

Proposed Changes to Alligator Farming and Public Waters Alligator Egg Collections



Draft Rules
April 25, 2018



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Version 1

This report covers proposed amendments to the alligator farming and public waters alligator egg collection rules to support additional participation opportunities in the public waters alligator egg collection. 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
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Status of Alligator Resource

- Abundant – greater than 1.3 million alligators statewide
- Thriving, stable population
- Scientifically supported management
- Sustainable harvest of eggs, hatchlings, and adult alligators



Farming Program Review

- Initiated in April 2016
- Several in-person meetings and opportunities to submit written comments
- Feedback on desired program changes are complex and competing
- Representative stakeholder group was created
- Industry developed suggested program improvements
- Staff updated the Commission in December 2017
 - Agreement to bring forward draft rules



Alligator Management Program staff has engaged the alligator farming industry and other stakeholders in a review of the alligator farming program to assess any needed improvements.

Suggested Improvements

- Expand the number of permitted farmers who have access to eggs from public waters
- Adjust the allocation of public-waters eggs to participating farms
- Continue to seek out additional public-waters eggs available for collection
- Award the new permits using qualifying criteria and a preference point system
- Reassess participation opportunities every five years



To accommodate the suggested program improvements, two existing rules would need to be amended.

Draft Alligator Farming Rule Changes (68A-25.004, F.A.C.)

- Increases the number of permitted farmers granted access to public-waters eggs from 30 to 35
- Establishes a preference point system to award new permits
- Establishes a 5-year recurring review deadline to assess whether additional permittees can be added



A preference point system based on the number of years a person has been permitted as an alligator farmer and permitted or licensed in other elements of the Alligator Management Program will be used to award new permits for accessing public-waters alligator eggs. Prior to June 2023, and every five years thereafter, staff will evaluate, based on the previous five-year average of public-waters alligator eggs collected, whether additional participation opportunities can be supported.

Draft Alligator Egg Collection Rule Changes (68A-25.031, F.A.C.)

Provides for Distribution of Eggs as Follows:

- The first 33,000 eggs to the current 30 permitted famers
- The next 5,500 eggs to the five new permitted farmers
- Any collected eggs in excess of 38,500 equally shared among all 35 permitted farmers
- Eggs collected based on annual population assessments



The total number of public-waters alligator eggs collected over the last five years has ranged from a low of 31,688 to a high of 40,254.

Input Received

- Draft rule language provided to alligator farming industry and stakeholders for commenting
- Feedback on the qualifying criteria for new opportunities, how preference points would be accumulated, and how the permits would be issued
- Majority of alligator farming industry supportive



While the majority of limited-30 farmers and farmers who do not have access to public-waters alligator eggs are supportive of the proposed changes, a few desire no changes or prefer a completely new approach to accessing and distributing public-waters alligator eggs.

Staff Recommendation

- Approve proposed rule amendments for advertising in the Florida Administrative Register
 - Changes to 68A-25.004 (35 permits issued, preference points, 5 year review)
 - Changes to 68A-25.031 (how eggs will be distributed)
- File for final adoption if no hearing is requested
- Rules effective as soon as possible



If approved, the rules would go in effect in time for the 2018 egg collection season that begins in July.