

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Morgan Richardson, Director, Hunting and Game Management
Date: April 25, 2018
Subject: Draft Rules: Alligator Management Program- Egg Collection

Purpose:

Present draft rule proposals that would amend the alligator farming and public waters alligator egg collection rules to expand participation opportunities and achieve desired program improvements of program participants.

Summary:

Staff has engaged Alligator Farming Program participants and other stakeholders in a review to assess any needed farming program improvements to address their concerns. The primary concerns are: 1) expanding the limited participant access to alligator eggs collected from public waters (currently limited to 30 qualifying alligator farmers); 2) fairly allocating the public waters alligator eggs to participating farms; 3) instituting a preference point system to award newly created participation slots; 4) having an expressed commitment to reassessing participation opportunities every five years; and 5) increasing the number of public-waters alligator eggs available for collection. Staff has held several meetings and worked through other written communication pathways with participants and stakeholders, including limited-30 farmers and farmers who are not part of that opportunity. A staff report on this endeavor was presented to the Commission at their December 2017 meeting and Commissioners directed staff to bring any needed draft rule changes for consideration at a future meeting.

Draft rule changes presented include: 1) expanding the limited public waters egg collection slots from 30 to 35; 2) distributing the initial 33,000 collected eggs to current permitted participants (1,100 per current "limited-30" farmer), distributing the next 5,500 collected eggs to new participants (1,100 per new participant), and distributing any collected eggs above 38,500 equally to all participants; 3) awarding new participation slots to persons based on accumulated preference points determined by the number of years involved with the various elements of the Alligator Management Program; and 4) establishing a recurring five-year review deadline to assess whether additional participation slots are warranted as the public waters alligator egg collection program progresses. The majority of permitted farmers who have been engaged in this review are supportive of the proposed rule changes.

Staff is committed to reviewing the availability of other sovereign waters and public lands suitable for sustainable alligator egg collections to increase the number of alligator eggs available to program participants.

Staff Recommendation:

Approve the proposed rule amendments for advertising and file for adoption as soon as possible. If the rule amendments are approved for both advertisement and final adoption, Commission staff will file the rules for adoption as allowed by s. 120.54(3) Florida Statutes, without further public hearing.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Harry J. Dutton, Game Management and Public Hunting Section Leader