregistered motor vehicles. These proposals update and clarify existing vehicle rules to minimize habitat damage and illegal use of vehicles on the area.
Statewide Rule Changes

- Require all hunters to report all wild turkey harvested
- Restore Holmes County turkey seasons and bag limits

**Turkey Harvest Reporting** – require all hunters to report all wild turkey harvested during spring and fall seasons to a telephone or internet-based harvest reporting system within 24 hours of harvest; and require hunters to use a harvest log to record harvest prior to moving the wild turkey from the point of harvest. The proposed rule would take effect beginning with the 2022 fall turkey season. If approved, hunters would report turkey harvest via FWC’s current reporting options (24/7 phone, online, and Fish|Hunt FL app).

**Holmes County Turkey** – establish a season bag limit of 2 gobblers or bearded turkeys (currently 1) and establish a fall turkey season on private lands in the county. These changes will make the turkey hunting regulations in Holmes County consistent with the statewide season dates and bag limits. These changes are possible due to the recovery of the turkey population in Holmes County.
Statewide Rule Changes

- Adjust the statewide quail season end date
- Remove restrictions on the take of non-native geese and doves
- Clarify rules regarding deer carcass handling

Statewide Quail Season End Date – establish that the statewide quail season ends the first Sunday in March consistent with gray squirrel season. This minor change would prevent quail season from occasionally ending on leap day (February 29) one week earlier than gray squirrel season.

Non-native Geese and Doves – allow the take of Egyptian geese, common pigeons (rock doves) and collared doves without restriction on private lands and allow them to be taken on FWC-managed areas during established area seasons, with no bag limit, using methods of take as allowed by season.

Deer Carcass Handling – clarify rules regarding deer carcass handling, storage, transfer, possession, and labeling requirements. The purpose of this rule proposal is to provide consistency among rules and clarify existing rule language. Proposed modifications include: New definitions of taxidermist, processor, and final processing. Simplifies requirements when dismembering and/or transferring a deer or deer parts to another person in the field. Clarifies labeling requirements for deer stored at a public cold storage unit, taxidermist, or processor. Clarifies that an owner, operator, or lessee of public cold storage units or a taxidermy or processing facility are not subject to possession limits for any game legally taken by another and stored in their facility.
Staff Recommendation

- Approve the proposed rule amendments for final adoption as advertised
- If approved, most rules would take effect July 1, 2022

If approved, most rules would take effect July 1, 2022.

Staff have evaluated the final rule amendments under the standards of 68-1.004, F.A.C., and found them to be in compliance.