



Quota Hunt Update June, 2012

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

Introduction:

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) made major changes to the quota hunt program in 2009. This presentation is an update on those changes and what the results have been.

History:

- Quota hunts began on public lands in 1975
- Many changes and improvements over time
- Worked closely with stakeholders for two years
- Commission action in February 2009 with Changes implemented in 2009-10
- Commissioners updated each year



Background History:

The quota hunt program helps FWC manage hunting pressure, harvest, and quality of the hunting experience on public lands. The program began in 1975.

Many attempts were made to improve the program over its history, but FWC continued to receive complaints from the public regarding perceived fairness of how permits are allocated.

Staff worked closely with stakeholders for over two years, holding working group and general public meetings to develop proposed changes.

Commissioners took final action at the February 2009 Commission meeting to revise the system.

Changes were implemented for the 2009-10 hunting season.

Staff has provided annual updates to the Commission – most recently at the November, 2011 Commission meeting.

Major Changes Made



- **Fairness:** **Nontransferable** - Quota permits are now nontransferable
- **Flexibility:** **Guest permits** - Most limited entry hunts now allow a guest permit



The challenge was to balance fairness with flexibility.

To address fairness, permits were made non-transferable. This focused on issues such as people applying for multiple permits, hoarding permits and enhanced FWC's ability to spread out opportunity to more people. This change was controversial, with strong feelings on both sides.

To address flexibility, a guest permit was made available for each quota permit. Some worried about overcrowding and overharvest, but guest permits were generally accepted as a positive change.

Other Changes

- Permits printed from home (self service)
- Application periods extended
- More specific hunt applications (Archery, Muzzleloading Gun, General Gun, Wild Hog, Spring Turkey and Family Hunts)
- Permits returned and reissued



Quota permits are currently applied for online or at vendors and tax collectors' offices.

Customers may now print most permits at home, providing additional convenience.

The first application period was extended to 30 days and hunters have more hunt types they can apply for.

In addition, permits may now be returned for reissuance. If the returned permit was obtained with preference points, these are reinstated to the applicant and an additional point awarded.

Outcomes

- Deer and turkey harvest has remained stable
- Hunter participation has remained stable
- License revenue has not declined
- Most comments have been positive, but improvements have been suggested



On most areas, deer and turkey harvest has remained stable since prior to the changes in 2009.

Non-transferable permits resulted in fewer permits being used, but guest permit use appears to make up the difference. Hunter participation has remained relatively stable.

Hunting license and wildlife management permit sales have remained stable or increased over time.

We have received many compliments on the new system. Some hunters say they are able to get permits and hunt popular areas that they were unable to obtain in the past. New hunters are using the management area system.

The system continues to be complex and improvements are needed.

Our Timeline



This is the timeframe presented at the November, 2011 Commission meeting.

Staff has worked with stakeholders and continues to assess the changes to the quota hunt program.

Today, staff is providing an update and seeking Commission direction.

We will continue to monitor permit issuance from point of sale (Office of Licensing and Permitting). Permit use will be monitored at check stations by WMA staff and hunter surveys will continue.

As we continue to work with stakeholders, we will be prepared to present draft rules amendments, per Commission direction, at the December 2012 Commission meeting with final consideration in February 2013.

What Have We Heard?



- Make the system easier to understand & use
- Revise guest permits
- Address returned & re-issued permits
- Examine Mobility-impaired hunts
- Review bag limits



Staff has listened to stakeholders and heard the following:

- The system is too complex.
- Guest permits should be more user friendly.
- Improve the process for returning and re-issuing permits.
- Continue to work with mobility-impaired hunters to address their concerns.
- Review bag limits and standardize as much as possible.

Bag limits are connected to the number of quota permits issued on some areas therefore an examination of these areas would have to include a review of the population data and potential harvest sustainable.

Make It Clear and Simple



- A new vendor should help improve service
- Staff is implementing changes to our website per customer requests
- Include better instructions
- Address in Hunter Education classes
- Provide more reminders of application dates



The Commission has contracted with a new vendor (Brant Information Services) to provide improved service.

Staff is continuously making improvements to our website and procedures, based on customer feedback. Many suggestions from customers have already been implemented.

Instructions for how to apply for a quota permit are being improved.

The quota system will be addressed in Hunter Education classes and a video on the topic will be included.

Some stakeholders would like more reminders of application dates. This can be accomplished through electronic media and our website.

Guest Permit Improvements

- Allow the host flexibility to choose different guests
- Continue to share bag limit and vehicle
- Host is responsible for bag limit
- Continue to receive guest permit on-line



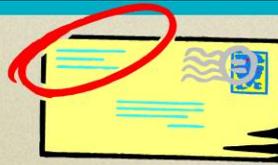
Currently, the permit holder is restricted to one individual as a guest for the entire hunt. Stakeholders would like the flexibility to choose any guest that does not have a quota permit or other guest permit.

The host and guest would continue to share the bag limit and not bring more than one vehicle onto the area.

The permits are now available on-line and this would continue.

Staff will continue to explore stakeholder suggestions.

Returning Permits



- Electronic return
- Permits must be returned 10 days prior to the hunt to be re-issued
- Reinstate preference points only if returned in time to be reissued
- Re-issue more frequently
- Provide final list of permit holders to Law Enforcement and staff



Currently, returned permits must be mailed in and postmarked prior to the hunt. Many permits are being returned too late to be re-issued. The re-instatement of preference points was meant to be an incentive to return permits so they could be re-issued. In order to encourage permits to be returned for re-issuance, staff and stakeholders have recommended that permits be returned electronically, but must be received 10 days prior to the hunt in order to receive preference points.

Currently, permits are batched and re-issued on a monthly basis. Staff would like to propose doing this on a weekly basis.

A final list of permit holders would be made available to Law Enforcement and check station staff prior to the hunt.

Mobility-Impaired Hunts

- Explore the possibility of providing no-show permits at the pre-hunt meeting or on those WMAs with check stations



Mobility-impaired hunters often have medical situations that prevent them from attending hunts. We would like to consider the possibility of allowing a portion of the no-show permits to be issued at the pre-hunt meeting or the check station on those areas that have check stations. This has been done on a pilot project in the Northwest Region and has worked well.

Bag Limits

- Review bag limits on area by area basis
- Standardize as much as possible
- Allow host and guest to harvest an animal, where possible



Bag limits are set on each area, depending on game populations, management objectives, harvest pressure and sustainable yield.

Staff will review bag limits and standardize where possible.

Stakeholders would like to allow the host and guest to each harvest a deer or turkey, without reducing the number of quota permits. This will not be possible on all areas, but can be considered on some.

Recommendation

- Bring draft rules to the Commission in December, 2012 to improve the current quota hunt system
- Direct staff to prepare draft rules to repeal sunset provisions prohibiting transferability of permits and allowing for guest permits



Staff believes the current quota system is working well, but it can be improved.

We recommend that staff continue to work with stakeholders and bring draft rule amendments to the Commission in December, 2012 to improve the quota hunt system.

These amendments would include a repeal of the sunset provisions in 68A-15.005 which prohibited transferability of permits and allowed for guest permits

Are there any questions?

Following is direction given staff at the meeting of the Commission on February 4, 2009:

Provision in 68A-15.005

(6) Sunset of Revised Quota System.

The Commission intends to sunset the rule amendments approved on February 4, 2009 and made effective May 1, 2009 that made changes to the quota hunt permit system prohibiting transferability of permits and allowing for guest permits. Therefore, Commission staff shall present at the next regularly scheduled Commission meeting after November 1, 2012 draft rule proposals necessary to repeal those rule amendments unless prior to that deadline the Commission directs staff to prepare draft rules to repeal or amend the deadline in this subsection.