



Major Proposed Rule Changes for Hunting and FWC-Managed Areas

Final rules
January 2017

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Division of Hunting and Game Management



Version 1

This presentation covers the major proposed rule changes related to hunting and to 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 – July 2016: reviewed proposals received from staff, the public and cooperators

September – October 2016: solicited and assessed stakeholder input

November 2016: Commission review; approve to advertise

December 2016: advertise in Florida Administrative Register; communicate with stakeholders

★ February 2017: Commission considers adoption



FWC received about 200 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 considered these ideas and is recommending 121 for rule changes.

Specific Rule Changes

New Hunting Opportunities:

- 20 areas: add hunts, days, species or methods of take to existing hunts, or remove quotas
- 60 areas: allow any dog during small game seasons
- Establish new WMA (Everglades Headwaters WMA)



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

Southwest Region (68A-15.061): Fred C. Babcock/Cecil M. Webb – Yucca Pens Unit; **(68A-17.005):** Lake Wales Ridge – Royce Unit

North Central Region (68A-15.062): Camp Blanding, Steinhatchee Springs; **(68A-17.005):** Fort White

Northwest Region (68A-15.063): Apalachicola – Bradwell Unit, Aucilla, Box-R, Chipola River, Choctawhatchee River, Escambia River, Joe Budd, Lafayette Creek, Ochlockonee River, Talquin, Wakulla, Yellow River

South Region (68A-17.005): Southern Glades

Northeast Region (68A-15.065): Ocala, Tosohatchee

New Hunting Opportunities – Allow for any dog to be used to hunt small game during the small game season:

North Central Region (68A-15.062): Cary, Cypress Creek, Devil's Hammock, Flying Eagle, Four Creeks, Goethe, Gulf Hammock, Little River, Lochloosa, Log Landing, Lower Econfina River, Middle Aucilla, Potts, Ralph E. Simmons Memorial, Steinhatchee Springs, Thomas Creek – Kings Road Unit; **(68A-17.005):** Fort White, Lafayette Forest;

Northwest Region (68A-15.063): Apalachicola – Bradwell Unit, Blackwater - Hutton Unit, Lafayette Creek, Ochlockonee River, Perdido River, Pine Log, Point Washington, Talquin, Tyndall AFB, Wakulla, Yellow River

South Region (68A-15.064): Allapattah Flats, Big Cypress, Everglades and Francis S. Taylor, Holey Land, J.W. Corbett, Okaloacoochee Slough, Picayune Strand, Rotenberger, Spirit-of-the-Wild; **(68A-17.005):** CREW, John C. and Mariana Jones/Hungryland, John G. and Susan H. DuPuis Jr., Southern Glades

Northeast Region (68A-15.065): Buck Lake, Charles H. Bronson, Etoniah Creek, Gores Landing, Lake George, Lake George – Dexter Mary Farms Unit, Lake Monroe, Little Big Econ, Marshall Swamp, Matanzas, Ocala, Rock Springs Run, Ross Prairie, Seminole Forest, Seminole Forest – Lake Tracy Unit, Seminole Ranch, Tiger Bay, Tiger Bay – Rima Ridge Unit

*Staff is proposing Notices of Change to clarify rule language as advertised for Rules 68A-15.062 and 68A-17.005 as they relate to the proposed small game hunting season changes

New Hunting Opportunities – Establish a new WMA:

Southwest Region (68A-15.061): Everglades Headwaters, Gulfstream Tract – (new) – establish a new wildlife management area (395 acres) as the first tract of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Everglades Headwaters WMA

*Full summaries of these proposed rules and Notices of Change can be found in the additional background materials

Specific Rule Changes

Other Rules:

- 13 areas: roads, vehicles, access, hunting equipment, scouting, check stations, permit issuance methods or camping
- 8 areas: adjust dates
- 3 changes: guest permit (statewide), RUP cost and quota



Other Rules:

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

South Region (68A-17.005): John G. and Susan H. DuPuis Jr., Southern Glades

North Central Region (68A-15.062): Big Bend - Jena Unit, Four Creeks, Grove Park

*Staff is proposing a Notice of Change to allow vehicular access on an approximately 1,800 acre parcel the Suwannee River Water Management District has recently acquired and desires to add to Cypress Creek WMA

Northwest Region (68A-15.063): Apalachicola – Bradwell Unit, Chipola River, Choctawhatchee River, Econfina Creek, Escambia River, Joe Budd, Point Washington, Yellow River

South Region (68A-17.005): Southern Glades

Adjust dates –

North Central Region (68A-15.062): Andrews, Belmore, Cary, Four Creeks, Jennings Forest, Steinhatchee Springs

Northwest Region (68A-15.063): Box-R, Eglin AFB

Quota permits and Recreational Use Permit (RUP) cost –

Statewide (68A-15.005): During quota hunts that allow exemptions, allow exempt hunters to bring a licensed guest, assistant, or supervisor that may participate in the hunt, but may not harvest wildlife.

North Central Region (68A-9.004):

Gulf Hammock – Increase the cost of each RUP from \$275 to \$417 at the request of the landowner.

Northeast Region (68A-15.065):

Ocala – Require a quota permit for the entire general gun season on the Pipeline Unit (5,000 permits, exemptions allowed) at the request of the cooperating agency. This change is not intended to limit the number of individuals that participate in the hunt, but it will allow our cooperator to better understand use of the area during the general gun season.

*Full summaries of these proposed rules and Notices of Change can be found in the additional background materials

Holmes County Spring Turkey Season

Conservation Success Story:

- Closed to hunting in 1998
- Successful restoration effort
- Reopened to limited hunting in 2006

Expand Season:

- 16 → 37 day spring season
- Maintain 1 bird bag limit and 2-day youth hunt
- No fall season



Holmes County, in northwest Florida, was closed to wild turkey hunting in 1998 in response to confirmed reports of the county being nearly devoid of wild turkeys. With the support of residents, landowners and conservation organizations, the FWC initiated a successful wild turkey restoration program that has returned wild turkeys to most all suitable areas of the county.

Following the release of 121 turkeys at 8 sites within the county from 1998 to 2000, regular monitoring of the turkey population confirmed successful reproduction and steady expansion of turkeys across the county.

In response to the expanding turkey population, a limited, 3-day spring turkey season was opened in in 2006. As the population continued to expand and grow the season was extended incrementally over the next several years. Currently, there is a 2-day youth hunt and a 16-day regular spring season with a 1-bird season bag limit. Based on harvest data, hunting success in Holmes County continues to be as good as, or better than, that of surrounding Florida counties.

Due to continued success of the restored turkey population, staff is recommending a proposal that would apply statewide season dates for the spring season in Holmes County. Specifically, the proposed rule amendment would maintain the 2-day youth hunt and extend the regular spring season to a full 37-days. The resulting spring season length would be consistent with the rest of the counties in the state. Fall turkey season would continue to be closed in Holmes County and the bag limit for the spring season would remain at 1.

Public Input

- Rule summaries made available online for commenting
- Stakeholders notified through email and social media
 - Sent to more than 140,000 email addresses
 - Comments received via phone, email, online, etc.
- Over 12,800 responses



Summaries of all rule proposals regarding hunting and FWC-managed areas were provided to the public online for commenting. The opportunity to comment was advertised and made available through FWC's HuntFlorida Facebook page and Twitter account. Additionally, an email blast was sent via GovDelivery (FWC's email news group service), resulting in emails to over 140,000 unique email addresses. These efforts resulted in over 12,800 responses received via phone, email, online and other avenues. Staff evaluated public input received and made appropriate changes to rule proposals.

Staff Recommendation



- Approval of rules as advertised
- Approval of 3 Notices of Change
 - 68A-15.006, F.A.C. to address feedback received from JAPC
 - 68A-15.062, F.A.C. to clarify rule language and allow vehicular access on an approximately 2,230 acre addition to Cypress Creek WMA
 - 68A-17.005, F.A.C. to clarify rule language



Approved rule amendments would take effect July 1, 2017.