



Major Proposed Rule Changes on FWC-Managed Areas February 2013



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

Statewide Rule Changes

- Allow steel trap use without a permit for moles and pocket gophers
- Allow air guns to take rabbits and gray squirrels
- Make minor adjustment to boundary between hunting zones C and D



68A-1.004 Definitions. - The proposed rule amendment would amend the definition of steel trap to allow the use of mole and pocket gopher traps without a permit.

68A-12.002 General Methods of Taking Game; Prohibitions. - The proposed rule amendment would allow hunters to harvest rabbits and gray squirrel with air guns.

68A-13.004 Open Season for Taking and Bag Limits for Non-Migratory Game and Issuance of Antlerless Deer Permits. - The proposed rule amendment would adjust Zone D to include that portion of Wakulla County located south of U.S. Highway 98, east of Spring Creek and west of the Wakulla and St Marks rivers.

Statewide Rule Changes, continued



- Define wild hogs as game on Commission managed lands for purpose of license requirements
- Note: Staff is requesting permission to withdraw the proposed change to 68A-1.004(38) at this time for further coordination with stakeholders



This change is proposed to define wild hogs as game only for the purpose of license requirements and only on those properties established by the Commission for public hunting. This rule would not afford additional protection for hogs or affect access to public lands by hunters but would simply help clarify that appropriate license requirements are met by those hunting on these lands. Making sure persons hunting on Commission managed lands are properly licensed and have met the requirements to hunt in a safe and responsible manner is important to hunters and other users of these properties. It is not the intent of this rule to restrict any hunting opportunities nor to protect the wild hog. The FWC continues to provide as many hog hunting opportunities on these properties as possible and will continue to do so. FWC has statutory authority to require hunting licenses for the take of game animals. Therefore, in order to require hunting licenses on FWC managed lands for persons hunting hogs, the definition of “game mammals” in rule needed to include hogs.

NOTE: Staff is requesting permission to withdraw the proposed change to 68A-1.004(38) for further coordination with stakeholders.

Statewide Rule Changes, continued

Camping



For those areas where camping is allowed by permit, rule authorizes adoption of permit conditions to increase camping opportunities and reduce conflict



The intent of this rule is to allow for provisions in camping permits that will provide more camping opportunities, safe and enjoyable camping experiences and will protect natural and cultural resources on those areas where camping permits are required. This rule does not institute permits on any area. Any camping permits must be adopted in area-specific rules working with users of the area.

An FWC camping issue team is working to improve the camping experience on wildlife management areas. The team has conducted a statewide survey of WMA permit holders (2,183 responses received) and found that respondents identified late night noise, lack of access to campsites, crowding and safety (primarily theft) as problems on the campgrounds that the respondents used. Permit conditions could be used to address these issues. The use of permits to promote a family friendly atmosphere was supported by 85% of respondents (36% supported without qualification, 49% supported dependent on specific provisions of the permit) and 15% did not support.

Southwest Region – Two New Areas



Lower Hillsborough WMA

Lead Manager = Southwest Florida Water Management District
County = Hillsborough
Total Acres = 2,775



Lower Hillsborough WMA

SOUTHWEST REGION

Proposed rules (68A-15.061) would: NEW

- Establish family and youth spring turkey hunts with hunter quotas
- Allow fishing and frogging year round
- Establish public access and vehicle restrictions



Lower Hillsborough WMA (new) – establish a new wildlife management area (2,775 acres) with the following open seasons: four 3-day family hunts (quota of 5, no exemptions) and two 3-day youth turkey hunts (quota of 5, no exemptions); allow the take of deer, wild hog, turkey, small game, furbearers, fish and frogs; allow a bag limit of two deer per family quota permit; allow a bag limit of one gobbler or bearded turkey per youth turkey quota permit; allow camping by permit only; prohibit hunting with dogs; prohibit vehicles except in parking areas and for access to the camping area by persons with a camping permit; prohibit the use of airboats, tracked vehicles, swamp buggies, all-terrain vehicles, and unlicensed and unregistered motorcycles; prohibit public access from 1.5 hours after sunset until 1.5 hours before sunrise unless camping; and prohibit fires except in the camping area.

Weekiwachee WMA
Lead Manager = Southwest Florida
Water Management District
County = Hernando
Total Acres = 2,850



Weekiwachee WMA

SOUTHWEST REGION

NEW

Proposed rules (68A-15.061) would:

- Establish archery hunts with hunter quotas
- Allow fishing and frogging year-round
- Establish public access and vehicle restrictions



Weekiwachee WMA (new) – establish a new wildlife management area (2,850 acres) with the following open season: five 6-day archery hunts (quota of 10, no exemptions); allow the take of antlered deer, wild hog, small game, furbearers, fish and frogs; allow a bag limit of two antlered deer per quota permit; prohibit camping on the area; prohibit hunting with dogs; prohibit vehicles except in the parking area; prohibit the use of airboats, tracked vehicles, swamp buggies, all-terrain vehicles, unlicensed and unregistered motorcycles, and horses; prohibit public access from 1.5 hours after sunset until 1.5 hours before sunrise; and prohibit fires.

Specific Area Rules

- Expanding allowed use of horses on 13 areas
- Increasing deer or spring turkey bag limits to better accommodate guest hunters on 39 areas
- Prohibiting use of dogs for hunting hogs during seasons not intended to be hog-dog hunts on eight areas



Staff took a statewide approach to existing area-specific rules to do three things:

1. Relax the limits regarding use of horses, in response to a request from equestrian stakeholders. Staff recommended these changes on areas where feasible and compatible with other area users.
2. Increase the deer and spring turkey bag limits where appropriate so that both the quota permit holder and 1 guest may take either a deer or a turkey.
3. Prohibit the use of dogs for hunting wild hogs for certain hunts where the use of dogs is either incompatible with other hunters or is posing problems with dog-trespass onto adjacent property. This is to address unintended conflicts caused when hogs were added as legal to take during small game seasons where use of dogs was allowed for small game hunting.

Expand use of horses –

Southwest Region (68A-15.061): Fred C. Babcock/Cecil M. Webb Yucca Pens Unit, Green Swamp West Unit, Hilochee, Hilochee Osprey Unit

North Central Region (68A-15.062): Flying Eagle, Lochloosa, Potts, Ralph E. Simmons Memorial

Northeast Region (68A-15.065): Buck Lake, Fort Drum, Lake Panasoffkee, Salt Lake, Seminole Ranch

Increase deer or spring turkey bag limits –

Southwest Region (68A-15.006): Babcock Ranch Preserve; **(68A-15.061):** Arbuckle, Chassahowitzka, Hilochee, Hilochee Osprey Unit, Walk-in-the-Water; **(68A-17.005):** Lake Wales Ridge Royce Unit

North Central Region (68A-15.062): Bayard, Big Bend Snipe Island Unit, Cary, Hatchet Creek, Thomas Creek Kings Road Unit, Twin Rivers, Potts, Ralph E. Simmons; **(68A-17.005):** Fort White, Lafayette Forest

Northwest Region (68A-15.063): Apalachicola Bradwell Unit, Blackwater Hutton Unit, Box R, Chipola Altha Tract, Aucilla, Beaverdam Creek; **(68A-17.005):** L. Kirk Edwards

South Region (68A-15.064): Fisheating Creek, Picayune Strand, Spirit-of-the-Wild, John C. and Mariana Jones/Hungryland

Northeast Region (68A-15.065): Dunns Creek, Half Moon, Ocala, Matanzas, Etoniah Creek, Marshall Swamp, Ross Prairie, Three Lake Prairie Lakes Unit, Buck Lake, Ocklawaha River Gores Landing Unit, Tiger Bay Rima Ridge Unit

Prohibit hog dogs –

Southwest Region (68A-15.006): Green Swamp, Hickory Hammock, Hilochee, KICCO, Lake Marian Creek, Upper Hillsborough, Walk-in-the-Water

Northeast Region (68A-15.0065): Richloam Baird Unit

Specific Area Rules, continued

New Hunting Opportunity

- Add hunts, days, species or methods of take to existing hunts, or increase quotas - 30 areas

Reduced Hunting Opportunity

- Reduce days, quotas or area; restrict take of certain animals - 5 areas



This page summarizes the remaining substantive rules that are area-specific and contained in this rule-change package (details are in the background report).

New Hunting Opportunity - Increases to hunt types, number of days or number of species to hunt:

Southwest Region (68A-15.061): Fred C. Babcock/Cecil M. Webb, Fred C. Babcock/Cecil M. Webb Yucca Pens Unit, Green Swamp WMA, Green Swamp West Unit, Hilochee Osprey Unit

North Central Region (68A-15.062): Andrews, Cedar Key Scrub, Citrus, Devil's Hammock, Grove Park, Holton Creek, Little River, Osceola; **(68A-17.005):** Suwannee Ridge

South Region (68A-15.064): Dinner Island Ranch, Everglades and Francis S. Taylor, Holey Land, Picayune Strand, Spirit-of-the-Wild; **(68A-17.005):** John G. and Susan H. Dupuis

Northeast Region (68A-15.065): Buck Lake, Lake George, Little Big Econ, Relay, Richloam, Rock Springs, Seminole Forest Lake Tracy Unit, Tiger Bay Rima Ridge Unit, Tosohatchee, Upper St. Johns River Marsh

Reduced Hunting Opportunity – Reductions in days or quotas, reduction in area open to hunt, or restrictions on take of certain animals:

Southwest Region (68A-15.061): Hilochee Osprey Unit

South Region (68A-15.064): Holey Land, J. W. Corbett, Rotenberger

Northeast Region (68A-15.065): Guana River

Specific Area Rules, continued



Other Rules

- Revise rules concerning roads, vehicles, access, check stations, or camping – 16 areas
- Adjust hunt types and dates – 4 areas
- Expand area where cast nets may be used – 1 area
- Change name of area – 1 area



Other Rules:

Roads, vehicles, access, check stations, or camping -

Southwest Region (68A-15.061): Fred C. Babcock/Cecil M. Webb, Green Swamp, KICCO, Lake Marion Creek; **(68A-17.005):** Lake Wales Ridge Royce Unit

North Central Region (68A-15.062): Raiford

Northwest Region (68A-17.005): Apalachicola River, L. Kirk Edwards

South Region (68A-15.064): Everglades and Francis S. Taylor, Fisheating Creek, Holey Land, Rotenberger; **(68A-17.005):** John G. and Susan H. Dupuis

Northeast Region (68A-15.065): Fort Drum, Little Big Econ

Adjust hunt types and dates –

Southwest Region (68A-15.061): Hilochee Osprey Unit

North Central Region (68A-15.062): Homosassa, Osceola

South Region (68A-17.005): John G. and Susan H. Dupuis

Northeast Region (68A-15.065): Richloam Baird Unit, Twelve Mile Swamp

Expand area where cast nets may be used –

Northeast Region (68A-15.065): Guana River

Change name of area –

Northeast Region (68A-15.065): Ocklawaha River Gores Landing Unit

One Proposed Amendment to Rules Presented in December



Special Event Authorization

Amends 68A.9004 to require written authorization for special events when:



- An event violates statewide or area rules
- Requires additional infrastructure or FWC resources
- Could have significant impact on natural or cultural resources or other area users



The original staff recommendation was to amend 68A.9004 to require a special event permit. Based on input received at the November Commission meeting, staff is now proposing to require written authorization rather than a permit.

This rule amendment is being proposed to ensure that the increasing range of special event requests - tours, vehicle rallies, adventure and equestrian endurance races - are accommodated in a manner that does not interfere with other users of the property or negatively impact fish and wildlife habitat.

FWC management area staff will work with applicants to modify events if the size, timing or location of the event presents issues of concern. A draft policy and conditions for authorization have been developed to ensure a consistent approach to consideration of event requests.

Requested Action for this Commission Meeting



- Approval of one change to rule amendment advertised in 68A-9.004
- Approval to notice withdrawing change to 68A-1.004(38)
- Approval of the rest of the rule amendments as advertised



If approved, staff will file a “Notice of Change” to advise the public of the change to the language in 68A-9.004 as described in this presentation which would prescribe issuing written authorization for special events.

Staff would withdraw the changes to define wild hog as game on commission managed lands.

The following slide is considered as background information and is not anticipated to be presented during the actual meeting.



