MEMORANDUM

To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners

From: Diane R. Eggeman, Director, Division of Hunting and Game Management

Date: July 10, 2017

Subject: Consent Agenda - Final Rule: Proposed Rule Changes for Expanded Small Game Opportunities 2017-2018

Purpose:
Staff will recommend adoption of previously approved draft rule amendments to revise specific area regulations to expand small game hunting opportunities on Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and Wildlife and Environmental Areas (WEAs).

Summary:
Staff proposed rule amendments at the April 19-20 Commission meeting that would 1) expand small game season by increasing the number of days open for hunting on 18 areas; 2) increase the number of species legal to take during small game season on 1 area; and 3) allow northern bobwhite to be released and taken by shotgun during the small game season on 9 areas. A daily no-cost permit and proof that northern bobwhite were purchased from a licensed game farm would be required for each individual or group participating. No changes to the advertised amendments have been made.

Small game opportunities provide a diverse suite of hunting recreation activities with broad appeal that also:
- Are a great recruitment gateway for new conservationists
- Have a low barrier to participation allowing for “spur-of-the-moment” hunting recreation
- Have a higher chance for hunter success, in turn increasing confidence
- Help keep tradition alive
- More small game opportunity means more opportunity for experienced conservationists to share their heritage and knowledge

FWC staff has been and is continuing to gather input on all proposed rule amendments online. Over 2,800 individuals have provided comment and a large majority of the respondents support these proposals.

Staff Recommendation:
Approve the final rule amendments as advertised. If approved, all rules would take effect September 1st 2017.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:
Wes Seitz, Public Hunting Areas Program Biologist, Division of Hunting and Game Management