

Major Proposed Rule Changes for Hunting and FWC- Managed Areas



Final Rules
February 2018



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Version 1

This presentation 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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FWC staff received 205 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 has recommended 141 of the ideas for rule changes. The public has had an opportunity to submit comments to staff online and via email and phone.

Statewide Rule Changes

Dove Season Dates

- Modify season dates to accommodate hunter preference and federal framework change

Dove Shooting Hours

- Expand 1st phase shooting hours to ½ hour before sunrise until sunset

Special-Opportunity Daily Dove Permit

- Encourage youth participation by allowing youth to take their own bag limit with no additional fee



Dove Season Dates (68A-13.008): The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is expected to approve an expansion of the dates during which the dove season may be held, moving the closing date from Jan. 15 to Jan. 31. This regulatory change is supported by staff in response to feedback received from a 2013 statewide dove hunter survey and comments received since that time, indicating a preference for more cool-weather hunt days during a time when more migratory doves are present. We propose to shorten the length of Phases 1 and 2 of the dove season and expand and shift Phase 3 of the dove season to occur later in the year. A total season length of 90 days combined over all 3 phases would remain the same.

Dove Shooting Hours (68A-13.008): Expand dove season shooting hours during Phase I of the dove season from noon until sunset to ½ hour before sunrise until sunset. This proposed rule change is in response to feedback and comments received from Florida's dove hunters.

Special-Opportunity Dove Permit (68A-9.007): The \$35 special-opportunity daily dove hunt permit would be modified to allow for a host hunter and youth hunter to each take a daily bag limit of doves. Currently, a host and youth must share a bag limit unless the \$10 youth permit option is purchased. This permit option would be eliminated to encourage youth participation.

Statewide Rule Changes

Air Guns

- Recent innovations greatly increase range and power
- 8 States allow take of deer
- 4 States allow take of turkey

Propose to Allow for Deer and Turkey

- Allow pre-charged pneumatic air guns for hunting deer and turkey on public and private lands
- Define pre-charged pneumatic air gun



Recent innovations in technology have led to specific types of air guns that have sufficient range and power to take big game. Currently, 8 states allow air guns to be used to take deer and 4 states allow them to take turkey.

Over the past decade, as powerful air guns have become more affordable and commercially available, the public's interest in using them to take big game has grown. As a result, we are proposing to allow the use of pre-charged pneumatic air guns for hunting deer and turkey on public and private lands.

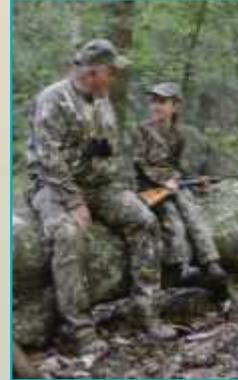
To accomplish this, we are proposing to create a definition of what a pre-charged pneumatic air gun is and specify what caliber and projectile types may be used to take both deer and turkey. This is to ensure that only air guns and projectiles that can effectively take these species are allowed. Furthermore, we propose to limit the hunting seasons when air guns may be used to avoid conflicting with current methods of take allowed during a given season. For example, we are proposing to allow air guns during existing general gun hunting seasons, but not during archery seasons.

*Draft rules presented at the November Commission meeting specified that air guns used for taking deer must be at least .40 caliber. Based on stakeholder feedback, we are proposing a Notice of Change to revise this to .30 caliber.

Specific Area Rule Changes

Expand Hunting Opportunities

- 61 areas: add hunts, days, methods of take or species to existing hunts, or remove quotas
- Establish 3 Public Hunting Areas
 - Everglades Headwaters WMA, Hatchineha Unit (~1,460 ac)
 - Kissimmee Chain of Lakes, Rolling Meadows Unit (~1,800 ac)
 - Plank Road WMA (~8,000 ac)



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): Croom WMA;

Everglades Headwaters WMA, Hatchineha Unit – establish a new wildlife management area (~1,460 acres) in Polk County as the second tract of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Everglades Headwaters WMA

North Central Region (68A-15.062): Bayard, Belmore, Big Shoals, Camp Blanding, Cary, Cypress Creek, Devil’s Hammock, Flying Eagle, Four Creeks, Gulf Hammock, Hatchet Creek, Homosassa, Little River, Log Landing, Lower Econfina River, Mallory Swamp, Potts, Thomas Creek - Kings Road Unit, Troy Springs, Twin Rivers; **(68A-17.005):** Watermelon Pond

Northwest Region (68A-15.063): Apalachee, Blackwater - Carr Unit, Blackwater - Hutton Unit, Chipola River – Altha Tract, Econfina Creek, Escambia River, Escribano Point, Flint Rock, Lafayette Creek, Ochlockonee River, Perdido River, Pine Log, Tate’s Hell, Wakulla, Yellow River; Plank Road WMA – establish a new WMA (~8,000 acres) in Leon and Jefferson counties; **(68A-17.005):** Apalachicola River

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

Northeast Region (68A-15.065): Caravelle Ranch, Dunns Creek, Gores Landing, Guana River, Lake Panasoffkee, Little Big Econ, Matanzas, Ocala, Richloam, Rock Springs Run, Seminole Forest - Lake Tracy Unit, Seminole Ranch, Triple N Ranch WMA; **(68A-15.006):** Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Area, Rolling Meadows - establish a new area (~1,800 acres) in Polk County

Specific Area Rule Changes

Other Rules

- 27 areas: roads, vehicles, access, hunting equipment, scouting, check stations or camping
- 9 areas: unit designations, dates, bag limits or use of dogs
- 2 areas: measures to address declining deer populations
- Everglades Complex (3 WMAs): address unsafe target shooting



Other Rules:

Roads, vehicles, access, hunting equipment, scouting, check stations or camping -

Southwest Region (68A-15.061): Arbuckle, Green Swamp West, Walk-in-the-Water

North Central Region (68A-15.062): Big Shoals, Camp Blanding, Jennings Forest, Thomas Creek – King Road Unit

Northwest Region (68A-15.063): Apalachee, Apalachicola, Chipola River, Choctawhatchee River, Econfinia Creek, Eglin, Escambia River, Perdido River, Yellow River; **(68A-17.005):** Apalachicola River

South Region (68A-15.064): Dinner Island Ranch, Picayune Strand; **(68A-17.005):** John G. and Susan H. DuPuis Jr., Southern Glades

*Staff is proposing a Notice of Change to remove certain restrictions related to stoves when camping on J.W. Corbett WMA based on stakeholder input

Northeast Region (68A-15.065): Herky Huffman/Bull Creek, Little Big Econ, Richloam – Baird Unit, Three Lakes, Triple N Ranch; **(68A-17.005):** Split Oak

Unit designations, dates, bag limits or use of dogs –

North Central Region (68A-15.062): Bayard, Lower Econfinia River

Northwest Region (68A-15.063): Flint Rock, Blackwater – Hutton Unit, Chipola River

Northeast Region (68A-15.065): Caravelle Ranch, Charles H. Bronson, Richloam, Seminole Forest – Lake Tracy Unit

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 -

North Central Region (68A-15.062):

Potts – prohibit the take of antlerless deer

Northeast Region (68A-15.065):

Three Lakes WMA – prohibit the take of antlerless deer during the archery season

Address unsafe target shooting in designated areas as provided by s. 790.15, FS –

South Region (68A-15.064): Everglades and Francis S. Taylor, Holey Land, Rotenberger

Public Input

- Rule summaries made available online for commenting
- Stakeholders notified through email and social media
 - Sent to more than 152,000 email addresses
- Over 15,400 responses



Summaries of all rule proposals regarding hunting and FWC-managed areas were provided to the public online for commenting beginning September 23 (ongoing). The opportunity to comment was advertised and made available through FWC's HuntFlorida Facebook page and Hunting Hot Sheet. Additionally, an email blast was sent via GovDelivery (FWC's email news group service), resulting in emails to over 152,000 unique email addresses. These efforts resulted in over 15,400 responses.

Staff Recommendation



- Approval of rules as advertised
- Approval of 2 Notices of Change
 - 68A-12.002, F.A.C. to change the minimum caliber of air guns allowed when taking deer from .40 to .30
 - 68A-15.064, F.A.C. to remove certain restrictions related to stoves when camping on J.W. Corbett WMA



Approved rule amendments would take effect July 1, 2018.